

Report of Conference on the Future of Europe Talk

organised by CoR Members

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Living Europe in a border community - experiences, perspectives and wishes of the citizens



Organised by:	Mützenich, district of the city Monschau (Germany 52156)
Partners:	Mützenich; Parliament of the German-speaking Community of Belgium; Minister for Federal and European affairs and international affairs of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia; StädteRegion Aachen; Inda-Gymnasium Aachen
Date and time of the event:	24 May 2022, 7-9 p.m
Event type:	Face-to-face event
Location(s) of event	Schützenhaus, Ringstraße 8, 52156 Monschau – Mützenich (NRW, Germany)
Total number of participants:	50
Type of participants:	Residents from the Monschau area, German-speaking neighbours from East Belgium ; high school students
Name(s) of representatives from other EU institutions	Patrick Lobis, Deputy of Head of the European Commission in Germany, acting Head of the Regional Representation in Bonn
Conference on the Future of Europe theme(s) covered during the event:	Health A stronger economy, social justice and jobs European democracy

<p>Other ideas:</p>	<p>On the one hand, life at and with the border has become commonplace. Today people cross it and take advantage of the advantages on the other side. But can we also say that we have become more European as a result? Or are we even taking a step backwards when you look at the events during the Corona crisis and the war in Ukraine? What do people wish for in this Mützenich border community which has seen the development of Europe on a daily basis and has experienced the dismantling of hard borders and the growing together of Europe - or is more Europe and the improvement of cross-border activities not so desirable after all?</p>
<p>Recommendations/conclusions from the debate:</p>	<p>1) Multilingualism should already be compulsory in school education (pre-school and school), especially in Germany, with French as the first foreign language alongside English. A central language should be learned alongside the mother tongue. Pupil exchanges should be made easier by mutual visits of pupils in neighboring schools on both sides of the border. Joint school events should also be held. Qualifications in education and training should be systematically recognized on both sides of the border.</p> <p>2) A cross-border recruitment of workers / trainees in cooperation with public authorities must be made possible. Simplification of legal matters is necessary when it comes to awarding contracts to companies on the other side. Abolition of different tax rates on both sides of the border to enable approximately the same product prices.</p> <p>3) More facilitations should be created for cross-border fire brigade operations, health care, the police and business as well as for cross-border commuters (employees, employers), and for people who choose to live on the other side of the border / Germany permanently).</p> <p>4) Harmonization of the mobile phone network is necessary by closing the coverage gaps in border areas.</p> <p>5) Clubs (e.g. sports) should work together much more closely across borders. The media on both sides of the border should report much more about sporting and cultural events on the other side in order to arouse the public's interest in the "other" side.</p>
<p>Other relevant messages expressed by citizens or speakers during the event:</p>	<p>The problems of people in the border regions of Europe -due to cross-border issues- are to be taken seriously as they face their neighbours on the other side of the border daily and do not turn their backs to them. The contact to the neighbours on the other side of the border is to be maintained and encouraged so as to help that one's own country does not to close itself up to its neighbouring countries. The thought of Europe is particularly lively in the border regions– the permeability of the border is never questioned there -in these areas there is always enough to be done to tear down further obstacles.</p> <p>In Mützenich it becomes clear that the border is an enriching opportunity for a "Europe united in variety". Here one can see that that there is no challenge which can be mastered by one Country alone. One must abandon the idea that Europe is somewhere in the abstract. It is important that people in the villages and towns feel themselves as Europeans - and people in border areas show how one can achieve that.</p>
<p>Hyperlinks to web / press / social media coverage:</p>	<p>https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/M%C3%BCtzenich-Monschau.aspx https://www.aachener-nachrichten.de/lokales/eifel/monschau/europa-leben-in-einer-Grenzgemeinde_aid-70410007 https://www.wochenspiegellive.de/monschau/artikel/europa-mal-ein-riese-und-mal-ein-zwerg https://www.bordercho.net/74470/artikel/2022-05-27/es-are-still-many-construction-sites-in-all-day-of-the-german-belgian-border</p>

