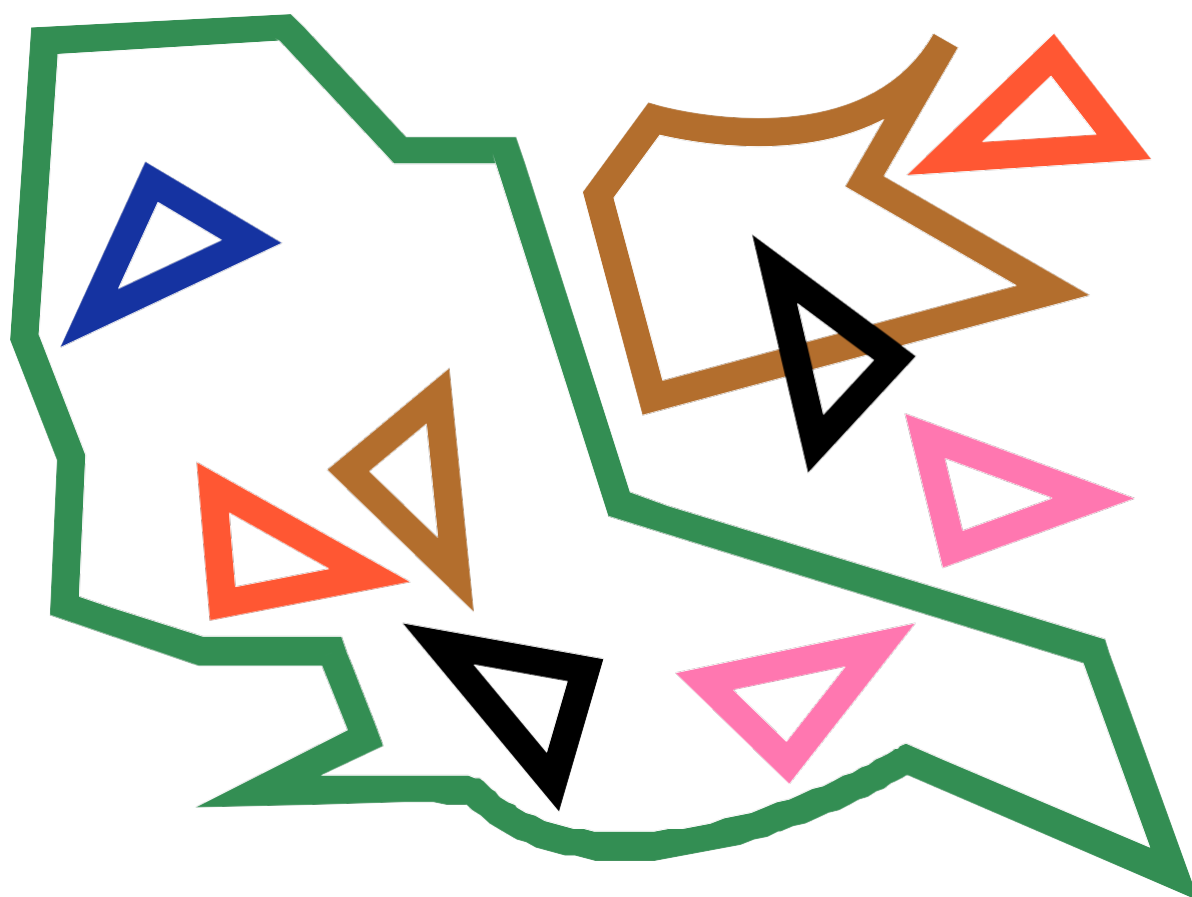


## Policy Brief – Final

### B-SHAPES - Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies



## Co-creating Policy for Borderlands: The need for an inclusive approach



**Funded by  
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

## Contents

Abbreviations .....	2
Executive Summary .....	3
Context .....	5
Evidence, Analysis and Results .....	7
Borderland minorities .....	7
Cultural border heritage .....	9
Border landscapes as heritage .....	10
Cross-border governance and border management .....	12
Key Policy Recommendations .....	13
Co-creating Policy with Minorities in Borderlands .....	13
Co-creating Cultural and Cultural Heritage Policy .....	13
See the Value of Border Landscapes.....	14
Be Inclusive in Cross-border Governance and Border Management.....	15
B-SHAPES Policy References .....	17

## Abbreviations

B-SHAPES (Borders shaping perceptions of European societies)  
SDU (South Denmark University)  
HH (Halmstad University)  
AEBR (Association of European Border Regions)  
UOULU (University of Oulu)  
UWr (University of Wrocław)  
SEN (Sensitive)

R (Document, report)  
WP (work package)  
EU (European Union)



## Executive Summary

This Policy Brief summarizes the policy implications of Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies (B-SHAPES), a Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action.

