

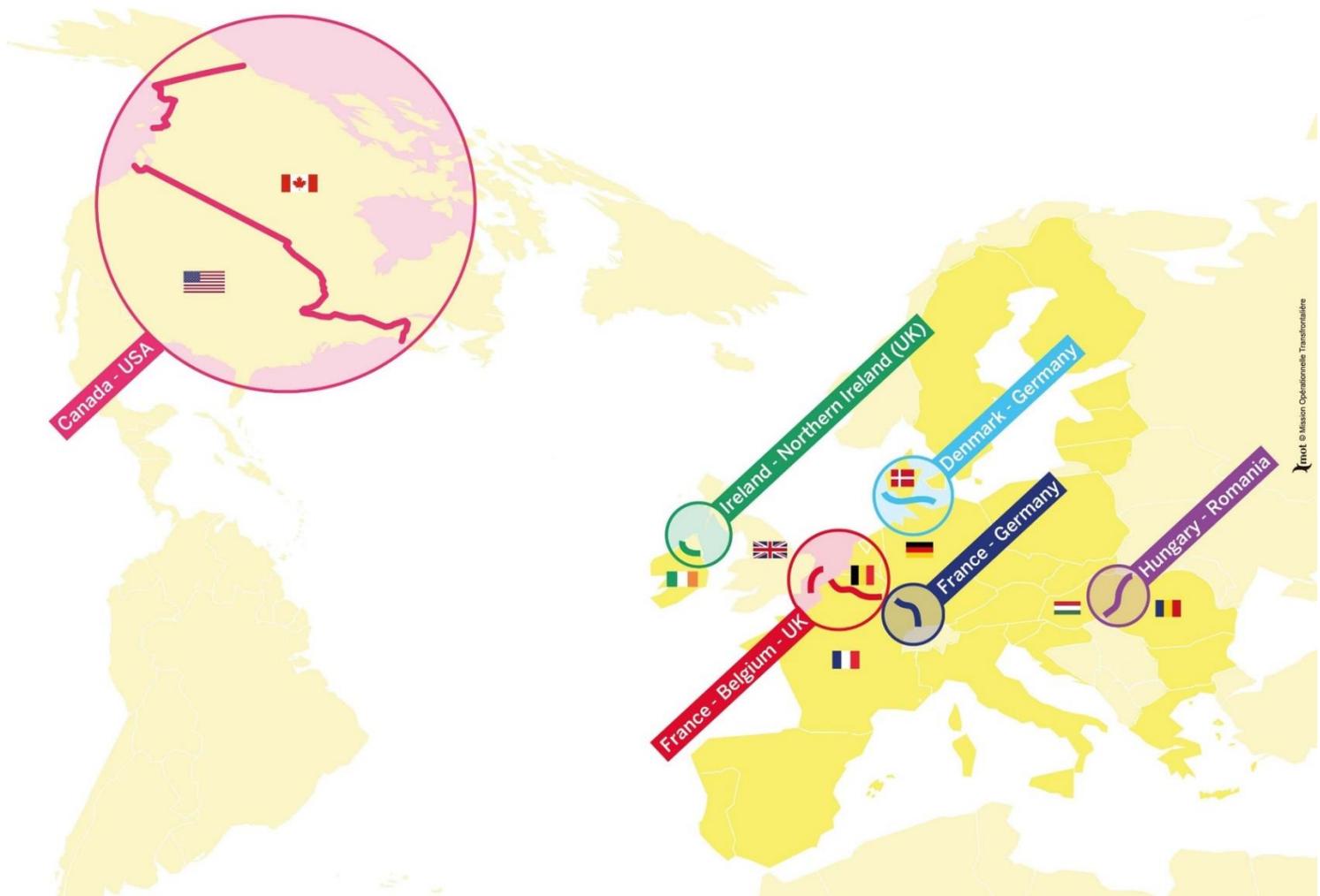


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Toolkit on Models of Border Management and Perception in the EU

5 Case Studies



This toolkit was developed within the FRONTEM network and coordinated by the Euro-Institut, together with the University of Strasbourg – Sciences Po. It was kindly co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

Date of publication: 31 August 2023



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



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Foreword

The Jean Monnet Network “Frontières en mouvement: quels modèles pour l’UE (FRONTEM)?”¹ was supported by the European Union’s Erasmus+ program for the period between 2019-2023.

Linking two disciplinary fields that have until now been little connected – Border Studies and European Studies – the network exchanged knowledge and practices on five different models of EU border management and perception: the border between France and Germany, the border between France and Belgium, the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, the border between Romania and Hungary and the border between Denmark and Germany. A comparative analysis was also conducted with regard to the Canada/US border in order to assess whether the European “models” can be transposed to other regions in the world.

The key question addressed by the network was how to assess the role of the border in the process of European integration when faced with processes of re-bordering and the questioning of the model of a “Europe without borders”. The FRONTEM network aimed therefore at offering a critical reading of a “Europe without borders”. It started from the observation that the EU has developed a unilateral approach to borders, which essentially retains their economic dimension as a barrier, without sufficiently taking into account other aspects, symbolic and political, in particular. The hypothesis put forward was that political borders have never disappeared and that there is an ambivalence of borders in the EU both as places of contact and exchange and means of protection and delimitation. Thanks to the comparative approach to the management and perception of borders in European cross-border regions, the network wished to develop a more differentiated and multidimensional approach to the border. It therefore took a new look at the role of the border in European integration, considering that there is not a single model of the perception and management of borders in the EU, but that they depend on the specific context of each border area concerned.

The partners of FRONTEM² carried out a cross-analysis of border management and perception in their border areas by organising each a scientific seminar with researchers and a focus group with local stakeholders. This toolkit collects and analyses the results of these events.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all partners of the network for their input, their team spirit, their availability and investment during these 4 years, which was not an evidence at a time, when the COVID-19 crisis rendered international cooperation extremely difficult. Travel was hindered by new waves of the pandemic and the FRONTEM events often had to be rescheduled or organised with the harsh constraints of sanitary security measures. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to: Steen Bo Fransen, Martin Klatt and Katarzyna Stoklosa from the University of Southern Denmark, to Anne Thevenet from the Euro-Institut in Kehl, to Joachim Beck from the Hochschule Kehl, to Anthony Soares from the Centre for Cross-Border

¹ 611115-EPP-1-2019-1-FR-EPPJMO-NETWORK

² The University of Southern Denmark in Sonderborg, the Euro-Institute in Kehl, the Hochschule Kehl, the Babes-Bolyai Cluj University, the Centre for Cross-Border Studies in Armagh in Northern Ireland, the Catholic University of Louvain, the University of Artois (Arras), the Mission opérationnelle transfrontalière (MOT) in Paris, the Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) in Budapest.

Studies in Armagh, to Nicolae Paun from the Bogdan Vodă University Cluj-Napoca, to Gyula Ocskay from the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) in Budapest, to Jean Peyrony and Jean Rubio from the Mission opérationnelle transfrontalière (MOT), to Fabienne Leloup from the Catholic University of Louvain, to Bernard Reitel from the University of Artois and to Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly and Oliver Schmidtke from the University of Victoria in Canada.

At Sciences Po Strasbourg, I would also like to thank the director Jean-Philippe Heurtin for hosting FRONTEM at our Institute and our FRONTEM manager Marc-Alain Kohou for his administrative help. Special thanks go to my colleague and friend Frédérique Berrod, professor of Law at Science Po Strasbourg, who holds a mirror Chair Jean Monnet to my own chair on borders and with whom I discuss, coordinate and manage all Jean Monnet activities in Strasbourg. I am also extremely grateful to the president of the University of Strasbourg, Michel Deneken, who supports all our Jean Monnet activities – FRONTEM, the Jean Monnet Chairs and our Jean Monnet Center of excellence- with great enthusiasm and European conviction.

Finally, the realisation of this toolkit would not have been possible without our partner Anne Thevenet, deputy director of the Euro-Institut in Kehl; and especially the hard and excellent work of her colleague Fabienne Schimek, who has coordinated this project, collected the texts, reviewed the content, wrote parts of the toolkit including the general introduction and who completed all the editorial work. She was assisted successively by my four trainees at Sciences Po from the Master of International Studies, Laura Abidi, Marion Dieudonne, Simon Vanlichtervelde and Vincent Tupinier, who largely contributed to the successful implementation of this toolkit. The toolkit is therefore definitely an outcome of a successful teamwork of the FRONTEM-network and I am very grateful for this fruitful cooperation!

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Professor of Contemporary History
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Introduction and instruction for use

This toolkit on border management and border perception was developed within the Jean Monnet Network “Frontières en mouvement: quels modèles pour l’UE (FRONTEM)?”.

The [FRONTEM network](#) was officially launched on 18 November 2019. As the first network obtained by France within the European Union’s Jean Monnet actions, the network is part of the University of Strasbourg’s tradition of excellence in research on European issues. It aims at a critical assessment of border management and perception within the European Union (EU). Thanks to its interdisciplinary composition and its crossing over approach between European Studies and Border Studies, it allowed exchanging knowledge and practices on five case studies of border regions in the EU.

Coordinated by Birte Wassenberg, professor at Sciences Po Strasbourg, the FRONTEM network brings together several partners at the borders between:

- Belgium and France,
- Ireland and Northern Ireland,
- France and Germany,
- Denmark and Germany
- and Romania and Hungary.

During the past years, the network has involved young researchers, doctoral students and cross-border actors by organising research seminars and focus groups, a doctoral seminar, a summer school and a final conference. Various outputs have been produced, including a joint publication, an [interactive platform on the perception of borders](#) at the five border spaces examined and this toolkit.

The toolkit is addressed to researchers, but also to practitioners of cross-border cooperation as well as to students. Aiming at giving an overview of border management and perception at these five borders, it is divided into two parts: Border Management and Border Perception. These two parts contain different topics, e.g. governance, obstacles, cross-border flows or mutual trust in the border region. The different chapters are accompanied by maps illustrating these topics.

It is to be understood as a tool that can be used in different ways: if the reader is only interested in a specific border region, he/she can go directly to the border-specific chapters and thus get an insight into how this border is managed and perceived with regard to different topics. However, if the reader is interested in a specific topic, he/she can jump to the respective chapter and read the contributions on all five borders, thus allowing him/her to gain a comparative overview on the five border regions.

In preparation for this toolkit, a grid was sent to the partner organisations at the five borders, which included various questions on the individual chapters. The partners could choose the questions relevant to their border region and focus on topics and issues that are in the foreground at the respective border. Therefore, the individual contributions were written according to the

specific characteristics of each border region and regarding each partner's expertise.

In addition, the individual contributions contain aspects from the focus groups that took place within the framework of FRONTEM. In the past years, these focus groups were held in the five border regions gathering politicians, representatives of civil society and actors of cross-border cooperation. Depending on the border region, different topics were discussed within these focus groups, some of which have found their way into this toolkit. Hence, for certain topics, the current discussions in the focus groups are taken into account and the chapters are fed by these elements. A brief summary of the different approaches and topics discussed within the focus groups at the five borders is given in the following chapter, before diving into the chapters of border management and border perception. The focus of the individual border-specific contributions, as well as the way in which the topics are presented, can therefore differ greatly. The toolkit as a result of the compilation of these contributions offers an insight into the diversity of the five border regions presented, but cannot be considered exhaustive.

This toolkit has been developed as a collaborative work, coordinated by Sciences Po Strasbourg (France) and the Euro-Institut (Kehl, Germany), involving the following institutions and authors:

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Fabienne Schimek, Euro-Institut
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Nicolae Păun, Bogdan Vodă University Cluj-Napoca

- *Maps*
Jean Rubio, Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière

We wish you happy reading and exciting immersion in the realities of border management and perception at the five European borders!

The Focus Groups at the five borders

France-Germany

Along the Franco-German border, two focus groups were conducted on June 28th 2022. Organised by the Euro-Institut, these two focus groups took place in Kehl on the German side of the border in the Upper Rhine Region. One focus group was composed of citizens and took place in the morning in the form of a breakfast workshop, the second one gathered actors from cross-border institutions in the afternoon. The results from the exchanges within these two groups contributed greatly to the chapters in this toolkit; the topics to discuss during the focus groups were also chosen with this aim in mind. Even though the German-French border comprises two border regions, the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine Region, this toolkit will focus on the Upper Rhine Region as the focus groups concentrated on the latter.

In preparation for the focus groups and for this toolkit, the Euro-Institut created and conducted a survey from April to May 2022. The online survey comprised 26 questions in German and French and was divided into three sections: Personal questions about the relationship to the region and border behaviour, questions on cross-border cooperation and on civic participation as well as identity. For reasons of simplification, most of the questions were closed questions with predefined possible answers. In total, 189 people took part in the survey, the majority was of French nationality (111), followed by Germans (85) and Swiss (8); some had a dual nationality. 134 of the respondents lived on the French side and only 46 on the German side, which shows that a large proportion of Germans do not actually live in Germany: while only 11 % of all French people live in Germany, 51 % of Germans live in France. The questionnaire not only aimed at getting an overview of the residents' border perception, but also served the purpose of reaching interested citizens for the focus group: at the end of the questionnaire, citizens could register for attending the focus group. Furthermore, the responses were used to feed the discussion in the focus groups.

Prior to the focus groups, the topics were sent out to the participants by email for a better understanding of the aim and procedure of the exchanges; this procedure differed only slightly between the two focus groups.

In the end, it was a small, but dynamic group of seven citizens attending the breakfast workshop. The majority of the participating citizens had already been interested in cross-border relations and had a German-French background, be it as an employee in a German-French company, as a (language) teacher or as a cross-border commuter. The participants discussed several topics, such as obstacles for citizens in border regions, their perception during the Covid-19 crisis and the question of cross-border identity.

In the afternoon of June 28th, the second focus group among cross-border cooperation actors took place. The stakeholders were specifically invited and care was taken to ensure that the 11 people participating represented different levels within the main institutions in the Upper Rhine Region: two Eurodistricts, the Freiburg District (Regierungspräsidium), the Upper Rhine Conference and Council, the Science and Economy pillars of the Trinational Metropolitan

Region, the Swiss Regio Basiliensis, the Collectivité européenne d'Alsace and the Committee for Cross-border Cooperation. In about three hours, the actors of cross-border cooperation exchanged views on the role of the citizen, legal and financial instruments, trust and identity as well as the pandemic in the Upper Rhine.

France- Belgium

The focus group at the France-Belgium border happened between the 27th and the 28th of February 2023 in Mons, in Belgian Hainaut. It was introduced by a half-day of pre-seminar in Tournai, on the 17th of November, 2022, and was organised in cooperation with the DISPLU pluridisciplinary research group for local and regional studies of cross-border spaces. The researcher panel was composed of Fabienne Leloup, Bernard Reitel and Birte Wassenberg.

On the morning of the first day, two PhD candidates presented their ongoing thesis as a part of the research seminar. The first one, Lucille Nicolas, works on the day-to-day life of customs officers in the region of Valenciennes for the 19th and 20th centuries, thanks to a newly found archive fund. The second one, Marianne Petit, works on the commercial centres of medium-sized town along the France-Belgium border (Armentières, Mons, Arras and Tournai).

The following part of the morning was dedicated to the commerce in the development of cities. In the context of the French “Politique de la ville” (translatable as ‘renovation of cities urban areas’), Denis Houdé (head of the department of partnerships and contractual politics of Arras – “Stratégies Partenariales Politiques Contractuelles”–) presented the situation in the city of Arras, allowing for Laurence Moyart (European project manager for the city of Mons) and Alexis Gilbert (PhD candidate in urban planning and architecture) to intervene on the matter. Several subjects were discussed such as the vacancy of city-centre shops, the central role of train stations as node points for medium-sized cities, the difference between different Belgian or French institutions and finally the central role of local leaders and the necessity for an exchange between administrations just as it is being done by the Euro-Institut at the France-Germany border.

The second round table was held in the afternoon on security, circulation and integration at the France-Belgium border. Arnaud Delmulle (Directory general of Customs in Dunkerque), Simon Douchy (Police officer in Borraine Saint-Ghislain), and Bruno Collin (president of the association on History and administration of Customs offices) debated on this subject. They presented the different legal instruments that allowed for French and Belgian police to cooperate (Tournai I and II). Most remarks involved the fact that cooperation can be achieved efficiently through planned operations, actors stressed that emergency situations were not that successful. During the COVID-19 crisis, participants insisted on the fact that the flow of goods did not wane down, contrary to the flow of persons.

A third round table has taken place on the morning of the 28th of February, about culture and environment at the France-Belgian border. It involved Inès Mendès (cultural centre of Tournai), Lisa Bardot (European park Plaines Scarpes Escaut), Vincent Dochez (deputy mayor of Quarouble) and Catherine Christiaens (project coordinator at the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai). The accent was put on the European park Plaines Scarpe Escaut, since it is the first natural park, which evolved into a cross-border park under the form of an European Grouping

of Territorial Cooperation under Belgian law. The round table ended with a search of a term describing Franco-Belgian cooperation. All the actors present agreed that conviviality was the best expression of the cooperation in the field of culture and environment.

Denmark-Germany

The two focus groups took place on 18 and 19 November 2021. They intended to discuss issues of identities as well as changes and dynamics caused by recent developments in the border region and the border regime, especially since Denmark joined the Schengen Agreement. Less concerned were given to economic, legal, and governance aspects or to other important border region issues like commuting, trade, tax, technical issues and quantitative data related to the border and life in the region.³ This choice was motivated by the impression that the atmosphere in the border region has undergone some quite interesting developments in the last years. The border, although stable and no longer disputed, has changed substantially. Since Denmark joined Schengen, we have seen the construction of the wild boar fence, the “temporary” suspension of the open border, and finally the COVID-19 closure. All these developments have had a huge impact on the physical but indeed also the mental border. Therefore, the interest was mainly to gather opinions about the role of majorities and minorities, and in initiating a discussion of the consequences – on what it means to live in the border region.

For the focus groups, representatives from the majorities and minorities that were not in high-ranking positions were invited. Priority was given to activists and NGO's more than to traditional organisations when sending out invitations. The intention was to facilitate a more open discussion, less dominated by political and official statements. The report from the two focus group sessions should therefore also be considered as less reflecting the (rather well-known) official narrative and more the picture from “below”, from people and activists more personally and directly involved in border work and the daily life of the region. The authors are convinced that this actually happened, but they are also aware of the bias coming from the fact that no officials participated in the focus groups who could have explained or defended the existing structures of the border region – like, e.g., border control or the wild boar fence, but also the rather “frozen” institutions of the minorities and the majorities of the region.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

Two focus group discussions were organised in March 2022 as part of the FRONTEM project's activities relating to the Ireland-Northern Ireland border. The first focus group brought together several key actors with oversight of or involved in a range of areas relevant to cross-border mobility.⁴ A core purpose for organising this focus group was to gather their views on and experience of managing and monitoring cross-border mobility.

³ This is e.g. very much the case when it comes to commuters. Interview with Peter Hansen, Regional Office 10.10.2022.

⁴ Participants in this focus group were drawn from the following institutions and organisations: East Border Region (a cross-border network of six local authorities from the east coast of Ireland and Northern Ireland); EURES Cross Border Partnership (an alliance of representatives from the employment services in Ireland and Northern Ireland,

The second focus group was composed of representatives from a range of community groups, as well as civic society organisations whose work includes addressing issues related to citizens' cross-border mobility. Four of the seven participating organisations were based in Northern Ireland, three in the Republic of Ireland, with four located within the border region and three outside of it. A central purpose of constituting this focus group was to discover their perceptions of the border and the importance of citizens' cross-border mobility.

In advance of each focus group meeting all participants completed a questionnaire. Reflecting the differing purposes of the focus groups, there were two different questionnaires with different sets of questions. The questionnaire aimed at key actors with oversight of or involved in areas relevant to cross-border mobility included questions on monitoring and reporting of cross-border mobility, the implementation of measures addressing changes to rates of mobility, impacts of Covid-19 on mobility, and organisational collaboration on mobility. The questionnaire completed by the second focus group included questions on perceptions of the border, the importance citizens place on cross-border mobility, monitoring and restricting cross-border mobility, and closing the border. The responses were then used to inform the focus group discussions, allowing them to explore in greater depth some of the issues raised by the questionnaires.

Hungary-Romania

The focus group meetings organised within the framework of the FRONTEM project by the Babeş-Bolyai University and CESCO in Cluj-Napoca took place on 19 May 2022. The meetings were held in the ceremonial hall of the Prefecture of the county of Cluj, in two moderated round-table type sessions.

The morning session was dedicated to the issue of border management, where Romanian and Hungarian stakeholders (representatives of the Hungarian Police, regional border municipalities, Romanians living in Hungary, Hungarians living in Romania, the University of Cluj, etc.) shared their experiences with the borders during and after the communist era. The core topic of the debate was the fact that the Romanian-Hungarian is still an external Schengen border, which remarkably hinders the integration of the borderland.

trade unions from both sides of the border, chambers of commerce, and business and employers' federations; this partnership has now reconstituted itself as the Cross Border Partnership Employment Services); the EU & North/South Unit of the (Irish) Health Service Executive; Irish Central Border Area Network (a cross-border network of eight local authorities from the central border area); InterTradeIreland (established as one of the implementation bodies under Strand Two of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, its role is to help small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland to explore new cross-border markets); Middletown Centre for Autism (established in 2007 by Ireland's Department of Education and Skills and Northern Ireland's Department of Education to support the promotion of excellence in the education of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders); and the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Joint Secretariat (established under Strand Two of the Good Friday Agreement, the NSMC brings together the governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland to develop consultation, cooperation and action within the island of Ireland, supported by a Joint Secretariat drawn from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Northern Ireland's Executive Office).

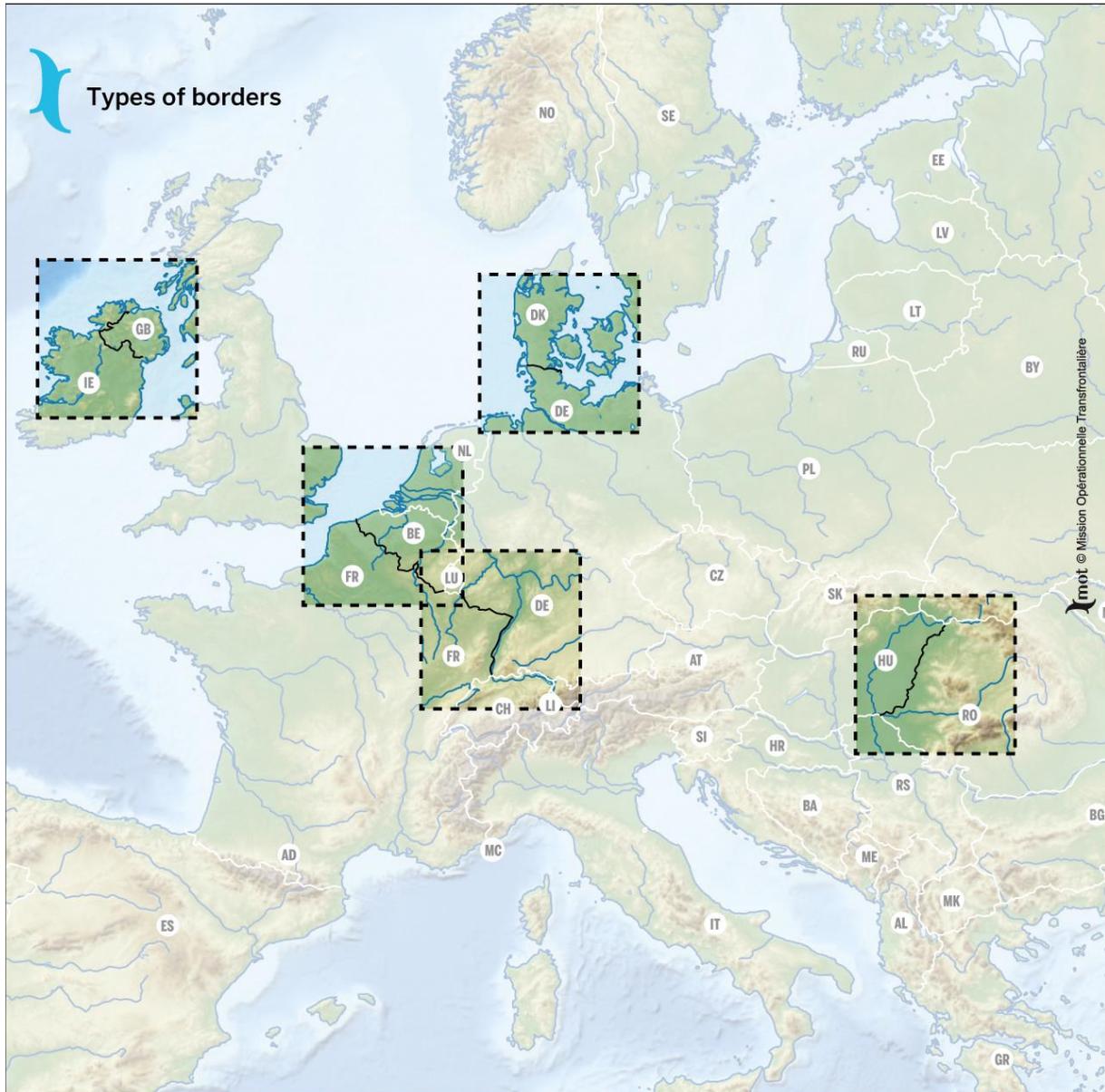
During the afternoon session, the participants (including the representatives of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC⁵), the minorities, border county municipalities, scholars of the University of Oradea, etc.) shared their experiences regarding the perception of the border. The testimonies referred to identity issues, the dividing role of the border, and the impacts of the EU integration. 28 persons in total attended the meeting and its outcomes are summarised and further explained in this toolkit.

⁵ To learn more about EGTCs, see chapter “Legal instruments”.

Part 1. Border Management

Types of borders

Introduction



The Cambridge Dictionary defines ‘borders’ as “a line that has been agreed to divide one country from another”.⁶ The term itself can hold different meanings and already the English language distinguishes between boundary, border and frontier. While ‘boundary’, for instance, refers to the demarcation of a certain territory, ‘border’ can be used in a more figurative sense the way two spatial systems are separated, thus, also referring to both delimitation and

⁶ Reitel B., “Border Regions”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 134-135.

interface.⁷ Additionally, the respective meaning may be defined or perceived differently depending on the language and translation.

When thinking of borders in general, we often tend to imagine borders between countries we are crossing while travelling, for example. Besides various forms of natural borders like land or maritime borders, mountain chains, rivers, sea, urban or rural area, there are other types of border such as political (determining therefore as well the limits between different national political-administrative systems), cultural (e.g. language) and normative or economic borders (when thinking of the differentials between the economic level of development in border) etc. Distinction can also be made between old border regions, like those in Western Europe and new border regions (EU external borders) that are emerging as a result of the enlargement of the EU. Traditionally speaking, borders were regarded as lines that demarcated territories, mainly national ones. Contemporary understandings, however, conceptualise borders and border regions as social constructs, as borders are “made” in political and societal negotiations. Likewise, one might also find the term ‘borderlands’, which is especially used in certain languages like Polish in order to link the border with a territory but without defining the exact limits of the territory.

In the EU, 37.5% of the population lives in border areas and in total, there are approximately 38 internal borders.⁸ The borders between nation-states within the European Union are characterised by free border crossing: since the establishment of the Schengen Area in 1995, borders within the European Union represent open borders, without walls, fences and checks at the border. The Schengen Area was aimed to be the fundament of the European Union and its internal market. In order to make the border-free Schengen Area work, the *Schengen Convention* includes a common visa policy to facilitate the entry of non-EU nationals.

With the creation of the single market in 1993, the EU grants free movement of people, goods, capital and services. As border regions were and still are the first to experience this freedom of movement, they are considered as key areas with both the effects of movement towards European integration as well as the place where the remaining obstacles to integration can be observed best. When speaking about border regions, we first need to define the term ‘region’. The concept of a ‘region’ is largely used and can be defined as a “large space with its own spatial consistency”.⁹ It can bear several meanings, but when focusing on its political dimension, one can define a region as an administrative unit, a territory situated between the national level and local authorities. The specificity of a border region manifests itself in the fact that this territorial unit has an international border with one or more neighbouring states, why both its configuration and its organisation is different from domestic regions.¹⁰ Eurostat defines EU border regions with a geographical nomenclature classification that subdivides the economic territory, the *Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics*, abbreviated NUTS (from

⁷ Reitel B., “Border Regions”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 134-135.

⁸ “Interreg A - Cross-border cooperation”, European Commission webpage. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en. Accessed 19 April 2023.

⁹ Reitel B., “Border Regions”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 134-135.

¹⁰ Ibid.

the French version *Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques*)¹¹, at the level of NUTS 3 regions as those regions with a land border, or those where more than 50 % of the population lives within 25 km of such a border.¹²

Cooperation between border regions is promoted by the European Union via its policy of European Territorial Cooperation, aiming at supporting the economic and social development of the regions as well as tackling the obstacles that borders bring with them in order to achieve a regional harmonisation and to overcome strong asymmetries between regions. The European Territorial Cooperation, also known as INTERREG, has begun in the 1990s and has become an official objective of European Cohesion Policy in 2000. It is organised in four strands, one of which is cross-border cooperation (Interreg A). Interreg A supports cooperation between NUTS 3 regions from at least two neighbouring Member States.¹³

Following this understanding of border region, cross-border areas can therefore be defined as spaces where cooperation exists within the respective administrative territories on each side of the border. However, interactions between border regions have also given birth to so-called functional cross-border regions. ‘Functional areas’ relate, as the name implies, to a specific function and are characterised by certain linkages and interdependencies. Two conceptions are prominent in defining functional areas, as territories that cluster around a node (flows-based approach), and as a cohesive and interactive zone based on several-selected criteria. Cross-border functional areas are therefore as well spatially specific territorial areas, which are not defined by administrative borders, but rather marked by functional and cooperative relationships of various cross-border actors as well as governance mechanisms, resulting from a common goal/potential and/or solving common problems.¹⁴

In total, there is wide variety of European borders, coming along with different structures, competencies, encountering different legal frameworks and more. This chapter provides a look at different aspects of the borders that mark the five border regions that FRONTEM encompasses.

The map shows a topographic overview of the five border regions that will be presented in this toolkit: the Franco-German border of reconciliation, the border between Belgium and France, the invisible border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, the border between Denmark and Germany and the border between Romania and Hungary.

¹¹ For more information about the NUTS classification, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>

¹² “Territorial typologies manual - border regions”, Eurostat webpage. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Territorial typologies manual - border regions](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Territorial_typologies_manual_-_border_regions). Accessed 19 April 2023.

¹³ “Interreg A - Cross-border cooperation”, European Commission webpage. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en. Accessed 19 April 2023.

¹⁴ Jakubowski, A., Trykacz, K., Studzieniecki, T. & Skibinsko, J. “Identifying cross-border functional areas: conceptual background and empirical findings from Polish borderlands”, *European Planning Studies*, vol. 30, n°12, 2022, pp. 2433-2455. DOI:10.1080/09654313.2021.1958760.

France-Germany



The history between Germany and France, and thus the history of the border, has been marked by wars for centuries. This is why people speak of “Franco-German enmity”, the idea of natural hostility and rivalry between German and French people, which only ended with the founding of the European Communities after the Second World War. Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the border between Germany and France has always been continuously fought over and the Rhine River gradually became a political and military border separating the two countries; the French territories Alsace and Lorraine/Moselle had changed their national affiliation four times between 1871 and 1945. Because of this history, the rapprochement of France and Germany after the Second World War is strongly influenced by the reconciliation motif and the border is therefore also called the “border of reconciliation”. The current border between Germany and France dates back to the accession of the Saarland to the Federal Republic of

Germany on 1 January 1957.¹⁵ However, due to the lack of a peace treaty after the Second World War and because of the divided Germany, the German territory as a whole and thus the final borders were only defined after reunification by international law in the *Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany*, also known as *Two Plus Four Agreement* in 1990.

The approximately 455 km long Franco-German border is a very dynamic border within the Schengen area, where a multitude of cross-border institutions and cross-border projects have emerged. With time, these two regions have been sometimes referred to as models for cooperation and in light of the underlying historical reason have also been identified as model for reconciliation in Europe. Cross-border cooperation along the Franco-German border has developed within two different areas: the Upper Rhine Region, which encompasses France, Germany and Switzerland, and the Greater Region with France, Germany, Luxemburg and Belgium.

At the same time as cross-border cooperation along the Franco-German border began in the early 1960s, the *Élysée Treaty* on friendship was adopted between France and Germany, laying the foundation for the emergence of numerous city twinning and Franco-German Youth Office¹⁶. However, the treaty represents an intergovernmental approach and the development of cross-border cooperation is not only due to efforts of reconciliation on a bilateral level, but equally due to concrete initiatives by private actors who agreed on the necessity to exchange on information, to discuss on border issues and to boost joint projects.

Cooperation in the area has furthermore been decisively influenced by external factors and there are economic and geographical reasons that cooperation along the Franco-German border is so intertwined: The Upper Rhine region is enclosed by mountains, the Vosges and the Palatinate Forest in the west, the Black Forest in the east and the Jura Mountains in the south, and has the Rhine in its centre as a common water source. As for the Greater Region, cooperation was largely initiated by the steel and mining industry crisis that affected the German, French and Luxemburg side in similar ways and led to the 1969, established Intergovernmental Commission. Thus, the origin of the concept of the *Greater Region* lies in economic factors, namely the management of a cross-border industrial basin. In the beginning, cooperation was limited to a territory comprising Saarland, Luxembourg and Lorraine, plus the German regions of Trier and Western Palatinate in 1980. It was only in 2005 that the cross-border region was extended to Wallonia.¹⁷ Today, it encompasses the territories Lorraine in the French region Grand Est, Wallonia, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and Ostbelgien in Belgium, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Natural characteristics of the region are its rivers Rhine, Saar, Meuse and Moselle. More than 11.6 million inhabitants live in this region that covers 65 401 km².¹⁸ Charleroi in Wallonia (202 000 inhabitants) and Mainz in Rhineland-Palatinate (207 000) are the largest cities in the region,

¹⁵ See “Law on the Integration of the Saarland“ [in German], 23 December 1956. https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav#_bgbl_%2F%2F%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl156s1011.pdf%27%5D_1689325903081

¹⁶ <https://www.fgyo.org/>

¹⁷ Lamour, C., “Greater Region”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 512-513.

¹⁸ To get an overview of the Greater Region, see <https://www.granderegion.net/en>.

other important cities are Nancy and Metz in France, Saarbrücken (Saarland) and Luxemburg City.¹⁹

The Upper Rhine Region gathers the four sub-regions Alsace in France, Northwestern Switzerland as well as Southern Palatinate and Baden in Germany over a total area of 21 568 km². The region opens up along a border of 350 km that follows the Rhine River, which represents a natural physical border entailing specific challenges for cross-border mobility. Another geographical feature are the mentioned hills and mountains due to which the region is 43 % covered with forest.²⁰ The largest sub-regions in terms of area and population are Alsace and Baden with approximately 40 % of the Upper Rhine population living in Baden and 30 % in Alsace. Together, the two areas account for the largest share of 76 %. The remaining quarter of the area is divided between Southern Palatinate (7 %) and Northwestern Switzerland (17 %), the former is home to approximately 5 % and the latter to 24 % of the population. There are several metropolitan areas within the Upper Rhine Region, namely the cities of Karlsruhe, and Freiburg in Germany, Strasbourg, Colmar and Mulhouse in France and Basel in Switzerland. In total, the region has 6.3 million inhabitants.

As for the administrative division, the French region Grand Est and the German federal states Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland are at NUTS 1 level. Saarland functions as both NUTS-1 and NUTS-2 regions. The NUTS 2 level in Germany encompasses the government districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) which include Karlsruhe and Freiburg for the sub-region Baden and Koblenz, Trier and Rhineland-Palatinate in Rhineland-Palatinate. As for the NUTS 3 level, there are in total 74 administrative districts bordering France (Saarland has five administrative districts and the Saarbrücken Regional Association, 36 in Rhineland Palatinate and 22 in Baden). In France, the NUTS 2 level englobes the former administrative regions of Lorraine and Alsace. Lorraine has four departments on NUTS 3 level: Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse, Moselle and Vosges; Alsace is composed of the departments Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin²¹ as territories on NUTS 3 level.

Cross-border cooperation is characterised by a strong asymmetry with regard to the distribution of competences at administrative levels. With France as a central state and Germany as a federal system, the political and administrative systems are built on a completely different basis. For example, regions on the French side do not have the same competences and budget as those on the German side, which influences cooperation. One competence can be at regional level on the one side and at local/city level on the other side. Here, it is also interesting to mention that a unique feature in the Upper Rhine is the creation of the French territorial authority *Collectivité européenne d'Alsace* (CeA)²² established in 2021 and composed of the two départements Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin. The CeA has additional competencies, especially regarding cross-border cooperation and bilingualism or tourism.

¹⁹ Statistics portal of the Greater Region: <https://www.grande-region.lu/portal/de/regionen/grossregion>.

²⁰ Statistische Ämter am Oberrhein, "Oberrhein. Zahlen und Fakten" [online brochure], 2022. Retrieved from: https://www.oberrheinkonferenz.org/de/statistik/aktuelle-informationen/items/statistikbroschuere-2022.html?file=files/assets/Wirtschaftspolitik/docs_de/broschuere-zahlen-und-fakten-2022.pdf&cid=3244. Accessed 15 May 2023.

²¹ Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin still exist at NUTS level, even if they administratively merged to create the Collectivité Européenne d'Alsace.

²² <https://www.alsace.eu/>

France-Belgium



The border between France and Belgium is twofold, as the northern part of Belgium is Dutch speaking and the southern part is French speaking. Therefore, in the south, all use the word “frontière”. In the north however, there is a linguistic discontinuity, with the Belgian part using the Dutch word “grens”. However, in local Flemish dialects spoken in both French and Belgian Flanders, the border is named “*de schreve*” translating as the “stroke of a pen” (or in French le “*trait de plume*”), for how the border was drawn on a map first.

The genesis of the border testifies its age, since parts of the line were drawn as soon as the treaty of Nijmegen (1678), Ryswick (1697) and Utrecht (1713). The border was kept when the first French republic annexed the Austrian Netherlands in 1795 up to the end of the Napoleonic Empire in 1814/1815. The treaty of Kortrijk modified some minor sections of the border in 1820. In effect, the Kingdom of Belgium inherited these borders when birthed in 1830/1831. Even though some minor modifications were drawn in 1820, the Franco-Belgian border is one

of the most stable studied by the FRONTEM network. The border is 620km long, the longest border of Belgium, and the third longest of France (after with Brazil and with Spain). There are no topographical discontinuities between the French and the Belgian side of the border, but the landscape is not the same across the entire border. The only thing that changes when crossing by car is perhaps the signs and the quality of the road, which both the French and the Belgians make fun of. One way at looking at the border region geographically is by scanning the space section by section.

The southernmost section of the Franco-Belgian border is the Ardennes massif, with its five natural parks. Four of them are Belgian (*Gaume*, *Ardenne méridionale* and *Viroin-Hermeton* and the recent national park of the Semois Valley) and one is French (Natural Regional Park of the *Ardennes*). The landscape is hilly and covered by forests. Some cities are prominent, such as on the French side Longwy (15 000 inhabitants) and Charleville-Mézières (46 000 inhabitants), and Arlon (31 000 inhabitants, at the tripoint with Luxembourg) on the Belgian side. Longwy and Arlon are however within the attraction area of Luxembourg.²³ The border is characterised there by the Doigt de Givet (Givet salient), a French strip of land within Belgium along the Meuse River, where lies the nuclear reactor of Chooz. The area is historically industrious, but has difficulties converting into a service economy. It includes also the natural cross-border region of Thierache, around the city of Chimay (Belgium).

The second section covers the territory from the south-easternmost point of the département du Nord to the arrondissement de Valenciennes. There is also a natural landscape, as testified by French parks: the officially cross-border European Natural Park of Plaines Scarpe-Escaut (managed as an EGTC), and the French Natural Regional Park of Avesnois. As induced by the names of the parks, the Escaut River and the Scarpe River cross the territory towards Belgium. However, three main cities structure this area, namely Valenciennes (43 000 inhabitants), Maubeuge (30 000 inhabitants) (both in France) and Mons (Belgium, 96 000 inhabitants)²⁴. Like the previous section, the area includes new industries (such as Toyota in Valenciennes or Google in Mons) and tend to develop the service economy, notably by betting on tourism.²⁵

The third section is the most densely populated one. It is shaped by Lille (the metropole and its agglomeration such as Roubaix and Tourcoing), Tournai (Wallonia, 68 000 inhabitants) and Kortrijk (Flanders, 79 000 inhabitants). On the northern part of this border, Wallonia has an exclave (Comines-Warneton) on the left bank of the Lys River, which constitutes the main natural line for drawing of the border. France still has a border with Flanders around Menen, and the eastern part of this section is shared with Wallonia.

