

From reactive crisis management to resilient programmes beyond 2027

EU Neighbours in action: Knowledge across borders | 19-20 May 2026

Overview

The session aimed at enhancing the knowledge of participants on the concept of resilience and what it means for cooperation, particularly at EU external borders. It equally aimed at supporting programmes to deliver a more resilient post-27, including the overall EU resilience related objectives of competitiveness, strategic autonomy, green transition, digital sovereignty and social inclusion.

Methodology

The session started with an overall introduction of what is resilience, its relevance for cooperation, best practices and what it means more specifically for programmes and beneficiaries with a focus on EU external border areas.

Following-up from the initial presentation, participants had the opportunity to jointly answer the question: “Can you be prepared for the unexpected?”. After the debate, participants reported back on their views and experiences and were presented with concrete options to be prepared for the unexpected.

During the last part of the session participants had the opportunity to answer three questions related to resilience and post-27 using a World Cafe methodology. Questions were the following:

1. How can cooperation support resilience at external borders?
2. How can cooperation support climate resilience?
3. What other ways (not related to environment or external borders) could cooperation help make Europe more resilient?

The session ended with a reporting back from each question and a wrap-up with agreed actions and next steps.

Key discussion points

Discussion points reflected the division of the session into the question about how to be prepared for the unexpected and the World Cafe ideas generation focusing on post-27.

Main discussions related to “How to be prepared for the unexpected”?

- Participants showcased examples from their programme areas.
- Participants reflected on what are the best ways to ensure preparedness.
- Interact shared solutions to be as prepared as possible to the unexpected. They included:
 1. Proactive preparedness and anticipation, rather than waiting for crisis to happen, actively scan and develop scenario plans
 2. Bounce forward, not back: use disruptions as catalysts for reforms.

3. Be robust and adaptable.
4. new forms of coordination and decision making, including long-term commitment at all levels of government.

Main discussions related to building a resilient post-27

Participants exchanged ideas and proposed solutions to ensure cooperation programmes ensure resilience particularly in what regards climate change, external borders, and other elements such as energy, migration, geopolitics, governance, knowledge sharing, and capitalization. Main ideas below:

1. Bottom-up approach in building strategies.
2. Increased multi-level governance.
3. Simplify procedures to be ready for periods of crisis.
4. Shared responsibilities.
5. Capacity building.
6. Involve local communities.
7. Support integrated early warning systems.
8. Develop joint emergency protocols.
9. Ensure migration and security are priorities.
10. Develop joint scenarios to be ready for the unexpected.

Full list of suggestions split by questions may be found at Annex 1.

Main takeaways

Main takeaways from the session were:

- Europe and more particularly external border areas are facing a period of multiple crisis and building resilience is key.
- There are available tools to ensure programmes and beneficiaries prepare for the unexpected and become more resilient.
- Multi-level governance is a key element to achieve resilience.
- Programmes should continue to exchange and generate ideas with the facilitation of Interact as post-27 is discussed.

Follow-up actions / next steps

Agreed next steps were:

- Interact to ensure additional opportunities for programmes to discuss the topic of resilience are created.
- Interact to design and publish a Factsheet on Resilience using the results from the session as an inspiration.
- Programmes to take onboard ideas generated at the session.

Session team

Session Lead: Guilherme Johnston

Contributors: Phil Heaton, Valeria Cibrario, Ilze Ciganska

Report prepared by

Guilherme Johnston, Phil Heaton, Ilze Ciganska, Valeria Cibrario

Annex 1: How to ensure cooperation support a resilient post-27?

How can cooperation support resilience at external borders?

- Address migration as a particularly challenging topic
- Strengthen security cooperation
- Develop joint emergency protocols
- Improve smart border infrastructure
- Ensure high-level ownership
- Strengthen multi-level governance
- Improve exchange of information
- Support digitalisation
- Promote shared responsibility
- Build institutional and local capacity
- Use existing protocols and other measures more effectively
- Support small towns through access to services from larger centres, especially fire, emergency and health services
- Address demographic challenges, including social services and elderly care
- Include the human aspect of resilience
- Tackle disinformation and strengthen the feeling of integration and solidarity
- Use dissemination activities to increase local communities' knowledge of resilience
- Reduce paper logs where possible

How can cooperation support climate resilience?

- Scenario-building
- Rescue team cooperation
- Joint response teams, tools and procedures
- Air pollution measures
- Management practices, including forest industry
- Regulatory requirements and incentives
- Energy efficiency in construction and energy autonomy
- Nature-based solutions
- Border cooperation and joint planning, using a common language
- Promote more renewable energy use in the private sector
- Increase protection of rivers and natural resources, for example by raising awareness and creating more green areas in cities
- Use private sector incentives, restrictions or additional taxes

What other ways can cooperation make Europe more resilient?

- Healthcare cooperation and closer options for services
- Learning from our ancestors, including simpler solutions where they may be the smarter ones
- Institutional capacity building
- Youth and skills retention or return
- Energy cooperation and economic cooperation
- Participation of people in building strategies
- Bottom-up approaches in building strategies
- Sharing acquired knowledge and experience from previous crises
- Informing communities on simplified procedures and what to do in crisis situations
- Being ready and prepared to react when people are in need