B-SHAPES has analysed and assessed how borders continue to be a key factor in shaping the ways European societies are understood over a period of three years (April 2023-March 2026). Drawing on the experiences of Europeans living in border regions, B-SHAPES has examined the role of borders, especially in relation to attitudes to Europe in border regions and perceptions of national minorities in border regions, with an additional focus on the role of border landscapes as a special phenomenon of heritage and a subject of cultural (heritage) policies.

B-SHAPES has generated new insights into how borders shape perceptions of societies by collecting and analysing narratives of borderland residents. Our research has demonstrated how the story of borders can be narrated differently than from a purely nation-state-centric perspective. Through B-SHAPES' outreach activities within and beyond border regions (e.g. summer schools, policy seminars, policy webinars and policy workshops) we have linked actors from the public sector with actors of the creative industries. This, in turn, will enable increased exposure of the diversity of European art, culture and values to a broader set of audiences.

B-SHAPES' results support the idea of a body of practice underpinning European policy, as well as member state and subnational policy. This body of practice recognizes the value of including borderlanders in policymaking and models their involvement through multilevel democratic governance, as well as through innovative participatory approaches such as those explored in the B-SHAPES research. The project also identified gaps, including the need for standardized models for cross-border cultural heritage collaboration. These models should bridge territorial cooperation policy, environmental planning, and heritage conservation."



## Context

In a global context, Europe is in a unique position to benefit from diversity generated by historical bordering and debordering processes. Europe has gone further than any other continent in integrating its economic, social and cultural policies across borders, and it also has the most widespread and deep institutional cross-border cooperation at the local level, creating opportunities for cooperation between cultural, creative and economic partners. At the same time, B-SHAPES' starting point was the joint observation that those living at the border often live with a sense of distance and exclusion from national and European centres of decision making and policymaking. This is exacerbated by perceptions of border regional issues as less pressing and less of a priority than more visible policy issues at the centre. Achieving action on the needs of borderlands requires a grasp of such facts as, for example, border region populations comprising 30% of the EU's total population and border region territory comprises 40% of the EU's geographical territory (as estimated based on NUTS 3 regions adjacent to borders<sup>1</sup>). From a policy and practitioner perspective, effective responses to climate crisis and the need for sustainable competitiveness through innovation, working and scaling beyond national borders are fast becoming an imperative for survival of the European project.

However, the European integration project 'Borderless Europe' has been challenged in recent years. There has been a renewed emphasis on borders, especially during the so-called migration crisis in 2015/16 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, and the theme of securitised borders is becoming stronger in the context of fast-evolving geopolitical dynamics. Political, symbolic, and cultural boundaries have become more tangible and present in public discourse as well as physical reality, affecting the movement of people and goods and the broader process of European integration. This can be felt and experienced especially in border regions, where political decisions to re-border are made by state governments in capitals, that may be geographically distant from border regions.

Nevertheless, in the period during which B-SHAPES was conceived and delivered as a research initiative, there have also been a range of important policy developments which point towards cross-border cooperation (if not borders themselves) being more firmly rooted at the centre of the European project. These include the 2021 communication of the European Union on EU Border Regions as Living Labs<sup>2</sup> and the discussions following up the Draghi report.<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of national borders in the context of the European Union and the wider European economic and partnership area is both a development asset for diversity and depth, and a risk to releasing the full potential of European competitiveness. To address both these appropriately — the development asset and the risk — requires an ongoing nuanced approach which demands an ever-deepening comprehension of the various policy spheres

---

<sup>1</sup> Eurostat. (2023). *Accessing European statistics / Territorial Typology Manual – Border Regions*. European Commission. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/SEPDF/cache/72679.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> European Commission. (2021). *EU border regions: Living labs of European integration*. European Commission. [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/information-sources/publications/reports/2021/eu-border-regions-living-labs-of-european-integration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/reports/2021/eu-border-regions-living-labs-of-european-integration_en)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, 2025. *The Draghi report: one year on*. [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report/one-year-after\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report/one-year-after_en)

which impact on border regions in particular, the ways in which they impact on border regions, and also — crucially — the recognised ways in which border regions and borderlands can support and nurture policy innovation — for example in the areas of shared services, landscape and environmental management, and regulatory innovation.