²³ Observatoire Interrégional du marché de l'emploi (IBA/OIE), « La démographie de la Grande Région SaarLorLux » [in French], Helfer, Malte; Pauly, Michel & Caruso, Geoffrey (eds.) in *GR-Atlas – Atlas de la Grande Région SaarLorLux*, vol.42, 2021, 15p.

²⁴ The populations indicated are those of the communes. However, Belgium merged its communes in 1977, considerably reducing the total number of communes, which is not the case in France. This makes it difficult to compare city populations. For example, the Valenciennes conurbation has 333 000 inhabitants, compared with 43 000 for the city center.

²⁵ Oumheta, Myriam. « Diagnostic de la destination Nord-Pas-de-Calais, une analyse à partir de la modélisation du système touristique régional », [Master's thesis, in French], *Hal Science*, 2023, Retrieved from <https://hal.science/hal-03957586/>. Accessed 27 March 2023.

The final and northernmost part of the Franco-Belgian border is between the Lys River and the North Sea, where the landscape is mainly rural and without major geographical elements. This rural border has also evolved to a linguistic one with the propagation of the French language to French Flanders during the 19th century. The French port of Dunkirk (87 000 inhabitants, 196 000 in the *Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque*) plays an important role in the coastal border region with Belgium, as it is the main entry point for goods in the region. The sharing of the maritime border has been somewhat tense lately with the construction project of offshore wind turbines by 2028 that France will lead without having consulted the bordering Belgian authorities.²⁶

The border lies within the Schengen area. Administratively, at the NUTS-1 level, regions of *Hauts-de-France* and *Grand Est* are bordering Belgium, and on the Belgian side, it is both the Wallonia and Flanders regions. The NUTS-2 level encompasses in France the former regions (pre-2016), as to say *Nord-Pas-de-Calais*, *Picardie*, *Champagne-Ardennes* and *Lorraine*. In Belgium, the NUTS-2 bordering entities are the provinces, which are West-Flanders, *Hainaut*, *Namur* and Luxembourg. The French administrative equivalent to the Belgian provinces are the departments²⁷, which are categorised at the NUTS-3 level, while in Belgium this scale is for the *arrondissements*.²⁸ At the local scale, cross-border cooperation is also managed by local cities, but there is a disequilibrium between the French tradition of keeping small municipalities and regrouping them in syndicates, then-to-be intercommunalities.²⁹ The result of this is the formation of diverse in shape and in competence administrative levels between the municipalities and the departments. On the other side, Belgium has been through a period of fusion of its municipalities since the 1970s, which means the local governance level is located at a level in between the largest French intercommunalities and municipalities.³⁰

The territory therefore does not have many discontinuities in terms of demography and economy, apart from the notable exceptions of Lille and, in a lesser extent, Dunkirk. The first two European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation have been created on the Franco-Belgian border: the first one created in 2008 includes 157 cities around Lille, Tournai and Kortrijk. The creation of such frames foster cross-border cooperation between Belgium and France.

²⁶ Cocq, Emeline, « Parc éolien en mer: la Belgique porte plainte contre le projet de Dunkerque, des ‘tensions diplomatiques à craindre’ alertent les opposants » [in French], *France 3 Hauts-de-France*, 28/04/2022, retrieved from <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/nord-0/dunkerque/dunkerque-la-belgique-porte-plainte-contre-le-projet-de-parc-eolien-des-tensions-diplomatiques-a-craindre-alertent-les-opposants-2532840.html>. Accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁷ The Belgian provinces were inherited from the French period (1792-1793; 1794-1814), drawn as departments like the others created in 1790 and called “*Départements réunis*”. The Kingdom of the Netherlands maintained the territorial decoupage, and kept the drawing of the departments as its own provinces. When the Kingdom of Belgium became independent in 1830/1831, it also kept the drawing as its own provinces.

²⁸ The Belgian *arrondissements* are sub-provincial entities, regrouping several municipalities and which has an *arrondissement* commissioner at its head, directly named by the executive of the region.

²⁹ “Intercommunalities” since the word generally used in French is “intercommunalités”. The administratively correct formula is “*Etablissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale (EPCI)*”. There are multiples types of EPCI, depending on the population and competences.

³⁰ On the differences between the French and Belgian (and more generally on the European) systems of regional and local governance, see Pasquier, Romain, “Organisation territoriale et démocratie locale en Europe” [in French], *La documentation française*, 2022.

Denmark-Germany



Geographical aspects

The German-Danish border divides the historical region of Schleswig. It is a political border drawn in 1920 in the effort to find a solution to the long national conflict over the former duchy. The Paris Peace Conference decided to hold plebiscites in order to establish a new international border expected to reflect the national division in a more appropriate way. These plebiscites took place in two zones in February and March 1920. They confirmed the expectations of an undisputed Danish majority to the north and a similar clear German vote south of the proposed borderline.

The border runs through a predominantly rural and sparsely populated part of Schleswig. To the East, it almost touches the northern outskirts of Flensburg, the biggest city of the entire region. The plebiscites made Flensburg a particularly contested city. Many Danes were eager to include it in their nation-state, while most Germans – Schleswig-Holsteinians as well as

German nationalists – fought to keep the symbolic place on their side, resulting in a strong German majority, and the city remained a part of Germany. The border is also a maritime border – both to the East in the Baltic Sea and to the West, where it divides the Wadden Sea area of the North Sea. Today most of the Frisian Islands are situated on the German side. Cross-border cooperation has in later decades been particularly developed in the Wadden Sea region.³¹ Here a political border seems meaningless as the tidal water decides the conditions. Nature has, in fact, dictated a closer cooperation.

Historical and socio-cultural aspects

The Duchy of Schleswig forms a historical region dating back to the Middle Ages. Later, the region was divided between different lines of the Oldenburg dynasty but remained under the Danish crown until 1864. Danish nationalists and German-oriented regionalists succeeded in provoking growing tensions in the region, culminating in 1848 as Schleswigian and Holsteinian German speaking subjects of the King tried to create an independent state. In the end, they suffered a defeat, and the Danish King regained control. During the following decade, the Danes tried to bring the Duchy closer to their Kingdom, but they were not able to convince a majority of the Schleswigians to become more Danish. A second war followed in 1864. Now the Danish King lost the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia and Austria. Afterwards Schleswig was annexed by Prussia and soon after it entered the new German Empire.

The region remained under Prussian rule until 1920, but also the German side failed in integrating all Schleswigians in one nation-building process. The local population considered the Prussians to be foreigners; their presence, moreover, contributed to the strengthening of a Danish Schleswigian identity. The northern parts of the region were strongly dominated by the Danish movement although the population in the bigger towns and some parts of the region spoke German and showed German sympathies. The German-speaking Schleswigians, disappointed by the Prussian annexation, slowly gave up on their scepticism – the German cultural and linguistic influence grew in the southern and central parts of the region. Flensburg experienced economic growth and, being the third largest port of the German Empire, it became an even more German city than before.

The border divides now people of the same kind but of different national conviction. The national conflict and the following process of nationalisation created and underlined the differences. This process can be understood as one of segregation. Like the border divided nation-states that had not existed before, the plebiscites of 1920 created minorities on both sides that were, in many respects, culturally and institutionally segregated and kept apart from the respective majorities. The dominating national ideologies have always tried to present a picture of two totally different cultures and nations in the region, thereby ignoring the regional reality of mixed families and a linguistic reality that is not as sharply divided. The *patois* – Danish or German – still makes communication easier among the locals across the border.

The ethnic minority of the Frisians in the western parts of Schleswig is often neglected or even forgotten by the two dominant nationalities, and it is in many respects a silent player in the border region. The Frisians, however, were not divided by the border of 1920, but remained together on the German side. Settled in a rather limited area south of the border a particular

³¹ Wadden Sea Forum, est. 2002, bringing together Dutch, German, and Danish representatives.

consciousness about it has not developed. During the national conflict of the 19th century most Frisians took a regional stand that estranged them from the Danish national movement. After 1920 the potentials for a cooperation with the Danish minority were not realised, but after 1945, the Danish and the Frisian minorities discovered common interests and drew near.³² In the 1950s, the exchange was quite extensive but then it stagnated, and although the two minorities cooperated politically, they hardly can be said to have a common voice in the border region. It seems relevant to mention the successful novel *Mittagsstunde* by the German author Dörte Hansen, set in a (fictitious) North Frisian environment without referring to the context of the border, thereby demonstrating the almost perfect distance that has been developed by the different groups during the second half of the 20th century.³³

“Reconciliation”, like it took place for example in the Franco-German or Polish-German border region, is not a word used to describe the development in the Danish-German border region. The chosen solution is much more characterised by as much division as possible, this becoming the point of reference for a pragmatic cooperation in dealing with current problems. This was clearly illustrated by the celebrated *Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations* signed in 1955.³⁴ They are still considered the foundation of the friendly neighbour relationship that has developed ever since. The Declarations aimed at regulating the minority issue but did not include any roadmap for a closer future cross-border cooperation in the region.³⁵

Scope and types of borders regulation

In 1997 plans for a “Euroregion Schleswig”, similar to other examples of close cross-border cooperations in the EU, were abandoned due to a widespread opposition on the Danish side.³⁶ In nationalist and Eurosceptical circles this idea was considered a threat to Danish sovereignty and to the existing border regime. The name Schleswig was rejected as well, although it was also the traditional Danish name. In September 1997, the region “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” was organised by five Danish (the municipalities of Aabenraa, Haderslev, Sønderborg, Tønder, and the regional county of Southern Denmark) and three German partners (the City of Flensburg and the districts of Schleswig-Flensburg and Nordfriesland). This institution constitutes the political and administrative part of the cross-border cooperation of the Danish-German borderland. Other parallel cooperations exist within business, organisations of civil society and individuals on both sides of the border. The region is understood as an institution to further and improve the conditions of these cooperations and to assist and council the protagonists on both sides of the border. Thus, scope and activities of the region are rather pragmatic.

“Sønderjylland-Schleswig” is a recognised Euroregion although the scope of this cooperation is less ambitious than originally planned. “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” today represents the institutionalised cross-border cooperation in the Danish-German border region. The expenses

³² Thede Boysen Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, on 19 November 2021.

³³ D. Hansen, *Mittagsstunde*, Penguin, Munich, 2018.

³⁴ J. Kühl, *København-Bonn Erklæringerne 1955-2005: de dansk-tyske mindretalserklæringers baggrund, tilblivelse og virkning*, Institut for Grænseregionsforskning, Aabenraa 2005.

³⁵ For the history of the Danish-German border region see: Frandsen, S.B., *Schleswig: A Border Region Caught Between nation-states*. In: Stokłosa, K. Besier, G. (eds.), *European Border Regions in Comparison. Overcoming Nationalistic Aspects or Re-Nationalization*, New York/London 2014, 79-97.

³⁶ www.vimu.info/general ; L. Ejlskov Röhrig, *Sønderjylland - hvad kan det bruges til?*, Specialeafhandling Syddansk Universitet, 2006.

are paid equally by the Danish and the German side. The region “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” is supervised by a board that consists of representatives from the local administrative bodies. There are committees (Culture, Labour Market, and Cross Border development) and business groups. The competencies of the region are limited. “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” is represented by the Regional Office situated at the border in Padborg/Pattburg. The region does however also understand itself as a platform for a common position in ongoing discussions with decision-makers in Copenhagen, Berlin, and Kiel. This includes an interest in areas and questions of cross-border cooperation in a European context,³⁷ although “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” is not exactly a frontrunner of European regional politics. One could, however, say that the region for all its pragmatic and less formalised or judicial aspects actually works very well with capacity building in the cross-border cooperation.³⁸

The territory of the border region overlaps the former Duchy of Schleswig, but due to the division and the annexation of the two parts into different nation-states the present-day region has lost its historical borders. On both sides administrative reforms have changed the territory, and in the present neither the Danish nor the German part have retained an independent administrative delimitation. The region “Sønderjylland-Schleswig” only comprises parts of historic Schleswig, and both sides respectively are now included in bigger regions with administrative centres outside the regions themselves. The region is situated within the Schengen area. Denmark signed the treaty in 1996, but ratification only began in 2001. The open border existed until 2016 when the Danish government decided to re-introduce border control. Although this was planned as a merely temporary provision it has never been lifted again. There are no signs that the open border will be re-introduced in a foreseeable future. Too many potential arguments can be brought forward to prevent this, and the EU has, for now, not been too eager to intervene. Today there are controls with random checks at the most frequented border crossings.

Border regions

Historically, Schleswig was one of the richer regions of the Oldenburg Monarchy. With the national conflict of the 19th century and the division in 1920, it turned into a relatively weak region suffering from the border and a peripheric position in both nation-states. As a predominantly agrarian region, the geographical position in the middle of the Cimbric peninsula had given historical Schleswig an important role in trade and commerce. Flensburg, the North Schleswigian town of Aabenraa, the islands in the Baltic, but very much also the Frisian islands at the West coast of Schleswig had a reputation for their merchant ships and naval activities. They took part in trade all over the Baltic and the North Atlantic, and especially Flensburg profited from the colonial trade of the Oldenburg Monarchy.

The border of 1920 cut off trade and traditional contacts inside the region. Flensburg is still the dominant economic centre of Schleswig, while the region's Danish part is known for impressive feats of entrepreneurship. Most notably, Danfoss and Linak on the island Als have a strong position in the regional economy.

³⁷ Regional Office homepage www.region.dk / www.region.de

³⁸ Luise Neumann (ed.), Chancen in der Euroregion Schleswig/Sønderjylland: attraktive Bildungsangebote von Ausbildungsbetrieben und Hochschulen, Akademien, Fachschulen und Institutionen: Messehandbuch der vocatium Flensburg 2023.

Ireland-Northern Ireland



The land border between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, which separates Northern Ireland from its southern neighbour on the island of Ireland, stretches in a meandering way for 500kms, from Lough Foyle in the north-west of the island to Carlingford Lough in the north-east. There are no legally agreed national maritime boundaries in either of these bodies of water that lie at each end of the border.

Much of the border region is rural in nature, with a comparative lack of significant urban centres. Whilst the north-west contains Northern Ireland’s second largest city – Derry/Londonderry – with a population of just over 83,000 according to the 2011 Census, the next largest population centres are located on either side of the eastern end of the border, where Dundalk in the Republic of Ireland had a population of 39,004 (2016 Census), and Newry in Northern Ireland had a population of almost 27,000 (2011 Census). In contrast, away from the

border, Northern Ireland's capital city, Belfast, boasted an estimated population of 343,500, and Ireland's capital, Dublin, had a population of almost 1.2 million.

Currently, almost 20% of the population of the island of Ireland is resident in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region, with almost 20% of registered businesses also located there. For our purposes, the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region comprises the territory between the two red lines on the map. In other words, it consists of five Local Government Districts (LGDs) in Northern Ireland (Derry City and Strabane; Fermanagh and Omagh; Mid Ulster; Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon; and Newry, Mourne and Down), and six counties in the Republic of Ireland (Donegal; Leitrim; Sligo; Cavan; Monaghan; and Louth).

The border's meandering nature, cutting through towns, farms and villages, is due to its origins in 1921. Following Ireland's War of Independence (1919-1921), 1921 was the year that saw the establishment of Northern Ireland and its six constituent counties (local electoral units) remain part of the United Kingdom and under British rule, while the independence of the rest of the island of Ireland and its twenty-six counties was secured. Northern Ireland's geographical limits were set out in the Government of Ireland Act 1920, which came into law on 23 December 1920, and stated that:

“Northern Ireland shall consist of the parliamentary counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, and the parliamentary boroughs of Belfast and Londonderry, and Southern Ireland shall consist of so much of Ireland as is not comprised within the said parliamentary counties and boroughs.”

This political geography and the border it created left three counties – Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan – within what would eventually become the Republic of Ireland, even though they along with the six counties that now constituted Northern Ireland formed one of the four provinces on the island of Ireland: Ulster (the other three being Connaught, Leinster and Munster). Driving this division was the desire of Unionist politicians in Ulster to ensure a majority Protestant population in Northern Ireland loyal to British rule, which from their perspective would not have been assured if Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan with their majority Catholic populations had been included within its boundaries. This did not prevent the border and the separation it represented from becoming a point of contestation.

When thinking of border management in the context of the island of Ireland, it is important to take into account this history of contestation and its legacy. The border campaign carried out by the IRA (Irish Republican Army) from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s presaged the period from 1969 to 1998 that became known as “the troubles”, which left more than 3,500 dead and many more thousands injured. For most of this time the Ireland-Northern Ireland border was the most militarised area in Europe west of the Berlin Wall, as security forces tried to prevent the cross-border movement of terrorist activity. This not only meant security checkpoints and military observation posts and fortifications along the Northern Ireland side of the border, but also the closure of many border crossings, cutting off many communities from their natural hinterlands on the other side of the border.

Although the Ireland-Northern Ireland border would no longer be a customs frontier from midnight of 31 December 1992 as a consequence of Ireland and the United Kingdom having joined the European Economic Community in 1973 and the Single European Act of 1986, its nature as a security border would not begin to change until the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. It was only in the wake of this Agreement – which marked the transition to what could be termed a “post-conflict” context – that the process of the removal of security infrastructure and the re-opening of crossing points could begin, leading to the current “invisibility” of a border between two Member States of the European Union.

However, as a consequence of the United Kingdom’s decision in 2016 to leave the European Union, the status of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland has changed once again. It is now effectively an external border of the EU, even if the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland that forms part of the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and EU means that Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that continues to have access to the EU’s single market for goods. The manner in which this was achieved, by requiring controls on goods moving across the Irish Sea from Great Britain into Northern Ireland in order to avoid a “hard” border on the island of Ireland, continues to be contested by Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland, who see this as placing a border between parts of the United Kingdom. Therefore, the issue of “border management” is one that is surrounded by a degree of contestation and one that requires a significant amount of sensitivity.

Hungary-Romania



Terms

Border = ‘határ’ (in Hungarian), ‘frontiera’ (in Romanian)

Geographic features

The eastern region of Hungary and the western region of Romania share a border that spans 448 km in length between the three-country corner within the historical region of ‘Banat’, 15 km south of Szeged, where the Hungarian-Serbian and Romanian-Serbian borders meet and the border triangle of Hungary, Romania and Ukraine to the north. The border crosses the Pannonian Plain representing 415.8 km of terrestrial and 32.2 km of fluvial (along the Mureş/Maros, Criş/Körös and Someş/Szamos rivers) border. Notwithstanding the short common river sections, no natural barriers disconnect the Romanian and Hungarian border areas.

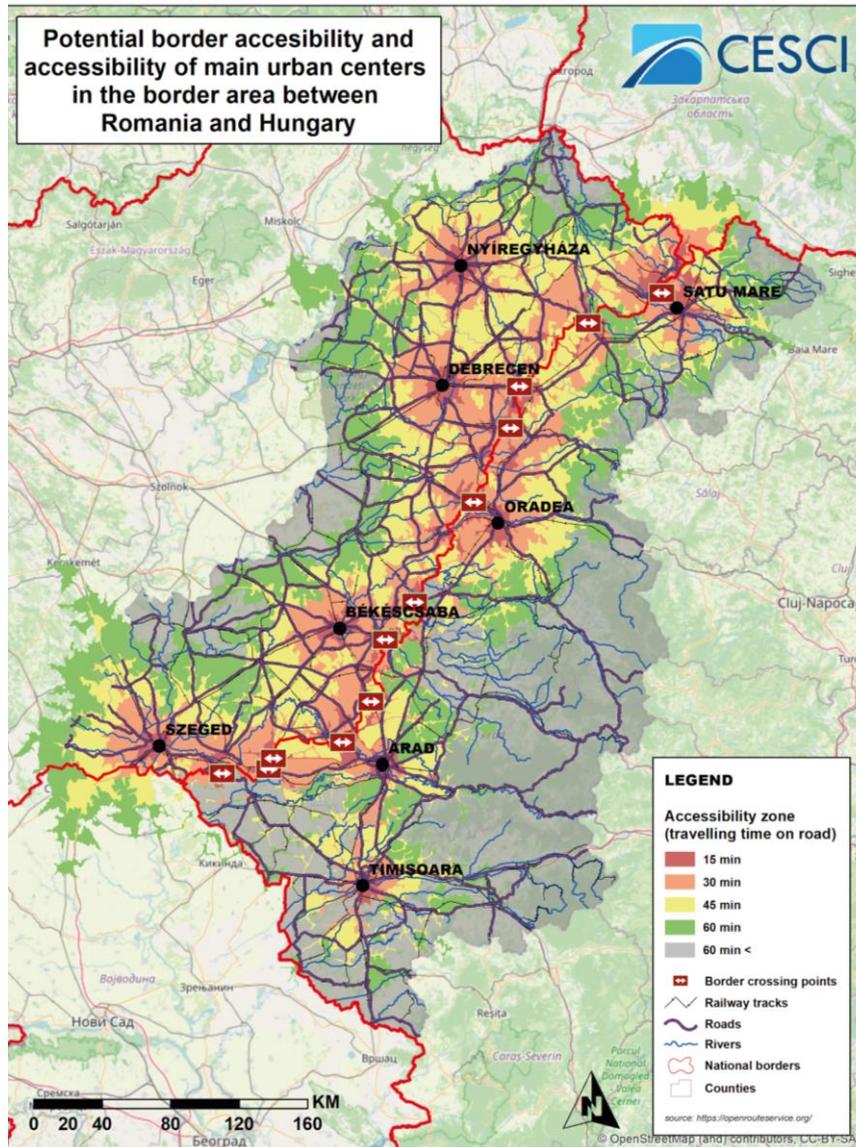
Status of the Border

The present Hungarian-Romanian border is relatively new as it had never existed prior to the Trianon Treaty signed in 1920. The administratively demarcated border line was changed in 1940, as a result of the 2nd Vienna Award when the northern part of Transylvania was re-occupied by Hungary; and in 1947 when the Peace Treaty of Paris re-established the status quo defined in 1920. Thanks to historical movements, both the Hungarian minority (mostly in the North) is present on the Romanian side, and the Romanian minority on the Hungarian side (mostly in the South). The minorities play a role of bridges between the two, culturally and linguistically different nations providing a fertile environment for bilingualism and cooperation. The border is an intra-EU, but still external-Schengen border which means that some barrier effects have already been eliminated but the border control still generates difficulties to free flow of goods, persons, services and capital. In spite of that Romania has fulfilled all the technical and administrative requirements of the Schengen accession as early as 2011, the country's entry has been impeded by recurrent vetoes of different EU Member States (the last case happened in 2022 when, regardless of the positive results of the evaluation about the country's preparedness, and the supporting attitude of all EU institutions and the large majority of the Member States, Austria vetoed the accession which generated fierce reactions on behalf of the entire Romanian population, and the Romanian ambassador to Vienna was recalled).

Physical permeability

Apart from air travel, border crossing is possible at 12 road points and along 5 railway corridors. During the last 10 years further 10 border crossing road connections have been constructed which are not open but with strict time limits only (e.g. once a week) – if at all. The reason for this failure stands in the permanently prolonged deadlines of Romania's joining the Schengen zone as the joining would make the construction of border control infrastructure useless. It means that the average density of crossings is more than 37 km which is four times higher than the density along the Austrian-Hungarian but still by 60% lower than at the (mostly fluvial) Bulgarian-Romanian or Hungarian-Croatian borders.

Potential cross-border functional urban zones and border crossings along the Romanian-Hungarian border:



Source: CESCO

Demography

The border region itself is not legally defined, neither institutionally constituted. The most common definition used is the one provided by the Interreg programme, which delimits the border region based on the territory of the counties adjacent to the border. The eight counties cover an area of 50,435.31 km² in total. Four of them are located in Hungary (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés, Csongrád-Csanád), the other four are in Romania (Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad, Timiș). Apart from the region's largest cities (county seats) which are Timișoara (250 th. inh.), Debrecen (200 th.) and Oradea (185 th.), Arad (145 th.) and Szeged (160 th.) Nyíregyháza (115 th.), and Satu Mare (100 th.), as well as Békéscsaba (60 th.), the region is largely rural. With a total population of almost 4 million people, of which 1.8 million live on the Hungarian side and 2 million on the Romanian side, the border region is characterised by a population density below the national and EU averages. One third of the total population is concentrated in the county seats. Over the past decade, notwithstanding Timișoara, the region has consistently experienced population decline due to negative net migration and negative

natural reproduction trends. In general, the natural reproduction decline on the Hungarian side was twice as high as on the Romanian side (-3.8%, versus -1.9%). Especially, the emigration from Hajdú-Bihar, Bihor and Satu Mare counties represents a big challenge.

Socio-economic features

In terms of economic productivity, the border region is substantially far below the EU GDP per capita average, with major differences between the counties. While Hungarian counties account for 18.3% of the population and 10.40% of Hungary's GDP, Romania's population accounts for 18.70% of the total, but the region generates only 10.33% of the national GDP. The GDP per capita in the northern part of the region (Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg) is only slightly more than a quarter of the EU-27 average and even only half of the national value, while Timișoara is the economic powerhouse of the region. The production of wealth is based rather on industry in the Romanian and on services in the Hungarian border area. The difference in salaries, especially in industry, construction and services (about 40% higher in Hungary than in Romania), means that twice as many Romanians say they cross the border for work or business reasons than Hungarians in the border region. Although unemployment and long-term unemployment rates are very low, the population at risk of poverty is far above the EU average. There are universities and educational institutions in the region that offer good opportunities for higher education, but keeping the young population in the local labour market is a common challenge.

Cross-border integration

No geographic barriers impede cooperation and cross-border integration. Even though there is a considerable diversity in the region, it can be observed that the territorial concentration of population, the demographic trends and economic characteristics, suggest that the border regions have common challenges: both regions are rather rural areas and are affected by depopulation and ageing tendencies which is also expected to decrease the share of economically active population in the long-term. Language and cultural differences are perceived by some as a potential limitation to cross-border cooperation, however, the preservation of Hungarian-to-Hungarian and Romanian-to-Romanian relations represents a major asset. At the same time, the very low level of mutual trust favours the above ethnically homogeneous initiatives instead of enhancing cross-cultural learning processes. Instead of geographic or economic discontinuities, this is the factor hindering the enhancement of cross-border ties the most. The level of cross-border mobility and the development of integrated functional zones are at an embryonic stage – even in comparison with Hungary's western and northern borders – not to mention the western European examples. The most salient cross-border integration processes can be observed around the larger cities located near the border, namely: Satu Mare, Debrecen, Oradea, Arad and Szeged.

Competences regarding border regulation

Introduction

When we speak of EU border management, we must first distinguish the management of internal and external borders.

With the *Schengen Agreement*, signed in 1985, states agreed on the removal of border control and on the freedom of movement. The agreement is supplemented by the *Schengen Convention*, signed in 1990 and entered into force in 1995, which sets out the arrangements and security measures for this area without internal border controls.³⁹ Following these agreements, measures within the EU's internal borders have been put in place, such as mobile border area surveillance and a stronger cooperation of police. The Schengen Agreement also includes, for example, judicial cooperation between the Schengen states and access by the member states to the Schengen Information System (SIS). The SIS is the most successful integrated tool of cooperation in terms of border management as it allows State's authorities to share information, used in immigration, police, customs and judicial authorities.

The overall legal source for legal regulation is the Schengen Border Code. On the European Commission's website, there is a webpage on the temporary reintroduction of border control by Member States Among borders studied by the FRONTEM network and that are within the Schengen area, the ones currently concerned by temporary reintroduction of border control are the France-Belgium and the France-Germany borders (notified to the EC the 1st of May 2023).⁴⁰ These controls are carried out by Member States but are constrained by the Schengen Borders Code (SBC), namely by art. 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29, limiting the reintroduction of border controls in time (maximum 6 months). The SBC also makes it mandatory for states to give a justification for their reintroduction of border controls, as it must be linked to a serious threat to public policy or internal security. This justification can be commented upon by an opinion of the European Commission, though the Commission cannot overrule the reintroduction of border control itself.

Regarding the management of external borders of the EU, Member States benefit from the support of Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency), established in 2004.⁴¹ The migration crisis in 2015 led the Member States to create a new agency (but *de facto* strengthening Frontex) in order to face it, and a similar reinforcement happened in 2019.⁴²

³⁹ „Schengen Agreement and Convention“, EUR-Lex [online], https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN-DE/TXT/?from=DE&uri=LEGISSUM%3Aschengen_agreement. Accessed 17 May 2023.

⁴⁰ Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en. Accessed 02 June 2023.

⁴¹ Frontex was created with Council Regulation (EC) 2007/2004.

⁴² A. Wawrzusiszyn, “The role of Frontex in enhancing transborder security of the European Union,” *Internal Security*, vol. 14, n°1, 2022, pp. 77-93. Doi:10.5604/01.3001.0016.0374.

V. Meissner, “The European border and coast guard agency Frontex after the migration crisis: Towards a ‘Superagency’?” In J. Pollak & P. Slominski (eds.), *The role of EU agencies in the Eurozone and migration crisis*, 2021, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Frontex has however since been the subject of various criticism, may it be about violation of human rights but also of mismanagement.⁴³

The COVID-19 crisis has had a major influence in how European states consider border management. Sudden and unilateral border closures shocked inhabitants as well as observers and recalled the State's central role about the management of borders. States installed physical barriers at their own borders, forbidding border crossings; in other words, it showed that European integration has not succeeded in preventing "reborderisation"⁴⁴. This phenomenon deeply disturbed the cross-border way of life of local inhabitants and revealed how dependent cross-border territories are on each other (as for cross-border workers for instance, especially in the health sector). If M. Eckardt, K. Kappner and N. Wolf conclude in an August 2020 paper that the closure of borders effectively helped with stopping the propagation of COVID-19,⁴⁵ there are disagreements on, if states' borders were the ideal place to "reborderise," especially in the light of Art. 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union on territorial cohesion.⁴⁶

Despite the EU not being competent on the management of borders, it shapes cohesion across internal borders, and is competent in combating cross-border health threats by coordinating, steering and supporting actions of Member States on grounds of Decision 1082/2013/EU.⁴⁷ This decision was repealed by Regulation 2022/2371,⁴⁸ aiming at ensuring solidarity among Member States.⁴⁹ During the pandemic, the action of the Union relating to border crossing has been the guaranteeing, on the one hand, of commuters' ability to cross internal borders, albeit in 'essential' sectors, and on the other, of the freedom of movement for goods across the Union.⁵⁰ The coordination effort pursued by the Union is visible, for instance, in the Council Recommendation 2020/1475 on a "coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic."⁵¹ The EU's coordination efforts can also be seen in the communication of the European Commission on the "Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures," built upon the meeting of the Members of the European

⁴³ J. J. Rijpma, "Frontex: Successful blame shifting of the Member States?" *Elcano Newsletter*, n°66, 2010.

N. Perkowski, "There are voices in every direction": Organizational decoupling in Frontex," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 57, n°5, 2019, pp. 1182-1199.

J. P. Kalkman, "Frontex: A literature review," *International migration*, vol. 59, n°1, 2021, pp. 165-181.

⁴⁴ On "reborderisation", see B. Wassenberg, B. Reitel & J. Peyrony, "Introduction," In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical dictionary on borders, cross-border cooperation and European integration*, 2020, Peter Lang, Brussels, pp. 35-53.

⁴⁵ M. Eckardt, K. Kappner & N. Wolf, "Covid-19 across European regions: The role of border controls," *Covid Economics*, n°42, pp. 94-111.

⁴⁶ J. Peyrony, "The effects of Covid-19-induced border closures on cross-border regions," In J. W. Scott (eds.), *Cross-border review*, 2021, Central European service for cross-border initiatives, Budapest, pp. 15-24.

⁴⁷ Decision n°1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2013 on serious cross-border threats to health. Retrieved from: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2013/1082/oj>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁴⁸ Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health. Retrieved from: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2371/oj>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁴⁹ V. Delhomme & T. Hervey, "The European Union's response to the Covid-19 crisis and (the legitimacy of) the Union's legal order," *Yearbook of European Law*, 2023.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵¹ European Commission, "Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures 2020/C 126/01, *Official Journal*, C 126, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0417\(06\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020XC0417(06)). Accessed 2 June 2023.

Council on the 26th of March 2020. The communication had a special section for the reopening of internal borders,⁵² even though neither the communication nor the European Council meeting did prevent confusions at European internal borders.⁵³

Competences on border regulation also depend on the structure of a state, as more or less amplitude is given to sub-state entities regarding border regulation. For instance, Germany gives much amplitude to its federal states, *Länder*, for health-related issues, which can make cooperation with a heavily centralised French state difficult.

France-Germany

The *Schengen Convention*, which came into force in 1995, has significantly expanded the possibilities of police cooperation between France and Germany. Since then, the police can, for example, pursue criminals across the border or continue observations of suspects in the neighbouring country. However, there are very strict regulations concerning cross-border observation and pursuit. These measures concern, for example, only precisely defined offences. Furthermore, police services need the neighbour state's approval to observe or to pursue criminals on their territory. As Germany and France have been Schengen Member States from the beginning on, they have access to the Schengen Information System (SIS), which contains personal and material data, especially for tracing purposes.

Besides the Schengen Agreement and Convention, the *Prüm Treaty* represents another important step for police cooperation as it aimed towards a deepened cooperation in the fields of terrorism, crime and illegal migration. In 2005, it was originally concluded outside the European legal framework as an intergovernmental agreement between now 13 EU Member States, among them France and Germany. The treaty regulates extended cooperation in terms of simplified data exchange (access to vehicle registers and comparison of DNA databases) and operational cooperation between police, law enforcement and immigration authorities.⁵⁴

The competences for border protection lie in the central state of France with the “Direction centrale de la police aux frontières” (DCPAF), which is part of the Police Nationale and thus subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The Gendarmerie Nationale is part of the French military and falls under the jurisdiction of both the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior; it performs policing tasks in rural areas and has, amongst others, responsibilities in the field of counter-terrorism.

In Germany, border protection, railway police as well as air security are part of the remit of the Federal Police, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior. Since other police matters that do

⁵² See in particular p. 9 of the European Commission Communication.

⁵³ See for instance: AFP, “Coronavirus: pagaille et déception à la frontière franco-belge,” *Le Soir*, 30 May 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.lesoir.be/304126/article/2020-05-30/coronavirus-pagaille-et-deception-la-frontiere-franco-belge>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁵⁴ Bundesinnenministerium, “Zusammenarbeit über Grenzen hinweg“. Retrieved from: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/sicherheit/nationale-und-internationale-zusammenarbeit/grenzueberschreitende-polizeiliche-zusammenarbeit/grenzueberschreitende-polizeiliche-zusammenarbeit-node.html>. Accessed 17 May 2023.

not exclusively belong to the federal competences fall under the jurisdiction of the states of Germany (Länder), the specific protection police or criminal investigation police can take on different organisational forms depending on the respective Land.

The legal basis at bilateral level for police and customs cooperation at the Franco-German border is the *Mondorf Agreement*, as the first implementation of the Schengen Convention; a reform of the agreement is currently planned. It came into force in 2000 and is about cooperation between police and customs authorities.⁵⁵ It applies to all police services of the three German federal states (Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland), to the federal police as well as to the customs administrations with local jurisdiction and to the French Police Nationale, the Gendarmerie Nationale and the French custom office. As geographical areas, it comprises the administrative districts of Freiburg and Karlsruhe in Baden-Württemberg, the police districts of the police headquarters Rheinpfalz and Westpfalz in the federal state Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland as well as the French border departments Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle.⁵⁶

In 2019, in the context of *the Treaty of Aachen* to intensify cooperation on European security and defence, an administrative agreement on the creation of a Franco-German task force, which operates especially along the Franco-German border, was signed. This unit consists of officers from the German Federal Police and the French Gendarmerie Nationale and provides support during major events and incidents as well as in the event of disasters and serious accidents.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Ministers of the Interior have signed only recently an agreement on the creation of a joint Franco-German unit to combat illegal immigration, to carry out joint patrols on the shared border to better control migratory flows.⁵⁸

Away from the intergovernmental to the regional level, it was in the Upper Rhine Region that the first joint police and customs cooperation centre in the European Union was established in 1999 in Offenburg (Germany), based on the *Mondorf Agreement*. Since 2002, this joint centre is located in Kehl (Germany) where 60 officers from federal and regional (Baden-Württemberg) police as well as customs work together with their French colleagues. In 2022, the joint office received around 22 000 requests (e.g. information request and person checks) and thus, has become an important actor when it comes to exchange of information and in terms of the security partnership with France.⁵⁹ Linguistic support for this cooperation is provided by the German-French Language Centre as a joint institution of the police of Baden-Württemberg and

⁵⁵ Ministerium des Inneren, für Digitalisierung und Kommunen Baden-Württemberg, “Zusammenarbeit mit den Nachbarstaaten“. Retrieved from: <https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/sicherheit/polizei/nationale-und-internationale-polizeiliche-zusammenarbeit/zusammenarbeit-mit-den-nachbarstaaten/>, Accessed 15 May 2023.

⁵⁶ „Gesetz zu dem Abkommen vom 9. Oktober 1997 zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Französischen Republik über die Zusammenarbeit der Polizei und Zollbehörden in den Grenzgebieten“, Bundesgesetzblatt 1998 (38), 14.09.1998. Retrieved from [https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*\[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf'\]#_bgbl_%2F%2F*\[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf'\]_1685019287769](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf']#_bgbl_%2F%2F*[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf']_1685019287769)

⁵⁷ Bundesinnenministerium, “Deutsch-Französische Einsatzinheit geht an den Start“ [Press release], 12 October 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2019/10/deutsch-franzoeseische-polizeieinheit.html>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

⁵⁸ Bundesinnenministerium, “Deutschland und Frankreich: Gemeinsam gegen irreguläre Migration“ [Press release], 23 January 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/kurzmeldungen/DE/2023/01/dt-frz-ministerrat.html> Accessed 6 June 2023.

⁵⁹ Centre de Coopération Policière et Douanière / Gemeinsames Zentrum, *Jahresbericht 2022*.

the French Gendarmerie Nationale, situated in the police academy in the city of Lahr in Baden-Württemberg since 1999.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in the Upper Rhine region, a joint water police station was established in 2011 as the first joint operational police station in Europe. Here, the police of the Baden-Württemberg and the gendarmerie of the Alsace region work together, e.g. control the shipping traffic and patrol the water, monitors navigation and prosecutes violations of navigation law. By merging the water police forces, personnel and equipment can be used more effectively and presence on the Rhine and therefore safety can be increased.⁶¹ Another recent example of cooperation is the binationally staffed police post in Rust (Germany), created in 2018. Up to 14 German and French police officers from the police of Baden-Württemberg and the Gendarmerie Nationale work together.⁶²

The Greater Region also has a joint Centre for police and customs cooperation, established 2003 in Luxembourg. The centre has the distinctive feature that not only two countries cooperate at the border, but four. In total, 40 employees from Germany, Luxembourg, France and Belgium work here together.⁶³ Geographically, the centre operates in the French departments Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Ardennes and Meuse, in the entire territory of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, five judicial districts in Belgium (Dinant, Arlon, Neufchâteau, La Marche and Eupen) as well as the entire territory of Saarland and the districts of the police headquarters Rheinpfalz, Westpfalz and Trier in Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany.⁶⁴ Its main tasks include the exchange of police information in the context of bilateral and international relations and between police units: in 2019 the Centre has recorded 7555 requests from other authorities, such as public prosecutor's offices or Customs and Excise Agencies.⁶⁵

France-Belgium

Information presented in this part are taken from a focus-group organised by FRONTTEM in Mons on “Security, traffic and integration” the 27th and 28th February 2023. It consisted of 3 round-tables between representatives of organisations and institutions working at the cross-border zone, either on security and border regulation (customs and police), urban and trade

⁶⁰ „Gesetz zu dem Abkommen vom 9. Oktober 1997 zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Französischen Republik über die Zusammenarbeit der Polizei und Zollbehörden in den Grenzgebieten“, Bundesgesetzblatt 1998 (38), 14.09.1998. Retrieved from [https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*\[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf\]#_bgbl_%2F%2F*\[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf\]_1685019287769](https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?start=%2F%2F*[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf]#_bgbl_%2F%2F*[%40attr_id%3D'bgbl298s2479.pdf]_1685019287769).

