

Call for Papers

How Can Europe Border Russia? The Grassroots Perspective

Dates: June 25–26

Location: School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute (EUI),
Florence

Organized by: School of Transnational Governance (EUI); Caucasus Institute for Peace,
Democracy and Development; LUISS Guido Carli University.

Conference Overview

This interdisciplinary conference departs from conventional security-centered debates. Drawing on historical experiences of border design in Eastern Europe, it assumes that “just” borders are rarely – if ever – achievable, but that fairer and more cooperative arrangements can emerge through inclusive and locally informed processes of border making.

The conference revisits a question left unresolved since the end of the Cold War, which forms the overarching theme of the conference:

How can the European Union border Russia? What form and type of border would be fairer and more sustainable, and how can the negative consequences of drawing borders be mitigated for the people living on the borderlands?

We approach this question from a grassroots perspective, focusing on the lived experiences of borderland communities and their adaptation to shifting political, economic, and cultural boundaries. The conference draws inspiration from initiatives such as President Wilson’s Inquiry Commission and the International Commission on the Balkans. When a problem is too large for a single solution, disaggregating it into local, human-scale components may be a precondition for durable settlements and the reduction of injustice.

The conference does not advocate any specific border configuration, nor does it seek to resolve grand geopolitical questions. Instead, it aims to foreground often-neglected dimensions of border design and management and to provide space for alternative and visionary perspectives rooted in local realities.

Lines of Inquiry

The conference addresses the overarching question through the following themes:

- How can majorities and minorities coexist in border regions where political orders have been repeatedly imposed, disrupted, or superimposed?
- What institutional arrangements—regarding citizenship, property, language, economic exchange, religious life, or family reunification—have worked, failed, or remain untested?
- What do historical demarcation processes and “phantom borders” reveal about the long-term consequences of border-making for local communities and how can we imagine cross border solutions?
- What kind of economic integration or cooperation can be imagined succeeding to disintegration and destruction to support the revival of borderlands and a sustainable border between Russia and the EU?
- How can localized, ground-level knowledge be incorporated into macro-level peace negotiations that often overlook it?

We especially welcome contributions grounded in fieldwork and scholars who combine disciplinary rigor with direct knowledge of contested or border regions.

Invited contributions

We invite contributions from scholars and policy experts across disciplines, including anthropology, history, political science, sociology, geography, economics, international law, and cultural studies—engaging with one or more of the conference questions. A limited number of discussion policy papers will be commissioned and offered to guide discussion.

Deadlines and Logistics

Please submit an abstract (maximum 600 words) by **March 24** to [bordersconference@luiss.it]. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by **April 10**.

Participation costs will be fully covered for scholars originating from the Eastern Partnership Countries by the GMFUS supported by the European Union. Scholars based in European Union Member States and the United States are warmly encouraged to apply and attend. The

EUI will provide invitation letters to all accepted participants who require them for visa applications or external funding purposes.

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