The B-SHAPES research consortium is based on a shared understanding of these simultaneously central and peripheral roles of borders, as well as on a conviction of the significance of narratives of borders and Europe — their entanglements, overlaps and contradictions. It has been our principal aim to connect researchers with professionals/practitioners in the field of policymaking and development cooperation, the creation of insights which may have relevance for policymaking and cooperative practices in key sectors such as heritage-driven regeneration and development.

In addition to the academic research institutions, B-SHAPES' consortium partners are:

- [The Association of European Border Regions \(AEBR/AGEG/ARFE\)](#) — the key political interest organisation of European Border Regions, which combines a mandate for multi-level policy advocacy and political engagement with a praxis model of research, working with evidence, delivery of major practical interventions relevant for cross-border cooperation, and global engagement as part of a European territorial diplomacy offering.
- [The National History Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria](#) — located in a region shaped by repeated bordering and re-bordering, with a heritage of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, Judaism, Islam and Orthodox Christianity.
- [The European Network Remembrance and Solidarity \(ENRS\)](#) - a foundation and network established in 2005 by the Culture Ministers of Poland, Germany, Slovakia and Hungary, and which was joined by Romania in 2014. It focuses on documented memory, including that of the 20th Century, in recognition of what the founding partner States referred to as 'a century of wars, totalitarian dictatorships, the suffering of civilian populations, the victims of wars, persecution, conquest, forced expulsions and nationalist, racist and ideologically motivated repression'.<sup>4</sup>
- [Lungomare](#) - an art collective based in Bolzano, on the Italy-Austria border. Lungomare is a platform for design and cultural production which works in collaboration with clients, artists and other experts to develop strategies and concepts that focus on finding the appropriate form for the content to be conveyed. Lungomare has a particular interest in spatial expression. Its contribution to B-Shapes, "[Through the Prism of Borders](#)", explored borders and created concepts of liminality.
- [KREATUS](#) - a consultancy firm engaging cross-border stakeholders in Central and Eastern Europe and providing quantitative and qualitative, evaluation, social and marketing research.

---

<sup>4</sup> This quotation is drawn from the wording of the Ministerial Declaration signed by the four Ministries of Poland, Germany, Slovakia and Hungary, in 2005, which established ENRS.

## Evidence, Analysis and Results

B-SHAPES has produced a wealth of analysis driven by a combination of conceptual work and empirical data. Here we highlight that which is of **most interest to policymakers**, focusing on the policy areas of:

- National minorities in border regions
- Cultural border heritage
- Border landscapes as heritage
- Cross-border governance & border management

B-SHAPES **also has conducted research on attitudes to Europe and Euroscepticism** in border regions, demonstrating through [analysis of media](#)<sup>5</sup> and [interviews/focus groups](#)<sup>6</sup> that living in a border region does not automatically produce a pro-European outlook and that support for open borders often coexists with distance from the EU. This has policy implications for all four of these policy areas.



### Minorities in border regions

**Research on minorities in border regions** (*minorities understood here as communities with common ethnic, linguistic and/or religious features different from the titular nation of a state, and with historical ties to a specific geographical area*) has revealed that cross-border connections are vital to their daily lives and social fabric. Re-bordering measures as the pandemic induced border closures in spring 2020 can, therefore, be especially challenging for them.

B-SHAPES has collected minority narratives through (1) [a media analysis](#) of over 1,700 border-related articles from six minority newspapers in Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and Slovakia, focusing on the periods of increased migration in 2015-2016 and the border closures

---

<sup>5</sup> Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, K. (Data curator), Wassenberg, B., Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, K., Bruyas, P., Svensson, S., Moll, Ł., Balogh, P., Böhm, H., Miraka, O., & Boháč, A. (2025). *Country summaries for B-Shapes WP3 interview and focus group analysis*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16359768>

<sup>6</sup> Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, K. (Data curator), Wassenberg, B., Bruyas, P., Svensson, S., Moll, Ł., Balogh, P., Böhm, H., Miraka, O., & Boháč, A. (2025). *Country summaries for B-Shapes WP3 interview and focus group analysis*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16359768>

enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020<sup>7</sup>, and (2) in semi-structured [interviews, zine-making workshops and policy seminars with young people](#) (16-30) belonging to national minorities in borderlands<sup>8</sup>.