⁶¹ Baden-Württemberg, “Deutsch-französische Wasserschutzpolizeistation in Kehl eingeweiht“ [Press release], 9 March 2012. Retrieved from: <https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse/pressemitteilung/pid/deutsch-franzoesische-wasserschutzpolizeistation-in-kehl-eingeweiht>, Accessed 22 May 2023.

⁶² Ministry of the Interior Baden-Württemberg, “Einweihung des Polizeipostens Rust“ [Press release], 2 September 2021. Retrieved from: <https://im.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse-und-oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/pressemitteilung/pid/einweihung-des-polizeipostens-rust>. Accessed 22 May 2023.

⁶³ „Zahlreiche Anfragen an grenzüberschreitende Polizeistelle“, *inRLP*, 25 January 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.inrlp.de/rlp/zahlreiche-anfragen-an-grenzueberschreitende-polizeistelle-art-5627802>. Accessed 15/05/2023.

⁶⁴ Rapport de l’Assemblée Nationale N° 1931 et N° 1932 (13 May 2014), *assemblee.nationale.fr*. Retrieved from <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rapports/r1931.pdf>. Accessed 11 July 2023.

⁶⁵ The Government of the Great Duchy of Luxembourg, “International Relations Department”, 6 March 2023. Retrieved from: <https://police.public.lu/en/votre-police/a-propos-de-la-police/direction-relations-internationales.html>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

development, environmental and cultural stakes. This part was also completed with notes of the round table of the 17th of November 2022 in Tournai notably on subjects related to police cooperation across the Franco-Belgian border.

In the EU, the customs office has control over a strip of land 60km wide from the border, and in key hubs like ports, airports, international train stations etc. There are 3 scales of cross-border cooperation in terms of security. The first is located at the international level. Both Belgium and France are part of the Schengen area, and thus members of the Schengen Information System. The Prüm treaty, nicknamed “Schengen III” and signed in 2007 by seven EU member states⁶⁶, aims at “stepping up cross-border cooperation, particularly in combatting terrorism, cross-border crime and illegal migration”⁶⁷. The second level is binational, by treaties like the Tournai I and II agreements. Tournai II allowed for policemen from France to do a U-turn in Belgium if necessary in case of a chase. This possibility was also used for French policemen to grab fries on the other side of the border while carrying weapons and wearing the uniform. Belgium is currently holding a working group about the possibility to pursue this binational cooperation under the form of a Tournai III agreement, comprising sections about cooperation in times of emergency, on the generalisation of information exchanges (notably about petty crime). Finally, cross-border cooperation in security is also more localised at precise practices between police agents and officers.

Since the Franco-Belgian border lies within the core of the European Union, the Schengen area made the border crossing as smooth and fluid as possible for goods. 2015 was the year when some border controls and identity checks were reintroduced after a wave of terrorist attacks. The missed opportunity to arrest Salah Abdelslam when the French police checked his identity near Cambrai after committing the November-13th terrorist attacks made the French government extend the state of emergency.

Common operations between the French and Belgian police are sometimes programmed despite giving less and less possibilities of unplanned (usually urgent) operations. The Tournai I and II agreements allow for the presence of in fact police officers and agents on the other side of the border in precise cases, such as after a race on the motorway.

The proximity of the border of the United Kingdom makes the northern part of the Franco-Belgian border a hotspot, notably in terms of human trafficking. At the time this section is written, France had reintroduced border checks, for reasons linked to the “risk of arrival of persons who could pose a threat among the flow of refugees, irregular migration, [...]” for the timespan November 2022 to April 2023.⁶⁸ On a multilateral perspective, on December 8th 2022, ministers of interior and/or migration of the UK, Belgium, France, Germany and the

⁶⁶ Austria, Belgium France, Germany, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and Spain. Since 2007, 18 other EU member states became Decision Participants (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), and 4 non-EU member states participate (Iceland, Norway Liechtenstein and Switzerland).

⁶⁷ The text of the treaty of Prüm is available on the following link: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/05/st10/st10900.en05.pdf>. Accessed 28 March 2023.

⁶⁸ “Temporary Reintroduction of border Control”, European Commission webpage. Retrieved from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en. Accessed 28 March 2023.

Netherlands (accompanied by representatives from Europol and FRONTEX) met. They jointly stated that they would set up a yearly ministerial meeting in order to discuss on (1) common progress on secondary movements across Europe and the Channel and on (2) tackling migrant smuggling as well as migratory flows into Europe and cooperation with third countries.

On a more sectorial approach, specific governance structures have been set up since 2008 for health cooperation along the Franco-Belgian border: the European Economic Interest Grouping (GEIE) Franco-Belgian observatory for health numbers⁶⁹ and 7 Organised Zones for Access to Cross-Border Care⁷⁰. These ZOASTs are true regulatory arrangements for cross-border healthcare districts, they cover the whole Franco-Belgian border area and have become references for healthcare cooperation in the EU between hospitals closed to the border. Two of the densest ZOASTs are the ZOAST MRTW-URSA in rural Flanders and urban Lille area, and the ZOAST Ardennes around the *Doigt de Givet*. This cooperation has emerged after several decades of intense cooperation such as in the *Thiérache* region.

If zoomed in, the competences of cross border cooperation are diffused among the different authorities of the border zone. For instance, in France, regions are competent for economic development, hence making the *Hauts-de-France* and *Grand Est* regions one of the main interlocutors of the Flemish government (fusion of the Flemish Community and Flemish region) and of the French Community and Wallonia region. As for a concrete example, there is a project of digging (or rather enlarging) a canal between the Seine (Oise) and the Scheldt Rivers. This canal's main partners are the French State and the *Hauts-de-France* region, but also all the *départements* impacted (*Nord, Oise, Pas-de-Calais, Somme, Aisne* and *Val d'Oise*). On the Belgian side, the Wallonian *Public Service* (Wallonian government's administration) and the *Vlaamse Waterweg* (government agency of the Flemish government) are the main partners for the project *Seine-Nord-Europe*.⁷¹

Denmark-Germany

Because the Danish-German border is an EU border, there is a Schengen Information System and a common border protection structure in place. Controls are carried out separately on each side. In the situation of crises, the established structures can experience crises, too. Already in connection with the first strong migration movements of 2015, border control was introduced at the Danish-German border in 2016. Inhabitants of the area experienced a resumption of the border control subsequently followed by an almost total border closure during the COVID-19 crisis. In both cases, the right of a temporal reintroduction of border controls at internal EU borders because of a potential threat to internal security had been used. In May 2022, Denmark prolonged temporal border controls until the 11th of November 2022 while Germany did not yet

⁶⁹ “*Observatoire Franco-Belge de la Santé (OFBS)*” [Franco-Belgian Observatory for Health], which organises yearly since 2016 a cross border forum on health.

⁷⁰ “*Zones Organisées d’Accès aux Soins Transfrontaliers (ZOAST)*” [Organised Zones for Cross-Border Care Access], created since 2008, cf. Delecrosse, E., Lewalle, H., Leloup, F., *European Crossborder Cooperation on Health : theory and practice, DG Sanco & DG Regio*, European Commission, Brussels, 95p., 2017.

⁷¹ See the website section over the partners of the *Canal Seine-Nord-Europe*: https://www.canal-seine-nord-europe.fr/les-acteurs/les-partenaires/?doing_wp_cron=1685963448.4927320480346679687500. Accessed 5 June 2023.

re-introduce border controls on the Danish border.⁷² The main reason for the Danish decision was the terrorist threat that had been ranked as very high by the Danish Terror Analysis Centre⁷³ – which means, in practice, that people crossing the border to Denmark can be controlled and have to plan for waiting accordingly while border crossing to Germany takes place without any control.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

The border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland marks the limits of two sovereign states. Although a central element of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was the establishment of a power-sharing devolved government in Northern Ireland, regulation of the border is not generally within its competences, and lies instead with the UK Government in London along with the Irish Government in Dublin. Immigration policy, for example – deciding who can and who can't freely cross the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – is a matter for the Dublin and London governments, as is the enforcement of the two administrations' policies in this area. It is important to note, in this regard, that although both the UK and the Republic of Ireland joined the EU neither of them were within the Schengen area. Long pre-dating their joint membership of the EU, and resulting from an informal agreement between London and Dublin in 1923 whereby each country would enforce the other's immigration policy, the Common Travel Area was established to allow for most people who had legally entered either country to move between them without needing to go through passport or immigration controls. This Common Travel Area would later include the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, and in effect avoided the need to implement passport and immigration checks at the Ireland-Northern Ireland border.

However, bearing in mind that many nationals requiring a visa or other permission to enter either the Republic of Ireland or the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) have no legal right to cross the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the UK's post-Brexit immigration policy has arguably highlighted how the implementation of a reserved competence does not take properly into account the realities of cross-border life on the island of Ireland. As a result of recent legislation, the UK Government will be introducing the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), which most people not legally resident will need to apply for *before* travelling to the UK. This will include non-Irish EU citizens. In effect, this means unless remedies are put in place, a non-Irish EU citizen living in the Republic of Ireland would need to apply for an ETA before crossing the border to enter Northern Ireland. The enforcement of this measure will not, according to the UK Government, take place *at* the Ireland-Northern Ireland border, and will not fall to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, but rather to UK Border Force. Any enforcement by UK authorities, therefore, will presumably take place *away* from the border. Notwithstanding, and as a result of the operation of the Common Travel Area, Irish authorities regularly carry out immigration checks on passengers

⁷² The “temporary” control is becoming more and more permanent. It has now been prolonged until May 2023. Cf. for instance “Grænsekontrol fylder syv år: Ny regering ædrer intet”, 13 January 2023, in: Græseforeningen (graenseforeningen.dk/nyheder/graensekontrol-fylder-syv-aar-ny-regering-aendrert-intet).

⁷³ Flensborg Avis, 5 August 2022.

travelling on public transport (mainly buses) from Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland, although these also do not take place immediately *at* the border.

Closures of the border, which would be an extremely sensitive matter given the particular context on the island of Ireland, cannot generally be made by the devolved government of Northern Ireland, unless permission is sought and given by the UK Government in London. Indeed, the overriding ambition to maintain the land border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland open and “invisible”, without any controls and border infrastructure, led to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland that is part of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, which set out the legal basis for the UK’s departure from the EU. In effect, the Protocol removed the need for controls at the land border whilst still protecting the EU’s Single Market by placing them at sea ports, thereby establishing a maritime border between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. A matter of continued contestation from unionist political parties in Northern Ireland and the UK Government, the Protocol provides for shared competences between the EU and UK Government on the movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, while also giving the European Court of Justice the authority to rule over aspects of the Protocol that give Northern Ireland continued access to the Single Market for goods. However, at the time of writing the UK Government introduced proposed legislation (the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill) being considered by the UK parliament that would unilaterally dis-apply the central elements of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland relating, among other things, to the movement of goods and the role of the European Court of Justice.

Finally, it is important to note that the future constitutional status of Northern Ireland, and therefore of the status of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, also ultimately lies within the competence of the UK Government. The Good Friday Agreement sets out that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (a UK Government Minister) will call for a poll to determine whether the majority of the people of Northern Ireland were of the opinion that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland. However, the Agreement also declares that the UK Government Minister will only do so if ‘it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom’.

Hungary-Romania

Border management structures

In Hungary, the border police are integrated within the national police force, while in Romania the two bodies exist independently. Thus, Hungarian police authorities work together with their Romanian counterparts in a multiple way. The Border Police are authorities commanded by the Ministry of Interior in both countries and they are the specialised state institutions, which carry out the tasks related to the surveillance and control of the crossing of the state border, the prevention and fight against illegal migration and against acts specific to cross-border criminality. Common border protection bodies do not exist but the cooperation is strong which can be justified by the joint actions against illegal migration and the harmonised measures taken in favour of the approximately 5-6000 Ukrainian refugees crossing the Romanian-Hungarian border on a daily basis.

Border control system

Prior to the EU accession, a double border checking system was in place, the travellers were controlled both at the Romanian and the Hungarian border which lasted sometimes half a day. The controlling procedure was strict, terrifying and (very often) humiliating. Those who wanted to be exempted from the procedure had to corrupt the border guards and the customs officers. Thus, corruption became a daily routine with its materialised currencies and processes. After the regime changes took place in both countries, the procedures were modified according to the EU integration process. First, the strictness and the terrifying aspects of border crossing have been alleviated. In 2004, when Hungary joined the EU, the border became an external EU border which reduced the permeability. Since Romania joined the EU in 2007, the Romanian-Hungarian border has been functioning as an internal border of the EU, but as an external border of the Schengen Zone which means that there is no customs control and there is no double border crossing – but the control of persons is still operational. According to the Schengen Agreement and the Schengen Borders Code, the Romanian authorities also apply the SIS (since 2018).

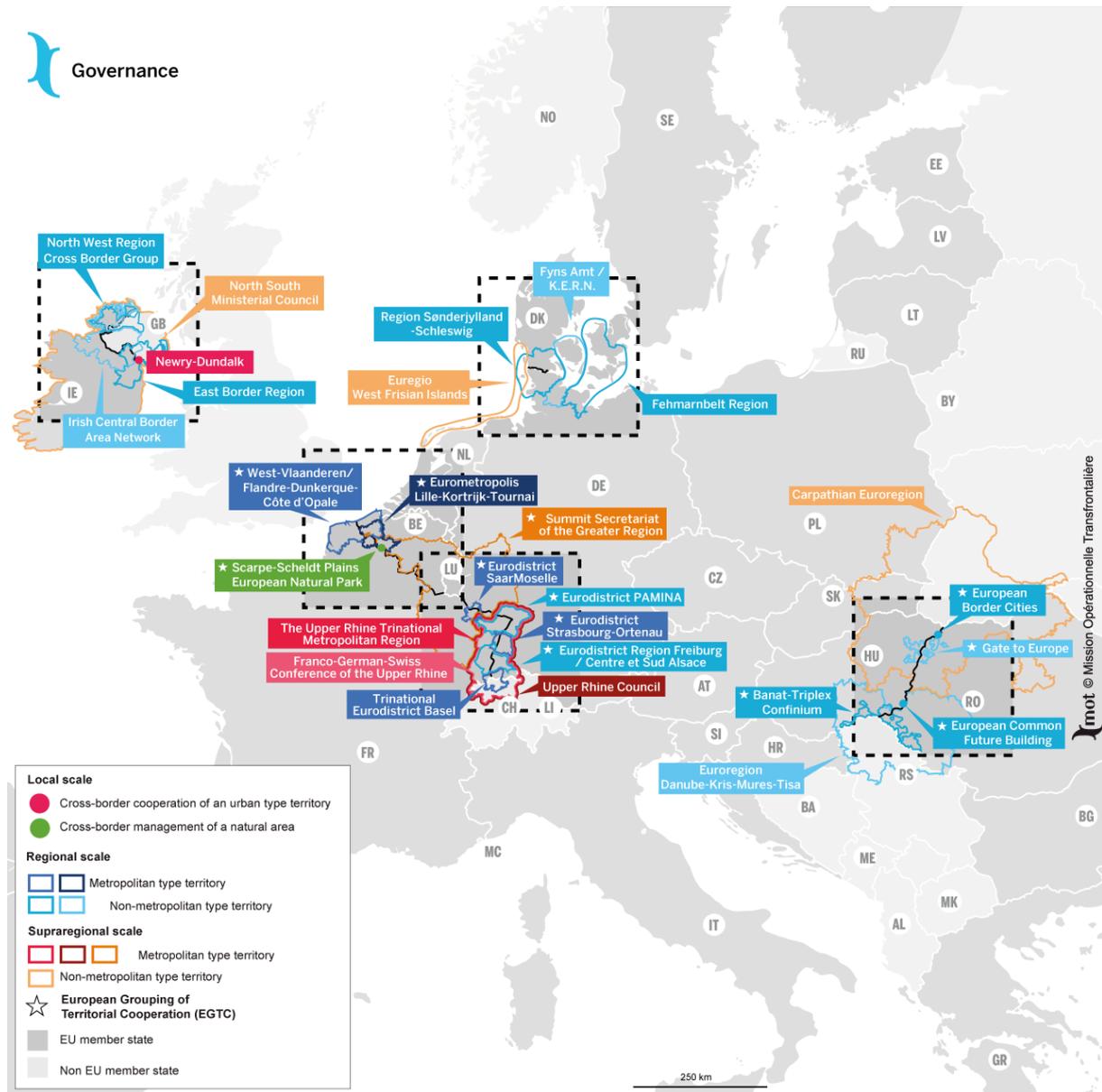
In the meanwhile, the double-check system has been replaced by a simplified model. In Hungary, the Romanian border was the first external one where the one-step checks were inaugurated. Now, with the one-step system, the control takes place at one border, generally at the exit, where both border police carry out the necessary checks. In terms of the control of the persons and their documents a duality continues to exist – each part performs their own checks. Based on the principle of common trust, each party accepts the decision on entry of the other. According to the current rules, to enter or leave the territory of Hungary from/to Romania is only permitted at the designated border crossing points during opening hours. As a general rule, border checks are carried out under the method of “first come, first served” and are free of charge. The border check is a control carried out at border crossing points to ascertain whether persons, as well as their means of transport and the objects in their possession, are eligible to enter the territory of Hungary or Romania. During the border checks - besides checking entry conditions - the passport control officer has the right to inspect the vehicles (including engine, interior and luggage rack) and the lawful use of the vehicle. Travellers shall possess a valid ID card. The time span of the crossing has been remarkably reduced during the last decades, and the crossing itself completely lost its stressful character.

Illegal migration

Illegal migration is relatively high in some parts of the Romanian-Hungarian border, though it is not as voluminous as on the Hungarian-Serbian border. Illegal immigrants entering Romania from southern countries are dominantly present around Timișoara, but the volume is still manageable. On the other hand, cigarette smuggling is common in the northern parts of the border area, based on the activities of the Ukrainian criminal groups.

Governance

Introduction



The governance system in the European Union enhances European integration through its European, national, regional and local levels. To analyse and describe EU policy happening on these different levels, the term ‘multi-level governance’ was developed in the 1990s by the US political scientists Gary Marks and Liesbet Hooghe. Multi-level governance goes along with multiple actors of different territorial and/or functional levels cooperating, sharing competences and responsibilities of political decision-making. The multilevel governance (MLG) system in the EU conditions also activities of cross-border cooperation actors in order to contribute to the

European regional policy, especially by providing financial resources (specific EU funds and the INTERREG programme since 1990) for common projects.⁷⁴

European Territorial Cooperation is an example of MLG that encompasses both a vertical and a horizontal dimension: whereas the first refers to interactions and the sharing of competences between general-purpose jurisdictions at different levels (governments), including the principle of vertical subsidiarity; the latter is more about interaction between actors from the same level/sector and task-specific jurisdictions.⁷⁵ Cross-border cooperation is therefore characterised by the constitution of both policy-related and issue-related networks throughout different levels. It can be discussed whether and to what extent the integration between two neighbouring regions, the horizontal cross-border integration, needs to be further deepened. *Cross-border governance* can be defined as:

“a set of differently organised institutions of cross-border co-operations between various actors mainly of the subnational level with the objective to overcome challenges due to a shared national border”⁷⁶.

This phenomenon originates from the Schengen area and the European Single Market. The abolition of internal borders and free movement of persons, services, goods and capital created the need for another type of border management structures and tools and a strong administrative cooperation in border regions. In addition, cross-border governance has been facilitated and conditioned through the process of decentralisation in Europe in some border regions. It has developed from informal cooperation to more institutionalised governance systems.

Cross-border actors come from the private, public and para-public sectors and can be found through all different levels (local, regional, etc.). Hence, borders are not exclusively managed by nation-states, but can be seen as “an active interface where several players meet”.⁷⁷ However, states play an important role in cross-border cooperation as they have the competences to negotiate intergovernmental treaties, through which in turn legal frameworks for regional and local actors can be created. These actors on regional and local level in border regions differ largely as the political systems, the degree of decentralisation and distribution of competences are different in European countries.⁷⁸ The asymmetry of competences with regard to different sectors as well as different scopes of these actors are synonym of great challenges in cross-border cooperation, as it can lead to coordination, cultural, legal and administrative problems.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Wassenberg, B., “Cross-Border Actors”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 209-212.

⁷⁵ Beck, J., “Multi-level governance”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 605-609.

⁷⁶ Zumbusch, K. & Scherer, R., “Cross-Border Governance: Balancing Formalized and Less Formalized Co-Operations”, *Social Sciences* 2015, 4(3), 2015, pp. 499–519, <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci4030499>

⁷⁷ Reitel B., “Border/Boundary/Frontier”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 111-113.

⁷⁸ Pasquier, R., “Organisation territoriale et démocratie locale en Europe”, *La Documentation Française*, Paris, p. 10.

⁷⁹ Wassenberg, B., “Cross-Border Actors”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 209-212.

In contrast to the public and para-public sector (e.g. chambers of commerce), private actors such as the business sector, but also civil society are still underrepresented in cross-border governance structures and projects.⁸⁰ This under-representation is also part of the criticism of MLG in cross-border cooperation, namely that it is primarily a closed inter-institutional network between administrations not necessarily open to other actors.⁸¹ In addition to the various actors at different levels in the respective national framework, border regions are characterised by trans-regional actors: common cross-border structures exist since the 1960s, the beginning of cross-border cooperation in (Western) Europe.

During that time, the first euroregions and euresios, usually composed of local and regional administrative units from both countries, emerged in European border regions and have become essential trans-regional actors in cross-border cooperation.⁸² The term ‘euroregion’ is derived from the provisions of the Council of Europe’s Madrid Convention on transfrontier cooperation of 1980 and refers to a cooperation structure between at least two adjacent territories, but is also loosely used in literature to refer to a cross-border area. In Europe, approximately 300 territorial cooperation structures exist nowadays, out of which 267 could be identified as euroregional structures, meaning organisations that cover a cross-border territory and/or provide specific services for the population in a border area.⁸³

When speaking about cross-border governance, one must be aware of the substantive distinction between the similar words “governance” and “government”. In the cross-border context, there is not yet an institutional order that prescribes a hierarchy in decision-making processes as a real “government”; procedures are often complex due to a superposition of governance systems. Instead, financial and functional competences lie within the respective national institutions, which is why functioning cross-border governance often depends on the political will of the neighbouring states.⁸⁴ It is a subject for discussion, whether it is necessary to establish a more binding mechanism that leads to a cross-border government.

The map at the beginning of this introduction represents the existing cross-border governance structures in the five FRONTEM border regions and thus provides an overview of the local, regional and supraregional levels. In each border-specific chapter, these structures are mapped again separately with regard to the respective border region.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Beck, J., “Multi-level governance”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 605-609.

⁸² Wassenberg, B., “Cross-Border Actors”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 209-212.

⁸³ Berzi, M., Durà, A., Camonita, F. & Noferini, A., “Euroregion (overview)”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (Eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 384-386.

⁸⁴ Beck, J., “Multi-level governance”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 605-609.

France-Germany



The creation of Franco-German regional cooperation structures are to be seen as a step in the reconciliation process that had been launched at a bilateral level between France and Germany from 1945 on. Just as important, however, were concrete initiatives by private actors who agreed on the necessity to exchange on information, to discuss on border issues and to boost joint projects. Nowadays, both border regions are characterised by a strong institutionalisation and contain specific governance systems on different scales. In the following, the main institutions of both areas and their emergence are briefly outlined:

The origins of the Greater Regions lie in the 1969 established Franco-German *Intergovernmental Commission*, joined by Luxembourg two years later.⁸⁵ In 1971, this

⁸⁵ The following information on the institutional structures has been taken from the following websites: <https://www.granderegion.net/en> and <https://www.grossregion.net/Institutionen>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

commission on nation-state level decided to set up a regional commission *SaarLorLux/Trier-Westpfalz* as a cross-border cooperation body of the state authorities at local level, which was legally established after an agreement between Germany, France and Luxembourg in 1980. In 1986, the *Interregional Parliamentary Council* was founded and constituted back then a unique cross-border initiative at legislative level in Europe. This body is composed of representatives of the parliamentary assemblies of the Greater Region's members and its work is organised in six commissions working on different topics and transferring recommendations and opinions to the Summit of the Greater Region. Although it has no legislative competence, it is understood as a consultative parliamentary assembly of the Greater Region.

Growing cooperation and the conclusion of the *Maastricht Treaty* led to the involvement of the highest political level of the partner regions: the *Summit of the Greater Region*, established in 1995, can be described as the executive of cooperation as it is responsible for the strategic guidelines of the cooperation. The Summit consists of the heads of government of the several member's territories, e.g. the Presidents of the Councils of the French departments or the Minister Presidents of the German Länder. Linked with the Summit is the *Committee of the Personal Representatives of Summit Executives* that manages and supervises the implementation of the Summit's political agenda. Furthermore, the Summit and its Committee is assisted by the *Summit Secretariat of the Greater Region*, established in 2014 in form of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. The secretariat coordinates and supports the work of the Summit and its working groups and functions as well as point of contact for network building, not only in the Greater Region but also all over Europe. It is located in the joint Luxembourg-Rhineland-Palatinate-Saarland office in Luxembourg, commonly referred to as *House of the Greater Region* ("Haus der Großregion/Maison de la Grande Région").

In the same building of this joint secretariat, one can also find the *Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region*, a peculiarity of the Greater Region as it represents trade associations, social, and professional organisations. It is the advisory body to the Greater Region Summit in the socio-economic field and submits studies and opinions to the Summit. The actors cooperate in four different working groups and thus represent the interests and needs of employees and employers of the Greater Region, which is unique in Europe.

Horizontal interaction between actors from the same level also takes place at the local level within several structures. One of these is the non-profit association *EuRegio SaarLorLux*⁸⁶, a local authority umbrella organisation of the Greater Region comprising forty local authorities, established in 1995. The *SaarMoselle Eurodistrict*⁸⁷, founded in 2004 and an EGTC since 2010, also represents an important municipal cross-border structure, comprising a total of 126 German and French municipalities. To name a third example, also cities cooperate along the French-German border, namely the *QuattroPole city network* between the cities of Luxembourg, Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ <https://euregio.lu/de/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁸⁷ <https://www.saarmoselle.org/fr/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁸⁸ For an overview of cooperation structures, see: <https://euregio.lu/de/la-grande-region/structures-de-cooperation-2/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

In the Upper Rhine Region, a cross-border cooperation governance system has continuously developed since the beginning of the 1960, however, several twinnings between French and German municipalities had already come into being in the 1950s. The first cross-border structure in the region was the *Regio Basiliensis*⁸⁹, founded in Basel in 1963 by representatives from business and science. These private actors came together with the aim to plan and promote the economic, political and cultural development of the region and has since then played a decisive role in shaping regional cooperation in the Upper Rhine region.⁹⁰

Two other cross-border areas were subsequently created, the *Upper Rhine Regio* (1965) and the *Freiburger Regio* (1985), which merged in 1995 into the *Regio TriRhena*,⁹¹ a cross-border platform of cities, regional institutions, communes, economic chambers etc. and thus a network for strengthening the southern Upper Rhine region around the cities of Freiburg, Colmar, Mulhouse and Basel.

Cooperation in the Upper Rhine region was officially institutionalised with the *Intergovernmental Treaty of Bonn*, concluded in 1975 between France, Germany and Switzerland. This agreement defined a limited territory for cross-border cooperation and gave birth not only to an intergovernmental commission to examine and resolve neighbourly issues in the region, but also to two regional commissions (bipartite regional commission for the northern Upper Rhine and tripartite regional commission for the southern Upper Rhine). Since 1991, the institutional framework has been provided by the *Franco-German-Swiss Conference of the Upper Rhine*, commonly known as *Upper Rhine Conference*⁹².

The *Basel Treaty* in 2000 extended both the mandate area and the cooperation partners (more German districts, three new Swiss cantons, the former region Alsace and the French State). The Upper Rhine Conference has thus become the central information and coordination body for cross-border cooperation, which reports on its work to the Intergovernmental Commission, which in turn mediates on issues that cannot be settled at regional level.

In 1997, this executive body was complemented by the ‘legislative body’ *Upper Rhine Council*⁹³, composed of 71 local and regional elected representatives from Alsace, Baden, Rhineland-Palatinate and Northwestern Switzerland.

As common living spaces, four Eurodistricts, Franco-German areas linking municipalities on both sides of the Rhine, were established in the region from 2005 onwards, even if several had existed as different forms before (Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict, Eurodistrict Freiburg/Centre and Sud Alsace, the Trinational Eurodistrict of Basel and Eurodistrict PAMINA).⁹⁴

To structure the multi-level governance system, to link different structures, to associate the local level to the institution cooperation framework and to establish an effective and joint strategy for the whole region, the *Trinational Metropolitan Region Upper Rhine* (TMR)⁹⁵ was created

⁸⁹ <https://www.regbas.ch/fr/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁰ More information on Regio Basiliensis, see: <https://www.regbas.ch/de/aktuell/60-jahre-regio-basiliensis/>

⁹¹ Wassenberg, B., “France”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 481.

⁹² <https://www.oberrheinkonferenz.org/de/home.html>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹³ <https://www.oberrheinrat.org/de/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁴ <https://eurodistrict.eu/de/>, <https://www.eurodistrict-freiburg-alsace.eu/de/>, <https://www.eurodistrictbasel.eu/de/>, <https://www.eurodistrict-pamina.eu/de/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁵ <https://www.rmtmo.eu/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

in 2010. Structured into four pillars (political, economic, scientific and civil society), the TMR follows the goal of uniting previously independent political, economic, scientific and civil society actors, especially in involving local cooperation structures.

The actors of cross-border cooperation who participated in the focus group on the Franco-German border discussed also about governance in the Upper Rhine Region. According to them, the strong institutionalisation did not mean that there were no challenges. Communication and networking needed to be improved in the region and the high number of cross-border institutions (also specific thematic structures like the European Consumer Center⁹⁶, the Infobest Network⁹⁷, TRION Climate⁹⁸ or the Euro-Institut⁹⁹) entailed a difficulty to speak with one voice. However, communication was also seen as an opportunity that the strong institutionalisation offers, as it obliged the actors to communicate on a regular basis. Furthermore, participants stated that the density of actors be seen as well as an asset to complement each other.

The participants stressed furthermore that cross-border institutions and the linkages between them needed to be more explicit, visible and easy to understand for the citizens, towards the elected representatives and the actors who are not part of the cross-border sphere. In general, they perceived the Upper Rhine Region as owning a pioneering role when it comes to governance: governance would find itself in a phase of implementation and integration due to numerous concrete projects that were created and that deepened and strengthened cross-border cooperation.

⁹⁶ <https://www.cec-zev.eu/de/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁷ <https://www.infobest.eu/de/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁸ <https://trion-climate.net/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

⁹⁹ <https://www.euroinstitut.org/>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

France-Belgium



The border between France and Belgium is characterised by two main types of cross-border governance structures. On the one hand, and concentrated on the two southern sections of the border, cooperation takes the form of linkages between natural parks on both sides of the border.

First, at the south of the border, the Natural Park of *Gaume* is more oriented towards the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg despite its localisation on the French border of Belgium. It was part of several Interreg V projects, such as AROMA (*Grande Région*, for local foodstuffs), DEFI-Laine (*Grande Région*, aiming at reinforcing and promoting the wool sector both economically and economically), *Lorraine Gaumaise* (*Grande Région*, fostering tourism across the border in the Pays de Gaume). Several projects are scheduled for Interreg VI, with this time both the *Grande Région* (oriented towards heritage) and the France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen (on research and innovation on tourism, involving French and Belgian schools as well as tourism offices).

The Natural Park of *Gaume* also cooperated with the French *Nouvelle-Aquitaine* region on the setting up of third-places.

Second, the Belgian Natural Park *Ardenne Méridionale* was created in 2019 across a trans-provincial internal Belgian border, along the Semois River. Because of its recent setting up, it was not already part of nor did it conducted an Interreg project, but is aware of the double potential that its geographical location confers. Indeed, it the Natural Park *Ardenne Méridionale* can both benefit from a project of the *Grande Région* (landscape and touristic development) and of the *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* Interreg programme (sustainability and social and physical action) programmes. The park collaborates with both private actors and public ones, like touristic structures.

Third, the French Natural Regional Park des *Ardennes*, set up in 2011, covers the northern part of the Ardennes department, within which the Givet salient, and borders the Belgian *Ardenne Méridionale* park at the east and the *Viroin-Hermeton* Park at the north. The park has been part of several initiatives, notably by the European economic interest grouping “*Destination Ardenne*”, piloting Interreg projects financed by both *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* and *Grande Région* Interreg programmes, such as the “*Ardenne Attractivity*” portfolio¹⁰⁰ and the AGRETA project¹⁰¹. For the next Interreg programming period, the PNR *Ardennes* plans to set up another portfolio, consisting of 5 Interreg projects, built in continuity with the previous ones, on sustainability, tourism, cycling mobility, etc. Finally, the park festivals are an opportunity for members of the French and Belgian parks to meet in a more informal way and discuss about their respective events and activities.

Fourth, the *Viroin-Hermeton* Park in Belgium links the French Natural Regional Park des *Ardennes* and the *Avesnois*, constituting a territorial natural continuity across both French and Belgian Ardennes. In this territorial context, the *Viroin-Hermeton* Parc is also part of the Interreg portfolio “*Ardenne Attractivity*”, developing projects based on ecotourism, territorial marketing and social linkages across the territory. These projects are to be extended and deepened in the Interreg VI programme. The Natural Parc *Viroin-Hermeton* also works informally with actors across the border, as for the Natural Regional Parc *Ardennes* or by the organisation of the “*Nuit de la Chouette*” [Owl night] event, which is piloted by the French “*Ligue pour la protection des oiseaux*” [League for the protection of birds] association. Within the European economic interest grouping *Destination Ardenne*, the parc will collaborate with the French Natural Regional Parc of the *Ardennes* and the Natural Parc *Ardenne Méridionale*.¹⁰²

Finally, the French Natural Regional Parc of the *Avesnois* has been working with Belgian counterparts for the micro project “*Entre 2 Ho*”. This micro-project was aimed at fostering the protection of 3 river species (a fish, a bird and a mollusc) together with the Belgian natural park

¹⁰⁰ The “*Ardennes Attractivity*” Interreg portfolio, under the Interreg *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* programme, combines 3 Interreg projects, namely “*Ardenne Ecotourism*”, “*Ardenne Ambassadors*” and “*Ardenne Marketing*”. Website available: <https://interreg.visitardenne.com/index.php/fr/attract> [in French]. Accessed 25 April 2023.

¹⁰¹ Project financed by the *Grande Région*, website available : <https://interreg.visitardenne.com/index.php/fr/agreta> [in French]. Accessed 24 April 2023.

¹⁰² For more details, see the report of the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière*, www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Documents_MOT/Etudes_Publications_MOT/PVD/Fiche-projet_DestinationArdenne.pdf. Accessed 5 June 2023.

of the *Hauts-Pays*. This park has been an operator of the project “*Gestion Intégrée de la Haine Méridionale*” [Integrated Management of the Southern Haine, GIHM] during the Interreg III programme period.

On the other hand, the northern and more densely inhabited area of the French-Belgian border is where EGTCs are located. There are four of them, the southernmost being the transboundary European Natural Park *Plaines-Scarpe-Escaut*. This unique cross-border Park for the region of the border is the result of a very long-term cross-border cooperation and is created by the aggregation in 2021 of the French Natural Regional Parc *Scarpe-Escaut* (set up in 1968) and the Belgian Natural Parc *Plaines de l’Escaut* (created in 1996), though the two parcs still continue to exist outside of the frame of the EGTC. It was launched with the help of the Interreg PnEPSE Objectif 2025 project, aiming at structuring governance between actors of the two parcs. The parc EGTC is functioning well since its setting up, organising various events such as a border walk at the end of January 2023.

The foremost example of cross-border Franco-Belgian cooperation is the *Eurométropole of Lille-Tournai-Kortrijk* according to many local actors¹⁰³. This cross-border cooperation structure comes from the Intercommunal Cross-border Permanent Conference set up in 1991, which led to the setting up of the GLCT¹⁰⁴ “*Lille Eurométropole Franco-Belge*”. Eventually, the GLCT evolved into the EGTC “*Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai-Kortrijk*” in 2008, the first European EGTC. The territory covered by the EGTC is centred on the French arrondissement of Lille, and the Belgian economic intercommunals¹⁰⁵ of *Tournai-Ath*, of *West-Vlaanderen*, of *Leiendal*, and of *Mouscron-Comines-Warneton-Estaimpuis*. Its actions revolve today mainly around water management, culture, mobility and air quality, as shown by the 8 action groups of the Eurometropolis: Formation in cross-border work-based training, learning of languages, digital, higher education, incentive and facilitate borderless mobility, borderless employment, the *Parc Bleu* of the Eurometropolis, and the promotion of alternative energy sources.

Another EGTC on the Franco-Belgian border is “*West-Vlaanderen Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d’Opale*”, covering territory from Boulogne-Sur-Mer to Bruges and founded in 2009, Michel Delebarre was the first president, followed by Patrice Vergriete, both mayors of Dunkirk. The EGTC chose to centre its activities closer to the border after some years, by defining an area of “proximity cooperation” within the territory covered by the EGTC, in order to be closer to the inhabitants of the cross-border region. There is an overlaying between the EGTC *West-Vlaanderen-Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d’Opale* and the *Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai*, since the territory covered by the intercommunal of *Ieper* part of the *Eurométropole* are also part of the EGTC.

¹⁰³ Delecrosse, E., Delhuyenne, L. Leloup, F., « L’Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, instrument au service de l’institutionnalisation de la coopération transfrontalière », *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, n°2526-2527, 87 p., 2022

¹⁰⁴ In French “*Groupement Local de Coopération Transfrontalier*”, a cross-border cooperation structure that can be set up after a binational treaty, such as the Agreement of Karlsruhe (France, Germany, Luxemburg & Switzerland, 1996), and the Brussels Agreement (France-Belgium, 2005). GLCTs have legal capacity and financial autonomy.

¹⁰⁵ In Belgian administrative terms “*intercommunales*”, not to be mistaken with the French “*intercommunalités*”.

Finally, there is also the EGTC *Grande Région*, build around Luxembourg. This entity is quite wide on the territory, encompassing several entities across four countries, namely Luxembourg, the German *Länder Saarland* and *Rheinland-Pfalz*, Wallonia (Belgium)¹⁰⁶ and the former French *région Lorraine*.¹⁰⁷ The *Grande Région* is foremost a space dedicated for exchange amid actors of the region, born after the 1960s intergovernmental Franco-German talks about management of this mining-driven region. Wallonia joined the cooperation in 2005, adopting its name with this enlargement. The *Grande Région* consists of several institutions that structure cross-border cooperation. Firstly, there is the Summit of Executives of the Grande Région, which serves as a political decision-making centre, helped with a Secretariat. Secondly, there is the Parliamentary Interregional Council, consisting of members of regional (and national for the case of Luxembourg) parliaments of constitutive entities of the *Grande Région*, writing recommendations for the Summit. Thirdly comes the Economic and Social Committee of the *Grande Région*, constituted by experts and economic and social partners for entities of the *Grande Région*. Other structures exist for more concrete projects, such as the *Task Force Frontaliers*.

¹⁰⁶ In reality, there are 3 Belgian entities participating in the *Grande Région*, which are the *région Wallonie*, the *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, and the Germanophone Community.

¹⁰⁷ With the 2015 territorial reorganisation in France, participating entities are the *région Grand-Est*, the *départements Meuse, Moselle* and *Meurthe-et-Moselle*.

