

VIDEO MESSAGE FOR COMMISSIONER CRETU
CONFERENCE ON
"THE FUTURE OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION"

- Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, good morning!
- I would have very much liked to be with you today in Brussels, for this Joint Conference on "the Future of Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe".
- Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to attend the Conference but I am pleased to have the opportunity to address you this message.
- The Association of European Border Regions, the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe are essential partners for the European Commission in the delivery of cohesion policy. It is people like you, on the ground, who make this policy, live every day, in particular when it comes to cross-border cooperation.
- This year, we celebrate 25 [twenty-five] years of INTERREG. The experience so far shows that the intuition of our forefathers, their enthusiastic choice for cross-border cooperation, was absolutely right.
- Cross-border cooperation is the driving force of the European integration process. As you rightly put it, it's the cornerstone and cement of the European House as one European in three live in border areas.
- Everything that INTERREG has achieved so far, it has had a visible impact for many people.

- And, ladies and gentlemen, INTERREG has achieved so much over these last 25 [twenty-five] years.
 - Cooperation programmes have worked towards establishing a solid layer of trust, building or rebuilding bridges, and facilitating reconciliation among people living on the border. This is of foremost importance for the Europe we all aspire to: a solidary Europe;
 - INTERREG has enhanced connectivity by connecting railways, roads or ICT [AI-SI-TI] infrastructure across the borders;
 - It has contributed to fostering a healthy environment, regardless of the side of the border in which we are;
 - It has identified and implemented cross-border risk prevention solutions in areas like floods or forest fires;
 - **Last, but not least**, INTERREG is a driver for growth and jobs in border areas.

Dear friends, all these achievements are in fact YOUR achievements, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for it.

- But the challenges of today are so different to those we were facing just a few years ago,
- Ladies and gentlemen, in changing times cross-border cooperation has always managed to reinvent itself to be the front runner in tackling new challenges, so I am confident it will continue to do that in the future.

- The Cross-Border Review, on which the Director General for DG REGIO, Walter Deffaa, will say a few words later today, or the strengthening of the macro-regional approach to territorial cooperation – these are the kind of responses we need in the current situation.
- But above all, what we absolutely need is that you continue devoting your knowledge, your experience and your energies to building a borderless Union. In reaching this people are our major asset, and in them we put our strongest hope for a better, common future.
- Please be assured that the European Commission will always stand by you in this endeavour.
- Meanwhile, I wish you every success in today's conference.
- Thank you!