Findings include that strong regional and minority identities of minority borderlanders transcend national divisions while affirming specific minority cultural distinctiveness. Furthermore, findings show that for most young people belonging to minorities in European borderlands, borders are experienced as opportunities rather than barriers, as open, largely invisible and easy to cross, thanks to the Schengen regime of open borders. However, borders still matter in other ways: language and cultural differences feel like the “real” borders; family histories and collective memory shape perceptions of borders; crisis events like COVID-19 expose the fragility of border openness. Comparing open internal borders to securitised external EU borders made young people aware of inequalities of the effects of borders on people. Here, Turkish minority youth in Greece experience border crossings with a feeling of uneasiness.

Notably, narratives on borders and Europe in minority newspapers [differ substantially from those of young](#) people from minority communities in European borderlands<sup>9</sup>. Whereas media outlets frame borders and Europe in politicized or securitized terms, young members of minorities are pragmatic and functional, focusing on the opportunities the EU offers for travel, study, work, and everyday convenience. The EU is perceived as a taken-for-granted institution that guarantees free movement, programmes such as Erasmus+ exchange, and funding for regions, as well as minority protection. At the same time, the EU is also considered to be distant and unreliable, and some minority youth are sceptical about the EU’s institutional commitment to minority rights. This divergence underscores that youth voices are often underrepresented in public narratives, despite their importance for the future of European integration.

#### **Key findings on minorities in borderlands**

1. Minority communities are an asset for borderlands. Their cross-border outlook and experience with different cultures should be acknowledged and should inform cross-border cooperation policies, not the least in the heritage industry
2. Minority youth in border regions normalize and internalize European integration through their everyday practices
3. Young minority borderlanders do not display a strong emotional attachment to the EU
4. The inclusion of their voices is key to shaping inclusive visions of Europe’s future.

<sup>7</sup> Mitterhofer, Johanna; Alice Engl; Marcus Nicolson; Martin Klatt; Elżbieta Opilowska; Damian Bączkiewicz; Péter Balogh; and Hynek Böhm. 2026. B-SHAPES WP4 Dataset. The role of minority media in shaping narratives on borders and Europe. Zenodo <https://zenodo.org/records/13935158>

<sup>8</sup> Engl, Alice; Johanna Mitterhofer; Marcus James Nicolson; Martin Klatt; Elżbieta Opilowska; Péter Balogh; Hynek Böhm; Nasrin Gadimova-Akbulut; and Petranka Nedelcheva. 2025. Minority Youth and Their Perceptions of Borders and the EU. <https://zenodo.org/records/17600967>

<sup>9</sup> Engl, Alice; Johanna Mitterhofer; Marcus Nicolson; Martin Klatt; Elżbieta Opilowska; Damian Bączkiewicz; and Péter Balogh. 2024. Comparative Report on Border Discourses in Minority Media. Zenodo. <https://zenodo.org/records/14526872>



## Cultural border heritage

Cultural heritage as it relates to borders was mainstreamed throughout much of B-SHAPES work, and it was the focus of a policy document analysis as well as recorded discussions at several policy workshops and policy seminars. The [cultural and cultural heritage policy document analysis](#) spanned documents produced at municipal, regional, and national levels, as well as policies crafted by cross-border governance institutions.<sup>10</sup> Overall, 64 policies were collected by the project partners, with strategies being the most common type of policy. The documents were compared across the dimensions of objectives, implementation mechanisms and pathways to impact.

Results indicated a general national-level neglect of the special conditions of borderlands and an uneven attention to these conditions by sub-national (local and regional) bodies and agencies. The degree of alignment with EU policies and global conventions is frequently stronger, maybe reflecting EU attention to this area, although there is significant variation with respect to this aspect as well. Global/international attention to culture is important, but explicit references are stronger in northern Europe than in continental Europe, where EU references dominate. Furthermore, minorities with historical ties to specific border regions are significant drivers of cultural initiatives. The predominance of the economic growth perspective on culture is also clear in borderlands. A significant number of policies emphasized the economic benefits of cultural heritage, particularly through tourism development. However, fewer policies prioritized fostering a shared cultural identity or social cohesion in border regions, which are critical for long-term regional integration. Moreover, the focus on tourism does not always translate into actionable strategies or concrete measures.

These findings were further discussed, validated and extended at a policy seminar on cross-border cooperation on cultural heritage taking place in Lazdijai (Lithuania) on April 25, 2025, a policy workshop on culture and cultural policy taking place in Copenhagen (Denmark) on November 3, 2025 and the B-SHAPES Winter School held in Halmstad (Sweden) on January 28-30, 2026. It is evident that the extent to which local communities, cultural institutions, and private actors were involved in policy implementation varied widely across border regions, and that this is due both to whether policies promote bottom-up participation or not, and the extent to which culture is valued (or not) as a field in itself.