Denmark-Germany

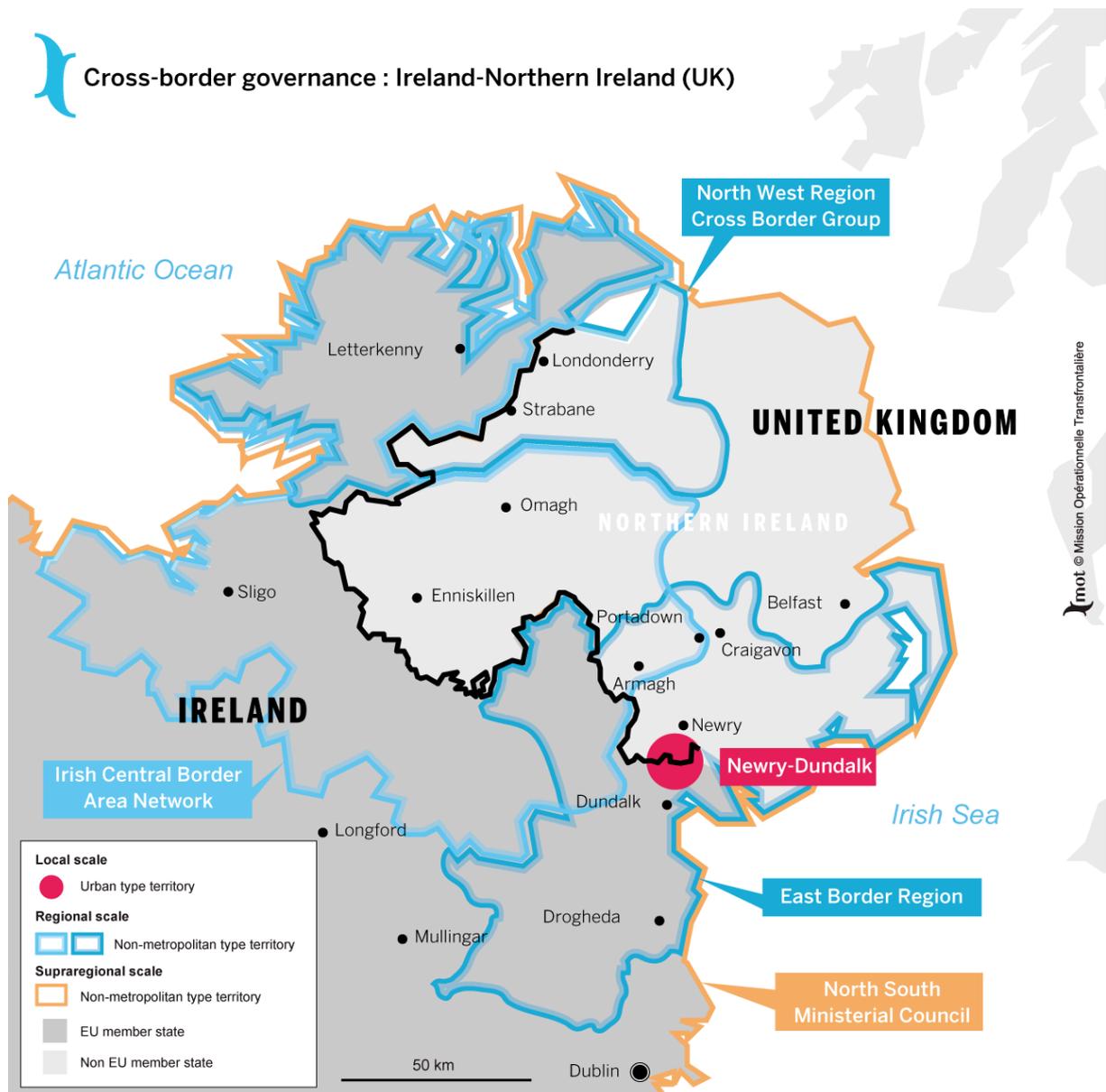


Cross-border competences are held by the Danish government in Copenhagen and by the federal government in Berlin. On the German side, the Landesregierung (the provincial government) in Schleswig-Holstein also can be involved. A certain imbalance results from the fact that Denmark is only one of nine German neighbours, whereas Germany is the largest and most important Danish neighbour. This being the only land border it is often simply referred to as “the border”. The importance of this line of division means that the Danish government often reacts more swiftly, and – due to a centralist structure – much more directly than its German counterpart.

Only the governments in Copenhagen and Kiel can make decisions for the Euroregion, and the contacts between the two centres are relatively weak due to the imbalance resulting from the different governmental levels. The actual knowledge and enthusiasm for the border region is not very impressive. Plans of constructing a tunnel under the Baltic, connecting the Danish

island of Lolland with the island of Fehmarn has further diminished the interest for the land border. When this connection opens people from Copenhagen or Hamburg will have no reason any longer to take the long route through Schleswig. In former times, individual networks played an important role in establishing contacts and trust across the border – but this aspect is no longer particularly prominent. Today, the minorities on each side of the border have much closer contacts with each other than they had in the past —this represents an interesting development which shows how national antagonisms increasingly lose their importance to many people living in the region.

Ireland-Northern Ireland



Given the land border's situation within a post-conflict context, governance is primarily focused on cooperation between the administrations in Dublin and Belfast, reinforcing its invisibility. Strand 2 of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement put in place a formal governance structure

for dialogue and cooperation between the Irish Government and the devolved administration in Northern Ireland, as well as setting out the creation of a number of bodies (known as implementation bodies) to undertake practical cross-border and all-island cooperation in a range of specific areas within the competence of both administrations.

The formal structure for cooperation between the Dublin and Belfast governments is the North South Ministerial Council, whose Joint Secretariat, staffed by personnel from the Irish Civil Service and Northern Ireland Civil Service, is located in Armagh, Northern Ireland. The six implementation bodies that would result from the 1998 Agreement, and who report to the North South Ministerial Council, are:

- The Food Safety Promotion Board (known as safe food);
- The Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (consisting of two agencies – the Loughs Agency, and the Lights Agency, although the latter is yet to be established);
- The Language Body (consisting of two agencies – Foras na Gaeilge and Tha Boord o Ulster-Scotch/Ulster-Scots Agency);
- The Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB)
- The Trade and Business Development Body (known as InterTradeIreland); and
- Waterways Ireland.

Two points should be highlighted here. The first is that items to be discussed at the North South Ministerial Council have to be agreed by both Governments, meaning that there has to be agreement *within* each Government to table an item for discussion. The second point is that the Council cannot deal with issues that are not devolved to the administration in Northern Ireland (such as defence or foreign policy, for example). Where issues relating to cooperation are not within the competence of the Northern Ireland administration, under Strand 3 of the Good Friday Agreement and its establishment of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, the British and Irish Governments are able to discuss relevant matters. Moreover, the Agreement states:

“In recognition of the Irish Government’s special interest in Northern Ireland and of the extent to which issues of mutual concern arise in relation to Northern Ireland, there will be regular and frequent meetings of the Conference concerned with non-devolved Northern Ireland matters, on which the Irish Government may put forward views and proposals. These meetings, to be co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, would also deal with all-island and cross-border co-operation on non-devolved issues”.

It is also important to understand the interrelated nature of the three core strands of the 1998 Agreement, and how the governance of cross-border cooperation depends on the proper functioning in particular of Strand 1, which established the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive and the Northern Ireland Assembly. When the institutions under Strand 1 are not functioning, as has been the case over several periods since 1998, the North South Ministerial Council cannot operate.

As well as the areas of cooperation for which the implementation bodies created under the Good Friday Agreement are responsible for under the direction of and answerable to the North South Ministerial Council, the Council is also responsible for six further areas of cooperation where common policies and approaches are agreed but implemented separately in each jurisdiction. These are:

- Agriculture, including rural development;
- Education;
- Environment;
- Health, including accident and emergency planning;
- Tourism; and
- Transport, including rail and road safety

Other relevant governance structures have arisen as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. While the EU-UK Joint Committee is responsible for the implementation and application of the overall Withdrawal Agreement, that Agreement and its Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland also established the Specialised Committee on the Protocol and the Joint Consultative Working Group. The role of the Specialised Committee, which brings together officials from the EU and UK, including from the Northern Ireland Executive, is to:

- Facilitate the implementation and application of the Protocol;
- Examine proposals concerning the application and implementation and application of the Protocol from the North South Ministerial Council and the implementation bodies set up by the Good Friday Agreement;
- Consider any matters of relevance to Article 2 of the Protocol (on the rights of individuals) brought to its attention by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, and the Joint Committee of representatives of the Human Rights Commissions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;
- Discuss any point raised by the European Union or the United Kingdom that is of relevance to the Protocol and gives rise to a difficulty; and
- Make recommendations to the Joint Committee as regards the functioning of the Protocol.

The main purpose of the Joint Consultative Working Group, composed of representatives from the European Union and the United Kingdom, is to serve as a forum for the exchange of information and mutual consultation.

Hungary-Romania



Administrative systems of the two countries

The territory of Romania is divided into four NUTS I level regions¹⁰⁸ (so-called ‘macroregiunea’) from among which two (the first and the fourth ones) cover partly the border region. The NUTS II level is represented by 9 territorial-statistical regions; two of them (Nord-Vest and Vest) are relevant in the presented area. Hungary includes three NUTS I level regions; the Romanian border area is covered by the Great Plain and North region. From the 8 NUTS II level planning and statistical regions two (Northern Great Plain and Southern Great Plain) cover partly the border zone. The NUTS I and II level statistical units have no administrative competences in either country, but in Romania the NUTS II level plays an important role in

¹⁰⁸ EU regions are classified within a geographical nomenclature classification, the *Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics*, abbreviated NUTS (from the French version *Nomenclature des Unités territoriales statistiques*, see also: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

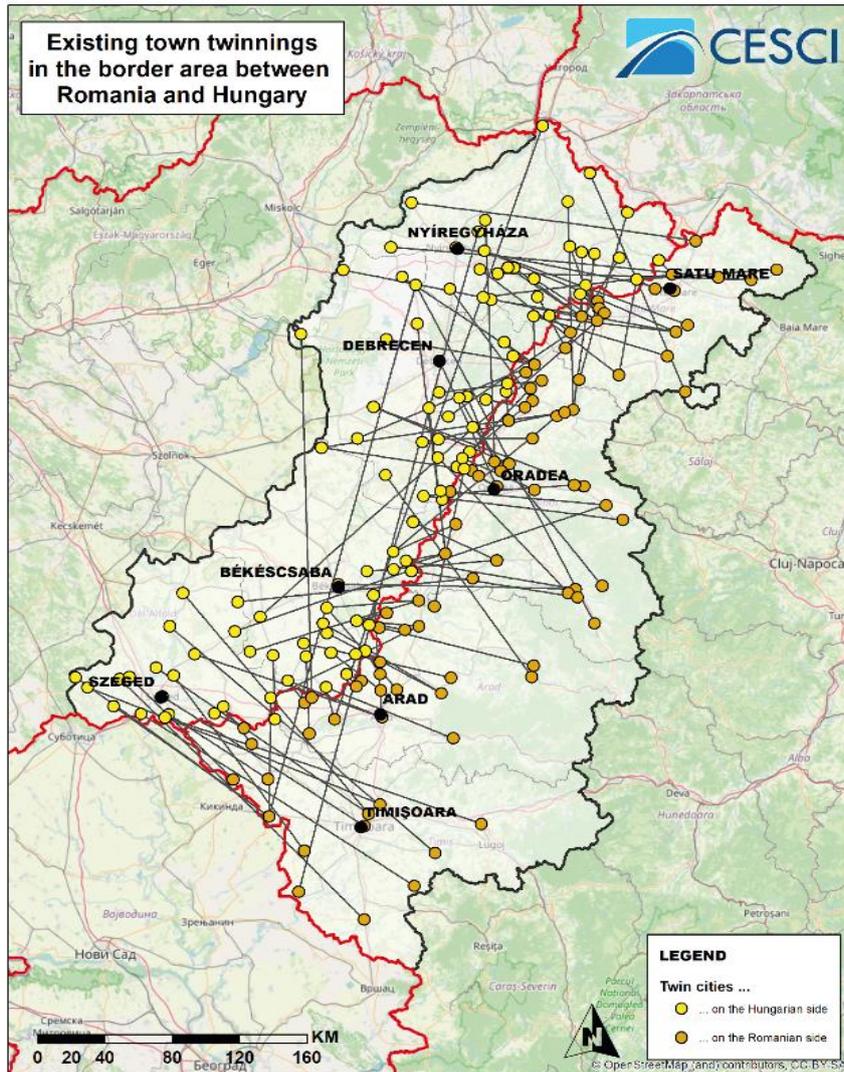
managing the regional operational programmes. Both countries are centralised unitarian states. However, the centralisation/decentralisation processes follow different ways: while Romania was an extremely over-centralised country where a gradual and cautious decentralisation process can be observed, after the regime change, Hungary provided the local and regional self-governments with very broad autonomy which was dramatically reduced in 2013 by the administrative reform. Currently, the administrative competences are shared between the levels of the national government, the NUTS III regions (*judet* in Romania, *megye* in Hungary) and the LAU 2 level¹⁰⁹ local municipalities. However, since 2013, in Hungary a new unit, the district (so-called *járás*) owns the majority of those competences which had earlier been delegated to the local municipalities. Furthermore, in Romania, one municipality (*communa* or *oras*) can include several (even 6-7 settlements) while in Hungary the municipalities used to steer the everyday life of one settlement. In Romania, metropolitan zones can be constructed around the larger cities which facilitate and manage the integrated development of the functional urban areas involving several local municipalities. Local municipalities have the right to establish inter-municipal associations as NGOs in both countries (*kistérségi társulás*, i.e. “subregional association” in Hungary and *asociația de dezvoltare intercomunitară*, i.e. intermunicipal development association in Romania). Finally, the above-mentioned administrative reform deprived the elected NUTS III level county councils from the major part of their competences and financial means and created a new, territorially deconcentrated system of NUTS III level authorities – very similarly to the Romanian and French model of the prefecture (forming part of the state administration). All these features influence unfavourably the governance factors of cross-border cooperation because the relevant competences – notwithstanding the rights of international cooperation at local and regional level – are mostly in the power of the state institutions.

Governance structures at the border

There are multiple forms of more or less institutionalised CBC present in the border region. The area is characterised by a long history of informal cooperation, through twinning initiatives, the constitution of Euroregions and the establishment of *European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation* (EGTC). The easing of border control has had a significant impact on the development of cross-border relations. In the beginning cooperation began at municipal level. Local governments, especially after the change of regime and especially after the EU accession, were a kind of engines of cooperation. Twinning relations had oftentimes a history from the socialist era, but these partnerships have been generally coordinated by the communist parties. After the regime change a completely new system of relationships has been created. According to the official websites of the local municipalities, altogether 144 twinings exist within the programming area. The agenda of these twinings is mainly characterised by cultural and sports activities, exchanges and they are based on ethnic homogeneity or (rarely) functional connections (e.g. between county seats and border municipalities).

¹⁰⁹ Eurostat maintains a system of Local Administrative Units (LAUs) compatible with NUTS; LAU 1 refers to the former NUTS level 4, LAU 2 to the former NUTS level 5; see also: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/local-administrative-units>.

Twinning across the Romanian-Hungarian border:



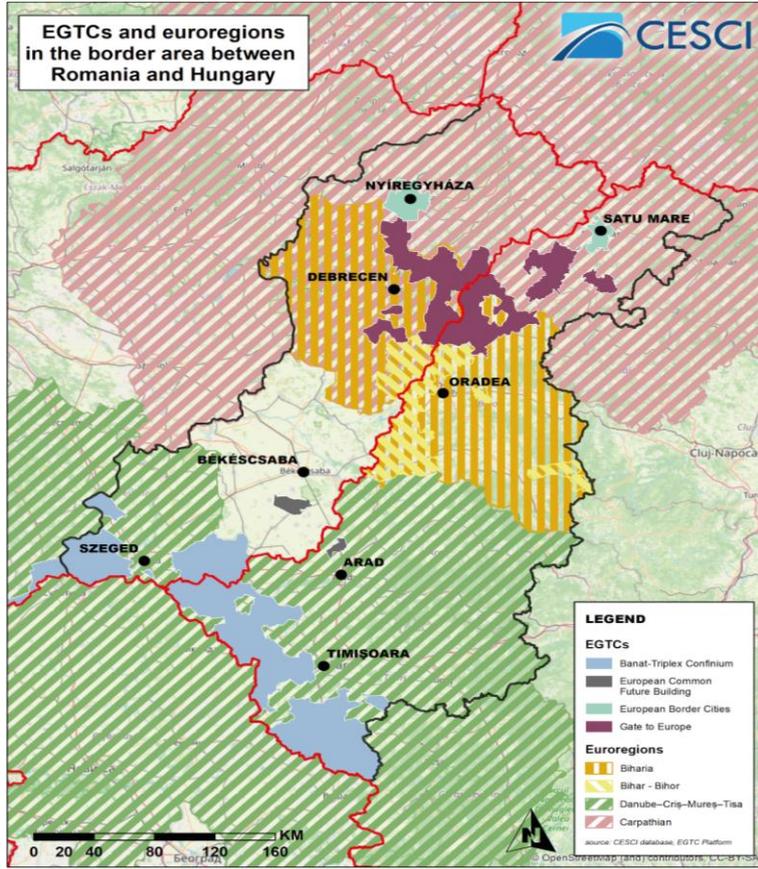
Source: CESCO

Following the western European model, euroregional organisations also emerged along the Romanian-Hungarian border. The Carpathian Euroregion was established in 1993 as the second one in the former communist bloc, the Danube-Kriş-Mureş-Tisa Euroregion in 1997, while the Bihar-Bihar (at local level) and the Bihar-Hajdú-Bihar (at county level) Euroregions were both established in 2002. Although the euroregions have had a significant role in helping the peripheral areas to adapt to the changes of transition, contributed to their development and solidified social, cultural and economic ties between the local actors, they have not been able to fulfil their objectives, for several (financial, structural, size-related, external, etc.) reasons.

Today, the DKMT is the only euroregion, which is still actively managing projects in the fields of tourism, transport, health and capacity building. The Carpathian Euroregion does not show any sign of its existence. The Bihar-Bihar was dissolved in 2016, the Bihar-Hajdú-Bihar terminated its activities in 2021. Since 2007, when the EGTC Regulation took effect, four Hungarian-Romanian European groupings of territorial cooperation have been established which perform at different standards (similarly to twinning and euroregions, mostly in harmony with the personal commitment of the changing local leaders), but their cross-border impact is

rather weak. The coordination between the different governance structures (including the municipal level development associations, the LEADER Local Action Groups, the euroregions and the EGTCs) is completely missing. Two EGTCs have an integrated cross-border development strategy, the other structures have not, and even the NUTS III level territorial development strategies lack the evidence of and the coordinating measures based on their border situation.

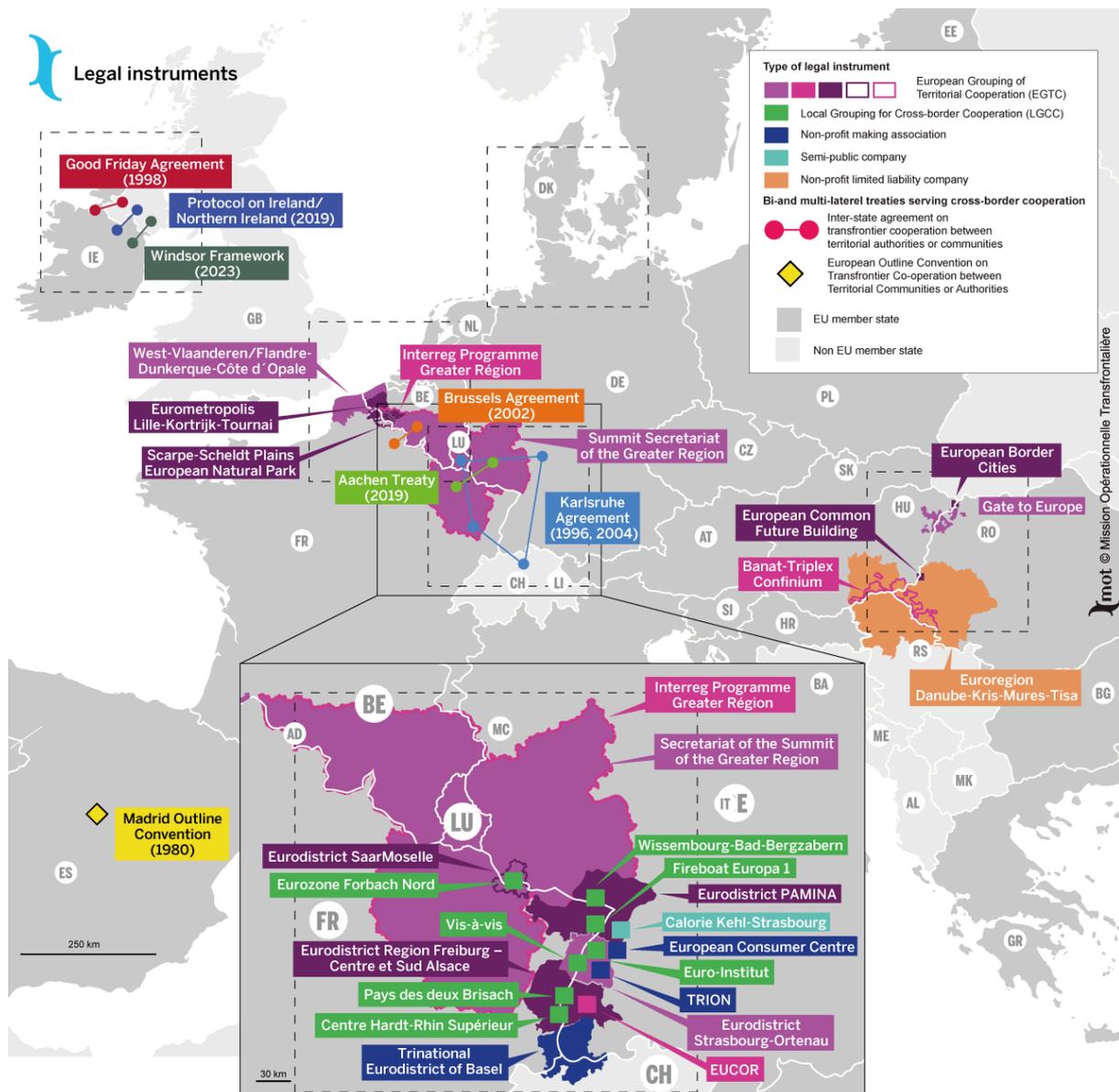
Euroregions and EGTCs along the Hungarian-Romanian border:



Source: CESCO

Legal instruments

Introduction



Cross-border cooperation is built on three institutional scales: the European level (or international otherwise), the national level, and the sub-state level (either local or regional); scales that are governed by specific legal instruments. The aim of this chapter is to present the different legal instruments at different levels for the borders covered by the FRONTSEM network.

At the European scale, a convention has been set up under the Council of Europe on cross-border co-operation between territorial communities or authorities in 1980, of which most members of the Council of Europe are parties (also referred to as Madrid Convention).¹¹⁰ While

¹¹⁰ See “European outline convention on transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities,” ETS n°106. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/1680078b0c>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

this convention does not provide concrete ideas of cross-border cooperation, it serves as a frame for it and a common reference across the continent. The last development of the Madrid Convention is its third protocol, which makes it possible to create Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (ECG), but this disposition has not yet been implemented.

The European Union has created, for its part, a financing programme aimed at fostering cooperation across European intern borders, namely INTERREG, in the 1990s, initially based on two EEC regulations.¹¹¹ The setting up of INTERREG allowed local and regional authorities to start dialoguing not only horizontally (among themselves across borders) but also vertically towards the Commission.¹¹²

The European Union also provides a framework for the institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation with the European Economic Interest Group (EEIG), a legal tool in existence since 1985 that aims at facilitating economic cooperation. It was used for cross-border cooperation as no other more relevant tools existed.¹¹³ Today, one of the most widely used tools is the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). They were set up in 2006 by the EU Council Regulation 1082/2006, amended in 2013. EGTCs have been created across the European Union, used to deliver a joint service by different authorities from different states. They are set out in a joint convention between said authorities and are circumscribed territorially (by participating territorial institutions), temporally, financially and by the scope of their missions. These missions can be quite wide, as to say capacity building, supporting the management of, say, Interreg programmes (case of the Greater Region for instance). The European institution accountable for the register of EGTCs is the Committee of the Regions.¹¹⁴

The principle of mutual recognition, meaning to recognise another States decisions, policies, laws, etc. can be found in some European regulations, is, however, little used in practice and without the wish to be extended.

The European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM) could have been an opportunity for fostering practical cross-border cooperation with the possibility to use the legal resources of another state for a cross-border situation or object if the situation makes it possible. The Commission officially proposed the ECBM Regulation in 2018 (COM/2018/373 final – 2018-0198)¹¹⁵. The ECBM would have been a welcomed legal instrument by local actors, which strive in what

There has been three additional protocols since the entry in force (on the 22nd of December 1981) of the Madrid Convention.

¹¹¹ See “Notice C(90) 1562/3 to the Member States, laying down guidelines for operational programmes which Member States are invited to establish in the framework of a Community initiative concerning border areas (Interreg),” Retrieved from: <https://op.europa.eu/s/yKIL>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

¹¹² B. Wassenberg, “Diplomatie territoriale et coopération transfrontalière en Europe depuis 1945,” *Relations Internationales*, vol. 3, n°179, 2019, pp. 9-24. See in particular pp. 18-20.

¹¹³ P. Tzvetanova, “Legal tools of cross-border cooperation”, In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical dictionary on borders, cross-border cooperation and European integration*, 2020, Peter Lang, Berlin.

¹¹⁴ More information on EGTC and the EGTC Platform: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/egtc.aspx> as well as the multilingual list of all registered EGTCs: https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/Official_List_of_the_EGTCs.pdf. Accessed 2 June 2023.

¹¹⁵ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context, COM(2018) 373 final 2018/0198(COD), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A373%3AFIN>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

regards the articulation of their own national legal instruments in projects of local cooperation. Discussions between the Member States have been halted, in particular because of questions of States' sovereignty. Nevertheless, discussions are gradually being relaunched, as the European Committee of the Regions proposed opinion CDR 6083/2022 shows.¹¹⁶

At the national level, states conclude bi- or multilateral treaties in order to facilitate their own relations, and sometimes having a clause regarding cross-border cooperation. This is for instance the case, in what regards the FRONTEM borders, of the Élysée (1963) and the Aachen (2019) treaties between Germany and France, the Quirinal treaty (2021) regarding the relations between France and Italy and the Franco-Spanish Barcelona (2023) treaty, etc.

Another form of institutionalisation happened for example with the treaties of Karlsruhe (1996 between France, Germany, Switzerland and Luxemburg) or Brussels (2002 between France and Belgium), which were signed in the context of the 1980 Madrid Convention. These agreements regulate regional and municipal cooperation across the borders and allow for the creation of Local Groupings of Cross-border Cooperation (LGCC). The LGCC are, just as EGCTs, autonomous bodies governed by public law and with legal personality and financial autonomy, however, LGCCs cannot comprise states, and the action must strictly be related to cross-border issues. LGCCs constitute a legal instrument that was created for the local and regional levels, and that pre-existed EGTCs (which were set up in a 2006 EU Regulation).

The map reveals that two borders are really engaged in the institutionalisation of their cooperation, namely the Franco-Belgian and Franco-German borders. Multiple EGTCs structure both borders, as well as the Hungarian-Romanian border (but not in the whole border region). The Franco-German border zone uses plainly the legal instruments at its disposal, as shown by the diversity of LGCCs, EGTCs, semi-public company and other sorts of associations institutionalising cross-border cooperation.

France-Germany

Both, France and Germany, have adopted the *European Charter of Local Self-Government* and the *Madrid Outline Convention for Transfrontier Cooperation* (the three additional protocols included). Based on the legal groundwork of the Madrid Outline Convention, the multilateral *Karlsruhe Agreement* was concluded in 1996 and extended in 2004. It is an intergovernmental cooperation agreement between France, Germany, Luxembourg and Switzerland aiming to promote cooperation between the territorial public authorities. This agreement paved the way for cooperation between local authorities and allowed the set-up of public law based Local Groupings for Cross-border Cooperation (LGCC) as statute of a structure in cross-border cooperation, a legal person of public law. Along the Franco-German border, several LGCCs emerged, e.g. the training institute Euro-Institut, the local cooperation structure Wissembourg-Bad Bergzabern or the German-French fire-fighting boat on the Rhine "EUROPA 1". The form of an LGCC at the Franco-German border strongly inspired the later established legal form of

¹¹⁶ For the CoR opinion, see <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/OpinionTimeline.aspx?opId=CDR-6083-2022>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), where, unlike the LGCC, states could also be participating parties.

With the emergence of the EGTC instrument, this became one of the most common schemes used in cross-border cooperation; the Eurodistrict PAMINA, for example, has been transformed from a LGCC into an EGTC in 2016. Further examples for EGTCs along the Franco-German border are the European campus EUCOR, the Eurodistrict SaarMoselle, the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau or the Summit Secretariat of the Greater Region. Along with these instruments, there are also other cross-border structures that can take on the legal status of an association, such as the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel (association under French law), the European Consumer Centre or TRION Climate (associations under German law) or local public-private entities, such as the newly founded Franco-German cross-border district heating project “Calorie Kehl-Strasbourg”.

Cross-border structures along the Franco-German border have existed for a long time outside the treaty framework.¹¹⁷ Even though the Franco-German Friendship Treaty, the *Élysée Treaty*, was already signed in 1963, it followed an intergovernmental approach without including local or regional actors. Political links between the intergovernmental on the one hand and regional and local cross-border cooperation on the other hand have existed, but it was only in 2019 that a permanent legal link has been established: the *Treaty of Aachen* as a new and complementary Franco-German Friendship Treaty on cooperation and integration.¹¹⁸ The Treaty explicitly mentions cross-border cooperation. Aiming to reduce obstacles and implement cross-border projects, the two states shall, according to the Treaty, “provide local authorities in border regions and cross-border entities such as eurodistricts with appropriate competences, dedicated resources and accelerated procedures” (Art. 13.2). Furthermore, “if no other instrument allows them to overcome such obstacles, adapted legal and administrative provisions, including derogations, may also be provided for” (Art. 13.2).¹¹⁹

Thus, with the Treaty of Aachen, a legal recognition of cross-border cooperation within the bilateral framework was anchored.

Furthermore, the Treaty allowed for the creation of a joint *Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly* and mentions the establishment of the *Franco-German Committee* on cross-border cooperation, comprising national, regional and local authorities, parliaments as well as cross-border entities. The Treaty states that this committee is responsible, amongst others, “to monitor [...] difficulties encountered in border regions and elaborate proposals to address them, as well as analyse the impact of new legislation on border regions” (Art. 14.2). Moreover, the Treaty also serves as a basis for the possibility of applying legal and administrative provisions that deviate from national law, including exemptions, to certain projects, so-called experimental clauses. Bilateral agreements between Germany and France exist on various issues in the border region, for instance the *Franco-German framework agreement on cooperation in the health sector*, which was established in 2005. There are also regionally differentiated agreements in

¹¹⁷ Peyrony, J., Wassenberg, B. “Aachen Treaty”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 55-59.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the Upper Rhine region, such as the bilateral agreements on cross-border cooperation in the field of emergency services between the two German states of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate with Alsace since 2009.¹²⁰ Another example for a regional agreement is the *Framework Agreement for Cooperation in cross-border initial and continuing vocational training Saarland - Lorraine* with the aim of promoting cross-border training involving all relevant stakeholders in Saarland and the border region of Lorraine.¹²¹ A similar agreement exists also in the Upper Rhine Region.¹²²

Institutionalisation at the Upper Rhine was founded by the *Intergovernmental Treaty of Bonn*, concluded between Germany, France and Switzerland in 1975, allowing for the establishment of the Franco-German-Swiss Intergovernmental Commission with the mandate to examine and resolve issues and obstacles in the Upper Rhine region. This objective was reconfirmed with the *Basel Agreement* in 2000. In the Greater Region, cross-border cooperation was provided with a legal framework in 1980 through the adoption of an intergovernmental agreement between France, Germany and Luxembourg. This agreement met the wish for greater formalisation of cross-border cooperation and laid at the same time the legal basis for the activities of the Intergovernmental Commission and the Regional Commission of SaarLorLux-Trier-West Palatinate.

The topic on legal instruments was also a point of discussion during the focus group among actors of cross-border cooperation. Most of the actors considered the existing legal instruments as mostly sufficient. For those actors stating that additional instruments should be provided, this should happen on a European level to ensure a global harmonisation. At the same time, legal flexibility should take into account the specificities of the regions in order to be more effective on local and regional level. Regarding the future of the project of the *European Cross-border European Mechanism* (ECBM), actors of cross-border cooperation underlined the fact that such a tool could be very helpful (even if it would not be a solution to all difficulties), but expressed a rather negative/realistic point of view: as long as at national level, the political will to implement the ECBM was lacking, there would be no need to continue to push the ECBM.

¹²⁰ „Rahmenabkommen zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Französischen Republik über die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit im Gesundheitsbereich“; „Vereinbarung über die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit im Bereich der Rettungsdienste Elsass / Baden Württemberg“, <https://www.oberrheinkonferenz.org/de/gesundheit/downloads.html>. Accessed 2 June 2023.

¹²¹ „Abkommen über die grenzüberschreitende Berufsausbildung Saarland-Lothringen vom 20.06.2014“. Retrieved from: <https://www.grossregion.net/content/download/4656/publication/Account%20apprentissage%20Sarre-Lorraine%202014%2006%2020.pdf>. Accessed 11 July 2023.

¹²² „Rahmenvereinbarung über die grenzüberschreitende Berufsausbildung am Oberrhein vom 12. Juli 2013“, https://www.eures-t-oberrhein.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Ausbildung/Rahmenvereinbarung.pdf. Accessed 11 July 2023.

France-Belgium

Franco-Belgian cross-border cooperation benefits from the Bruxelles agreement, signed in 2002. This framework agreement is inspired from the European framework convention of Madrid (1980),¹²³ and allows for local authorities and public organisms to engage in cross-border cooperation. The Brussels Agreement is inspired from the Karlsruhe agreement (1996) between France, Germany, Luxemburg and Switzerland. It recognises the possibility for the creation of LGCTs from the model of what the Karlsruhe Agreement framed. This possibility was seized in 2006 by the municipalities of Lille, Tournai, Kortrijk and their surroundings in order to further their integration, before creating the EGTC “*Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai*” in 2008.

Another framework agreement was signed in 2005 in the sector of cross-border health cooperation, providing the frame for conventions for health cooperation. This also ensures the continuity of care between the different health regimes of France and Belgium. In concrete way, this framework agreement boosted cross-border cooperation in the health sector. This paved the way for the setting up of the seven ZOASTs on the French-Belgian border. These conventions are not anymore only between hospital facilities, but bear a territorial approach for easing the crossing of border for patients. The framework agreement enlarged the vision of health actors in both rural and urban areas, for now covering almost all the border.

In terms of economy, innovation and formation, a series of conventions and protocols were concluded since the 2000s between regional actors. Despite regions in France and Belgium not being at the same NUTS level, Belgian regions¹²⁴ are competent in about the same sectors as the French regions.¹²⁵ In 2001,¹²⁶ on the one hand, the region *Nord-Pas-de-Calais* and the Flemish region agreed to a decentralised cooperation convention and on the other hand, the French region *Champagne-Ardenne* established a collaboration protocol with Wallonia, both on economic, research and formation, land-use planning and employment cooperation. In 2018, a cooperation convention was set up between the *Hauts-de-France* region and Wallonia on the same sectors than the previous convention and protocol, and reaffirmed the will for cooperation between the two regions in what regards the project of the canal between the Seine and Escaut Rivers. This project of linking the Escaut-Lys River systems to the Seine River is completed by the International Convention on the Common Lys, enlarging the Lys on 19kms for transport barges.¹²⁷

These conventions led to the setting up of various common meetings between French and Belgian political actors. These cross-border assemblies exist for instance between the Nord

¹²³ International treaty between 40 European countries members of the Council of Europe. It aims at providing a frame for binational agreements and treaties to foster local cross-border cooperation.

¹²⁴ Notably economy, employment and mobility.

¹²⁵ French regions are competent on economic development, professional formation, land-use planning and transportation.

¹²⁶ The territorial reform of the regions happened in 2016, at this time regions in France and Belgium were at the same NUTS level.

¹²⁷ “*Convention Internationale sur la Lys Mitoyenne*” [International Convention on the Adjoining Lys River], signed in 2019 between Wallonia, Flanders (regions) and France for the layout and management of the Lys River between Deûlémont and Menin in anticipation of the canal Seine-Nord/Seine-Escaut.

département and the provinces of *West-Vlaanderen* and Hainaut, and allows for a regular exchange on cross-border cooperation and for the evaluation of current projects and prospects for the future.

At a local scale, there are multiple agreements between the Belgian provinces and the French départements, and between French and Belgian cities and arrondissements. It is at this scale that the two EGTCs “*Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai*” and *West-Vlaanderen / Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d’Opale*” are operating. The city of Lille and the Belgian region *Bruxelles-Capitale* also concluded an agreement in 2019 on tourism, culture and accessibility.

The local scale, and thanks to the French law on the modernisation of territorial public action and affirmation of the metropolises¹²⁸, the *Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai* created a scheme for cross-border cooperation¹²⁹ in 2017. This document aims at giving a frame for all cross-border cooperation initiatives by trying to automatize the resort of cross-border devices if they exist. This SCT only bears legal effect on the French side of the Eurometropolis, and is a strategical document that does not propose precise projects, since the only institution that can take decisions is the metropolitan council. A similar document exists for the Ardennes area (*Stratégie de l’Ardenne Transfrontalière*), under the impulse of the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière*, some Belgian intercommunals and the bordering French intercommunalities¹³⁰, set up by 2020, and a more modest one in the Flemish region (*Coopération Transfrontalière Pays de Saint-Omer-Flandre Intérieure-West Vlaanderen*).¹³¹

On a prospective note, the next legal groundwork for Franco-Belgian cooperation will be in the *Ardenne* region. Actors such as the Belgian provinces, intercommunals, intercommunalities, universities and economic actors signed a declaration to reinforce cross-border cooperation on the territory. This proposal includes the construction of two bus lines in the urban area by the sector of Bouillon, Sedan, Arlon and Florenville, the systematic recognition of equivalent diplomas in the health sector, an offer of cross-border university formation, etc. This in-building cooperation seems to be enlarging in terms of cooperation in the sector of transportation, with the different transportation infrastructures crossing the département of *Ardennes* as the motorway Reims-Charleville-Charleroi (France-Belgium), the airfield Etienne Riché near Charleville-Mézières and the fluvial port of Givet on the Meuse River.¹³²

On a practical note for Belgians in France or French residing in Belgium, a new convention was signed in November 2021 between French and Belgian ministers of finances.¹³³ It consists on

¹²⁸ Loi MAPTAM “*Modernisation de l’Action Publique Territoriale et d’Affirmation des Métropoles*” in 2014.

¹²⁹ SCT, “*Schéma pour la Coopération Territoriale*” [Scheme for Territorial Cooperation].

¹³⁰ The *Ardenne Métropole* is a French intercommunal at the border with Belgium centred around the city of Charleville-Mézières and amounts to about 120 000 inhabitants.

¹³¹ See the website of the AUD “*Séminaire d’évaluation stratégie de coopération transfrontalière pays de Saint Omer – Flandre Intérieure – West Vlaanderen*” [in French], 30 November 2018 : https://www.aud-stomer.fr/fr_FR/ressources/seminaire-d-evaluation-strategie-de-cooperation-transfrontaliere-pays-de-saint-omer-flandre-interieure-west-vlaanderen. Accessed 03 April 2023.

¹³² See in particular the cross-border strategy of the *Ardennes département*: <https://www.cd08.fr/le-kiosque/les-ardennes-politique-transfrontaliere> [in French]. Accessed 03 April 2023.

¹³³ “Convention entre la République Française et le Royaume de Belgique pour l’élimination de la double imposition en matière d’impôts sur le revenu et sur la fortune et pour la prévention de l’évasion et de la fraude fiscale” [in French], 9 November 2022, Retrieved from :

replacing the existing convention that dates from 1964, and aims at preventing any risks of double imposition on income and wealth. The situation for binational civil servants became precarious since 2020 as a Belgian tribunal stated that an amendment to the previous convention which in 2009 was not applicable, meaning that Franco-Belgians residing in France and working as civil servant (for instance) in Belgium were imposed twice on their income.¹³⁴ The convention in 2021 tries to avoid such cases. However, at the time these words are written, the convention has yet to be ratified by both France and Belgium¹³⁵. In the meantime, the 1964 convention continues to be applied.¹³⁶ The new convention falls however short at addressing some shortcomings of the 1964 convention, namely on French translucent societies.¹³⁷

Denmark-Germany

In Schleswig, cross-border cooperation was never characterised by ambitious proclamations, but much more by a rather pragmatic approach concerning practical issues of cooperation and improvements in the border region and the cross-border cooperation. This is most prominently illustrated by the Regional Office's placement directly at the border in Padborg/Pattburg. The Office is dealing with, e.g., facilitating commuters and providing assistance for business and other cross-border activities.

