

Small States Regional Cooperation

Luxembourg

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Regional Cooperation - Introduction

- Overview: In what areas does your country engage in regional cooperation:
 - Economic: EU, Grande-Région, Benelux
 - Military: Benelux, NATO
 - Police and practical cross-border issues: Benelux and Grande-Région
- What are the main reasons that motivated your country's decision to enter into regional cooperation?
 - Foreign imposed decisions (e.g. Prussian customs union, 19th century)
 - Later economic interdependency, especially with the rise of the steel industry, that required export markets and relied on imported coal (Luxembourg had none).
- Historic overview: when did your country start/begin to participate in the key forms of regional cooperation?
 - Cooperation dates back to at least the 19th century.

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Example 1: The Benelux Union: History

- Following WW1 and WW2, the three countries decided to cooperate more closely.
- The Benelux was founded on 5 September 1944 with an agreement on customs union, which the governments signed while they were still in exile in London.
- The agreement took effect on 1.1.1948.
- More agreements followed, and the Benelux Economic Union was established on 3 February 1958.
- In terms of importance, it was soon eclipsed by wider European integration within the Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community (which created a larger customs union)
- The Benelux then focused on wider political cooperation and more pragmatic cross-border problems.
- The cooperation was renewed on 17 June 2008 and officially named "The Benelux Union"



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BENELUX: Institutions

- Committee of Ministers: the highest decision-making body, sets the priorities
- Benelux Council: prepares the files for the ministers
- Benelux Secretariat-General: initiates cooperation and supports it
- Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (the “Benelux Parliament”): 49 MPs (7 from Luxembourg). They inform domestic actors about Benelux affairs.
- Benelux Court of Justice: facilitates uniformity in the interpretation and application of Benelux legislation (e.g. intellectual property, penalty payment, protection of birds). Its decision-making powers on the Benelux common legal provisions are binding.
- The presidency of the Benelux is held in turn by the three countries for a period of one year. The most recent Luxembourg presidency was in 2019.
- Today, the Benelux Union focuses mainly on the internal market (e.g. Luxembourgish shops are often supplied via Belgian retailers), security (e.g. police/military cooperation) and society (e.g. sports, recognition of degrees and diplomas), as well as sustainable and digital cooperation (e.g. environmental initiatives).

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BENELUX: Policies (1)

- Automatic recognition of degrees and diplomas
 - This is unique in the EU
 - In 2015 agreed to automatically recognize each other's bachelor's and master's diplomas.
 - In 2018 this was extended to PhDs and graduate degrees from adult educational institutions.
 - Thanks to this agreement, citizens moving between these countries no longer need to get their qualifications officially recognized.

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BENELUX: Policies (2)

The Treaty on Police Cooperation (2018 – revises and expands 2004 Treaty)

- Improves the exchange of information, allows for more cross-border action and facilitates police investigations in the neighboring country.
 - Allows direct access to each other's police databases in certain cases, such as during joint operations and in common police stations.
 - ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) camera data can be exchanged between the Benelux countries in accordance with national law.
 - Better exchange of information on organized crime
 - Facilitates cross-border pursuit and allows a police officer to carry out cross-border investigations under certain conditions.
 - Police liaison officers, joint patrols and checks.
 - Cross-border assistance at major events. More possibilities for cross-border escort and surveillance missions and for operating on international trains.
 - In a crisis or for a high-risk event (e.g. high-level summit), special police units will be able to act across borders.
- Requires parliamentary ratification and implementing agreements

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Second Example: the Greater Region of Luxembourg (Grande-Région)

- Around 11mio people
- High number of daily commuters: highest number and density in the EU!
- Common economic due to the decline in the industrial and coal mining areas of the four countries

Das ist die Großregion - Voilà la Grande Région - Dat ass d'Grossregioun



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Grande-Région: Institutions

- Summit of the Greater Region: adopts the strategic guidelines.
 - Composed of the executives of the Greater Region's member territories: The Prime Minister of Luxembourg, the Minister Presidents of the German and Belgian regions involved, the Prefect of the Grand-Est and the presidents of the Conseils régionaux of the French departments.
 - The presidency is held in turn by each region for 24 months.
- The Committee of the Personal Representatives of Summit Executives manages the implementation of the Summit's political agenda.
- The Summit Secretariat coordinates and supports the work of the Summit and its working groups.
- 2 consultative bodies:
 - the Interregional Parliamentary Council: composed of representatives of the parliamentary assemblies of the Greater Region's members. Six commissions work on a broad range of topics and draft recommendations.
 - The Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region represents the interests and needs of employees and employers.

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Grande-Région: Policies

- The framework for projects is provided by EU funding:
 - cross-border program Interreg VA (2014-2020)
 - European Regional Development Fund
- Main goal is practical cooperation and to improve the daily life of citizens (e.g. by allowing them to get healthcare in another member territory without extra insurance or costs).
- Major data collection and territorial observation efforts through the Greater Region's Geographical Information System, the Interregional Labour Market Observatory and the network of the Statistical Offices of the Greater Region. Result e.g. Geoportail.

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Conclusion on regional cooperation (1)

- Is regional cooperation perceived as important by your country? Which types of regional cooperation are perceived to be important?
 - Economic cooperation, as Luxembourg is highly dependent on imports and export markets and on the free movement of labour
 - Military cooperation, as the country depends on larger neighbours for security and as it allows it to play a somewhat larger role in foreign affairs.
- What are/were the main benefits of regional cooperation for your country?
 - It allowed Luxembourg to get the specialized employees it needs for its high-skilled economy and to have good access to products and markets.
- Outlook: How is regional cooperation likely to evolve in the future?
 - Both the government and the population are firmly committed to regional cooperation.
 - Regional cooperation on economic and political matters in the EU is likely to deepen, especially in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, that has revived proposals like the issuing of Eurobonds. On a pragmatic level, the Benelux Union tries to solve more and more pragmatic challenges, from police cooperation to the provision of emergency services.

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Conclusion on regional cooperation (2)

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