---

<sup>10</sup> Svensson, S., Nilson, T., & Miraka, O. (2024). *Cultural and cultural heritage policies in border regions: Internal report based on WP6 desktop work for task 6.1 (Project B-SHAPES)*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19184111>

The results were integrated into an online [Policy Handbook on Inclusive Borderland Heritage Management](#),<sup>11</sup> which offers practical tips as well as best practice examples and a step-by-step guide adaptable to local circumstances.

### Key findings on cultural and cultural heritage policy

1. There is a national-level neglect of the special conditions of borderlands and an uneven attention paid to these conditions by sub-national (local and regional) bodies and agencies.
2. The degree of alignment with EU policies and global conventions vary.
3. Policy documents in continental Europe tend to refer more to European Union frameworks than global frameworks such as UNESCO, whereas policy documents in Northern Europe tend to have more of a global than European outlook.



### Border landscapes as heritage

**Research on border landscapes as heritage** involved [borderwalks with young and senior citizens](#) in the Swedish-Finnish, Swedish-Danish, Danish-German and Greek-Bulgarian borderlands<sup>12</sup> and a document analysis<sup>13</sup>. The borderwalks with young and senior citizens aimed at collecting their narratives on specific sites of border landscape to learn about how places and sites shape borderland identities. These narratives were set in perspective with an analysis of material used by tourism agencies, in schools and in environmental planning in borderlands. Although the border regions analysed differ in their geographic and demographic contexts, the findings reveal similarities in how border landscapes are perceived and valued as heritage.

Key findings include that official national narratives often do not adequately incorporate the importance of the natural landscape for people in the borderlands. Furthermore, official

<sup>11</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies)/European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS). 2026. *B-SHAPES Report 2026: Inclusive Approaches to Heritage Management in Borderlands*. <https://enrs.eu/news/b-shapes-report-2026>

<sup>12</sup> Prokkola, E-K., Jakola, F., Jagetic Andersen, D., Svensson, S., Nilson, T., Miraka, O., Nedelcheva, P., Karaneshev, D. & M. Fentz Haastrup. 2025. *Border landscapes as heritage – Theoretical and practical guidelines for reading the Story Maps*. Zenodo. <https://zenodo.org/records/15729306>

<sup>13</sup> For the Nordic cases, see Prokkola, E. K., Andersen, D. J., Jakola, F., Nilson, T., & Svensson, S. M. H. (2024). Multilayered Borders as a Method for Studying Tourism Destinations: A Case of Northern European Border Regions. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 1–21.

narratives do not always acknowledge the diversity of voices that shape the border landscape today. Official narratives in borderlands are generally tied up with national historiographies that do not emphasize or even recognize the lived cross-border dimensions that are part of people’s lives in the borderlands. This also reduces the innovative potential of the narratives.

The senior group narratives and memorisations were often tied to shared meeting places and past social gatherings. These findings reflect and augment the analysis of documents. The national scale is dominating the narratives of borders and border landscapes as heritage in all border regions. Cross-border perspectives and shared history and nature are present but usually viewed from a state-centric point of view. For instance, many planning documents focus on one side of the border, and the cross-border perspective is often in a rather marginal role. The extent and means of how common regional and cross-border heritage is included in education varies between and within the border regions. Many border region schools lack the inclusion of place-based education in their curricula, leaving the inclusion of the regional and local themes and perspectives to individual teachers’ priorities.

Finally, common natural and cultural heritage forms an asset for local tourism development but there is still untapped potential. Sometimes regional competition hinders motivation for cross-border cooperation. This is visible in tourism and heritage sectors where sites and related business infrastructure located on different sides of the border sometimes compete for visitors. Notably, the role of Europe, Europeanness, and the European union is limited within narrative material. In all material that was examined, Europe is referred mainly in historical context, such as war history and European explorers who have visited the border region. significance and meaning of “Europe” today is manifested through European Union and connected with funding opportunities or specific regulations and directives.

**Key findings on border landscapes**

4. National and state-centric perspectives dominate policy and planning documents, with cross-border histories, education, and cooperation often marginalized or dependent on local initiative.
5. Official narratives in border regions tend to overlook the importance of natural landscapes.
6. Although common natural and cultural heritage offers a strong potential for tourism and cross-border collaboration, competition, limited European framing, and weak integration of a contemporary European dimension into narratives of this common heritage have impeded innovation and cooperation.