In this area, we can observe a difference between Danish and German approaches. The Danes are much less interested in concrete juridical agreements and legal instruments. Here pragmatism weighs much more than formal agreements. This is also reflected in the discussion of legal instruments. The Regional Office stresses that the EGTC represents an excessively complex and large apparatus and is thusly not considered an adequate instrument for cooperation.

https://www.impots.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/media/10_conventions/belgique/dbv_met_frankrijk_fr-versie_-_alternat_vf2-pour_publication.pdf. Accessed 18 April 2023.

¹³⁴ Chantrel, Yan, “Double imposition des fonctionnaires binationaux franco-belges travaillant pour l’Etat français” [in French], Oral question to the French Senate, Retrieved from <https://www.senat.fr/questions/base/2023/qSEQ23030486S.html> Accessed 18 April 2023. The answer of this oral question has yet to be published by the website of the French Senate.

¹³⁵ Especially since it has to be ratified in Belgium by the federal parliament, the Flemish parliament, the parliament of the French Community, of the German-speaking Community, by the Walloon Region and the *Bruxelles-Capitale* Region (6 ratification instruments in total).

¹³⁶ “Version consolidée de la convention franco-belge du 10 mars 1964 modifiée par les avenants du 15 février 1971, du 8 février 1999, du 12 décembre 2008 et du 7 juillet 2009” [in French], Retrieved from : https://www.impots.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/media/10_conventions/belgique/belgique_convention-avec-la-belgique-impot-sur-le-revenu_fd_1425.pdf. Accessed 18 April 2023.

¹³⁷ This is a French type of society, meaning that imposition is done directly when the company registers its profits on individuals according to their shares of the company. When declaring their income in Belgium, the part of profit that Belgian shareholders will receive will again be imposed, since Belgium will consider it as a dividend. This means that Belgians who own shares of a French translucent company is imposed twice. For the way imposition on dividends currently works, see article 15 of the 1964 convention. See also Gackiere, J. “Nouvelle Convention fiscale franco-belge: les principaux impacts en matière de fiscalité patrimoniale” [in French], 2023, Retrieved from: <https://www.degroofpetercam.com/fr-be/blog/nouvelle-convention-fiscale-franco-belge>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

As referred to earlier, legislation regarding the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is within the competence of the UK Government in London and the Irish Government. This is particularly the case in terms of immigration policy, where the main UK pieces of legislation are the Immigration Act 1971 and the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, which amends core parts of the 1971 legislation affecting the operation of the Common Travel Area. It is the 2022 legislation that introduces the requirement for non-visa nationals resident in the Republic of Ireland, which includes non-Irish EU nationals, to apply and pay for an Electronic Travel Authorisation in advance of crossing the border into Northern Ireland.

The main pieces of Irish legislation in this area are the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2004, and the Immigration Act 2004. The latter makes the provision for an immigration officer to refuse a person entry into the Republic of Ireland if that person ‘intends to travel (whether immediately or not) to Great Britain or Northern Ireland’ and ‘would not qualify for admission to Great Britain or Northern Ireland if he or she arrived there from a place other than the [Irish] State’.

In terms of legal instruments, it is important to note that the Common Travel Area is not a single formal agreement between the Republic of Ireland and the UK. Instead, it is both a set of practices that reduce the need for passport controls for British and Irish citizens when travelling between the UK and Ireland, and a set of policy and legal provisions which allow British and Irish citizens to reside and work in either jurisdiction, without the need for special permission. The CTA is not simply a legal travel regime but a regime of citizens’ rights which include access to public services, to healthcare and social benefits, and some voting rights. Crucially, it does not apply to citizens who are neither Irish, nor British, nor does it apply to any other type of movement, beyond that of people, nor does it have specific legislation underpinning it in either UK or Irish law. This fact is reinforced in the Memorandum of Understanding agreed in 2019 between the Irish and UK governments on the CTA, which concludes by stating:

“The foregoing record represents the common understanding of the Participants upon the matters referred to therein. It is not of itself intended to create legally binding obligations. The longstanding durability of the CTA has benefited from a degree of flexibility and the detail of the foregoing arrangements may continue to evolve”¹³⁸.

The principal international agreement regulating relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, as implemented through domestic legislation by the UK and Ireland. Rather than setting out measures to manage the border, the Agreement in fact refers to the British Government’s removal of security

¹³⁸ United Kingdom Government and Ireland Government, “Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland concerning the Common Travel Area and associated reciprocal rights and privileges”, 08/05/2019. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800280/CTA-MoU-UK.pdf. Accessed 13 July 2023.

installations in Northern Ireland, which included those located at the border with the Republic of Ireland, ensuring its invisibility.

Within the UK system, the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is the legislation that enacts parts of the Good Friday Agreement for which the UK Government had responsibility. Section 5 of the Act includes the legislative framework for the Northern Ireland Executive's participation in the North South Ministerial Council. Section 3 of the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 provides the equivalent framework in Irish law for the participation of the Irish Government in the Council.

As for the implementation bodies to be established under the Good Friday Agreement, separate sections of the British-Irish Agreement Act 1999 set out the legislative framework for each of the bodies under Irish law, while the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 does the same under UK law. The legislation establishes the functions and responsibilities of all the implementation bodies, including how they are answerable to and under the policy direction of the North South Ministerial Council.

The UK's withdrawal from the European Union has also brought into play legislation relevant to cross-border relations and mobility between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The 2019 Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU is the overarching legal framework establishing the means of the UK's departure, while its Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland refers in its preamble to, among other things, the UK's and EU's 'firm commitment to no customs and regulatory checks or controls and related physical infrastructure at the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland'. Furthermore, the main body of the Protocol not only supports the continuation of the Common Travel Area (Article 3) and the protection of the Single Electricity Market operating on the island of Ireland (Article 9), in Article 11 it also states that the 'Protocol shall be implemented and applied so as to maintain the necessary conditions for continued North-South cooperation'.

The UK domestic law implementing the Withdrawal Agreement is the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020. However, as previously mentioned, in 2022 the UK Government introduced the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which sets out to unilaterally override large parts of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. This proposed legislation is being considered by the UK Parliament at the time of writing.

Hungary-Romania

Bilateral agreements

The most important legal document ruling cooperation between the two countries is the *Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good-neighbourly relations*¹³⁹ which was signed on 16 September 1996. The document ensures the respect of territorial sovereignty of both countries and the ways of protection of ethnic minorities, the two major topics impacting the most the bilateral relations. In the field of sectoral cooperation, the following bilateral agreements have been signed by the two parties:

- 1990: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of culture and education
- 1997: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of tourism
- 2001: A bilateral agreement on the protection and promotion of investments
- 2002: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of environment
- 2002: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of regional development
- 2002: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of justice
- 2002: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of agriculture
- 2003: A bilateral agreement on the protection of watercourses crossing the border and on cooperation of their sustainable utilisation
- 2008: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of fisheries
- 2008: A bilateral agreement on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications
- 2008: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of transport
- 2011: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of energy
- 2011: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of emergency management
- 2011: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of healthcare
- 2012: A bilateral agreement on the protection of the rights of national minorities
- 2014: A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of sports

Cross-border structures based on international law

Both countries have adopted the *European Charter of Local Self-Government* and the *Madrid Outline Convention* but not its three protocols. The Charter and the Convention enabled the local and regional authorities to start cooperation in an institutionalised form which is the euroregion. In addition, the above bilateral treaties not only rule the management of the sectorial subjects in question but some of them have created joint cross-border bodies as well. For instance, the Joint Committee of Economic Cooperation and the four subcommittees (for flood and inland water protection; water management and hydrometeorology; water quality; coordination and cooperation development) of the Water Management Joint Committee hold regular meetings. The Joint Committee of Minority Issues had no meetings between 2009 and 2022 due to tensions in the field. Furthermore, the historians of the two national academies established a joint committee which provides opportunities for exchanges on the disputed joint history of the two nations. At the same time cross-border structures similar to the western European borders do not exist in this region.

¹³⁹ “Treaty of understanding, cooperation and good neighbourliness”, 16 September 1996, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201966/volume-1966-I-33604-English.pdf>

Application of the EGTC instrument

In compliance with the *EU Regulation 1302/2013* amending the *Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006* on a European grouping of territorial cooperation, four European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) have been registered so far along the Hungarian-Romanian border. All of them are of cross-border regional groupings, and all of them have Hungarian seats due to the differences in the liability rules, which were not arranged by the Regulation of 2006 in a satisfactory way.

Brief overview of the Hungarian-Romanian cross-border cooperation EGTCs:

	European Border Cities EGTC	Gate to Europe EGTC	European Common Future Building EGTC	Banat Triplex Confinium EGTC
Year of registration	2014	2012	2012	2011
Seat	Nyíregyháza (HU)	Nyíradony (HU)	Pusztatölaka (HU)	Mórahalom (HU)
Number of member municipalities per country (2021)	HU: 1 RO: 1	HU: 20 RO: 15	HU: 5 RO: 3	HU: 39 RO: 37 SRB: 8 (observers)
Number of employees (2021)	5	3	1	3
Total value of the projects implemented so far (in EUR, 2022)	502.7 thousand	4200 thousand	no data	3200 thousand

Source: CESCI

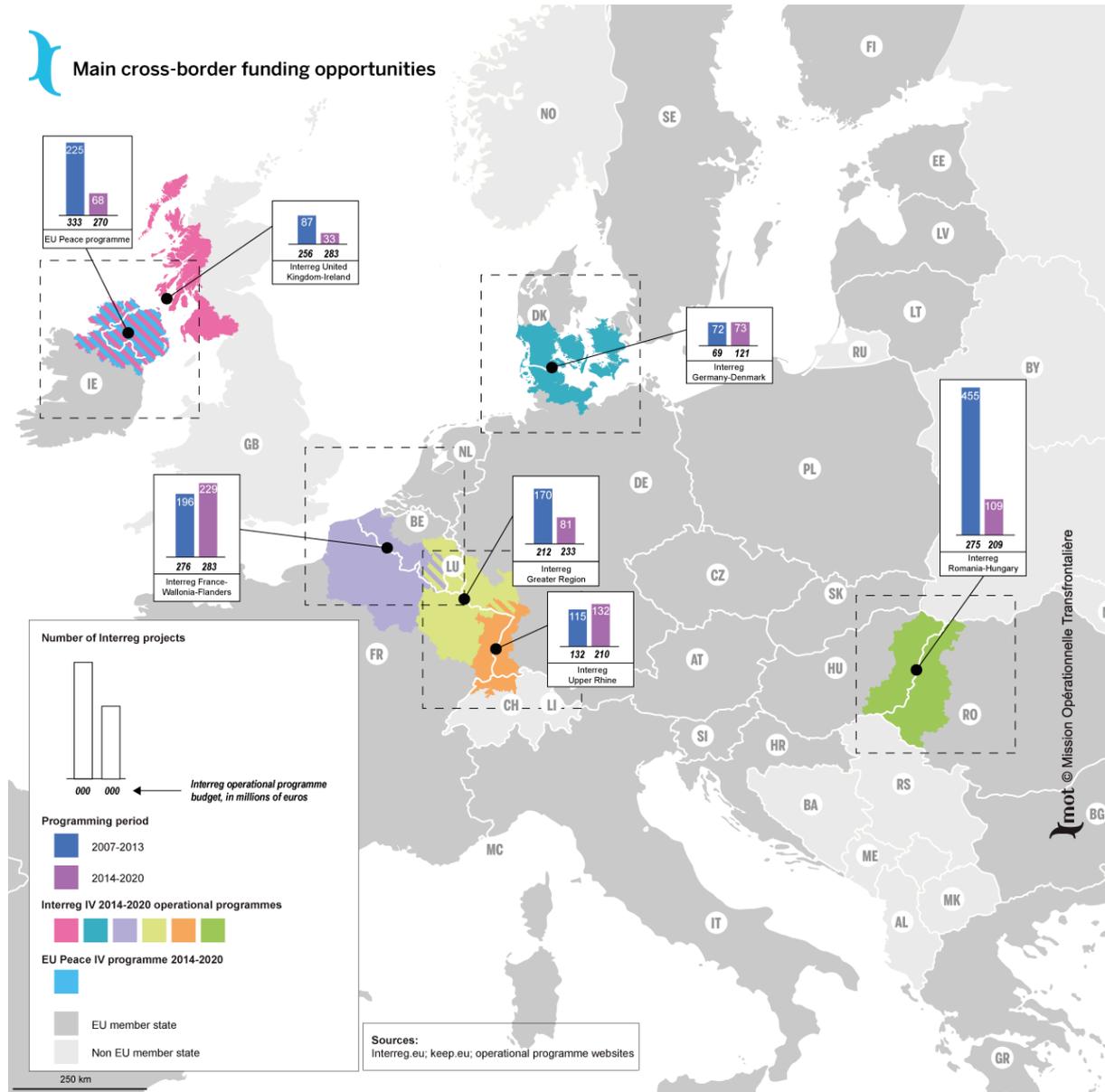
There are remarkable differences between the groupings by number of members and performance. Especially when comparing them to the Hungarian-Slovak EGTCs, salient shortcomings can be detected.¹⁴⁰ It is worth mentioning that unlike the Slovakia-Hungary CBC programme, where two groupings are managing the small project fund (with a value of EUR 13.5 million), 5 EGTCs implemented integrated action plans for employment in the previous programming period and the groupings have an observer status in the Monitoring Committee. In the case of the Romania-Hungary CBC programme, neither the EGTCs nor the euroregions are welcomed partners of the programme management bodies. Accordingly, the tool is much less popular than in the former case and the potential actors do not favour the establishment of new groupings.

There are differences between the national level approval procedures. The Romanian ones are more complicated, because several ministries are involved therein, and the interpretation of the tasks to be delivered by an EGTC are different too. However, it is not an impeding factor, as all four EGTCs have been registered and are operational. The main impeding factor is the low performance of the existing groupings, which does not make this tool attractive to further stakeholders.

¹⁴⁰ See the Snapshot on Hungarian EGTCs at the CESCI's EGTC monitor: <https://egtcmonitor.cesci-net.eu/en/>.

Main cross-border funding opportunities

Introduction



Funding opportunities in cross-border regions are various. In fact, European institutions, nation-states as well as local and regional actors all support financially cross-border projects. Even if private and associative funding can also be important, this chapter will focus on public funding in the five border regions.

INTERREG, as a series of programmes, supporting territorial cooperation within the European Union, is probably the most important of these funding sources. Created in 1990, these programmes are part of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It aims at promoting cooperation between European regions and the creation of joint solutions in the fields of urban, rural and coastal development, economic growth and environmental

management.¹⁴¹ European Territorial Cooperation is organised in different strands. Besides the transnational (INTERREG B)¹⁴², interregional (INTERREG C)¹⁴³ and outermost regions' cooperation (INTERREG D)¹⁴⁴, INTERREG A¹⁴⁵ is the most relevant one for border regions. More specifically, the INTERREG A programme targets cooperation across borders between neighbouring States and regions. With a global budget of 6.7 billion euros, it supports 73 cross-border cooperation programmes during the period 2021-2027.¹⁴⁶ These cross-border programmes are made up of 49 internal programmes, 24 external programmes (10 IPA and 14 NEXT) and the PEACE+ programme.¹⁴⁷ The latter, for example, aims to improve relations between Ireland and Northern Ireland and has a budget of 1.1 billion euros. In addition to structural and investment funds, sectoral programs (such as Erasmus+ or the European Social Fund) also provide funding in border regions. States and regions are also major providers of funding opportunities, for instance the Shared Island Initiative (Ireland) or Gábor Bethlen Fund (Hungary). These programmes aim to reconcile populations (Ireland), but can also be used for a more nationalist policy, such as the Gábor Bethlen fund, which aims to improve cultural cooperation between Hungary and the Hungarian communities in Romania. Moreover, states can co-finance cross-border structures, as it is the case in France and Belgium for instance.

However, this financial support, although appreciated by actors of cross-border cooperation, has room for improvement. First, INTERREG is “only” a co-financing instrument and, thus, other funding must therefore be found. Second, it is not a pre-financing scheme, which can pose problems, especially for smaller structures. Third, the funds are often little known to local actors: according to the EU cross-border cooperation survey, conducted in 2020, only 24% of respondents, who reside in border regions covered by INTERREG cross-border cooperation programmes have heard of any EU-funded cross-border cooperation activities in their area.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, apart from the necessary financial capacities to benefit from European funding, especially INTERREG requires also important administrative capacities. Thus, the funds naturally disadvantage small local structures. The map shows both an overview of the number of projects funded by INTERREG and PEACE and the funding amount in the last programming period 2014-2020.

141 More information on INTERREG: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

142 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/trans-national_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

143 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/interregional_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

144 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cooperation-outermost-regions_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

145 More information: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

146 The funds allocated to INTERREG have gradually increased since 1992, as it amounted for instance 6.6 billion Euros for the programming period 2014-2020.

147 European Commission, “Interreg A – Cross-border cooperation”. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

148 European Commission, “Cross-border cooperation in the EU”, Gallup International, 2020, p. 7. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/survey-2020_en. Accessed 7 June 2023.

France-Germany

As for other European border regions, the *European Regional Development Fund* of the European Union and its cross-border programme INTERREG A provide the framework for cross-border cooperation in both the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine region. The managing authority of the *INTERREG Upper Rhine*¹⁴⁹ programme is the Région Grand Est; the *INTERREG V A Greater Region*¹⁵⁰ programme is managed by a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) under Luxembourg law. It was in 2010 that the Greater Region was restructured as an EGTC with the objective to become the single managing authority for the operational INTERREG programme.

The territory covered by the actual INTERREG Upper Rhine programme is officially called *INTERREG VI-A France-Germany-Switzerland (Upper Rhine)*. It comprises the NUTS 3 areas along the border in France and Germany as well as five Swiss cantons and opens up along 350 km. Furthermore, the programme is also characterised by interdependencies beyond the programme area, which result in functional cooperation spaces, for example in the areas of mobility or environmental protection.¹⁵¹ Since the implementation of the programme in 1990, thus within 30 years, INTERREG Upper Rhine has co-financed more than 850 projects with over 257 billion €. ¹⁵² For the current funding period 2021-2027, the INTERREG VI Upper Rhine programme has a total of 125 million € at its disposal. According to the strategy of this sixth period, Europe is to become even greener, more connected, more social and more intelligent as well as closer to the people. Thus, the regional programme strategies priority these objectives, too. The *Interreg VI-A France-Belgium-Germany-Luxembourg (Grande Région/Großregion)* programme comprises NUTS3 areas in Belgium, France and Germany. Due to its size, the whole country of Luxembourg takes part. In the current period, the programme will invest 182 million € in cross-border projects.

Apart from INTERREG A, both border regions are part of other cooperation programmes within the framework of INTERREG B that is about transnational cooperation in geographically larger areas. As such, both the Greater Region and Upper Rhine are part of the corresponding INTERREG B Northwest Europe, the Upper Rhine is moreover part of INTERREG B Alpine Space and the German border regions of the Upper Rhine participate also in the INTERREG B Danube Region cooperation area.

In both regions are several funding opportunities available. For instance, both have a specific instrument for funding research projects: via the *Interregional Research Promotion* (Interregionale Forschungsförderung) of the Greater Region and the *Science Offensive* (Wissenschaftsoffensive)¹⁵³, launched by the Trinational Metropolitan Region Upper Rhine, the science sector, research and innovation is to be strengthened and new synergy effects in

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.interreg-oberrhein.eu/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.interreg-gr.eu/de/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵¹ „Interreg Oberrhein Programm 2021-2027“. Retrieved from <https://www.interreg-oberrhein.eu/wp-content/uploads/programm-interreg-oberrhein-2021-2027-genehmigt-am-29042022.pdf>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵² „30 ans d'Interreg dans le Rhin supérieur | 30 Jahre Interreg am Oberrhein“ [Video], *Interreg Rhin Supérieur | Oberrhein*, 13 January 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOS4R5LU7c8&t=231s>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵³ The Science Offensive is a thematic call for projects in the INTERREG programme.

research are to be achieved. Within *Eucor - The European Campus*, a network of five universities in the Upper Rhine Region, exists a specific funding instrument: Seed Money. Via Seed Money, research and innovation projects as well as projects in the development of study programmes are financed.¹⁵⁴

A national funding opportunity represents the joint *Franco-German Civic Fund* that has its origins in the Treaty of Aachen signed between France and Germany in 2019.¹⁵⁵ It was set up in spring 2020 and promotes town twinning and projects for meetings and exchanges between associations, i.e. also in the border region. The fund has supported more than 470 projects with an annual volume of 2.8 million euros. Another possible way to fund encounter projects is the INTERREG small project fund, also known as people-to people (P2P) or micro project fund. In the Upper Rhine Region, citizens can contact for example the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau if they would like to apply for funding up to a maximum of 100,000 €. The Greater Region has made since 2019 money available in the so-called *cooperation fund* to promote cross-border and citizen cooperation projects within the Greater Region. The cooperation fund is managed by the EGTC Summit Secretariat of the Greater Region. Citizens should thus have the chance to exchange ideas, overcome language barriers and make acquaintances in order to strengthen their sense of belonging to the Greater Region.¹⁵⁶ With the partnership concept between Baden-Württemberg and France, “Vivre la Wir”, exchange and encounter projects between Baden-Württemberg and France can be promoted. Here, projects in all areas can be funded from the micro-project fund with a grant of 500 to 6,000 €.

However, a recurrent problematic, with the latter fund and many others, is that they only finance direct costs, not personnel costs. This can be in particular problematic for smaller organisations and it is also detrimental to the sustainability of a project – the main question is to know how projects can be financially supported in the long term. Current funding instruments do not (yet) take this issue into account.

When discussing the funding opportunities in the Upper Rhine region, during the focus group, actors of cross-border cooperation stated that a problem was indeed the lack of available funds. They estimated that increasing these opportunities, especially on a long-term basis, would improve the situation. One idea would be for each local authority to have a specific cross-border budget; there should also be more funding for infrastructure projects, grants for companies that are committed to cross-border as well as an opportunity for companies and start-ups in the cross-border area. Moreover, the lack of funds were coupled with a more or less heavy administrative burden: the consensus is that INTERREG should be simplified, as this would counteract the effectiveness of projects and discourage new projects and the engagement of volunteers. The question of pre-financing can also be a problem. Many smaller organisations are not able to advance funds until the first payment from INTERREG, usually a few months after the start of a project. Regarding the existing cross-border funding opportunities in the region, actors stress the need to make them more visible; information and communication were here the key words. A guideline for financing has already been developed by the Upper Rhine

¹⁵⁴ More information about the funding “Seed Money”, here: <https://www.eucor-uni.org/de/seed-money/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.buergerfonds.eu/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Project call: <https://www.grossregion.net/Kooperationsfonds/Projektaufruf>. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Conference and will be renewed in the course of the current programme period INTERREG VI. This guide will be primarily addressed to citizens who wish to implement small-scale project and will inform about the funding rules for such projects.

France-Belgium

As for the other borders studied in this toolkit, the Interreg programme is one of the main funding opportunities for cross-border cooperation. At the transnational scale, two Interreg B programmes run in the region, as to say Interreg North-Sea and Interreg North Western Europe that comprises the whole Franco-Belgian border. Interreg A, focused specifically on cross-border projects, amounts to 3 programmes in the region. The first one is specifically dedicated to the Franco-Border, the Interreg *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* programme. The second one, Interreg *2Seas*, covers only the northern part of the border, only encompassing the *Nord* and *Aisne* départements and the provinces of West and East Flanders and of Antwerp. The last one is centred on the Great duchy of Luxembourg and covers Wallonia, the *Ardenne* département and the former region of *Lorraine* for the Franco-Belgian side, the Interreg *Grande Région* programme (which is the unique Interreg Programme managed by an EGTC).

The Interreg programme is a real broker of cross-border cooperation according to local actors from both sides. There is however a difference in the guarantee for financing the supported projects between France and Belgium. In both France and Belgium, the European Regional Development Fund finances Interreg VI projects up to 50% (and 70% for pilots of the portfolio projects). In Wallonia, the region can contribute so that the total eligible expenses for an Interreg *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* project totals 90%. In total, about 55% of Interreg *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* projects are Belgian.¹⁵⁷

The French and Belgian authorities are discussing about 2 projects of cross-border rail connection. The first of these projects is between Mons and Valenciennes, but the project is at a standstill up till works at the Mons train station will be over; however, it is now included in the new cross-border agenda. The second project is a commercial connection between Givet and Dinant. The French and Belgian ministers of transportation signed a statement of intent in 2021, in accordance with a previous agreement in 2018, that would revive the railway between Givet and Dinant. In order to move from stagnation about this line since 2004, a series of studies have been conducted in 2022, financed by the French “*Ardenne Rives de Meuse*” intercommunality and the Belgian federal state.¹⁵⁸ Conclusions on the feasibility of this revival will be known during the first semester of 2023. However, this liaison will only be for commercial freight and not for public transportation. The financing was -for now- conducted

¹⁵⁷ Europe en France, “Interreg – France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen. Programme de coopération transfrontalière” [in French], 9 June 2022, Retrived from https://www.europe-en-france.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/fiche_programme_francewallonieflandres_14_20.pdf. Accessed 04 April 2023.

¹⁵⁸ In total, the cost of the studies amounts to about 420 000€, with 300 000€ paid by “*Ardenne Rives de Meuse*” and 120 000€ by Belgium. Blanc, A. “Des études en 2022 pour rouvrir la ligne de chemin de fer Givet-Dinant” [in French], *France Bleu Champagne-Ardenne*, 25 January 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/transports/des-etudes-en-2022-pour-rouvrir-la-ligne-de-chemin-de-fer-givet-dinant-1643094023>. Accessed 04 April 2023.

without European participation, Interreg was not mobilised to cover part of the spending of such a project.

Another sector that is not covered by European funds is the financing of the EGTCs themselves. As for example, the EGTC *West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d’Opale* is financed on a par between French and Belgian public administrations. The same equality applies for the EGTC *Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai*, Belgians and French contribute equally based on their nationality.

Finally, and apart from the investment funds of the European Regional Development Fund, one of the main financing opportunity for the next few years will remain the Interreg programme. The next programme’s call for projects ended last February 2023 for the programme *France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen* and also for the *Grande Région* for the 2021-2027 period of the programme.

Denmark-Germany

The institutions and organisation of cross-border cooperation are co-financed from the two neighbours. Resources from INTERREG have played an important role in financing the cooperation in the past, and the border region has recently received a grant for future activities. Main fundings in the German-Danish border region come from local, national and European levels. INTERREG is the best known and used in border studies and has supported many bilateral projects related to the Danish-German border region and cross-border cooperation. It has played the main role in institutionalising cooperation in the Danish-German border region.¹⁵⁹

Several projects from the sphere of culture, economics, employment, education and tourism have been developed due to the support coming from INTERREG. The programme started in the Danish-German border region – as well as in many others – in 1990.¹⁶⁰ The cross-border cooperation in the German-Danish border region is well developed and has existed for many decades, hence other European programmes for the support of cross-border cooperation, for example PHARE,¹⁶¹ were not introduced for this region.

INTERREG plays an important role in the economic development of the Danish-German border region. Although it cannot be used to support specific companies or industries directly, some

¹⁵⁹ M. Klatt,, “The Danish-German Border Region: Caught between Systemic Differences and Re-bordering”, *Eurasia Border Review*, vol. 8, n°1, 2017, pp. 15–30.

¹⁶⁰ M. Klatt & I. Winkler, “Lessons from the Danish-German border region for post 2020 INTERREG A – an alignment with cross-border functional regions?”, *Europa XXI*, vol. 38, 2020, pp. 139–156.

¹⁶¹ The programme of Cross-border Cooperation introduced by the European Parliament in 1994 in order to support the co-operation between Eastern and Central-Eastern European countries and their neighbours. K. Stokłosa, “Opportunities and Problems of Euroregions along the Polish-German Border”, In J. Langer, (ed.), *Euroregions – The Alps-Adriatic Context*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2007, pp. 233–242; 238–24

J. Frątczak-Müller, A. Mielczarek-Żejmo, “Euroregion, governance, community – Analysis of functional interdependence on the example of the Euroregion Spree-Neisse-Bober”, In: K. Stokłosa, (ed.), *Borders and Memories. Conflicts and Co-operation in European Border Regions*, LIT, Zürich/Wien, pp. 117-133; 122.

INTERREG funds in all Operational Programmes have been used to improve companies' and industries' competitiveness. INTERREG funded business projects and supported contact fairs and vocational training for young females, immigrants and other "disadvantaged groups" to improve their levels of integration in the labour market.¹⁶²

Ireland-Northern Ireland

The EU's European Territorial Cooperation programmes have been the principal source of funding for cross-border collaborations between actors in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As well as the INTERREG A programme, since 1995 the island of Ireland has benefited from the PEACE programme, which was specifically created to support cohesion between communities involved in the conflict in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, and to support economic and social stability.

While the eligible area for the PEACE programme consisted of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland, since 2007 the INTERREG A programme also encompassed Western Scotland. Although the UK has left the European Union, the EU and the UK and Irish governments agreed to a post-Brexit European Territorial Cooperation programme. The €1.1 billion PEACE PLUS programme, which replaces the separate INTERREG A and PEACE programmes and no longer includes Western Scotland within the eligible area, was formally adopted by the European Commission in July 2022. Its overall objectives are to build peace and prosperity, and to leave a lasting and tangible legacy across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It has six thematic areas, which are:

- Building peaceful and thriving communities;
- Delivering socio-economic regeneration and transformation;
- Empowering and investing in our young people;
- Healthy and inclusive communities;
- Supporting a sustainable and better connected future; and
- Building and embedding partnership and collaboration.

Since 1982 the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs has also been an important supporter of cross-border cooperation through its Reconciliation Fund. The Reconciliation Fund was originally established to support organisations working to further peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, on a cross-border basis, and between Ireland and Great Britain. It has two key thematic pillars: repairing those issues which lead to division, conflict, and barriers to a deeply reconciled and peaceful society; and building a strong civil society that encompasses all communities, through the continued implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and other subsequent agreements, and promoting a rights-based society, political stability and respect for all. Among the priority areas under the Fund's current strategy (for the period 2021-2024) are the building of sustainable North-South links through the development of relationships and

¹⁶² M. Klatt & I. Winkler, "Lessons from the Danish-German border region for post 2020 INTERREG", *op. cit.*, pp. 145–146.

connections, and the commissioning of research on the challenges faced by border communities.

More recently the Irish Government also established the Shared Island Initiative. Its overarching aim is to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island of Ireland, and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future. The establishment of the Shared Island Fund was announced in Ireland's budget for 2021, with €500 million in capital funding for the period 2021-2025 for investment in collaborative North-South projects.

Hungary-Romania

Cross-border programmes

It is the European Union which provides the most important funding opportunity for cross-border cooperation. In 1995, when Austria joined the EU, Hungary became eligible for PHARE cross-border cooperation calls. Based on an agreement between the Austrian and Hungarian authorities a part of the total budget could be used for actions along the Hungary-Slovakia border, and, from 1996 onwards, along the Hungary-Romania border as well. It was a unique solution as this was the first external without between two non-member states which became eligible for INTERREG. It was in 1999 when the PHARE CBC programme designed for the Romanian-Hungarian border started its operation with a total budget of EUR 24 million. Between 1996 and 2003, EUR 62 million was spent for the projects of the CBC programme. Between 2004 and 2006, the two countries implemented a trilateral programme, including Serbia and Montenegro. The programme supported CBC projects on the Hungarian side with 32 (INTERREG)¹⁶³, on the Romanian side with 20 (PHARE) million euros. In 2007, when Romania joined the EU, ERDF financing replaced the PHARE programme. Since that time, two INTERREG A programmes have been implemented: the first one of EUR 211 million was managed by Hungary, the second of EUR 189 million by Romania. As a consequence of the low level of mutual trust and the backwardness of the border region, the cross-border relevance of the supported projects is rather weak. Similarly to several further CBC programmes, the beneficiaries consider the programme as an alternative funding opportunity to be used for their own local needs.

Hungarian national funds

Several national programmes are available in Hungary for cultural cooperation between Hungarian and Romanian Hungarian communities. Obviously, these funds facilitate cross-border cooperation but with a limitation of the eligibility: ethnic Romanians are excluded therefrom. The largest amount is distributed by the Gábor Bethlen Fund targeting the protection of Hungarian cultural heritage present in Romania, while the National Cooperation Fund facilitates the organisation of joint, Hungarian-Hungarian civil society activities. In addition, the Hungarian government provides financial subsidies for the 13 officially recognised minorities living in Hungary, on an annual basis. Accordingly, the educational institutions and cultural associations of the Romanian minority of Hungary have the opportunity to apply for

¹⁶³ “Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013.” (n.d.). Project database. Retrieved from: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/project_info/1428 . Accessed 26 January 2023

funding by which they can enhance their cooperation with their fatherland (organisation of cultural programmes and training, hiring native speaker teachers, etc.). All these funding possibilities have a strong ethnic character but they contribute to cross-border interactions.

Obstacles

Introduction

Obstacles to cross-border cooperation are multifold, either caused by historical developments between the countries sharing the border, by cultural, administrative, legal differences. The Eurobarometer set up a study on said barriers in its 2015 report on cross-border cooperation. Here, one type of obstacle identified is legal or administrative, and is one of the most straightforward difficulties when thinking about obstacles. It is close to another obstacle mentioned, which is the interest of public authorities.¹⁶⁴ Then, the obstacle of different languages (and more generally, albeit on a smaller scale, socio-cultural differences) is evident as it may hinder communication between the two sides of the border. This linguistic obstacle is however not to be found at all European borders. For instance, there are no language difference between the southern part of the border between France and Belgium, or between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Difficult physical access appears as well as obstacle. Indeed, some borders are modelled on landscape characteristics, which makes it the result of both history and geography. For instance, the border between Italy and France is marked by the Alps, which concentrates traffic at bottlenecks where the border can more easily be crossed. This is also the case with rivers as for the border between Alsace (France) and Baden-Württemberg (Germany) along the Rhine River. Here, the border can only be crossed on bridges. Finally, the last obstacle identified in the Eurobarometer is the lack of mutual trust, to which a chapter of this toolkit is dedicated.¹⁶⁵ However, all obstacles to cross-border cooperation and to freedom of movement were not listed by the Eurobarometer study since obstacles are sometimes way more concrete, as suggests the lack of transport connections at the border between Hungary and Croatia.¹⁶⁶

The fact that the EU conducted the Eurobarometer study to obtain a comparative view of the main obstacles to European cross-border cooperation shows that the EU is aware of the issue. In the context of finding solutions to overcome legal and administrative obstacles, both the Council of Europe and the European Union set up tools.

The Council of Europe also set up actions in order to tackle obstacles to cross-border cooperation in the form of the E-DEN platform, which lists case-studies across 24 European countries of good practice. The focus has been put on the good governance for cross-border cooperation. The idea of the E-DEN platform is to provide a pool of examples to take inspiration from to lift potential obstacles for a specific border.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, after having worked 2015 on a Cross-Border Review which identified difficulties in cross border regions throughout several actions (public consultations, workshops with stakeholders, a study), the European Commission has created through its Communication

¹⁶⁴ E. Medeiros, “Should EU cross-border cooperation programmes focus mainly on reducing border obstacles?”, *Documents d’Anàlisi Geogràfica*, vol. 64, n°3, 2018, pp. 467-491.

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter “Mutual Trust”.

¹⁶⁶ S. Tišma, K. Jurlin & H. Čermak, “Obstacles to cross-border cooperation – case of Croatia and Hungary”, *European Journal of Geography*, vol. 9, n°2, 2018, pp. 116-133.

¹⁶⁷ See the website of E-DEN: <https://edenplatform.org/about/>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

“Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions” (COM(2017)534)¹⁶⁸ the so-called *B-solutions* in 2017. *B-Solutions* is an initiative to specifically deal with legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border cooperation, supported by the DG Regio and managed by the Association of European Border Regions. It consists of a series of call for proposals from local and regional institutions in a bottom-up approach. The *B-solutions 2.0* is titled “Solving Cross-Border Obstacles”.¹⁶⁹

In the EU, there has been a proposal for a European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM). The ECBM aimed at enabling “one member state to apply the laws of a neighbouring member state for the purposes of a common cross-border project”.¹⁷⁰ The ECBM failed in Council since it was not deemed sufficient enough, notably since the Portuguese presidency of the Council, position taken up by Slovenia.¹⁷¹ The ECBM did not make it through the trilogue phase of the European Legislative Procedure yet, in particular because the Council did not want to pursue discussions on the mechanism.

On a prospective note, the next challenges remain centred on the adoption –or not– of a mechanism that would reassure the Council for the ease of cross-border cooperation. The ECBM-system proposed by the Commission, and validated by the European Parliament, seemed to grasp the main expectations of on-ground actors. Flexibility is key about the European Cross Border Mechanism, as each border area has its own challenges and obstacles depending on its history, of the States’ institutions and practices, and of the proximity of the relation cultivated between neighbours. The ECBM – without being the solution for all obstacles – would have allowed for taking into account all these particularities and for a swift deal with administrative and legal obstacles.

France-Germany

Along the Franco-German border, different mechanisms to identify and tackle existing obstacles exist. B-solution, an initiative by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) has been used several times during the first and the second call. For instance, in the Upper Rhine Region, the trinational competence centre *TRISAN*¹⁷², affiliated to the Euro-Institut, was commissioned by the Eurodistrict PAMINA in 2018 to develop an action protocol to reduce border barriers in the areas of health insurance/ cross-border healthcare. The action

¹⁶⁸ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions”, COM(2017) 534 final, 20 September 2017. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2017%3A534%3AFIN>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

¹⁶⁹ See the website of B-solutions: <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/about>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

¹⁷⁰ A. Engl & E. Evrard, “Agenda-setting dynamics in the post-2020 cohesion policy reform: the pathway towards the European cross-border mechanism as possible policy change”, *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 42, n°7, 2020, p. 918.

¹⁷¹ About this position, see the video of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Development questioning the Slovenian presidency on the 13th of July 2021 at the following link: https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/committee-on-regional-development_20210713-1345-COMMITTEE-REGI. Accessed 06 June 2023. The answer of the slovenian representative is at 14:29:30.

¹⁷² <https://www.trisan.org/fr/>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

protocol was part of a pilot project that received a grant from b-solutions. 12 border obstacles in the areas of health insurance / cross-border healthcare were listed in the action protocol and based on the analyses carried out by TRISAN, it was possible to develop concrete proposals for solutions and recommendations for action to improve the situation for each of the obstacles identified in the protocol.¹⁷³ Another example of b-solutions is the identification of an obstacle in terms of cross-border rail connectivity for the Port of Strasbourg: German freight trains renounce to use the Port of Strasbourg partially because of obstacles generating additional costs, complexity and delays for a distance as the crow flies as short as 2 km. Here, solutions were proposed by an external expert from the Euro-Institut.¹⁷⁴

Citizens in the Upper Rhine region experience several obstacles and difficulties in their daily lives and their professional activities, which are linked to the border. During the focus group on the Franco-German border, mobility was one of the mentioned obstacles. Citizens agreed that connexion in the region needs to be largely improved as the region lacks an integrated map of the French and German transport networks as well as interregional transport services. Obstacles to mobility are also mentioned in the *Interreg Border Orientation Paper*.¹⁷⁵ It is stated that the Upper Rhine Region has a relatively well developed road and rail connectivity. However, there exist still several obstacles, such as missing links between certain areas that would require some bridges to be built over the Rhine and some infrastructure work on the rail tracks. Furthermore, different frameworks in terms of security or transportation, lack of cooperation in planning and implementing mobility projects or no harmonised regional ticket pricing and systems are other obstacles hampering the area to develop its integration. According to the citizens, the possibility to move and to travel to the neighbouring country goes along with the obstacle of language. With regard to this matter, citizens furthermore express the need for tandem courses in professional contexts. Perceived as major difficulties in the border regions are, however, legal and administrative obstacles, especially in relation to the labour market. Different salaries in France and Germany, no harmonisation in terms of labour law, recognition of qualities as well as a lack of agreements, e.g. regarding traineeships, influenced citizens' motivation to seek a job on the other side of the border. Citizens furthermore perceive a lack of information on existing cooperation policies, on existing institutions, on health insurance etc. To this end, communication and transmission of information would need to be improved, especially via social networks. Interestingly, obstacles were perceived as something that may be unnecessary in the sense that these obstacles are willingly maintained: *“Sometimes we restore the boundaries ourselves.”*

¹⁷³ „Abschluss des Projektes B-Solutions über die Grenzhindernisse in den Bereichen Krankenversicherung / grenzüberschreitende Gesundheitsversorgung“, TRISAN [online], 30 May 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.trisan.org/themenfelder/patientenmobilitaet/artikel/abschluss-des-projektes-b-solutions-ueber-die-grenzhindernisse-in-den-bereichen-krankenversicherung-grenzueberschreitende-gesundheitsversorgung>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

¹⁷⁴ “Final report by the expert. Advice Case: Cross border rail connectivity for the Port of Strasbourg”, B-solutions [online]. Retrieved from:

https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/euroinstitut_autonomous_port_of_strasbourg_.pdf. Accessed 11 July 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Interreg Border Orientation Paper (2019). <https://www.interreg-rhin-sup.eu/wp-content/uploads/upper-rhine-fr-de-ch-v3-en.pdf>. Accessed 11 July 2023.

