

Bakgrund/Frågeställning

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to limelight the special role of cross-border regions (CBRs) in the European Union (EU). CBRs connect various regions at state borders and foster intensive social and economic relationships which are vital for the livelihoods of millions of people. However, national crisis response measures including border closures ('covidfencing') have caused serious disruptions to the CBRs' functioning, revealing a paradox in EU integration whereby the effective functioning of CBRs, which embody the successes of a borderless area is severely impaired in crises by a lack of explicit recognition in EU law.

The EU Treaties provide to EU citizens the freedom to move and reside, work, and offer and receive services within the Union; furthermore, cross-border transfers have been facilitated on EU level by Schengen cooperation, INTERREG funding and various other initiatives. Nevertheless, national governments remain the main actors in international economic cooperation. Effective cross-border strategies are often impeded, in addition to physical state borders, by infrastructure, market imperfections, divergences in culture, social norms and values as well as a myriad of national laws, regulations and administrative practices, such as, for example, the national tax and contribution systems. These obstacles have been greatly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, undermining previous efforts to facilitate interaction within CBRs.

The envisaged project provides a unique multi-disciplinary study combining law and regional economic geography perspectives. The overarching objective of the project is to unravel the constitutional significance of CBRs in the European integration project using interdisciplinary perspectives and a mixed methodology, and to thereby unveil the basic premises of the EU's aim of creating an "ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" (Preamble, Treaty on European Union).

The project, first, questions the particular role of CBRs in EU integration and whether their status in the EU's legal framework corresponds to their economic and societal relevance. Second, the study seeks to elucidate the effects of the predominantly national crisis measures during the COVID-19 pandemic on CBRs, and assess whether regional, national and EU-level coordination efforts have been adequate to ensure their proper functioning. Third, the study endeavours to clarify whether the role of CBRs warrants an enhanced status under EU law. In particular, the project aims to include consideration of legal conditions in regional studies research and integrate the results of the latter into normative analysis of the EU legal order.

Metod och Resultat

Konklusion