## Cross-border governance and border management

The research carried out within B-SHAPES was planned in response to a call for research funding advertised at the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, the application was submitted at the time of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the project ended in times of profound geopolitical uncertainty. The Schengen area of open borders had already been challenged during the increased migration in autumn 2015, resulting in widespread ‘temporary’ border controls. The pandemic and the de-facto border closures of spring 2020 was a further catalyst that profoundly reshaped debates on European borders, exposing the fragility of the vision of a truly borderless Europe.

While cross-border governance and border management were not the primary focus of the empirical research activities, B-SHAPES interactions with stakeholders during a series of policy seminars and workshops held in national locations during autumn 2025 and winter 2026 furthered our understanding of these processes. A continued discourse of securitization in EU member states’ national politics seriously challenges the open border regime of Schengen, while at the same time neglecting the specific needs of border regions and borderlanders living ‘borderless Europe lives’ – i.e. using and profiting from the special opportunities of both sides of the border in their daily lives. This also took place in the context of preparation for the 2028-2034 EU budget cycle, including the programme INTERREG, which is vital to many stakeholders.

B-SHAPES has discussed our results and policy recommendations with more than 150 stakeholders participating in our policy workshops: experts, practitioners from public authorities, cross-border cooperation organisations, universities, cultural institutions, and regional networks. They all have contributed insights that helped refine policy scenarios and informed policy implications for cross-border governance and border management.

### **Key findings on cross-border governance and border management**

1. There is widespread concern in policy communities that more work is needed to lessen the burden of borderlanders in the event of a new pandemic or similar. While the situation is better than in 2019, key stakeholders in multiple regions are not assured that they would be consulted by national governments or compensated for loss of economic activity.
2. There is widespread concern in the policy community that geopolitical insecurity will lead to recentralization, which in combination with economic pressure might reduce the room for bottom-up local and regional priorities to materialize through cross-border cooperation in the next EU funding cycle.



## Key Policy Recommendations

Here we list key policy recommendations derived from the evidence, analysis and results of B-SHAPES, as well as references to where to find detailed recommendations in other B-SHAPES outputs.

### Co-creating Policy with Minorities in Borderlands

- **The EU should ensure greater consistency in (national) minority protection.** The EU's reputation as a guarantor of minority rights is undermined when support is conditional (as in enlargement) but inconsistent afterwards.
  - *For detailed recommendations see the [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on European borderlands and minorities](#)<sup>14</sup>.*
- **Europe needs policies that support improved diversity in media representation,** a stronger role for the EU in border and cross-border policies, and the promotion of European heritage and values. If media works with decision-makers for these goals, we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and democratic European society that respects and supports its minority communities in border regions.
  - *For detailed recommendations see the [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on the role of minority media in shaping narratives on borders and Europe](#)<sup>15</sup>.*

### Co-creating Cultural and Cultural Heritage Policy

- **Actors should work more closely across scales and include specialist expertise of practitioners and heritage professionals.** The preservation and celebration of culture and heritage rely not only on decisions made by national, regional, and municipal political and administrative leaders, but also on the specialist expertise of

---

<sup>14</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies)/Association of European Borderlands (AEBR). 2026. B-SHAPES Policy Brief 10: Borderlands, Borders and Minorities. <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-10-Borderlands-Borders-and-Minorities-4.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies) / Association of European Borderlands (AEBR). 2026. B-SHAPES Policy Brief 2: Minority Media. <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-2-Minority-Media-2.pdf>.

practitioners and heritage professionals — archaeologists, heritage conservation specialists, historians, ecologists, architects, biologists, reenactors, cooks, musicians, and artists. Investing in partnerships creates significant value — not only between countries, but also among regional and local stakeholders across borders. Researchers, politicians, artists, craftspeople, activists, citizens, and local communities all play an essential role in building and sustaining these cross-border collaborations.