In the focus group, actors of cross-border cooperation discussed the main obstacles. One issue that came up repeatedly was about funding: there would not be enough money spent on cross-border cooperation and especially no funding that is designed to maintain projects. The lack of specific funding instruments was also raised, such as a fund for infrastructure projects or grants for companies engaged in cross-border cooperation. Furthermore, actors addressed the language obstacle and the need for more language courses as well as the need for harmonised data as another obstacle. They also stressed the importance of checking the impact on border regions when EU directives are being transposed into national law and to check to what extent there might arise problems with different transpositions.

However, they were unanimous in their view that many mechanisms for resolving obstacle already exist (e.g. the Franco-German-Swiss Conference of the Upper Rhine, INFOBEST network, b-solutions, Committee for cross-border cooperation etc.), but are not sufficiently known or wrongly used. They stated that the tools to identify and overcome obstacles exist, but voices to promote and finance the use of these tools are missing. This is what evokes a certain frustration among actors in the Upper Rhine Region: obstacles to cross-border cooperation remain unsolved even after the long period of cooperation that the Upper Rhine Region can count. New mechanisms as such would not be necessary, because the *Aachen Treaty* from 2019, the bilateral agreement between Germany and France, stipulated that the Committee for cross-border cooperation (AGZ/CCT) has precisely the task of identifying obstacles and drawing up proposals for dealing with them, thus embodying the mechanism: “*It already is legally established*”. The Committee for cross-border cooperation is indeed an important tool in terms of obstacle removing. Before its establishment, difficulties were referred to the Upper Rhine Conference, which then referred them to the Intergovernmental Commission and thus to the national level. The AGZ/CCT¹⁷⁶ as a policy platform now has the added value of comprising representatives from all, national, regional and local levels, and it was established with the aim of specifically looking at obstacles that cannot be solved at other levels by other institutions. At its constituent meeting on 22 January 2020 at Hambach Castle, the Committee adopted a work programme listing twelve thematic areas, containing “obstacles” and “other issues” which the committee addresses. Nevertheless, solutions of a political and administrative nature can only be settled internally, as there is a lack of financial means to involve external resources which is very limiting; moreover, the AGZ/CCT needs time to become an effective tool for solving obstacles. In addition to this committee, there are cross-border organisations, such as the Euro-Institut, which take the first step to problem-solving, that is to identify and analyse existing obstacles in the border region. Another example is the Task Force Grenzgänger 3.0 in the Greater Region that develops concrete legal and administrative proposals for solutions to problems of a fundamental nature for cross-border workers or trainees as well as companies that employ cross-border workers.

Another problem is that administrations and politicians are often not aware of the existing differences between two national systems, when implementing projects and policies. Taking the Upper Rhine Region as an example, although it is a highly integrated region, there is often a lack of knowledge within domestic regional structures about the functioning of institutions on the other side of the border. Therefore, one of the main concerns is that regional and local administrations learn to adopt a 360° perspective that the neighbour is consistently and

¹⁷⁶ <https://agz-cct.diplo.de/agz-cct-de>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

sustainably “thought with” in projects: How does the French side deal with this issue? Can we learn from the other side of the border in regards to this problem? Does our project have an impact on the German side of the border? Should we approach our project from a cross-border perspective? Can we develop a potential for the cross-border area together? These are only a few questions that need to be asked in a cross-border living space.

France-Belgium

When speaking with actors from the north of the border, it appears that the linguistic shift is a major obstacle, and that this obstacle will strengthen over time. Historically speaking, French Flanders is characterised by a Flemish substrate, but a sharp decline of the Dutch dialects locally led to French being the overwhelming majority language of economic, political and associative actors. Learning Dutch in France is possible at some schools at the border at the rectorate of Lille, but it concerns a minority of schools. Karima Delli¹⁷⁷ for instance stressed during her campaign for the *Hauts-de-France* region that Dutch is a factor of cohesion and potential source for economic development of the bordering territories, but these political intentions are –still– not materialised.¹⁷⁸ If organisms such as the Franco-German Youth Office or the British Council exist for German and English, there is no equivalent for the Dutch language. Of the total 3 669 256 middle and high school students on the 10-year timespan 2013-2022 in the Lille academy,¹⁷⁹ only 27 226 students learned Dutch, as to say 0.74% of all secondary school students of the Lille academy (bordering Belgium).¹⁸⁰

There is also a local phenomenon of cross-border schooling of French children in Belgian Flanders, and reversal, but this is very small minority.¹⁸¹ The linguistic obstacle strengthens because of the lack of interest for French in Belgian Flanders. In fact, of the 400 000 Flemish secondary school pupils for the year 2018-2019, 48% need remediation in order to be prepared for their school year programme of French. This score is also high in other subjects, but French is the highest score observed by entry tests suggesting remediation is needed.¹⁸² The Flemish minister of education confirmed that the learning of French was a total concern. These results indicate a lack of interest in the French language by the Flemish high school students, because

¹⁷⁷ French leftist union (greens) opposition leader in the region *Hauts-de-France* since 2021 and member of the European Parliament since 2009.

¹⁷⁸ Montard, N. “L’enseignement du néerlandais ou du flamand pas encore prioritaire dans le Nord de la France” [in French], *Les Plats Pays*, 11 November 2021. Retrieved from : <https://www.les-plats-pays.com/article/lenseignement-du-neerlandais-ou-du-flamand-pas-encore-prioritaire>. Accessed 5 April 2023.

¹⁷⁹ Aggregation of all secondary school students of the timespan. This makes an average of 360 000 pupils a year for the Lille academy.

¹⁸⁰ Own compilation from the DEPP (number of high school students from 2013-2022 by French academy) and MENESRI and *Système d'information Scolarité* (for the number of languages in both public and private high schools in the Lille academy) of the statistics department of the French ministry of National Education and of the Lille Academy statistics department. Almost all high schools that teach Dutch are located in the *Nord* department, bordering the Flemish region.

¹⁸¹ In the journal *De Morgen* 12 December 2022, Kelly van Droogenbroeck counted 179 French pupils schooled in Belgium, and 129 Belgian pupils in France.

¹⁸² Commissie voor Onderwijs, *Vraag om uitleg over de verplichte niet-bidende instapoets voor aspirant-studenten lerarenopleiding* [in Dutch], Reportmeeting. Retrieved from: <https://www.vlaamsparlement.be/en/parlementair-werk/commissies/commissievergaderingen/1293583/verslag/1296031>. Accessed 5 April 2023.

the use of English tend to stir up despite being the second compulsory foreign language for Flemish high school students.¹⁸³

The linguistic obstacle is not the only one present at the France-Belgium border. Indeed, there are some discrepancies between the way competences are devolved between France and Belgium. The two countries did not experience decentralisation and regionalisation the same way, and at the end, governance is experienced differently from one side of the border to another, added to more classical legal differences. For instance, there has been discussion for the creation of a Franco-Belgian bus line between Hazebrouck (France) and Poperinge (Belgium). Initially announced for January 2022, this bus line aimed at fostering mobility for Poperinge and connect it with the high speed train infrastructure of Hazebrouck. However, the project was delayed for the summer 2022, then to January 2023 and finally to summer 2023.¹⁸⁴ The project was in fact delayed in part because the prefect of the Nord département found out that the Belgian transport company “*De Lijn*” commissioned to carry out passengers did not have security belts. In response, the Belgian authorities, supported by local officials of the French side such as the mayor of Hazebrouck, asked the prefect for an exemption for this very situation, a call declined by the prefect of the *Nord département*.¹⁸⁵ This very trivial example shows how concretely the ECBM regulation could have enhanced and fostered territorial cross border cooperation at the Franco-Belgian border.

In France, a general report on cross-border cooperation of territorial collectivities has been written in July 2022, and identifies some obstacles to an efficient cross-border cooperation.¹⁸⁶ The main issue is the diversity and complexity of the juridical set-ups at the border, as the different cooperation structures and projects are closely interlinked. The identification of the competences of each actor is sometimes arduous, and counterparts sometimes do not know what actor does what on the other side of the border (as for the arrondissements and intercommunals in Belgium and in France the incertommunality’s syndicates). This observation led the general inspection of the administration to recommend not creating any other type of cross-border cooperation structure, but deepen the use of the already existing mechanisms. For instance, Belgian federalism is difficult to understand as a foreigner as a Belgian region has full competences in a certain set of domains, with no federal intervention. This report comforts the hunches of actors working at the European Natural Parc *Plaines-Scarpe-Escaut*. Indeed, even though for now conviviality remains the main characteristic of cross-border relations within the

¹⁸³ From the academic year 2012-2013, there were 1.58% of all Flemish bachelor programmes proposed in English and 17.84% Master programmes, to the academic year 2017-2018, as there were 3.11% English-based bachelor programmes and 23.63% Master programmes. For further information about this phenomena, see Rosiers, K. & Vogl, U. “Engels en Nederlands in het Vlaamse hoger onderwijs. Reflecties vanuit de (meertalige) praktijk” [in Dutch], in *Internationale Neerlandistiek*, vol.57(2), July 2019, pp.113-125.

French is however compulsory for Flemish high school students, and primary school students since 2004.

¹⁸⁴ Lagedamon, M. “Le lancement de la ligne de bus entre Poperinge (B) et Hazebrouck encore reporté” [in French], *La Voix du Nord*, January 2023, Retrieved from: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/1275343/article/2023-01-07/le-lancement-de-la-ligne-de-bus-entre-poperinge-b-et-hazebrouck-encore-reporté>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

¹⁸⁵ Lagedamon, M. “Bus Poperinge-Hazebrouck: le projet stoppé faute de ceinture de sécurité” [in French], *La Voix du Nord*, May 2022, Retrieved from: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/1181270/article/2022-05-19/bus-poperinge-hazebrouck-le-projet-stoppe-faute-de-ceinture-de-securite>. Accessed 25 April 2023.

¹⁸⁶ Inspection générale de l’administration, “La coopération transfrontalière des collectivités territoriales”, report n°22035-R, July 2022. Retrieved from: https://medias.vie-publique.fr/data_storage_s3/rapport/pdf/288529.pdf. Accessed 10 July 2023.

EGTC *Plaines-Scarpe-Escaut*, the structuration of the cooperation by its institutionalisation constitutes a risk of cooling relations along only administrative lines, which is clearly not wished by concerned actors.¹⁸⁷

Denmark-Germany

Since the signing of the *Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations* in 1955, no open conflicts involving the border have been known. This, of course, does not exclude different positions, and sometimes irritations concerning policies and restrictions on the other (side of the border). The existing border regime must be understood as emanating from the violent conflicts of the 19th and the difficulties of the 20th century, culminating in the German occupation of Denmark from 1940 to 1945. The solution of 1955 did not include any incentives to a closer contact or cooperation across the border. The intention was far more to reduce contacts and deal with upcoming issues in a less dramatical way. Neither government had any interests in a resumption of earlier and much more conflictual discourses in and around the border region.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

In 2001 a study on obstacles to cross-border mobility commissioned by the North South Ministerial Council was published.¹⁸⁸ The report identified a range of obstacles to mobility across a number of areas arising from different regulations and administrative structures in the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. These included:

- Taxation, social security and pensions;
- Health, childcare, housing and transport;
- Education and training;
- Employment legislation and recruitment practice; and
- Telecommunications, banking and insurance.

Among the report's 50 recommendations and proposed solutions was one that suggested: 'A one-stop cross-border mobility information website should be established which would provide comprehensive and easily accessible information on key aspects of jobs, learning opportunities and living conditions on both sides of the border'. The result of this recommendation was the awarding by the North South Ministerial Joint Secretariat of the contract to the Centre for Cross Border Studies to develop a cross-border mobility website, which came under the Border People project¹⁸⁹ that continues to this day.

¹⁸⁷ Information from the focus group in Mons on the 28th of February 2023, completed with a mail exchange with Lisa Bardot, in charge of cross-border cooperation at the European natural park *Plaines Scarpe Escaut* on the 26th of April 2023.

¹⁸⁸ North South Ministerial Council, "Study of Obstacles to mobility", *borderpeople* [online], 11/2001. Retrieved from: <https://borderpeople.info/site/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/obstacles.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

¹⁸⁹ For more information, see: www.borderpeople.info. Accessed 6 June 2023.

The persistence of some these obstacles can be seen in the programme for the PEACE PLUS programme for the 2021-2027 period, which refers to remaining obstacles arising from diverging national legislation on either side of the border, as well as incompatible administrative processes and a lack of common territorial planning.

While the UK was a member state of the European Union, many of the cross-border difficulties confronted by citizens could be resolved by resorting to EU regulations related to safeguarding the principle of the freedom of movement. However, post-Brexit that is no longer the case. Instead, Irish and UK citizens have to rely on the Irish and British governments putting in place measures that can, as far as possible, safeguard the rights of Irish and UK citizens resident on the island of Ireland to continue to engage in cross-border mobility, including in access to public services such as health and education. Where it is within the competence of the Northern Ireland administration, cross-border mobility is also reliant on legislation introduced by the Northern Ireland Assembly to not undermine that mobility.

The preamble to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland recognises that ‘the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the [European] Union gives rise to substantial challenges to the maintenance and development of North-South cooperation’, and that the EU and UK had ‘carried out a mapping exercise which shows that North-South cooperation relies to a significant extent on a common [European] Union legal and policy framework’. The absence of that shared legal and policy framework has, indeed, resulted in uncertainty for actors involved in cross-border cooperation, which is reinforced by the prospect of increasing regulatory divergence between the UK and the EU.

Civic society organisations and local authorities responding to the quarterly surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation (where East-West cooperation relates to cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain) initiated by the Centre for Cross Border Studies in the first quarter of 2021 (when the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland entered into force) have identified a range of emerging obstacles to cross-border cooperation and mobility.¹⁹⁰ While a number of responses report delays and increased costs in accessing goods, the overriding obstacle to cross-border cooperation is the uncertainty provoked by Brexit, which undermines actors’ confidence in future planning for cross-border collaborations. That uncertainty has arisen in the context of UK post-Brexit immigration policy, the potential for UK divergence from EU standards and, above all, the political divisions between the UK and the EU, and between London and Dublin, which have in turn created divisions between some political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government.

Indeed, political instability could be said to be the major obstacle to cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland. As is the situation currently, when there is no functioning Northern Ireland Executive or Assembly (which has occurred on several occasions since the Good Friday Agreement), there is no functioning North South Ministerial Council. While this is not encouraging for local actors engaged in cross-border cooperation, it not only means that the

¹⁹⁰ The Centre’s quarterly surveys, which began as part of the “Maintaining the necessary conditions for cooperation and cross-border lives”, funded by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs’ Reconciliation Fund, are available at: <https://crossborder.ie/what-we-do/projects/maintaining-the-necessary-conditions-for-cooperation-and-cross-border-lives/>. Accessed 6 June 2023.

Belfast and Dublin administrations cannot develop their cooperation, it also presents significant obstacles to the proper functioning of the implementation bodies established by the Good Friday Agreement. These bodies are presented with serious difficulties, for example, when members of their governing boards or their chief executives need to be replaced, or when they need their operating budgets to be agreed, which require the approval of the North South Ministerial Council. Although in these cases emergency measures have to be found, the lack of a fully functioning North South Ministerial Council prevents the implementation bodies from operating in a stable manner and with the ability to undertake proper planning.

Hungary-Romania

The context of obstacle management

Due to the reduced permeability of the border and the low level of mutual trust inherited from past conflicts, the intensity of cross-border cooperation is much lower along this border than in the western part of the EU – but even compared to the western and northern borders of Hungary. As a result of the low intensity of cooperation the number of obstacles encountered are also at a low level and mostly connected to the challenges of the external Schengen border – which are not solvable among the present circumstances. For instance, the cross-border commuters face the slow crossing procedure if there is a period of heavier traffic (during the holiday seasons of the western European countries when several tens of thousands Romanian visit their country of origin); the transport of equipment and some products (e.g. wine) necessary for organising cultural events may cause problems for the organisers; similarly, the flow of the participants of the twinning events is reduced due to the closed border crossings, etc. Since World War II, border conflicts have not occurred.

Obstacle management

Notwithstanding the bilateral agreements mentioned above, neither (national, regional or local) tools or solutions for obstacle management are put in place nor European models are used (like the e-Den tool). So far, one B-Solutions project was implemented by the Gate to Europe EGTC which targeted the cross-border retail of local products. The case and the potential solution were analysed by CESCO¹⁹¹. In 2016, within the framework of the Legal accessibility initiative¹⁹², CESCO organised a series of workshops around Hungary with the purpose of unfolding existing legal and administrative obstacles. Two workshops (in Nyíregyháza and Szeged) concerned the Romanian border. The stakeholders shared their experiences mentioning the obstacles to cross-border health service provision which channels the Romanian patients toward Hungarian private care; the burdens to opening a bank account for an EGTC and collecting membership fees across the border; the lack of coordination in the field of price-reductions in public transport, etc.

¹⁹¹ CESCO, (2021), A koronavírus hatásai a határrezsimre. Értékelő elemzés a magyarországi határrezsim változásáról 2020 márciusa és 2021 augusztusa közt. [The effects of the coronavirus on the border regime. Evaluative analysis of changes in the Hungarian border regime between March 2020 and August 2021]. Retrieved from: https://legalaccess.cesci-net.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/JOGa5_Covid-tanulmany_CESCO.pdf. Accessed 26 January 2023.

¹⁹² More information: <https://legalaccess.cesci-net.eu/en/legalaccessibility/>

Capacity-building

Introduction

Cross-border territories are key areas within the EU, where both the effects of movement towards European integration as well as the remaining obstacles to integration can be best studied. Cross-border cooperation is a tool to strengthen the territorial cohesion of the European Union and making lives of citizens living in those regions easier; it is about solving common problems and can contribute to the development of common opportunities. However, as necessary and important as cross-border cooperation is, it is equally important to underline that cooperation is not always easy. Obstacles to cross-border cooperation as well as to freedom of movement are present in daily activities and in setting up cross-border projects.¹⁹³ The lack of knowledge of ‘the other’, of the cultural, political, administrative functioning of the neighbour’s system creates a need for specialised measures, adapted to the specific characteristics of each frontier – a need for capacity building. As defined by the UN, ‘capacity-building’ can be understood:

*“as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world.”*¹⁹⁴

Applying this definition to the context of CBC, we can speak of a need to facilitate cross-border cooperation and to provide practical solutions to cross-border obstacles as well as to strengthen and develop skills of actors and processes in border regions. Capacity building in this context can take on various forms: information and counselling, training, support, mentoring or research.

The eurodistricts, eurocities and euroregions, as cross-border territories with a comprehensive vision and knowledge of the border areas, can represent such third-party facilitation and support. At regional level, other institutions, or specific bodies for the respective border regions, can be found. They can offer different means to facilitate cross-border cooperation, for instance by accompanying and supporting cross-border actors. At the national level, there are other institutions, which assist and accompany projects, analyse cooperation at national borders and function as a facilitator for networking, just like the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT)¹⁹⁵ in France or the *Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives* (CESCI)¹⁹⁶ in Hungary. At the European level, the *Association of European Border Regions* (AEBR)¹⁹⁷ exists, whose task is to represent the common interest of border regions at the European level and to identify common cross-border obstacles and finding solutions. The AEBR has implemented the B-Solution initiatives¹⁹⁸ and organises many events to connect different actors on European level. Another actor on European level is the *Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network*

¹⁹³ See also chapter “Obstacles”

¹⁹⁴ “Capacity-Building”, *United Nations Academic Impact* [online]. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/capacity-building>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

¹⁹⁶ <https://cesci-net.eu/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.aebr.eu/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

¹⁹⁸ <https://www.b-solutionsproject.com/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

(TEIN)¹⁹⁹, formed in 2010, which brings together 17 partners as well as 2 associated partners from 11 border regions in Europe. It consists of universities, research institutes and training centres, which are dedicated to the practical business of cross-border cooperation in Europe. TEIN partners come from various European borders, which is why TEIN is able to measure the need for capacity building in cross-border cooperation throughout Europe. The TEIN partnership's work involves cross-border training and facilitation, managing cross-border projects, providing mentoring, training and advice for cross-border actors, and researching on cross-border issues. Work on new products includes transferable training modules, different methods (e.g. need-analysis) or tools like impact assessment toolkits for cross-border cooperation. Once again using the UN definition of capacity building, its second part refers to a:

“transformation [as an essential ingredient in capacity-building] that is generated and sustained over time from within; transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.”²⁰⁰

We can see a need for this kind of transformation also when it comes to cross-border cooperation and to the question on how to tackle obstacles. While there has already been a shift from a selective problem perception to a pragmatic search for joint solution, future cross-border policy making will depend much more on a systematic capacity-building, and thus the need to consider and to be aware of ‘the other’ from the beginning.

France-Germany

In both the Greater Region and Upper Rhine Region, competences and processes are strengthened and developed in different ways. There are many institutions that provide counselling, knowledge transfer, guidance, training, teaching, research, etc. in order to build capacity in the region and with regard to cooperation across borders.

At the Franco-German border there is the *European Consumer Centre*²⁰¹, which acts as a contact point for any cross-border consumer protection issues in France and Germany (with all EU Member States as well as Iceland, Norway and the UK), be it questions about consumer rights or disputes with a company. In the Upper Rhine Region there is, for instance, the *INFOBEST network*²⁰², which consists of four advice centres distributed throughout the Upper Rhine region. The INFOBESTs were founded in the 1990s, initially as INTERREG projects. The four offices are the first point of contact for all cross-border questions about Germany, France and Switzerland that citizens might have. Thus, the INFOBEST network publishes information provides free advice on numerous topics such as social security, employment, taxes, moving to the neighbouring country, etc. In the Greater Region, this task is carried out

¹⁹⁹ <https://transfrontier.eu/>

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ <https://www.cec-zev.eu/de/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰² <https://www.infobest.eu/de/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

by *Frontaliers Grand Est*²⁰³, which provides information about the social, economic and legal instruments on cross-border workers and mobility together with the *Task Force Grenzgänger 3.0*²⁰⁴, which is responsible for developing concrete legal and administrative proposals for solutions to problems of commuters and companies. With regard health cooperation, the *Trinational competence centre TRISAN*²⁰⁵, amongst others, conducts studies on cross-border health issues, produces bilingual information material, networks actors from the health sector and supports exchange in the Upper Rhine Region. In addition to that, there exists also the non-profit association *TRION-climate*²⁰⁶, which is a German-French-Swiss network of energy and climate actors, founded in 2015 within the framework of the Upper Rhine Conference. The network links energy and climate actors and promotes the exchange of knowledge and experience, thus bundling synergy effects in the field of climate and energy. In addition to these institutions, the *Euro-Institut*²⁰⁷, a public organisation based, just like the listed organisations, in Kehl (Germany) must also be mentioned here. Established in 1993 by French and German authorities, its activities include mainly training, counselling and support of cross-border cooperation projects, but also research and networking activities. The Euro-Institut functions as a neutral platform primarily addressed to German, French and Swiss public authorities, but also open to all stakeholders interested and involved in cross-border cooperation. Neutrality is a crucial point in capacity building, as knowledge and competence transfer need to take place in a neutral framework and must therefore not be political or politicised. By accompanying or coaching stakeholders, by carrying out studies (e.g. on feasibility or evaluation) and by developing tools and methods, the Euro-Institut contributes to capacity building in the region, but also beyond on a national and European level. The core of the Euro-Institut's activity are practice-oriented trainings, which can take different forms, such as seminars, study trips or tandem language courses. They are conceived to develop transversal skills (e.g. knowledge of the different political-administrative systems or intercultural project management) and/or thematic skills regarding specific topics (e.g. spatial planning or childhood protection, culture, etc.).

Capacity building along the Franco-German border also takes place at universities. *Eucor*²⁰⁸ is a trinational association of five universities (the University of Freiburg and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany, the University of Strasbourg and the University of Mulhouse-Colmar in France and the University of Basel in Switzerland). Here, students can create their timetable trinationally and in total, there are more than ten cross-border degree programmes. Researchers can benefit from cross-border knowledge transfer and innovation transfer in cross-border research projects. Eucor was founded already in 1989 and has been a legal entity since 2016. In the Upper Rhine Region exists also *TriRhenaTech*²⁰⁹ since 2014. It is an alliance of universities of applied sciences in Germany and Switzerland and Engineering Grandes écoles in France. Its aim is to promote a joint approach to education, research, development and technology transfer in the field of applied science in the Upper Rhine.

²⁰³ <https://frontaliers-grandest.eu/de/startseite/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁴ <https://www.arbeitskammer.de/themenportale/task-force-grenzgaenger-30-der-grossregion>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁵ <https://www.trisan.org/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁶ <https://trion-climate.net/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁷ <https://www.euroinstitut.org/>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁸ <https://www.eucor-uni.org>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.trirhenatech.eu>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

In the Greater Region, the University of the Greater Region (UniGR)²¹⁰ forms a university network of six universities (the universities of Kaiserslautern, Liège, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Saarland and Trier), which was founded in 2008. The university promotes mobility as well as the development of linguistic and intercultural competences. UniGR has 30 integrated cross-border degree programmes. In order to meet the specific challenges of the border region, the UniGR has established interdisciplinary competence centres such as the Centre for Border Studies, as thematic science network dealing mainly with development of the borders of the Greater Region. Here, researchers also cooperate in the training of students within the trinational “Master in Border Studies”, a cross-border study programme at four universities.

During the focus group, actors of cross-border cooperation discussed about the need for capacity building on several levels. In terms of information, there was a need to learn quickly about new regulations in crises and stocktaking in order to prevent a further crisis. Furthermore, they proposed to work on a white paper for the Upper Rhine, allowing to gather information and proposals for the border region. In terms of training, actors referred to the need of training for elected representatives and national administrations as well as language / tandem courses. In addition to that, the Upper Rhine Region would need more political will and availability to deal with complex issues. Furthermore, more financial, political and budgetary support was mentioned as well as a monitoring for the resolution of cross-border obstacles and recognition for the different fields of cooperation.

France-Belgium

Capacity building at the Franco-Belgian border is a matter of good understanding, which underlines the convivial character of the Franco-Belgian border. Symbol of this conviviality is the way the media covered a border incident that happened in May 2021, when a Belgian farmer moved the border between Erquelinnes (Belgium) and Bousignies-le-Roc (France) in the region of Maubeuge. The matter was however taken very seriously by both French and Belgian national authorities. Indeed, this situation revealed the lack of precise demarcation on the ground since the place of the border mark of the border was interpreted from the Treaty of Kortrijk/Courtrai in 1820. The borders however in fact never moved, since the land register precisely describes where the properties’ limits are. A binational commission was set up in order to tackle this issue and replace the border marker to where it belongs (up to this day, the replacement of the border mark has yet to happen), comprising members of the Belgian Financial Service, as well as on the French part the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the Interior. The bourgmestre of Erquelinnes talked about the situation in the media, which made the gathering of information for writing this part quite easy as the media impact of this minor affair is very significant.²¹¹

²¹⁰ <https://www.uni-gr.eu>. Accessed 15 March 2023.

²¹¹ Information partly gathered by an email exchange with the bourgmestre of Erquelinnes the 8th of May 2023, as well as the multiple articles published in French, Belgian and the international press. See also: L. Daffe & G. Clément, “Nostalgie des frontières et constitution d’un ‘partimoine du franchissement.’ Négociations et accomodements ordinaires à la frontière franco-belge,” *Ethnologie française*, vol. 52, n°3, pp. 441-456.

A. Carrol, “How could a Belgian farmer accidentally move the border with France? It’s surprisingly easy, as history shows,” *Brunel University London*, 19 May 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.brunel.ac.uk/news-and->

The Ardennes is not to be outdone when it comes to capacity building. The province of Namur, the Wallonia region and the Belgian IDELUX intercommunal, together with the French *Ardenne Métropole* (intercommunality of Charleville-Mézières) and the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière*, gathered in a piloting committee, set up a common strategy for the cross-border *Ardennes* region. Concretely, the strategy aims at adopting common grounds against a declining socio-economic context that is similar in both sides of the border by dialoguing and facilitating cross-border projects in that sense. The strategy territorially encompasses multiple French intercommunalities and Belgian Wallonia provinces. The strategy was thought about in May 2019-March 2020. The elaboration of the strategic plan was itself oriented towards 6 main themes, as to say higher education and formation, economic development, health, mobility, visibility and territorial marketing and finally biodiversity and natural heritage. The strategy also encompasses the idea of creating portfolios of Interreg projects to facilitate their management for the Interreg programme 2021-2027.²¹⁷ The actors of the territory signed together a common declaration in order to reinforce cross-border cooperation in the Ardennes area in the beginning of 2022, according to what the provision of the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* and IDELUX suggested.²¹⁸ However, a common convention of the cross-border Ardennes as wished by the piloting committee is yet to be concluded among partners of the strategic plan.

However, capacity building across the border between political, economic or associative actors could benefit from a formation centre. There is no equivalent at the Franco-Belgian border of the Euroinstitut, which aims at (in)forming politico-administrative actors for cross-border cooperation and to explain the institutional functioning on the other side of the border. There is room for potential furthering of cross-border cooperation, especially since it is also possible to create a LGTC²¹⁹ between France and Belgium thanks to the Brussels Agreement. For now, common cross-border structures such as the *Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai de facto* act as formation provider on cross-border, within the scope of its competences. The metropolis of Lille created for instance informative thematic sheets on cross-border cooperation that focuses on the territory of the *Eurométropole*.²²⁰

Finally, other types of capacity building exist across the border. One of these examples is the network of French-speaking universities located at the Franco-Belgian border, that is the

institution-building: the EGTC as a facilitator of institutional integration in cross-border regions”, *Regional & Federal Studies*, vol. 26, n°2, 2016, pp. 143-169. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13597566.2016.1158164>. Accessed 26 April 2023.

²¹⁷ Stratégie de l’Ardenne Transfrontalière, *Rapport final*, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.idelux.be/servlet/Repository/Strat%C3%A9gie_de_l%E2%80%99Ardenne_Transfrontali%C3%A8re?ID=82182. Accessed 26 April 2023.

²¹⁸ Idelux, “Renforcement de la coopération transfrontalière sur le territoire de l’Ardenne” [Website], 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.idelux.be/fr/renforcement-de-la-cooperation-transfrontaliere-sur-le-territoire-de-l-ardenne.html?IDC=2513&IDD=57290>. Accessed 26 April 2023.

²¹⁹ “Groupement Local de Coopération Territoriale (GLCT)” [Local Grouping for Territorial Cooperation], chapter on *Governance*. The Euroinstitut is subject to German law. Political actors that would want to create an equivalent for the Franco-Belgian border would have to prospect whether Belgian or French law should govern it.

²²⁰ See website of the “Urbanism and Development Office of the Metropolis of Lille” [Agence de Développement et d’Urbanisme de Lille Métropole]: <https://www.adu-lille-metropole.org/productions/fiches-cooperations-transfrontalieres-france-belgique/>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

“Institute Borders and Discontinuities” [Institut Frontières et Diversités, IFD].²²¹ It is a multidisciplinary grouping of scientific interest between six French and Belgian universities, among them the University of Artois and the Catholic University of Louvain. It develops doctoral and non-doctoral research in Border Studies and applied contracts with authorities such as the Hauts-de-France Region. The IFD demonstrates that capacity building between France and Belgium does not only encompass administrations and politicians, but more diverse actors that, like the IFD, train and form future actors to cross-border cooperation.

Denmark-Germany

The Regional Office in Padborg/Pattburg is the most important facilitator of capacity building in the border region. There are of course several relevant initiatives with a decentralised base. University campuses exist in Flensburg (Europa Universität Flensburg) and in Sønderborg (University of Southern Denmark), but they have never managed to develop a significant cross-border cooperation. A few instruction courses and degree programmes profit from this proximity, but the universities could hardly be mentioned as drivers of cross-border capacity-building. This reflects less the interests and the engagement of the two institutions on a local regional level, but much more the almost total absence of any political interests on a national or regional level on either side of the border. It has not been possible to establish even a minimum of cross-border infrastructure to further the cooperation between the two universities. This differs from other European border region universities like e.g. in the German-Polish case.²²² A parallelism can also be found when it comes to e.g. libraries and archives that are very much dealing with each their part of the history and development in the border region. An example is the Danish Library in Flensburg (Dansk Centralbibliotek for Sydslesvig), which contains a large collection of material mostly from the Danish perspective that is very useful for researchers and students interested in the border region.²²³

Ireland-Northern Ireland

Under its theme of building and embedding partnership and collaboration, the PEACE PLUS programme has two investment areas that include a focus on capacity building for cross-border cooperation: strategic planning and engagement, and maintaining and forging relationships between citizens.

The first of these two investment areas is aimed at strategic stakeholders, with funding to enable ‘joint development and management of strategies; co-operation capacity building; and identification of solutions to reduce obstacles to cross-border co-operation’. Its support measures are designed to ‘contribute to the development and management of cross-border strategies that are necessary for sustainable and structural co-operation’, resulting in ‘the improved capacity for co-operation at strategic level in relevant sectors’.

²²¹ The IFD’s website [in French] is available at : <https://ifd.hypotheses.org/presentation-de-lifd>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

²²² K. Stokłosa, “Viadrina über Grenzen hinweg”, *Dialog. Deutsch-polnisches Magazin*, vol. 1, 1998.

²²³ <https://www.dcbib.dk/>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

The second of the two investment areas under this theme will fund ‘small scale projects or people to people projects that make a strong contribution to the social and civic cohesion of [the] cross-border region’. Its focus will be on promoting citizens’ cooperation and building mutual trust through joint actions, linking on a cross-border basis smaller organisations that work directly with citizens.

Capacity building for cross-border cooperation is also an ongoing task of the Centre for Cross Border Studies, working both independently and in collaboration with other organisations. Training on cross-border impact assessment was, for example, a core element of the Centre’s “Towards a New Common Chapter” project (2015-2019), which led to the New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands,²²⁴ and included capacity-building work with civic society organisations from both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. More recently, the Centre provided workshops on cross-border impact assessment and the development of cross-border partnership working to successful applicants to the Community Foundation Ireland’s All-Island Fund.

As part of the “Time to measure cross-border impacts” project (2021-2022),²²⁵ the Centre used the example of the introduction of public health measures in light of the Covid-19 pandemic to highlight the need for impact assessment of proposed policies and legislation from a cross-border perspective. This work involved discussing the concept of “border-proofing” of proposed legislation and policies with officials from both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, and sharing practice in other jurisdictions in Europe. Previously, the Centre led an INTERREG IVA project, in partnership with the International Centre for Local and Regional Development, which included executive training with cross-border local authority groups, the development of budget and evaluation toolkits for cross-border cooperation, and training and mentoring in cross-border impact assessment for officials at local government level.

Hungary-Romania

Capacity-building at the borders

‘Capacity building’ or ‘capacity development’ is a term generally understood as a “planned development of knowledge, output rate, management, skills, and other capabilities of an organization through acquisition, incentives, technology, and/or training”²²⁶. In a cross-border context, this term can mean anything from institutional development, project development, strategic planning, programming, to research in border studies. In the Romanian-Hungarian context, it is CESCO, which offers a comprehensive portfolio of capacity building: development of training curricula (online and in person), organisation of knowledge-sharing events (e.g.

²²⁴ For more information, see <https://crossborder.ie/what-we-do/projects/new-common-charter/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²²⁵ See <https://crossborder.ie/what-we-do/projects/time-to-measure-cross-border-impacts/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²²⁶ Zamfir, I. (2017). Understanding capacity-building / capacity development. A core concept of development policy. European Parliamentary Research Service Briefing. Retrieved from: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599411/EPRS_BRI\(2017\)599411_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599411/EPRS_BRI(2017)599411_EN.pdf) Accessed 11 June 2023.

within the framework of the Oradea process – together with French actors), expertise provided for cross-border institutional cooperation, cross-border planning and policy making, etc.

In terms of research and education, the University of Debrecen, through the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, and the University of Oradea, through its Institute for Euroregional Studies, are two key actors having an extensive background and activity in the region. The two institutions played a fundamental role in the creation and development of the euroregions in the 1990s and the 2000s and both universities provide courses on border-related topics and cooperation. Apart from them, the privately owned EDUTUS University (based in Budapest) offers a four-semester second-degree training of cross-border cooperation assistants attended by local civil servants also from the Romanian-Hungarian borderland.

Capacity-building at project level

In the Romanian-Hungarian border region actions pertaining to capacity building are still very much isolated from one another, project-based, and more often than not reduced to the shared acquisition of equipment, information dissemination, and the organisation of separate workshops and training sessions. Taking a look at the CBC projects aimed at capacity building, the general pattern entails the acquisition of equipment (most often the same equipment in parallel) by the project partners and the dissemination of results through a series of experience exchange events. Although these measures do indeed develop the individual competence and capacity of the partners, they are not designed for a joint, integrated, truly cross-border provision of services.

The Oradea Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation (BRECO) is also a key player in terms of Romanian-Hungarian CBC, a body created by the association of the two Regional Development Agencies in the proximity of Romania's border with Hungary (the Northwest RDA and the West RDA). Since 2005, when it was established, BRECO has been involved in the management of the Romania-Hungary Interreg CBC programme, takes part in designing and implementing cross-border strategies, promoting cooperation and good neighbourhood relations in the border region, and supporting local initiatives carried out within the region. Further CBC structures present in the border region take part in the management of projects in the fields of culture and tourism, transport, environment and health, which often entail capacity building actions, too. Moreover, these bodies also ensure the dissemination of relevant information through their websites and social media sites. Although no longer active, the Euroregional Informational Centre (ERIC) initiative of the DKMT Euroregion has to be mentioned as a good practice example. The ERIC was operational for several years as a multilingual news agency, bringing under the same umbrella all relevant information concerning the Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian tri-border region, with even such progressive features as an e-market database and marketplace which would still prove to be relevant today.

Flows in cross-border regions

Introduction

Cross-border regions as spatial entities are a result of exchange and interaction between border regions and areas, which consist of interdependencies. This interweaving is a wide variety of flows that can define and identify a territory: cross-border regions are marked by human mobility, but also by economic exchanges and cross-border trade, transport, cultural exchanges, political linkages or exchange in the field of research and knowledge, between universities, etc.

In this toolkit, we will mostly refer to one of the main groups of human cross-border flows in the EU, which is the one of cross-border mobility that is different from transnational mobility. The latter is marked by EU citizens deciding to move to another Member State for work.²²⁷ Cross-border work, however, means to live in one country and to work in the neighbouring country, which means commuting every day across the border. Apart from commuters, flows can also encompass tourists or students crossing the border, consumers, users of cross-border transportation lines or cross-border families (for example with parents being divorced and living on each side of the border). Another flow of cross-border human mobility are refugees; the EU's interest in these flows increased with the migration crisis in 2015 as e.g. shown by the reinforcement of the Frontex agency.

The strategy of the European Territorial Cooperation Policy, consisting of dismantling obstacles to interaction between border regions, is based on the idea that cross-border flows are drivers of stability, prosperity, and unity.²²⁸ However, it cannot simply be assumed that flows equate to interaction and that interaction automatically means a decrease in social and territorial disparities. Cross-border flows are usually driven by economic disparities and unbalanced development, which in turn can cause a strong asymmetry of flows. As a consequence of this asymmetry, social resentment and political tensions can arise.²²⁹ Therefore, it seems important to ask whether such a discontinuity of flows and its impact can only be seen as driving force or as an obstacle. Taking the example of the flow of cross-border workers, one can say that it happens because they take advantage of economic differences between border regions, meaning that the impetus to work on the other side of the border might be an attractive job and/or a higher salary in a wealthier neighbouring country.²³⁰ This could be seen as paradox with regard to the cohesion policy of the European Union, aiming at balancing economic territorial differences between border regions.²³¹ The challenge – in order to foster a well-balanced

²²⁷ Unfried, M. and ITEM “Cross-Border Labour Mobility”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 238-241.

