

“EU internal border regions cover 40% of EU territory and are home to almost 2 million cross-border commuters. According to the latest report on intra-EU labour mobility, more than 1.3 million people in the EU lived in one country and worked in another.” (EURES, 2021)

Impressions from the Castle Talks

Strasbourg, 13-15 November 2023

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Thinking decades back, traveling from one country to another in the European Union was not



a trouble-free act. The Schengen Agreement gave us the comfort and freedom that we enjoy nowadays. Our daily life and reality are characterized by the effortless crossing of borders between countries free from any border

controls or prolonged waiting times, which can be considered as a significant achievement.

Crossing borders is a daily act in the lives of many EU citizens, which can be seen in the high rate of daily border commuters. But what happens when a crisis, just like the Covid-19 pandemic or the persistent climate crisis, encounters the reality of cross-border regions? How does the cooperation look, and what regulations exist? What can border regions extract out of these special situations for the common future? Talking about borders and border regions

was the theme that brought together approximately 50 people in Strasbourg. Professors, PhD



candidates, and students from different countries (e.g. United States, France, Poland, Italy, and Germany) met for three days to share their knowledge and to discuss different aspects of the

PhD candidate Anna Shostak (r.) presents results of her master thesis.

diverse research field. The Castle Talks, held at the Château de Pourtalès from 13th to the 15th of November, centered around the main theme of “Narratives of Borders in Europe”, was divided into two significant themes. The first theme was “Borderlands as zones of common law”, and the second was “Resilience of border regions in times of crisis”. Three days were filled up with presentations, discussions, and interesting research



Results of our border experiences.

cases. Traditionally for the Castle Talks, the European Parliament Member Harald Liebrecht gave a speech; however new aspects were integrated in the program. This year, the PhD



Research Group from the Institute of Sociology Wrocław with Prof. Opiłowska during discussion.

Roundtable was realized for the first time and gave the participants the possibility to present and discuss their research projects. The Centre for Regional and Borderlands Studies at the Institute of Sociology,

University of Wrocław was represented by dr hab. Elżbieta Opiłowska, Prof. UWr and seven students, Anieli Partyga, Aleksandra Furtak, Gabriela Grela, Aleksandra Koźlarska, Wiktor Wilczyński, PhD candidate Anna Shostak and trainee Ayscha Deutschland. A special event that was organized on the first day, was the border walk. It gave the participants the chance to consciously experience the act of border crossing with the creative task of describing and drawing reflections on maps. At the end of the border walk, we found ourselves at the Hochschule Kehl, which was the meeting point after crossing the border from France to Germany, with a lot of different personal impressions and the shaping of our own map. The second day highlighted the theme of resilience and was filled with many exciting research projects from different thematic areas. The group of students from the Institute of Sociology,

University of Wrocław shared their great presentation about the Odra River pollution and the narratives on the event from the perspective of the disposition of common goods and the self-organization of local people.

On the last day of the Castle Talks, our research colleagues from the University of Opole



Research colleagues from University of Opole, Doctor Wojciech Opióła, Professor Elżbieta Opiłowska (r.).

presented interesting results about the German minority in the Upper Silesia.

Also, we got an insight into the research projects of Professor Elżbieta Opiłowska and Doctor Wojciech

Opióła. In summary, the Castle Talks gave us the

chance to gain more knowledge about borders and their meanings in politics, share research with other people in meaningful conversations, and create memories of great evenings together. We also tried the original Tarte flambée!