- *For detailed recommendations see the [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on cultural and cultural heritage policies affecting borderlands](#)<sup>16</sup>.*
- Actors involved in cultural heritage in border regions—such as practitioners, policymakers, and heritage managers—should adopt **structured approaches that strengthen cross-border communication and cooperation in heritage conservation and management**. They should provide consistent, long-term border heritage governance by creating and implementing cross-border heritage management plans, assigning responsible actors, and ensuring equal engagement in their execution on both sides of the border. However, rather than relying on one fixed solution, stakeholders are encouraged to use flexible frameworks that can be adapted to the specific context of each borderland.
  - *For detailed recommendations see:*
    - [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on Cross-border Cooperation for Border Heritage Management](#)<sup>17</sup>.
    - [B-SHAPES Report: Inclusive Approaches to Heritage Management in Borderlands](#)<sup>18</sup>

See the Value of Border Landscapes

- **Acknowledge cross-border dimensions of border landscape as heritage at regional and local scales.** Do this by supporting place-based landscape narratives that allow the expression of intersectional identities in border regions as assets for development and inclusion. Include border landscapes as heritage in national curricula at different educational levels and provide resources and opportunities for local schools in border regions to develop place-based teaching and excursions, such as visits to nature reserves, museums, and historical sites. Promote cross-border cooperation and initiatives among schools as well as other local and regional organizations.

---

<sup>16</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies)/ Association of European Borderlands. AEBR. 2025. B-SHAPES Policy Brief 4: Cultural Heritage. <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-4-Cultural-Heritage-2.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies) / Kreatus. 2023. B-SHAPES Policy Brief 8: Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) for Border Heritage Management. <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-8-CBC-for-Border-Heritage-Mngmt.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies)/European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS). 2026. "B-SHAPES Report 2026: Inclusive Approaches to Heritage Management in Borderlands." <https://enrs.eu/news/b-shapes-report-2026>.

- For detailed policy recommendations, see the [Policy Brief on Recognition of border landscapes as shared heritage](#)<sup>19</sup>.
- Avoid a **culture-nature divide in heritage perspective**. Such a division is artificial in many ways. This is especially visible in many borderlands, characterized by waterways, mountains or other natural features that are intrinsically linked to human-made culture. In the light of the climate crisis, it is a shared responsibility and ethical imperative to take care of natural heritage sites that spread and connect people across administrative divisions. The importance of these landscapes also often lies in cultural memories that help build values relating to natural, built, archaeological, artistic, and scientific heritage in border regions. Shared understanding of those values is key for developing successful, joint, and sustainable initiatives.
  - For detailed policy recommendations, see the [Policy Brief on border landscapes as people's heritage](#)<sup>20</sup>.

### Be Inclusive in Cross-border Governance and Border Management

- Establish and develop **long-term cross-border relations at all levels of staffing across institutions**, as well as additional funding for the continued existence of entities involved in cross-border cooperation (e.g. Euroregions, EGTCs, LAGs etc.), which can be based on capitalising on the outcomes of cross-border cultural projects and which can be resistant to changes in cooperating entities e.g. related to the election scores.
  - For detailed policy recommendations see
    - [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on Eastern Borderlands, Eastern Borderlands in Transformative Times: Policy Explorations](#)<sup>21</sup>
    - Chapter 3 (Borderland Policy Development) in the B-SHAPES edited volume [Seeing from the Border: Research and Policy Insights on European Borderlands](#)<sup>22</sup>
- **Require bilateral coordination and local consultations before border control impositions**. There should be a requirement to coordinate border control impositions with the neighbouring state's government on an interjurisdictional basis, which takes into account the particular implications for border regions, their population, and other actors within the civil and economic fabric of the region. Relevant contact persons at

<sup>19</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies)/ Association of European Borderlands (AEBR). 2026. *B-SHAPES Policy Brief 3: Shared Border Landscapes*. [https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-3-Shared-Border-Landscapes\\_Final-2.pdf](https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-3-Shared-Border-Landscapes_Final-2.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies), B-SHAPES *Policy Brief 11: Border Landscapes as People's Heritage*. 2023. [https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-11\\_Border-landscapes-as-peoples-heritage\\_WP5.pdf](https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-11_Border-landscapes-as-peoples-heritage_WP5.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies). 2026. *B-SHAPES Policy Brief 7: East Borders in Transformative Times — Polycentric Explorations*. [https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-7\\_East-Borders-in-Transf-Times-Poly-Explorations-2.pdf](https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-7_East-Borders-in-Transf-Times-Poly-Explorations-2.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Svensson, Sara, Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, and Martin Guillermo-Ramirez, eds. 2026. *Seeing Europe from the Border: Research and Policy Insights on European Borderlands*. Halmstad: Halmstad University Press. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:2034690/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

all levels of government should be named. In addition, to minimise the impact on cross-border students, families, and commuters, border regional stakeholders with local knowledge, such as EGTCs or Euroregions, should be consulted in designing and implementing rules governing border closures and checks. Clear rules on who is responsible for implementing policy should be established, with clear guidelines if private companies are to be involved in implementation.