²²⁸ Decoville, A., “Euro-scepticism in Cross-Border Regions”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 456-458.

²²⁹ Sohn, C. and Durand, F., “Cross-Border Integration” In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 236, 237.

²³⁰ Wassenberg, B., “Cross-Border Actors”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 209-212

²³¹ Ibid.

development – is then to create a 360° perspective of the labour market through cross-border cooperation.

According to the *Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility*,²³² there were approximately 1.7 million cross-border workers active in the EU and EFTA Member States in 2021. The report cites as main countries of destination Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg, which count all together almost 60% of all cross-border workers. Out of these 1,7 million commuters, 70% are men, who are mainly employed in manufacturing and construction sectors. The figures in the report confirm and reflect the asymmetry, because in the most significant areas for cross-border work (e.g. Meuse-Rhine region, Greater Region or Alpine region), the majority of flows are going only towards the regions with higher levels of economic development, e.g. in Austria, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland.²³³

Regarding the availability of data, the collection of flows at border level is often based on national statistical datasets. In general, it is not sufficient, as it is restricted to administrative boundaries,²³⁴ which are not necessarily identical with the functionally defined spaces that border regions consist of. Moreover, since the way the data is gathered differs, it might be difficult and less relevant to compare the datasets. While relevant datasets for cross-border mobility is still very much limited, there usually exists more data regarding the trade of goods or services. Due to this limitation, states are not always aware of the population who crosses the border and who deals with cross-border obstacles. This has become particularly evident only recently during the Covid-19 pandemic which has shown that it needs a force majeure in order for national governments to deal more with cross-border flows. Yet, the need for a pan-European approach for cross-border observation and monitoring has been evoked not only once: the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) is taking steps in this direction. ESPON is an EU funded programme that bridges research with policies by providing territorial analyses, data and maps.²³⁵ The ESPON Database, for instance, provides access to data, mainly coming from European institutions like EUROSTAT, at regional, local, urban and world level as well as historical data.

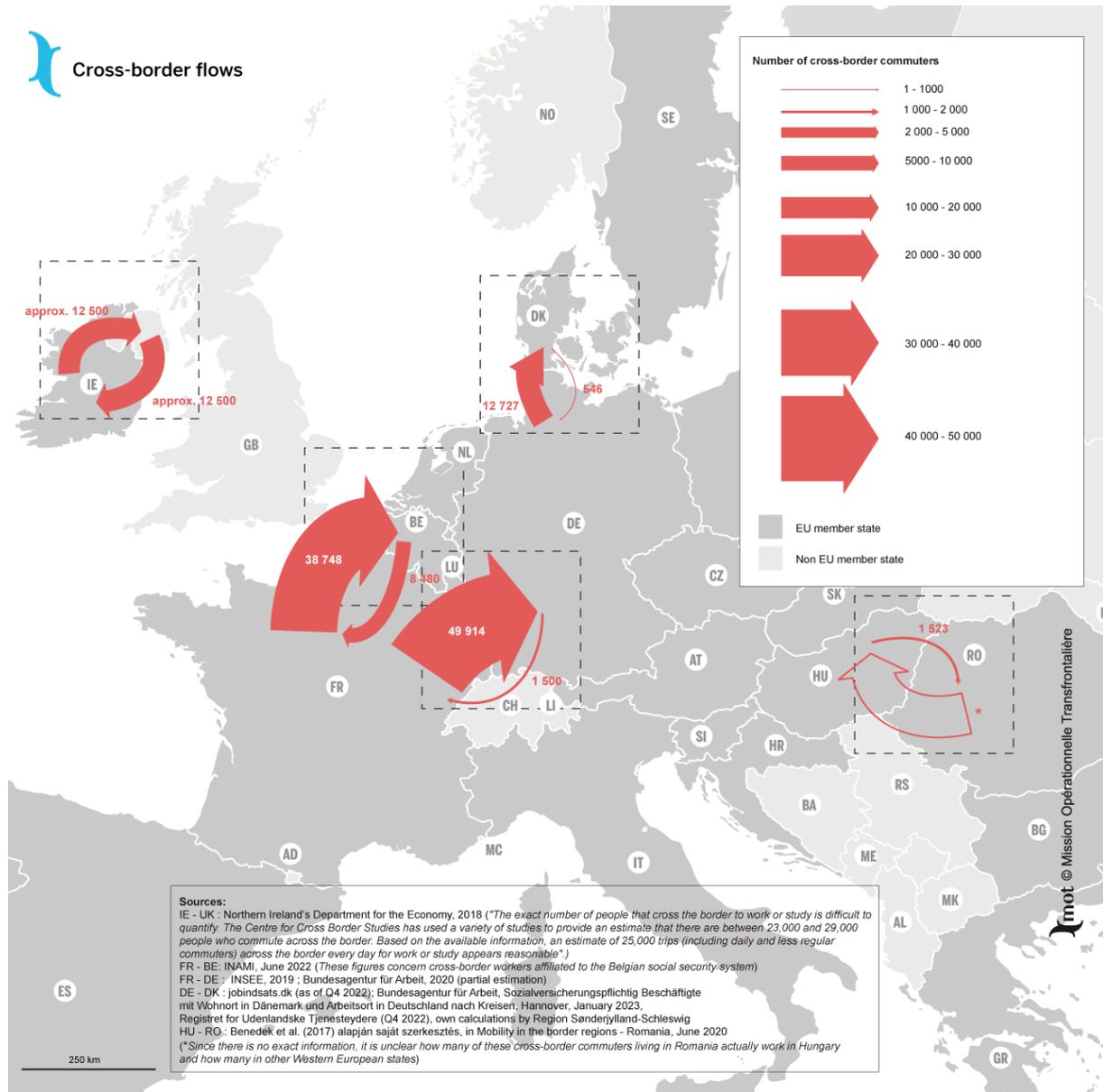
²³² European Commission, (2023), *Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2022*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26778&langId=en>. Accessed 20 April 2023.

²³³ European Commission, (2023), *Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2022*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26778&langId=en>. Accessed 20 April 2023.

²³⁴ ESPON, (2020), *Cross-border monitoring and observation in Europe*, [Policy brief], Retrieved from <https://www.espon.eu/policy-brief-cross-border-monitoring-and-observation-europe>. Accessed 20 April 2023.

²³⁵ For more information see <https://www.espon.eu/>. Accessed 20 April 2023.

This map reflects the numbers of cross-border workers in the five border regions covered in this toolkit. Here, not only the asymmetry of flows, but also the addressed problem of available data becomes evident.



France-Germany

As the border regions along the Franco-German border are much integrated areas, different flows are numerous and intense, whether trade, services or human flows. Regarding the latter, mobility on the Franco-German border happens quite naturally. According to the cross-border survey, conducted by the European Commission in 2020, citizens in both the Upper Rhine and Greater Region²³⁶ have mostly crossed the border for leisure activities or to shop for goods and services than for social reasons like visiting friends.²³⁷ Furthermore, citizens in both border regions perceive living in the border region significantly more as an opportunity than as an obstacle (e.g. Upper Rhine 52 % vs. 2 %). However, despite the integrated cross-border areas, obstacles for border crossing and cooperation persist: Language difference and legal or administrative differences are being considered more a problem for cross-border cooperation than economic, social or cultural differences.²³⁸ The survey conducted prior to the focus groups²³⁹ in the Upper Rhine Region, asked also about the frequency of border crossing and about associations with the border. Most of the respondents indicated to cross the border weekly and main associations were cultural differences, legal/administrative differences as well as opportunities. In the focus groups, citizens addressed border crossings linked to younger people and stressed their lack of interest in the respective neighbouring country: according to the citizens, many students would never cross the border. Actors of cross-border cooperation discussed more the future of the cross-border flows and stated that cooperation and thus flows will be strongly marked by climatic, environmental and energy aspects. Consequently, it will become even more necessary to operate on a cross-border level.

As it is in the countries in proximity to the Franco-German border, where almost 60 % of the 1.7 million cross-border workers in the EU and EFTA are based (Germany with 378 000 incoming workers or Switzerland with 345 000 and Luxembourg with 212 000 commuters)²⁴⁰, the flow of cross-border workers needs to be looked at more closely. From 11.6 million inhabitants in the Greater Region, approximately 250 000 commuters are crossing the border each day, which is the highest number of cross-border commuters in Europe. Of these, 47 % live in France and 75 % work in Luxembourg.²⁴¹ Thus, the management of these flows has been one of the key drivers of cross-border cooperation in terms of spatial planning.²⁴² The Greater Region promotes an active labour market policy, e.g. when it comes to cross-border training programmes. For instance, a web-portal for initial and continuing vocational training has been launched, offering support, information and tools for people looking for employment on the other side of the border.²⁴³

²³⁶ For further information on the two regions, see chapter 1.1 “Types of borders”.

²³⁷ “Cross-border cooperation in the EU”, *website of the EU*, Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/survey-2020/cross-border-survey-2020-report_en.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²³⁸ .Ibid..

²³⁹ For further information on the focus group and the survey, see chapter “Focus Groups at the five borders”

²⁴⁰ European Commission (2023). *Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2022*. Retrieved from: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26778&langId=en>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁴¹ See website of the Greater Region, <https://www.granderegion.net/en>. Accessed 17 May 2023.

²⁴² Lamour, C., “Greater Region”, In, B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (Eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European, Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 512-513.

²⁴³ “La formation professionnelle transfrontalière”, <https://www.granderegion.net/Citoyens/Se-former/La-formation-professionnelle-transfrontaliere>. Accessed 17 May 2023.

The cross-border labour market and employment is also one of the priorities of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Rhine region. Regarding the flow of cross-border workers, the Upper Rhine Region had more than 3, 2 million people in employment and 97 600 workers commuting within the region to neighbouring countries in 2020.²⁴⁴ Of these, 61% are coming from Alsace and 36% from Baden-Württemberg and within ten years, compared to 2010, the number of cross-border commuters has increased by 12 %. Unsurprisingly, most of the cross-border commuters work in Switzerland: while from Alsace 34 500 and 36 300 workers from Baden commute to Northwest-Switzerland, in the respective opposite directions there are only 100 and 400 Swiss workers in France and Germany. This asymmetry is to be explained by an economic differential regarding salary and unemployment rate as well as differences in real estate, taxes on revenue or linked to shortage professions. In 2020, for instance, the unemployment rate in Alsace was at 12, 3 % and in Northwest Switzerland only at 3, 3 %; due to the pandemic the before sinking unemployment figures in the Upper Rhine have risen by 0.9 percentage between 2019 and 2021.²⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the unemployment rate in Alsace generally continues to decrease, which is becoming a challenge for the cross-border labour market, relying on the asymmetric flow.

The cross-border labour market between France and Germany faces some challenges, which will increase in the future: more attractive labour markets in Luxembourg and Switzerland, difficult recognition of professional qualifications, the asymmetric flow from France to Germany, which is likely to increase competition for well-trained professionals as jobs in short supply are often the same on both sides of the border as well as declining knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country.²⁴⁶ With regard to the latter, however, especially the French side has been promoting the preservation and learning of the German and Alsatian languages since 2009/2010. The pandemic brought additional specific challenges for commuters to the fore. Not only the border closures and controls made the daily lives of many cross-border workers more difficult, but also problems occurred related to the double taxation of the short-time allowance received by French workers in Germany or questions about taxes and social security in connection with home office.²⁴⁷

In general, it must be stated that crossing the border for work is not trivial from an administrative point of view. Living in one country and working in another entails questions

²⁴⁴ Statistische Ämter am Oberrhein, (2022), *Oberrhein. Zahlen und Fakten*. Retrieved from <https://www.oberrheinkonferenz.org/de/statistik/aktuelle-informationen/items/statistikbroschuere-2022.html>.

Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁴⁵ BAK Economics, (2020), *Arbeitsmarkt am Oberrhein* [German]. Retrieved from https://www.regbas.ch/de/assets/File/downloads/BAK_Economics_RegioBasiliensis_Arbeitsmarkt_2022_web.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁴⁶ More information in: Hofmann, A. & Kauber, C., „Berufsbildungsk Kooperationen an der deutsch-französischen Grenze: Die Eurodistrikte Strasbourg-Ortenau und PAMINA“, In, C. Eberhardt (Eds.), *Berufsbildungsk Kooperationen in ausgewählten Grenzregionen. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, 2022, pp. 49-105. <https://res.bibb.de/vet-repository/780617>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

And furthermore in: Ross J. & Baumgartner A., „Grenzenlos Arbeiten. Der deutsch-französische grenzüberschreitende Arbeitsmarkt“, *DGAP Analyse* 4, 2022. Retrieved from <https://dgap.org/de/forschung/publikationen/grenzenlos-arbeiten>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁴⁷ To give an overview of points to watch out for and steps to take when working from home in the country of residence, the Euro-Institut, together with Infobest and Eures-T, has written a [guide for cross-border commuters and their employers](#). Accessed 29 August 2023.

and changes with regard to labour and social law, taxes, social security, unemployment, pensions, etc. Fortunately, commuters along the Franco-German border can contact cross-border organisations, like the INFOBEST network in the Upper Rhine Region.²⁴⁸

In comparison to other European border regions, data in both the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine region are better recorded and numbers of different flows are available. However, it can be stated that territorial observation is also in these regions along the Franco-German border one of the major challenges. In the Greater Region, there are three institutions cooperating closely on the subject of territorial observation: The *Greater Region's Geographical Information system (GIS)*, the *Interregional Labour Market Observatory* and the network of the *Statistical Offices of the Greater Region*.²⁴⁹ Regarding the flow of cross-border workers, the *Interregional Labour Market Observatory* collects and analyses data on the cross-border labour market and employment in region. Just like in the Greater Region, regional and local statistical offices work also together in the Upper Rhine Region, namely in the working group ‘Statistics’ of the German-French-Swiss Upper Rhine Conference. An exchange on data along the Franco-German border is promoted by a cooperation between the Greater Region’s information system and the one of the Upper Rhine, *GeoRhena*,²⁵⁰ e.g. to produce joint maps or to exchange on data harmonisation. Via their database, these information systems help to create the conditions for better joint spatial planning. When it comes to observation of the labour market, *EURES-T Upper Rhine* (European Employment Services) maintains a monitoring with maps, charts and database to analyse the developments of the labour market and its environment.²⁵¹

France-Belgium

Flows at the Franco-Belgian border is dense, because of the avoirdupois and intertwinement of the relations across the border. Eventually, this manifests in the human flows by the ambit of flows in terms of workers. Crudely, in 2022, there were about 38.750 French working in Belgium and 8.480 Belgians working in France. The proportion of French people working in Belgium compared to the total number of border workers²⁵² in Belgium has however been relatively stable since 2009 at about 75%, with Covid-19 having no directly plumb visible impact on the number of border workers in Belgium. French border workers represent about 74% of the total border workers in Belgium. The amount of Belgian border workers working abroad has however significantly increased since 1996 (from about 40.000 to more than 85.000 in 2022), but the proportion of Belgians workers in France has remained more or less the same (about 10% of the total number of Belgians working in bordering countries).²⁵³ This mobility across the border for work reasons is a historical phenomenon in the Franco-Belgian border

²⁴⁸ For more information on existing cross-border organisations, see chapter “Capacity-building”.

²⁴⁹ More information on the three institutions: <https://www.sig-gr.eu/fr.html>, <https://www.iba-oie.eu/>, <https://www.grande-region.lu/portal/de/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²⁵⁰ More information: <https://www.georhena.eu/de/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²⁵¹ More information: <https://www.eures-t.basleratlas.ch/?lang=en#c=home>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²⁵² Border workers is understood as workers from a bordering country.

²⁵³ “Statistiques des travailleurs frontaliers - 2022”, Institut National d’Assurance Maladie-Invalidité, 11 January 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.inami.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/travailleur-frontalier/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

area, with for instance the heritage of the Belgian migrants during the end of the 19th century in the Lille agglomeration²⁵⁴ and in the mining basins in the North of France.²⁵⁵

As for any other densely populated border that has few to no natural obstacles, inhabitants buy groceries where prices are lower or according to personal choices. This presupposes a dense commercial activity at the border, not easily quantifiable, but that quasi-exclusively commercial-oriented towns account, such as at the hamlet “le Mont Noir/de Zwarteberg” in Flanders, or “Blanc-Misseron” between Quiévrechain and Quiévrain, or thirdly at the tripoint between Belgium, France and Luxembourg. Usually, general stores are located on the French side, while tobacco shops, alcohol sellers as well as gas stations flourish on the Belgian side. Such a situation also exists at the United Kingdom-France border, with the immense mall “Cité Europe” located right at the Calais Eurotunnel arrival point.

This dense economic activity stirred up interest for as long as the border exists, and a very rich smuggling activity grew between France and Belgium. Of all the well-known areas favourable for smuggling, one is located between Bailleul and Poperinge, to which the museum of border life (“musée de la vie frontalière” [museum of the border life]) in Godewaersvelde is dedicated. Another is in the former Hem marshes, where locals used in the 19th century to smuggle tobacco with water up to the waist (a small hike was created retracing the smugglers’ trail). This smuggling life thrived to the point of spilling over culturally. This is illustrated in the Flemish tradition of giants at carnivals across the border, the French town of Godewaersvelde created a giant (French) customs officer and his dog.²⁵⁶

In terms of general commerce, Belgium is France’s fourth commercial partner with a total commercial volume of €82.350 billion. In 2021 compared to 2020, the total balance rose by 20%, mainly due to an increase in the imports from Antwerp of natural gas, which is attributable to exogenous factors. The main trading sectors between France and Belgium, apart from natural gas, pharmaceutical preparations, cars, steel- and iron-based products, products from the refining of petroleum and cereals and other agricultural products (oriented towards Belgium).²⁵⁷

If smuggling is a historical activity at the Franco-Belgian border, the region also benefits from an important connectedness with international high-speed rail networks running to London as well as to Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris. The border is at a crossroads, and therefore benefits from high speed rail infrastructure exploited by the international Thalys and Eurostar groups. The two have recently been regrouped in the Eurostar Group in April 2022.²⁵⁸ Rail connection

²⁵⁴ L. D’hulst & E. Declercq, “Tactiques de l’entre-deux: Une analyse discursive des chansons de migrants belges en France (1850-1914)”, In H. Roland & S. Vanasten (eds.), *Les nouvelles voies du comparatisme*, 2010, Academia Press, Ghent.

²⁵⁵ F. Leloup, “Memories of the Franco-Belgian border: Battles, heritage and cooperation”, In B. Wassenberg (eds.), *Frontières en mouvement”: Which models for the EU?*, 2023, Peter Lang, Berlin.

²⁵⁶ A quite complete description of the “Reuze” (Flemish for ‘giant’) Henri le Douanier is accessible here: <http://www.bougeons.fr/henri-le-douanier-geant-pour-carnaval-de-godewaersvelde/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁵⁷ Direction Générale du Trésor, “Belgique. Relations économiques bilatérales France-Belgique”, Ministère de l’Economie, des Finances et de la Souveraineté Industrielle et Numérique, 30 December 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/BE/rerelations-bilaterales>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁵⁸ P. Georgiadis, “Eurostar boss says peak trains are left a third empty because of post-Brexit passport delays”, *Financial Times*, 24 January 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.ft.com/content/6c0fe235-b815-4fff-9e7d-e103cf43ba2a>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

is crucial for the region, as shown by the fact that Valenciennes is the seat of the European Union Railway Agency.²⁵⁹ The next major step for the border is the implementation of the rail freight line between Givet and Dinant²⁶⁰, and the end of the works at the train station of Mons.²⁶¹

A last point about flows is the –very– large number of French students studying in Belgium. They represented in 2020 about 33% of all foreign students in Belgium, well ahead of the second place, the Netherlands, which delegation represents less than 8% of all foreign students in Belgium.²⁶² Many press articles try to explain this massive phenomenon because France has a strict *numerus clausus* for specific sectors, like physiotherapy or veterinary medicine, speech therapy, but also in other less selective branches like social, psychological science and fine arts.^{263, 264, 265} This situation provoked a feeling of resentment, as it is believed that the French Community pays an estimated amount of €112 million for the welcoming of French students in the French Community Wallonia-Brussels. Some politicians such as Valérie Glatigny, minister for higher education of the Wallonia-Brussels French Community, have argued for a European fund in order to provide compensation for EU member states disadvantaged by student mobility.

Denmark-Germany

Flows were not specifically dealt with in the focus groups – and especially not regarding the more technical and quantitative dimension. In general, it is however safe to claim that flows across the border have been increasing over the last decades. This also includes a growing number of people finding a job on the other side of the border. Here the movement from Germany to Denmark is much stronger than the other way round. To German commuters, there is an economic incentive to find a job in Denmark, where wages are usually higher, and there is also a widespread conviction of better working conditions on the Danish side.

²⁵⁹ Y. Boucher, “Le ferroviaire européen, c’est résolument à Valenciennes!” [in French], *La Voix du Nord*, 16 April 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/569290/article/2019-04-16/le-ferroviaire-europeen-c-est-resolument-valenciennes>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁶⁰ Blanc, A. “Des études en 2022 pur rouvrir la ligne de chemin de fer Givet-Dinant”, 2022 *op.cit.*

²⁶¹ Thys, F. “Grandeur mais surtout décadence: l’interminable chantier hors de prix de la gare de Mons va-t-il enfin prendre fin en 2023?”, *La Libre Eco*, 17 April 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.lalibre.be/economie/entreprises-startup/2023/04/17/grandeur-mais-surtout-decadence-linterminable-chantier-hors-de-prix-de-la-gare-de-mons-va-t-il-enfin-prendre-fin-en-2023-AG744H5YINADLMOYW22YKNW5IU/> Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁶² According to the UNESCO, in 2020, there were 18.089 French students in Belgium, 4.275 Dutch students in Belgium, and in total 54.080 foreign students in Belgium. Data retrieved from <https://uis.unesco.org/fr/uis-student-flow#slideoutmenu/>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁶³ Nunès, E. “Les universités belges sont saturées d’étudiants français”, *Le Monde*, 2 April 2019. Retrieved from: https://www.lemonde.fr/campus/article/2019/04/02/les-universites-belges-saturees-d-etudiants-francais_5444726_4401467.html. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁶⁴ Bouin, A., “‘Ici, on m’a laissé ma chance’: la Belgique, un refuge pour les étudiants recalés de Parcoursup”, *FranceInfo*, 17 November 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-choix-franceinfo/ici-on-m-a-laisse-ma-chance-recales-de-parcoursup-de-nombreux-francais-partent-etudier-en-belgique_4831055.html. Accessed 10 May 2023.

²⁶⁵ Van Lerberghe, L., “Pourquoi de plus en plus d’étudiants français partent étudier en Belgique”, *Eruope1*, 27 June 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.europe1.fr/international/pourquoi-de-plus-en-plus-detudiants-francais-partent-etudier-en-belgique-4120013>. Accessed 10 May 2023.

Like other borders, the one between Germany and Denmark is a border of opportunities, and people living in the border region are aware of this. To most Danes the German side of the border remains a place to go for consuming and profiting from lower prices for a number of products. Flensburg stands out as the biggest and most lively city in the region. There are relevant facilities in the centre and in the outskirts with several large retail stores. Furthermore, Flensburg attracts many Danish visitors because of a more urban atmosphere than you would find in the Danish towns of the border region. Flensburg is still the largest town in the border region, and not least Danes perceive it as the local “metropole”. They often prefer to go to Flensburg for cafés, bars, restaurants, cinema or concerts. On Saturdays, the farmers’ market in Flensburg usually have a large proportion of Danish visitors. Most sales assistants speak Danish and make longer conversations with Danish costumers. Flensburg also is a beloved destination for many Danes that come to visit the German style Christmas Market.

Many limitations remain. The example of the universities has been mentioned. It has also proven difficult to develop an effective cross-border structure when it comes to medication and the use of hospitals and both sides. The politicians are not that much interested in fighting the obstacles (for instance those generated by vastly different health insurance systems), and once more the weaknesses of a border region become clear. An effective cooperation among the local hospitals is also difficult because of the interests of the larger hospitals – especially the university hospitals in Odense and Kiel fearing to lose patients and hinterland.

Since Denmark joined Schengen, the border region has changed and the border itself has become much more open. As the crossing became easier earlier associations of a rigid barrier weakened. This could not least be observed in the minorities. They profited from the stronger and more immediate proximity to their kinstates. However, the development was not going exclusively in one direction. The open border was criticised by Eurosceptics and nationalists, and the refugee crisis of 2015 was used as an excuse to reintroduce controls. On the Danish side, more and more border control was introduced. The offices for police and customs control at the border that had been torn down after the introduction of the Schengen agreement gradually returned and has become more and more definitive. The border was again impossible to miss. The construction of the wild boar fence against the further spreading of the African swine fever added another visible and therefore striking psychological effect to the border.

A new culmination was attained during the COVID crisis. The total closure of the border clearly manifested how the minorities felt – even more separated from their kinstates as they might have done earlier. From time to time, voices can be heard demanding the border to be reopened, but so far nothing has happened.

Previous to the process of nationalisation from the mid-19th century, Schleswig had been a region of rich linguistic and cultural diversity. The national conflict and the dogmas which understood national languages as identity constituents more than as instruments for communication changed this picture dramatically and paved the way to a growing division. With the 1920-plebiscites a border following national identities was established. Even if voters were not always absolutely sure on which side they belonged, the border came to represent a segregation of two diverse national cultures in the region. The nationalist dream of liquidating an in between region of ambivalent and blurred identities came true. It was part of the new

nation-state order that people had to be different from each other. Since 1920, North and South Schleswig had been growing apart.

Segregation of the nationalities – the majorities and the minorities within each of them – would become the most important single ingredient in the success of the border region. The pacification of Schleswig and the present state of a generally unproblematic living cohabitation is not the result of close relations but of the successful introduction of distance between the national groups.

The new border gave birth to the two minorities consisting of those Schleswigians that had ended up on the “wrong” side of the border. Before the plebiscites Schleswigians had lived with each other without paying that much attention to language or national conviction, but after 1920 the minorities developed their own parallel structures that made it possible to live predominantly separate lives from the majority populations. This is still very much effectual as schools and cultural institutions are organised separately and nationally.

Whereas the minorities are bilingual, communication has turned into one of the biggest obstacles in cross-border contacts. The majority populations are less and less aware of each other, and they do hardly show much interest in each other. Germans from the border region only seldomly develop a proficiency in Danish, and on the Danish side the German language has experienced a constant loss of attraction over many years.²⁶⁶ Younger people often use English as their common language as knowledge of the other language is decreasing rapidly.²⁶⁷ Even the argument is raised from time to time that the growing proficiency in English among younger people will make it easier to overcome the border in future. This is quite a remarkable thought that illustrates how far the development has come in a former region that just one and a half century ago managed fine with local languages and dialects.

The focus groups also dealt with language issues.²⁶⁸ As a representative of the German minority in Denmark, Thore Naujeck criticised the use of English in German-Danish events. In his opinion there is a danger that local languages and bilingualism will disappear soon. He argues that this important cultural heritage in the German-Danish border region should be taken seriously.²⁶⁹ Similarly, Thede Boysen from the Frisian minority provocatively began his intervention in Frisian²⁷⁰ – an even more “forgotten” language in the region.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Language issues and the problems of understanding each other were very important topics within the focus groups. To Danes it has become conventional to use English, but Germans are less inclined to do so – not least when dealing with regional issues. The reality, however, is that German is no longer a language for all in the region, and the Germans are usually not able to follow Danish discussions themselves. The focus groups were held in English. – In the very last years, North Schleswig has experienced a growing attraction to German migrants. To what extent this will change the German-Danish connections there as well as inside of the German minority in Denmark, will have to be observed closely.

²⁶⁷ S. B. Frandsen, “The Danish-German Border Region: A critical introduction”, In B. Wassenberg, *Frontières en Mouvement*, Manuscript in preparation.

²⁶⁸ Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

²⁶⁹ Thore Naujeck. Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021. E-mail from Thore Naujeck to Katarzyna Stokłosa from 22 November 2021.

²⁷⁰ Thede Boysen. Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

²⁷¹ The number of Frisian lessons in the region has halved in the last two decades. U. Rahn, “Empörung bei der Minderheit. Brandbrief nach Kiel: Kaum noch Friesisch-Unterricht an Nordfrieslands Schulen”, in SH:Z, 22 April

Ireland-Northern Ireland

While the UK is no longer a member of the European Union, Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from a European Territorial Cooperation programme in the form of PEACE PLUS, which replaces and amalgamates the previously separate iterations of the INTERREG A and PEACE programmes. As was the case in the predecessor programmes, cross-border flows continue to be seen by the PEACE PLUS programme as an important driver of prosperity, cohesion and stability, particularly in the post-conflict context of the programme area:

“Increasing the level of cross-border mobility is essential for the economic and social and territorial cohesion across the Programme Area. This includes the further development and embedding of peace and reconciliation”²⁷².

A report published in 2018 by Northern Ireland’s Department for the Economy noted that ‘There is no one complete and definitive data source that records the number and purpose of all cross border movements between Northern Ireland, Great Britain and ROI [the Republic of Ireland]’.²⁷³ Nevertheless, referring to the existence of different estimates as to how many people commute across the Northern Ireland-Ireland border, the same report provides its own estimate:

“The exact number of people that cross the border to work or study is difficult to quantify. The Centre for Cross Border Studies has used a variety of studies to provide an estimate that there are between 23,000 and 29,000 people who commute across the border. Based on the available information, an estimate of 25,000 trips (including daily and less regular commuters) across the border every day for work or study appears reasonable”²⁷⁴.

There is more definitive data in relation to cross-border trade. According to InterTradeIreland (one of the implementation bodies established by the Good Friday Agreement), in 2020 the value of cross-border trade in goods and services was €7.733bn: €4.625bn of trade from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland, and €3.108bn from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland.²⁷⁵ The same organisation’s Retail Monitor, which records the number of cars parked in shopping centre car parks in border areas on a quarterly basis,²⁷⁶ showed that in the final quarter of 2022 8% of cars parked in retail centres on the southern side of the border were from Northern Ireland, while 30% of cars parked in centres on the northern side were from the

2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.shz.de/lokales/kropp-stapelholm/artikel/offener-brief-zahl-der-friesisch-schueler-in-nordfriesland-sinkt-24310356>. Accessed 15 August 2023.

²⁷² Special EU Programmes Body, “Peaceplus programme 2021 – 2027 Programme overview” [online], p.50. Retrieved from: https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS_Overview_24052023.pdf. Accessed 21 July 2023.

²⁷³ Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland – Ireland Border”, *Department for the Economy* [online], 03/2018, p.4. Retrieved from: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/movement-people-northern-ireland-ireland-border.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18.

²⁷⁵ “Cross-Border Trade Statistics”, *InterTradeIreland* [online]. Retrieved from: <https://intertradeireland.com/insights/trade-statistics>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

²⁷⁶ *Idem.*

Republic of Ireland.²⁷⁷ With tourism also being an important economic driver in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland, a 2021 report by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) estimated that in 2019 (pre-Covid) residents from the Republic of Ireland accounted for 25% of all trips to Northern Ireland by people resident elsewhere, while the equivalent figure for cross-border tourism in the other direction was 35%.²⁷⁸

Bearing in mind that there are some cross-border flows relating to education at school level, a 2018 joint report by Ireland's Department of Education and Skills and Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy showed that in the 2015/16 academic year there were 980 Northern Ireland undergraduate students enrolled in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Ireland, and 1,135 undergraduate students from the Republic of Ireland enrolled in Northern Ireland HEIs.²⁷⁹ In the same academic year, there were 220 Northern Ireland postgraduate students in Republic of Ireland HEIs, and 1,060 Republic of Ireland postgraduate students in Northern Ireland HEIs.

The importance of cross-border flows and mobility was considered during two focus group discussions as part of the FRONTEM project's implementation on the island of Ireland: one involving key actors with oversight of or involved in a range of areas relevant to cross-border mobility, and the other bringing together representatives from a number of community groups as well as civic society organisations whose work includes addressing issues related to citizens' cross-border mobility.

Although with differences in emphasis, both groups placed a positive value on cross-border flows and mobility, seeing reliance on cross-border mobility existing on a spectrum that spans from the practicalities of the delivery of services to the social and psychological impacts of cross-border mobility and cooperation. As one focus group participant summarised it, the existence and strength of cross-border flows is the embodiment of the "continued openness we've had since the [19]90s". The focus group with key actors stressed the role played by cross-border mobility in their ability to deliver services, and the importance of prioritising the quality of service provision ahead of jurisdictional boundaries, with the cross-border movement of patients, medicines and health professionals highlighted as a particular example of the value of cross-border flows. Those cross-border flows were also seen as both a product of and essential to cross-border cooperation.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that serious concerns were raised by both focus groups faced with the potential impacts of Brexit on cross-border flows and mobility. The possibility of the

²⁷⁷ "Q4 2022 Retail Monitor", *InterTradeIreland* [online], (consulted on 13/07/2023). Retrieved from : <https://intertradeireland.com/assets/publications/ITI-Retail-Monitor-Q4-2022-Infographic.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

²⁷⁸ Lawless Martina, "Cross-border trade in services", *Institiuid Taighde Eacnamaiochta Agus Soisialta* [online], 12/2021, p.52. Retrieved from : <https://www.esri.ie/publications/cross-border-trade-in-services>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

²⁷⁹ "An Analysis of Existing Statistics on Student Flows Between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland in Higher Education", *Department for the Economy* [online], 13/12/2018, p. 29. (consulted on 13/07/2023). Retrieved from : <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/analysis-existing-statistics-student-flows-between-republic-ireland-and-northern-ireland-higher>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

discontinuity of the cross-border flows that have developed on the island of Ireland over the last few decades is seen as a return to the conditions that existed during the conflict, as expressed by a participant in the focus group comprising representatives of civic society, who said “it now feels safe and right to travel anywhere on the island”, while another reflected:

“It has gone from a contested border, to peace and free movement, and we have become used to that. Now that is questioned again suddenly”.

The reference to “peace and free movement” is indicative of the wider collective responses to this question by both focus groups, where the nature of cross-border flows across the Ireland-Northern Ireland border is regarded as a consequence of both the end of the conflict *and* what had been the shared benefits of Ireland and the United Kingdom *both* being members of the European Union and its single market.

However, the civic society focus group in particular highlighted how Brexit and UK Government developments regarding immigration policy had not only removed Northern Ireland from the auspices of the EU Single Market’s principle of the freedom of movement, but had served as a reminder that even within the EU not all people had the ability to cross the border freely. Even prior to Brexit many non-visa nationals did not necessarily have the legal right to move from one jurisdiction to the other on the island of Ireland, while legislation introduced by the UK post-Brexit had now broadened this situation to encompass non-Irish EU citizens in the Republic of Ireland who, if the legislation is enforced unamended, would have to apply for permission to enter into Northern Ireland. Existing and potential new obstacles to cross-border mobility for certain people were also seen by focus group participants as negatively impacting on migrant communities’ participation within cross-border cooperation projects and programmes.

Whereas the general principle of cross-border mobility was seen as very important by both focus groups, when it came to the issue of monitoring and managing cross-border flows there was a certain degree of hesitancy. Indeed, the civic society focus group expressed outright antipathy towards the use of the concept of “monitoring” of cross-border flows and suggested that other terms should be used, such as “research into” or “studies of” cross-border flows and mobility. Opposition to the idea of monitoring was framed by a focus group participant when they suggested “you don’t want your car counted or checked every time it crosses the border”. Once again, though, this reaction can be linked to a psychological legacy of historic border checks and surveillance that were a regular feature during the period of the conflict, giving rise to a resistance to the introduction in the post-conflict context of measures at the border interpreted as returning to a time people want to leave firmly behind.

However, although the civic society focus group was strongly averse to the concept of monitoring cross-border flows, participants nevertheless accepted that a lack of data can lead to poor policy-making. This was highlighted by one participant in relation to post-Brexit policies on cross-border working implemented by the UK, commenting that “We don’t want to encourage checks, but there are frustrating issues such as the Frontier Workers Scheme which was introduced with no data to support it”. Another suggested: “A degree of study is needed to ascertain real data to know where problems are. [...] But it doesn’t have to be invasive”.

Participants in the focus group of key actors noted that while certain amounts of data on cross-border flows and mobility are gathered on a sectoral basis, there is no mechanism by which to get a panoramic view of cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland. Their approaches to the concept of monitoring of cross-border flows were influenced to a significant degree on the legislative frameworks under which they functioned. Participants felt that organisations on this island have a tendency to look to legislation to dictate their remit and function because there is “safety in what’s been agreed and written down”. This means that while cross-border mobility may be at the heart of what an organisation does, its legislative remit does not technically grant it any powers to manage or monitor cross-border mobility.

Importantly, however, the key actors in this focus group also suggested that the absence within their legislative frameworks to actively monitor cross-border flows resulted from the context in which they were designed, where both the UK and Ireland were members of the European Union. A lack of cross-border freedom of movement was not a perceived circumstance when the remits of the relevant institutions for cross-border and all-island cooperation were established under the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, and it is only now – following the UK’s departure from the EU and the challenges that this has given rise to – that focus has been brought to bear on the monitoring of cross-border flows and a realisation of the absence of adequate mechanisms.

It could be argued that this reveals an attitude that may not be unique to the Ireland-Northern Ireland border. The question arises as to whether administrations with internal EU borders are unduly inattentive to the need for the monitoring of cross-border flows, adopting an attitude that the overriding principle of the freedom of movement obviates them from such monitoring. It is only when a major shock occurs – such as Brexit or the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic – that administrations suddenly (temporarily?) become concerned with cross-border flows.

Hungary-Romania

Cross-border flows

No data on direct cross-border flows are available due to the lack of regular monitoring. Consequently, no information can be found regarding the motivation, the age structure and socio-economic characteristics of the citizens crossing the border. The available information is rather general.

Flows of goods

At national level, the volume of foreign trade between the two countries does not show big changes: it has slowly been increasing until the COVID-19 pandemic, with a positive balance for Hungary.

Volume of foreign trade between Hungary and Romania (2014-2020):

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total value of two-directional foreign trade (million EUR)	7109,5	7369,4	7213,7	7863,7	8137,2	8360,3	7983
Balance from Hungarian point of view (million EUR)	+2109,3	+2289,7	+2099,5	+2496,3	+2640,8	+2671	+2851,5

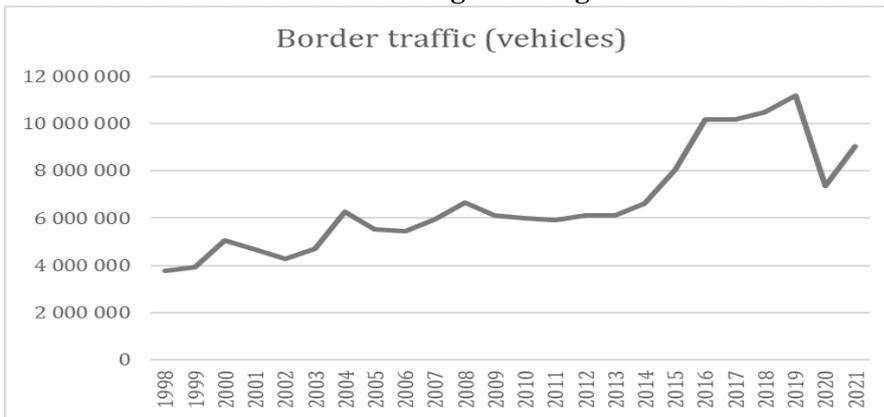
Source: KSH (2020)²⁸⁰

Unfortunately, the destination of the goods is not known – neither the locations of mutual FDI.

Flows of persons

Similarly, exact data regarding the cross-border traffic targeting the border area are unknown.

Volume of cross-border traffic along the Hungarian-Romanian border:



Source: KSH (2022)²⁸¹

During the last 25 years, the volume of cross-border traffic²⁸² has been growing – except for the period of the pandemic – and in 2019, it climbed to nearly 12 million, but it is hard to estimate the share of direct cross-border mobility.