- For detailed policy recommendations see the [B-SHAPES Policy Brief on the Effects of COVID-19 Border Closures on Commuters, Families, and Students](#)<sup>23</sup>.



The policy work that has been conducted within B-SHAPES builds on the empirical research conducted within B-SHAPES but also reflects the diversity in interests and expertise of the consortium members and the input received during various events. For instance, for special focus policy work on geopolitical challenging borders, see recommendations of the B-SHAPES Policy Brief on Greece-Bulgaria-Türkiye<sup>24</sup> and the [Policy Brief on Borderlands in Transformative Times](#).<sup>25</sup> Finally, B-SHAPES also has developed a [set of recommendations for research policy](#),<sup>26</sup> recommending the EU and other research funders that research policy move beyond a narrow focus on predefined social cleavages. Funders should allow applicants to justify which identities and distinctions are locally salient, support narrative and participatory methods, and recognise cross- border contexts as sites of inquiry in their own right rather than merely binational settings.

---

<sup>23</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies). 2023. B-SHAPES Policy Brief 1: Border Closures. <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-1-Border-Closures-2.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> B-SHAPES/AEBR. B-SHAPES Policy Brief #12: Cooperation and inclusion on troubled borders: Greece-Bulgaria-Türkiye. <https://www.aebr.eu/b-shapes-policy-brief-12-coop-and-incl-troubled-borders/>

<sup>25</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies), B-SHAPES Policy Brief 6: Borders in Transformative Times — Polycentric Explorations (2025), [https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-6\\_Borders-in-Transf-Times-Poly-Explorations.pdf](https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-6_Borders-in-Transf-Times-Poly-Explorations.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> B-SHAPES (Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies), B-SHAPES Policy Brief 9: Leaving No One Behind in Research and Policy (2026), <https://www.aebr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/B-Shapes-Policy-Brief-9-Leaving-No-One-Behind-in-Research-Policy-2.pdf>



## B-SHAPES Policy References

A dynamic collection of B-Shapes policy outputs can be found on website of the [Association of European Border Regions](#). They can also be found on the [B-SHAPES project website](#) at South Denmark University, which serves as the project archival site.

- Online Policy Handbook: [Inclusive Approaches to Heritage Management in Borderlands](#)
- Online Policy Edited Volume: [Seeing Europe from the Border: Research and Policy Insights on European Borderlands](#)
- Policy Brief #1: [COVID-19 border closures effects on commuters, families and students](#)
- Policy Brief #2: [Role of minority media in shaping narratives on borders and Europe](#)
- Policy Brief #3: [Recognition of border landscapes as a shared heritage](#)
- Policy Brief #4: [Cultural and cultural heritage policies affecting borderlands](#)
- Policy Brief #5: [Borders, Border Regions and Europe – Interim Policy Recommendations](#)
- Policy Brief #6: [Borderlands in transformative times: policy explorations](#)
- Policy Brief #7: [Eastern Borderlands in Transformative Times – Policy Explorations](#)
- Policy Brief #8: [Cross-border Cooperation for Border Heritage Management](#)
- Policy Brief #9: [Leaving No One Behind in Research Policy](#)
- Policy Brief #10: [European Borderlands, Borders and Minorities](#)
- Policy Brief #11: [Border landscapes as people’s heritage](#)
- Policy Brief #12: [Cooperation and inclusion on troubled borders: Greece-Bulgaria-Türkiye](#)



**Project Information:**

- **Project Beneficiaries:** University of Southern Denmark (SDU), Denmark; Brunel University of London, United Kingdom; European Academy Bozen (Eurac Research), Italy; Oulu University, Finland; Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, Hungary; Technical University of Liberec, Czechia; University of Wrocław, Poland; Université de Strasbourg, France; the National Museum of History, Bulgaria; the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), Germany; the Foundation Network of European Remembrance and Solidarity, Poland; Kreatus, Poland; Lungomare Art Collective, Italy; and Hogskolan Halmstad, Sweden
- **Duration:** April 2023 – March 2026 (36 months).
- **Internet presence:**
  - Website: <https://www.sdu.dk/en/forskning/forskningsenheder/samf/b-shapes>
  - LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/b-shapes-borders-shape-235a3a302/>
  - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/people/B-Shapes/100092507586694/>
  - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/bshapes2023/?igsh=dnhq3g0eGV1YWhx>



A project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101095186, and by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee under grant number 10065228."