Cross-border commuting has always been present in the border region, especially from Romania to Hungary which was a consequence of the differences in the average wages. Beside the commuters targeting the northern part of the Hungarian border area (around Nyíregyháza, Mátészalka, Debrecen), the phenomena of seasonal work are wide-spread in the mostly

²⁸⁰ “A külkereskedelmi termékforgalom értéke euróban és értékindexei a fontosabb országok szerint. [The value of foreign trade product turnover in euros and its value indices according to the most important countries]”, KSH, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/kkr/hu/kkr0008.html. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁸¹ “Magyarország államhatárán be- és kilépő járműforgalom. [Vehicle traffic entering and exiting the state border of Hungary]”, KSH, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://stainfo.ksh.hu/Stainfo/haDetails.jsp?query=kshquery&lang=hu>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

²⁸² Frontiera, P. de. (é. n.). Trafic Online—Politia de Frontiera. Romanian Border Police. Retrieved from: <https://www.politiadefrontiera.ro:443/en/traficonline/>. Accessed 26 January 2023.

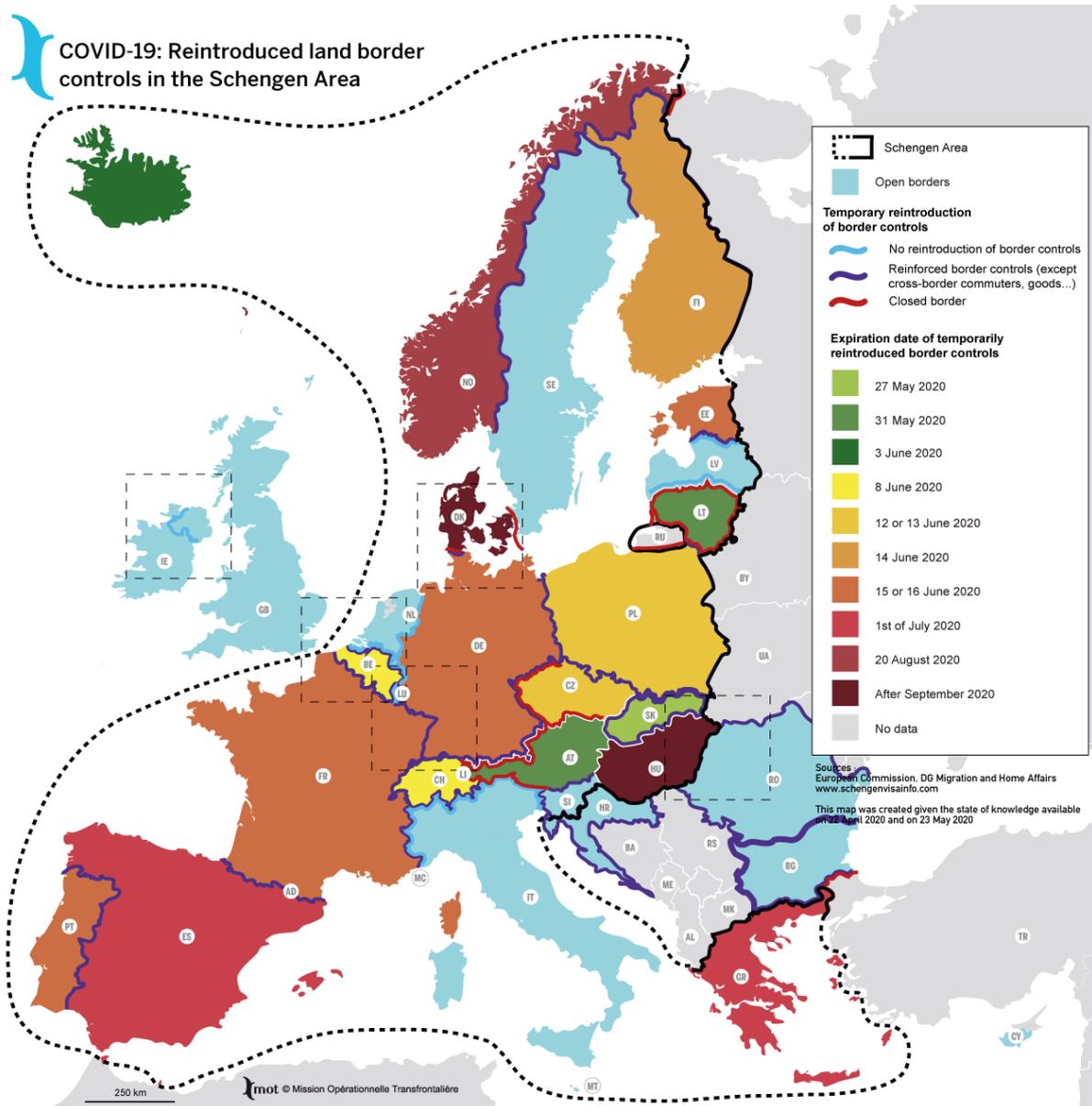
agricultural region. During the last 10 years, commuting to the opposite direction has become more and more frequent, from Békés county to Arad and more intensively to Sânnicolau Mare and Timișoara. As a result, the borderland is characterised by two-way labour mobility whose volume is not comparable with other western European examples. The commuters include those people who moved from Romanian larger cities (Satu Mare, Oradea and Arad) to the Hungarian side (the subregions of Csenger, Biharkeresztes and Battonya). The phenomenon of cross-border residential mobility has a history of 15 years, occurring after the Romanian accession to the EU. The main reason for the movements is the lower real-estate prices on the Hungarian side. More and more children of these re-settled families choose the Hungarian kindergartens and schools in Körösszegapáti, Mezősas, Mezőpeterd, Körösszakál, Bedő, Körösnagyharsány, Battonya and Gyula (where education is available also in Romanian language). In the northern part of the region, Hungarian local schools attract Hungarian children from the Romanian side.

Similarly to all border areas in Europe, the differences of prices have a strong pulling effect generating cross-border shopping tourism in both directions. For a long time, thanks to the remarkable differences between the quality of the services many Romanian citizens exploited the proximity of the border, especially in the beauty, wellness, health services, and in the gastronomy. Up to now, these differences have obviously been reduced and more and more Hungarian citizens visit the border cities in order to enjoy the Romanian services. Still, the existing differences favour exchanges and cross-border flows, which can improve the climate for cooperation.

The main means of transport is family-owned cars. Cross-border public transport is ensured by 5 railway connections and by the mostly private Romanian bus companies connecting the Transylvanian cities with the Hungarian capital, the airport of Debrecen and the most popular holiday resorts and spas. Arad is accessible from Hungary every two hours (from Püspökladány), Timișoara (from Békéscsaba) and Oradea (from Debrecen) three times a day – and vice versa. The trains between Békéscsaba and Salonta, as well as, between Mátészalka and Carei cross the border twice a day.

Border management in crisis

Introduction



Crises are recurrent, but each time different and disruptive as we could experience in the past years: natural disasters, pandemics, international terrorism and industrial disasters. Even though these crises concern of course all regions, cross-border regions are particularly affected. Even if there are various actors in cross-border regions, states are the most important ones for crisis management. In fact, states are one of the rare actors with the financial and material resources necessary to deal with important crises.²⁸³ During the COVID-19 crisis, the sovereign Member

²⁸³ “According to the International Monetary Fund database, central States expenses represent in average 28% of National GDP in Europe. Moreover, central States spend 5 times the budget of other public actors such as federated states or local public governments (2012-2021 average, 41 countries).”

States lacked a joint coordination of across the border. As a result, one border has been managed from each side creating so to say two borders (for example the “rules” for the Franco-German border were not the same in the direction France to Germany as in the opposite direction from Germany to France). Even though the European Union intervened in order to ensure that measures are implemented more uniformly, its mandate was rather limited.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many European countries closed their borders without consulting each other.²⁸⁴ First reactions to the crisis, measures and border management mainly took place within the national framework and were furthermore frequently modified. Thus, local and regional measures (or at least measures coordinated between the different levels), which could have been more appropriate, were thus prevented. The crisis, and especially the first wave during spring 2020, has shown that interdependencies in border regions and the daily functioning in cross-border living areas were not sufficiently known, therefore the impacts of the different measures that were taken were not really considered.²⁸⁵

Nonetheless, such crises are often easier to manage thanks to cross-border cooperation. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were cases when it was logistically easier to transfer a patient to the other side of the border than to transfer the person to the hospital in a his/her own country, which was geographically further away. Moreover, some cross-border structures collected and distributed masks or equipment. Not only did they provide information to the population, but also to national authorities and lobbied for the interest of border regions. Several ‘crisis management task forces’ at different levels were put in place, ensuring exchanges between stakeholders at national and regional level.²⁸⁶ Furthermore, the networks built up over years between proved to be very effective in managing crises, as the pandemic has shown. States therefore aim at providing a framework for cross-border cooperation on these issues to help avoid or resolve crises: memoranda of understanding, cross-border agreements and/or cross-border emergency management groups. These agreements may be sector-specific or form part of more general treaties, as for example, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that formalised cross-border cooperation structures between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The map was created during the first wave of the pandemic in spring 2020 and shows an overview of the dates of both the reintroduced border controls and the opening of the borders. It clearly shows how inconsistent the measures were from state to state. This chapter will give an overview on the different management during crises, focusing on COVID-10, along the five borders.

More informations can be found here: “Governance Finance Statistics”, *International Monetary Fund* [online], 2021. Retrieved from: <https://data.imf.org/?sk=a0867067-d23c-4ebc-ad23-d3b015045405>. Accessed 26 June 2023. Furthermore, border management is usually a competence of the nation-state.

²⁸⁴ More details on border closures:

Wassenberg B., Beck J., Berrod F., Brunet-Jailly E., Peyrony J., Reitel B., Stoklosa K., Thevenet A., “La crise de la Covid-19 aux frontières européennes”, L’Harmattan, Paris, 2021. Retrieved from: https://centre-jean-monnet.unistra.fr/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/TOOLKIT_PJM_Covid.pdf. Accessed 26 June 2023.

²⁸⁵ On the measures and their impact on border regions, see: MOT. “Analysis of the impact of border-related measures taken by Member States in the fight against COVID-19”, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/studies/cross_border/KN-04-22-050-EN-N.pdf. Accessed 26 June 2023.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

France-Germany

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the Franco-German border was subject to renewed controls. During the migration crisis, six Schengen Member States reintroduced controls at their borders between autumn 2015 and spring 2016. Here, Germany was the first country to restart controls on its external borders due to the increasing number of illegal border crossings on 13 September. The reintroduction was based on the Schengen Borders Code, according to which, in the event of a serious threat to public order or internal security, a Member State can carry out temporary checks at internal borders and also extend them if necessary. However, these measures taken by Germany applied mainly to its border to Austria in order to better record the influx of people seeking protection. France, meanwhile, declared a nationwide state of emergency following the terrorist attacks of 13 November 2015 and reintroduced border controls in parallel.

When it comes to the pandemic, not only northern Italy, but also the French region Grand Est was one of the first epicentres in Europe. Already at the end of February 2020, the department of Haut-Rhin in the south of Alsace in the Upper Rhine Region was highly affected. On 11 March, the Robert Koch Institute as the central institution of the Federal Government in the field of disease surveillance and prevention in Germany, designated this region as a risk area, which led to the reintroduction of strict controls at the Franco-German border a few days later.²⁸⁷ Germany introduced border controls on 16 March; France followed on 18 March with border controls and declared a state of emergency on 23 March, entailing a nationwide curfew. The measures taken to defeat the virus (lockdown, curfew, open or closed schools, number of people allowed to meet, etc.) were different in the two countries. As health is a state matter in France, measures, controls, entry conditions, etc. were adopted at national level and managed by devolved authorities at regional level. However, smaller adjustments, e.g. in the timetable of school closures, were possible at departmental level. In Germany, border closure was decided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior following the suggestions of the states (Bundesländer). Health is a competence that is managed by the regional councils; conferences between the states and the federal governments ensured a certain degree of coordination. In the Upper Rhine Region, for instance, the pandemic spread least in Rhineland-Palatinate, thus, the measures taken were less strict than in the other areas of the border region. France and Germany applied also different rules and measures in the course of the relaxations in May 2020 and the removal of border controls from mid-June 2020.²⁸⁸ For a long time, also the figures on COVID cases were not comparable; differences lay mainly in the tests and approaches to testing; also the Corona apps were developed nationally.

During the border controls, a joint coordination of police forces or harmonisation of procedures did not really exist along the Franco-German border and French and German police officers did not start their sampling checks at the same time and were not given the same instructions for

²⁸⁷ Weber, F. & Wille, C., "Grenzgeographien der COVID 19-Pandemie", *In*, F. Weber, C. Wille, B. Caesar, J. Hollstegge (Eds), *Geographien der Grenzen: Räume – Ordnungen – Verflechtungen*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2020, pp.191-225.

²⁸⁸ For a detailed overview of the effects of the Corona crisis on the Upper Rhine border region, see Euro-Institut, "Dossier 1: Auswirkungen der Coronakrise auf Grenzregionen (TEIN) - Kapitel 4: Regionalbericht Oberrheinregion", *In*, ITEM/TEIN (Eds.), *Grenzüberschreitende Gesetzesfolgenabschätzung 2020*. Retrieved from: https://www.euroinstitut.org/Dokumentation/PublikationenGREFRAP20_dossier_1_corona_DE_ch4-Oberrhein_kaft.pdf

checking people wishing to cross the border.²⁸⁹ In the Upper Rhine Region, out of 25 border crossings by car / ferry and 3 by pedestrian bridges, only 9 (car/ferry) border crossing points were open between 16 March and 16 May 2020.²⁹⁰ Consequently, the border controls lasted a total of 89 (France) and 91 (Germany) days. The border closure was not a general closing, but a reduction of mobility to cross the border only for valid reasons; priorities were given to the continuity of economy and to system-relevant professions. Other reasons for border crossing, however, were inadmissible for a long time, which impaired strongly the everyday life in the border region: families got separated, access to culture and sports or basic freedom of movement were not possible until the re-opening of the border on 15 June 2020.²⁹¹

An exception for cross-border workers had already been established in the very first days of border controls. Moreover, national ministries quickly reached agreements on social and tax law so that cross-border workers could work on short time or from home and thus maintain their status as a commuter despite the crisis.²⁹² In order to find concrete solutions to the situation at the borders, an ad-hoc cross-border group was set up along the Franco-German border, initiated by the Grand Est Region and the Region's Prefecture on 12 March 2020.²⁹³ This group gathered actors from the ministries of social affairs and health, eurodistricts and administrations at local, regional and national level who exchanged information within this strategic framework; the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was also represented. These discussions consisted of information exchange on the development of the pandemic situation, the transfer of patients and on the practical consequences of the closure of borders.²⁹⁴ In the Greater Region, a "Corona Taskforce" was additionally set up, in which the executives of the Summit of the Greater Region, but also health offices, experts from the ministries or the regional administrations, etc. participated.²⁹⁵ In the Upper Rhine Region, cooperation during the crisis was possible due to the already existing structures and personal networks that had been built up, especially through the working group on health of the Upper Rhine Conference during many years. Furthermore, the expert committee EPI-Rhin network, as part of this working group, exchanged information and the tracing of infection chains. The Upper Rhine Conference coordinated the transfer of patients from Alsace to hospitals in Baden-Württemberg from 21st March on²⁹⁶, which was a demonstration of solidarity and a positive sign of cooperation.

Due to their dependence on their members in terms of strategic decision-making and because the crisis management took place in the national framework, the cross-border institutions could not take over a leading and coordinative role. However, they played a major role in networking and exchanging as well as disseminating information and advice to the population. In this context, the INFOBEST network, European Consumer Centre and Frontaliers Grand Est have,

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

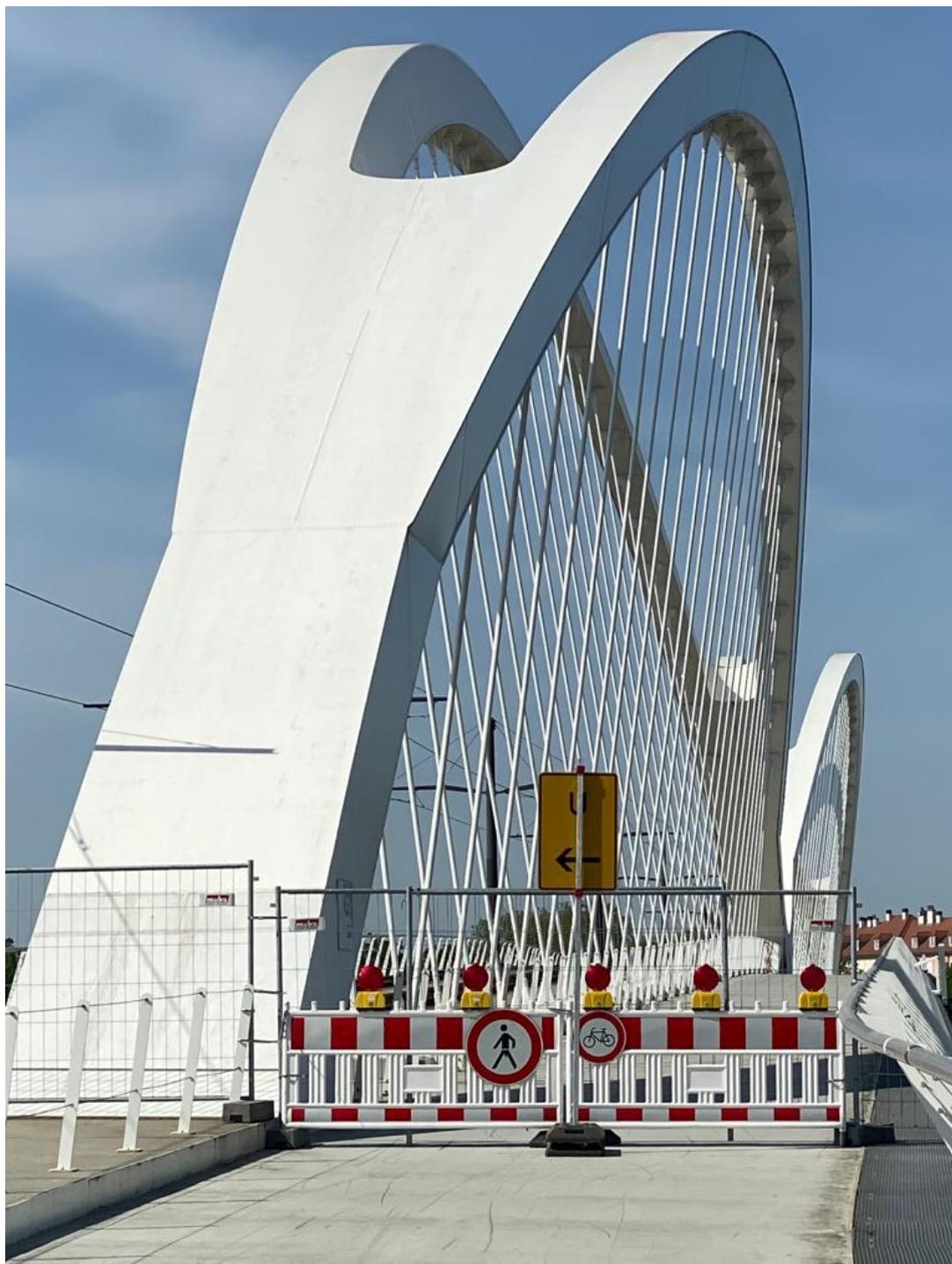
²⁹³ Various reports on the experience of dealing with covid can be found here: TRISAN, "Regards croisés – Perspektivenwechsel", March 2021. https://www.trisan.org/fileadmin/PDFs_Dokumente/21-03_Regards-croises_Perspektivenwechsel.pdf. Accessed 29 August 2023.

²⁹⁴ [Bericht des Gipfels der Exekutiven der Großregion über das Krisenmanagement im Gesundheitswesen](#), 20 June 2020.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Gemeinsames Sekretariat der ORK, „[Grenzüberschreitende Solidarität in Zeiten der Covid-19-Epidemie](#)“ [press release], 26.03.2023.

for example, developed a digital border-crossing tool that provides citizens with information about the applicable regulations and conditions for crossing the border.²⁹⁷



The closed bridge between Strasbourg and Kehl in spring 2020, © Birte Wassenberg

²⁹⁷ Digital Border Crossing Tool [in French/German]: <https://www.cec-zev.eu/thematiques/coronavirus-en-region-franco-allemande/outil-numerique-de-franchissement-des-frontieres/>

France-Belgium

Various crises have hurt the Franco-Belgian flows and cooperation in recent years. Four are identified by the literature, as to say the terrorist crisis (2015), the refugees and migrants' crisis (2015) and the COVID-19 crisis. Of these, the COVID-19 has been talked about during the focus group in Mons in February 2023. The terrorist crisis also made the management of the border evolve for the Franco-Belgian border.

The first of these two crises is the threat of terrorist attacks, especially after the notorious attacks of 2015 and 2016. At the intergovernmental level, a meeting was organised between Manuel Valls (then prime minister) and several others with Charles Michel as soon as the 3rd of February 2016 on judicial cooperation between France and Belgium.²⁹⁸ François Hollande acknowledged this cooperation during his official visit in Brussels by his declaration on March 18th,²⁹⁹ the same day Salah Abdelslam was arrested.³⁰⁰ Cooperation was also developed at the regional scale with several meetings as the Franco-Belgian conference on the fight against radicalisation in Mons in September 2017 that involved the Nord prefecture and Belgian federal and provincial authorities.³⁰¹ Other meetings happened at the national scale, such as in June 2018 in Paris,³⁰² which confirms and supports the joint declaration between the two prime ministers of October 2017.³⁰³ Another one, between Alexander de Croo and Jean Castex in November 2021³⁰⁴, deepened the 2017 joint declaration. Concretely, these events testify of a common will to cooperate to tackle the terrorist threat. Concretely, together with agreements cooperation in terms of security³⁰⁵, the changes that the intergovernmental dialogue sets allows for the

²⁹⁸ Ministère de la Justice, “La coopération judiciaire franco-belge renforcée”, 2016. Retrieved from: <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/le-garde-des-sceaux-10016/archives-2016-j-j-urvoas-12873/la-cooperation-judiciaire-franco-belge-renforcee-30296.html>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

²⁹⁹ Elysée, “Déclaration de M. François Hollande, Président de la République, sur la coopération judiciaire franco-belge contre le terrorisme, à Bruxelles le 18 mars 2016”, 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-13629-fr.pdf>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰⁰ RTBF, “Assaut terminé dans la rue des Quatre-Vents à Molenbeek: Salah Abdelslam arrêté (vidéos)”, *RTBF*, 18 March 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.rtf.be/article/des-perquisitions-sont-en-cours-en-region-bruxelloise-9244482>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰¹ Préfet du Nord, “Coopération transfrontalière – Organisation de la conférence franco-belge de lutte contre la radicalisation à Mons”, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://www.nord.gouv.fr/Actualites/Actualites/Cooperation-transfrontaliere-Conference-franco-belge-de-lutte-contre-la-radicalisation-a-Mons>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰² Ambassade de France en Belgique, “Réunion de coopération franco-belge (Paris, 11.06.2018)”, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://be.ambafrance.org/Reunion-de-cooperation-franco-belge-Paris-11-06-2018>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰³ Service Communication of the Maignon Hôtel, “Entretien entre Edouard Philippe et Charles Michel” [joint delaration], 2017. Retrieved from: https://www.gouvernement.fr/upload/media/default/0001/01/2017_10_entretien_entre_m_edouard_philippe_premier_ministre_et_charles_michel_premier_ministre_belge_-_16.10.2017_-_bruxelles.pdf. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰⁴ Premier [Website of the Belgian prime minister], “Déclaration Conjointe de la Belgique et de la France relative à la Coopération bilatérale en matière de Sécurité et de Lutte contre le Terrorisme”, 2021. Retrieved from : <https://lahbib.belgium.be/fr/declaration-conjointe-de-la-belgique-et-de-la-france-relative-cooperation-bilaterale>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰⁵ In terms of security, France and Belgium cooperate within the framework of the Tournai I (2001) and Tournai II (2003) agreements.

organisation of joint simulations of terrorist attacks, such as in Mons in September 2022.³⁰⁶ Against the terrorist threat, France and Belgium finally have chosen to go on and deepen their cooperation.

The same cannot be said about the management of the COVID crisis though. Before the beginning of the COVID crisis, Franco-Belgian health cooperation was a prime example at the European level. For instance, various agreements had been concluded between the hospitals of Mouscron and Tourcoing to let patients to be accepted in hospitals from both sides of the border and reimbursed by their health insurance systems.³⁰⁷ At the beginning of the Covid crisis, when States did not yet announce lockdown measures, hospitals such as the hospitals of Tourcoing and Mouscron could cooperate. The proximity between the health staff from both hospitals allowed for an exchange of Covid patients, but the national states in Europe quickly recentralised the health competence. This ended formal direct cooperation between hospitals. The harshening of health policies and the difference in law made many health staff members being confused between French and Belgian laws.

The border was completely closed for the first time since the Second World War by France on 18th March 2020. The most striking images of this closure of the border was seen around Lille, since it is a metropolitan urban continuous area. The road between Mouscron and Wattrelos was cut by concrete blocks surmounted by fences in the middle of a neighbourhood. Borders reopened on June 15th,³⁰⁸ but the second lockdown in October 2020 yet again restrained border crossings. Even if transfers of patients could occur and health staff could go on crossing the border, the recentralised and diversified ways of decision in each state prevented people to cross – as they do usually -. Structures such the EGTC's and media were used to inform citizens about the rules and lobbying the regional and national authorities from both sides of the border.

³⁰⁶ Préfecture Hauts-de-France, “Coopération transfrontalière: la zone Nord teste son ‘plan frontière’ lors d’un exercice conjoint avec la Belgique”, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/hauts-de-france/Actualites/Cooperation-transfrontaliere-la-zone-Nord-teste-son-plan-frontiere-lors-d-un-exercice-franco-belge>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

³⁰⁷ E. Delecasse, F. Leloup & H. Lewalle, “European cross-border cooperation on health: theory and practice. Study retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/cbc_health_en.pdf. Accessed on 11 July 2023.

³⁰⁸ B., Wassenberg, J. Beck, F., Berrod, E. Brunet-Jailly, J. Peyrony, B. Reitel, K., Stoklosa and A. Thevenet, “La crise de la Covid-19 aux frontières européennes” [Toolkit], 2021, pp. 7-8. Retrieved from: <http://centre-jean-monnet.unistra.fr/2023/04/04/toolkit-la-crise-de-la-covid-19-aux-frontieres-europeennes/>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

Denmark-Germany

The COVID crisis challenged the Danish-German border regime in a much more dramatic way than ever before. For the first time ever, the border was closed. Similar to other European borders, the Danish-German border during the COVID-19 crisis was a closed one with different phases of permeability under control and several exceptions.³⁰⁹ Although the closure was never total, “the impractical and abrupt border closing angered many inhabitants of the region”³¹⁰ because the easy and spontaneous border crossings and meetings of relatives and friends were interrupted for some time. This also resulted in strong local reactions as the border closure in general was met with incomprehensibility not least among the two minorities that saw themselves barred from contact with their respective kinstates. Furthermore, the decision coincided with the symbolic centenary of the plebiscite of 1920.



Closed German-Danish border © Martin Klatt

The COVID closure of the border brought up more than just a few issues concerning the common border. The closure resulted in a certain irritation on the German side because the decision was taken unilaterally by the Danish government without consultations with the German authorities. The management demonstrated clearly that decisions concerning the

³⁰⁹ M. Klatt, “The Danish-German Border in Times of COVID-19”, *Borders in Globalization Review*, vol. 2, n°1, 2020, pp. 70–73.

³¹⁰ S. B. Frandsen, The Danish-German Border Region: A critical introduction, In B. Wassenberg (ed.), *Frontières en Mouvement: Which models for the EU?*, Manuscript in preparation.

border were not taken on a local/regional level, what dramatically showcased the centralised decision-making process especially on the Danish side. Decisions concerning the border are taken in Copenhagen. This should not have been a surprise to anyone, but it did, in fact, create an uncommon feeling of powerlessness in the border region. The Danish decision to close the border without consultations with the Schleswig-Holsteinian government in Kiel also demonstrated the Danish conviction that the border is Danish and exclusively a matter of Danish sovereignty. This position had been clearly demonstrated already with the construction of the wild boar fence some years ago.

Almost all participants of the focus groups found the border closure very disturbing. They were particularly concerned with the national and bilateral dimensions of the process. As under a magnifying glass, the pandemic has shown how fast a seemingly stable situation can actually change. Many people in border regions could not proceed to live their life as they were used to, now, as things were more complicated in work and family meetings. It became much more complicated to live in the border region than in more central parts of a country. Still in November 2021, the Danish-German border region was struggling with the consequences of COVID-19.³¹¹

Ireland-Northern Ireland

As referred to earlier, one of the areas of cooperation under the North South Ministerial Council is accident and emergency planning. The need to be able to respond on a cross-border basis to a major event within the border region was recently evident when an explosion occurred on 7 October 2022 at a petrol station in the village of Creeslough, in county Donegal (Republic of Ireland), which left ten people dead. To assist their Irish colleagues attending this incident, members of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service crossed the border to attend the scene.

While the disaster at Creeslough provides an example of a cross-border response to a specific crisis, cross-border cooperation between the emergency services from the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland is an ongoing phenomenon, supported by a range of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and cross-border agreements, and the existence of a Cross Border Emergency Management Group. These regularly allow for emergency services from one jurisdiction to attend fires and other incidents in the other and to transport patients on a cross-border basis to attend the nearest hospital, whichever side of the border that happens to be.

The COVID-19 pandemic represented a crisis at a much larger scale. However, whereas across the European Union border closures were used by some member states as a means to respond to the crisis, this was not the case on the island of Ireland.

In its approach to the imposition of travel restrictions in the Republic of Ireland, for example, the policy of the Garda (Irish police) was ‘to engage, explain, encourage and only if necessary enforce the emergency legislation’. A similar approach was taken by the Police Service of

³¹¹ Rasmus Andresen (MEP Grüne), Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

Northern Ireland. Although attempts were made by the Irish police to discourage Northern Ireland citizens from crossing the border into the Republic of Ireland at traditionally intensive periods for cross-border leisure transit, and random checks were made to confirm the purpose of journeys being made by citizens travelling from the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland, these cannot be seen as border closures.

As the imposition of border closures would be politically divisive given the context on the island of Ireland, as well as being extremely difficult if not impossible given the number of border crossing points, other means had to be found to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Essentially, success in preventing the spread of the pandemic within and between the jurisdictions was predicated on the willingness of citizens to voluntarily abide by the public health restrictions put in place by the respective authorities, with enforcement – which the closure of the border would represent – not employed as a general practice.

Although differences in the timing of the imposition and lifting of various public health restrictions by the two jurisdictions created difficulties and confusion for those living in the border region in particular, the Dublin and Belfast authorities made efforts to cooperate, even if matters were often complicated due to pressures on the Northern Ireland devolved government to follow the policy direction of the central government in London. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by the two administrations on the island of Ireland was a clear signal of the desire to cooperate in addressing the pandemic, and could be seen as reflective of the fact that health is one of the areas of cooperation under the North South Ministerial Council. In terms of the development of public health responses by both jurisdictions, it included an acknowledgement of the need to coordinate those responses: ‘Consideration will be given to the potential impact of measures adopted in one jurisdiction on the other recognising that the introduction of such measures may differ reflecting differences in COVID-19 transmission at different stages of the public health response’.³¹² Crucially, however, no consideration was given to imposing closures of the border as a tool to address the pandemic.

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic was a crisis affecting human health, the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease was an animal health crisis whose profile was shaped to a significant extent by the cross-border movement of livestock. Bearing in mind that agriculture is also one of the areas of cooperation under the North South Ministerial Council, preventing this cross-border movement was a major concern for the authorities in both jurisdictions. This involved the Irish Government deploying significant numbers of soldiers and police to seal off the border to the movement of livestock from Northern Ireland, while the authorities in Northern Ireland closed ports of entry to livestock from Great Britain, although they were not involved in operations to seal off the land border.

³¹² Department of Health, Ireland, and Department of Health, Northern Ireland, “Memorandum of Understanding. COVID-19 Response – Public Health Co-operation on an All-Ireland Basis Between: The Department of Health, Ireland (and its Agencies); and the Department of Health, Northern Ireland (and its Agencies)”, *Department of Health* [online], 7/4/2020. Retrieved from : <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/MOU-NI-RoI-Covid-19.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

However, whereas managing the border to control the cross-border movement of livestock was a tool employed to address the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, it is a very different matter when doing so to control the cross-border movement of people, which would be much more difficult to do given the political sensitivities on both sides of the border. Moreover, such border controls were arguably only a minor element of a much broader effort by the two administrations to cooperate in response to the outbreak, facilitated by the channels of cooperation already in place, as noted here:

“The long history of practical co-operation between the two Departments of Agriculture was referred to on numerous occasions throughout the FMD crisis. [...] Ministers [...] stressed that the links between their departments, now formalised under the auspices of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC), had facilitated a high level of co-operation and were very important for the long term maintenance of animal health on the island. Senior officials in both Departments echoed this, noting that the post-Good Friday Agreement arrangements under the auspices of the NSMC had given a new energy to existing inter-departmental contacts.”³¹³

What these examples highlight is the preference for cooperation *across* the border rather than closures of the border when confronted with crises. This preference should be seen in the context where the 1998 Good Friday Agreement formalised structures for cooperation and marked a departure from a prolonged period where border closures and strict management of the border were central means of addressing a security crisis. There is little desire, therefore, to manage the border in a way that would be seen as reviving a painful history.

Hungary-Romania

In the past decades the biggest crisis linked to border management between Hungary and Romania undoubtedly happened during the COVID-19 pandemic³¹⁴. At the early stages of the pandemic both countries (similarly to the European trends) closed their borders without prior coordination or communication. The border was closed by the Hungarian authorities on 17 March 2020 but the return of Romanian and Bulgarian workers from the western countries was allowed during the night and along the predefined transit corridors. Ten days later the Romanian citizens commuting to Hungary and those having a farm in Hungary were given a derogation to cross the border. In Romania, the second Military Ordinance (21 March 2020) introduced restrictions on the movement of persons. Article 6 said that “it is forbidden to enter the territory of Romania, through the border checkpoints, for foreign nationals and stateless persons”. Exceptions were made for “transit through corridors organised in agreement with neighbouring countries”. Among other exceptions they were: family members of Romanian citizens; family

³¹³ Clarke, Patricia, “The Foot-and-Mouth Disease crisis and the Irish Border”, *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], 1/2002 p. 14. Retrieved from: <https://www.crossborder.ie/pubs/footandmouth.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

³¹⁴ “Coronavirus in Romania: PM announces harsher penalties for those who help spread Covid-19.” *Romania Insider*, 19 March 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.romania-insider.com/coronavirus-romania-penalties-disease-control>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

members of citizens of other EU member states or of states belonging to the European Economic Area or of the Swiss Confederation, residents of Romania or persons who travelled for professional reasons, proven by visa, residence permit or equivalent document. After this initial border closing until the introduction and spread of the vaccines, the border crossing process was quite uncertain and was frequently modified.

Before June 2020 there was no mention of Hungary on the list of states with high epidemiological risks, and even after that Hungary remained among the green zone countries for a long time. At the beginning of September, Hungary closed the borders against foreign citizens lacking a COVID test. Otherwise, they had to spend 14 days in quarantine. However, small border traffic was allowed from and to a distance of 30 km across the border crossing points.

By November 2020 Hungary became a yellow zone country from Romania's point of view for about 6 months. Since June 2021 Hungary was continuously on the green zone list, therefore no restrictions or quarantine measures applied to Hungarian nationals upon entrance to Romania and the border crossing procedure resumed its "natural" course. During the Romanian parliamentary elections held on 7 December 2020, the Romanian citizens could cross the border for the purpose of voting. From July 24 2021, Hungary restored normal crossing procedures at its internal Schengen borders, lifting all border controls.

The pandemic had the strongest negative effects on the mobility of persons, which was alleviated by the introduction of derogations on the mobility of cross-border commuters. The cross-border mobility of students was also resolved by the period of final exams in secondary schools. The area which felt the least negative effects of these obstacles was the movement of goods. The easiest controls were set up in relation to freight traffic, due to its importance to ensure the permanence of economic production. Freight traffic, with a few exceptions, continued without major interruptions.

The management of the closed borders did not cause such a huge logistical trouble since the Hungarian-Romanian border is an external Schengen border meaning that border controls were already in place. The only thing that changed was regarding who had the right to cross the border and later with what certificates (for instance the vaccination document).

Still, cross-border cooperation was seriously affected by the lockdown. According to a study conducted by the Gate to Europe EGTC³¹⁵, 60% of the member municipalities experienced disruptions in their cross-border contacts. The biggest problems were related to the difficulties of keeping cultural connections, young people's education, getting to work (later solved by the bilateral agreement of the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs) and the impediment of commercial activities. The closure of the border has not caused problems of supply in the area. The situation also affected the implementation of cross-border projects. The study concluded that the pandemic had a significant but manageable impact on the implementation of the projects. The

³¹⁵ "Assessment of the Economic Effects of COVID-19 in Gate to Europe EGTC Municipalities" Gate to Europe EGTC, 6 January 2020. Retrieved from: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/wp-content/uploads/news/K%C3%A9rd%C5%91%C3%ADv_ki%C3%A9rt%C3%A9kel%C3%A9se.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2023.

experience since then showed that the already running projects more or less continued and were finished, however, it was much harder to develop new projects as partner search and people-to-people meetings got largely cancelled or moved to the less efficient online platforms.

In the early, most turbulent days of the pandemic EU's reaction were perceived in the border region as being too slow and too weak. The CBC structures, especially EGTCs were active in mitigating the problems (such as Banat-Triplex Confinium EGTC's campaign to collect in Hungary personal protective equipment and facemasks and redistributing them in Romania) or at least collecting enough data for informed decisions (such as the Gate to Europe EGTC's survey).

The practice of border management is now completely returned to the pre-pandemic status. However, this crisis enlightened the limits of cross-border cooperation at the Hungarian-Romanian border. Primarily, the CBC on this border region is still in the early phases and thus it is highly dependent on regular, in person meetings, which is more difficult to realise if the borders are closed. Also, another serious problem brought forward by this situation was that the decision-making processes and the governance of the borderland is centralised in both countries and thus the problems arising locally could not be handled quickly and efficiently because time was needed for the information to reach the central government where these decisions were made.

Part 2. Border Perception

Mental maps

The question of how borders are perceived is an essential part of research in the FRONTTEM network. Throughout the past three years, this topic has been addressed by researchers, students and actors of cross-border cooperation within FRONTTEM, using different approaches and methods.

One methodology represents the so-called “mental maps”, cognitive interpretative maps that picture the mental and subjective representation of spatiality. Within FRONTTEM, the mental maps consisted in a cartographic research project about the representation of the five European cross-border regions studied in this toolkit. This approach aimed at grasping the perceived spatial structure and boundary lines in the minds of those living in border regions and thus, to map the cross-border regions. The underlying research question was to know how local stakeholders characterise the spatiality of their cross-border regions. To this end, citizens and cross-border actors who participated in the focus groups were asked to “create” the mental maps. This methodology resulted in a collective map, drawn by civil society, for each of the five border regions.

Within FRONTTEM, Dr Pauline Pupier, cross-border expert and geographer, coordinated this cartographic research project. Together with a web developer, she created a participatory online cartographic tool. The cartographic and sociological methodology is based on previous research development about cross-border metropolitan regions in the European Union.

In preparation for the focus groups on the various European borders, the participants were sent a link to a participatory online cartographic tool: <https://www.crossingspaces.eu/>. This website was accessible only a certain period of time prior to and during the focus groups and by using a password. Here, each of the European borders studied was displayed on a 400 x 230 km background map by Esri.³¹⁶ It consisted in a grid of small clickable squares of 20 km where participants could “draw” what they perceived as their border region, by clicking on a map of their respective border region and ticking boxes. For better accessibility, the website was conceived multilingual.

Respondents could thus select as many 20km² squares as they wanted to answer the following question:

In your opinion, what is the area covered by the cross-border region?

The work assignment beyond was:

³¹⁶ Esri = Environmental Systems Research Institute, an American multinational geographic information system (GIS) software company, known for its ArcGIS products: <https://www.arcgis.com/index.html>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

Please draw the area(s) on the interactive map below. To this end, click on the map on the squares you want to include. To select several squares at once, you can move the cursor by holding down the click. The green squares are selected. To deselect a square, click on it again.

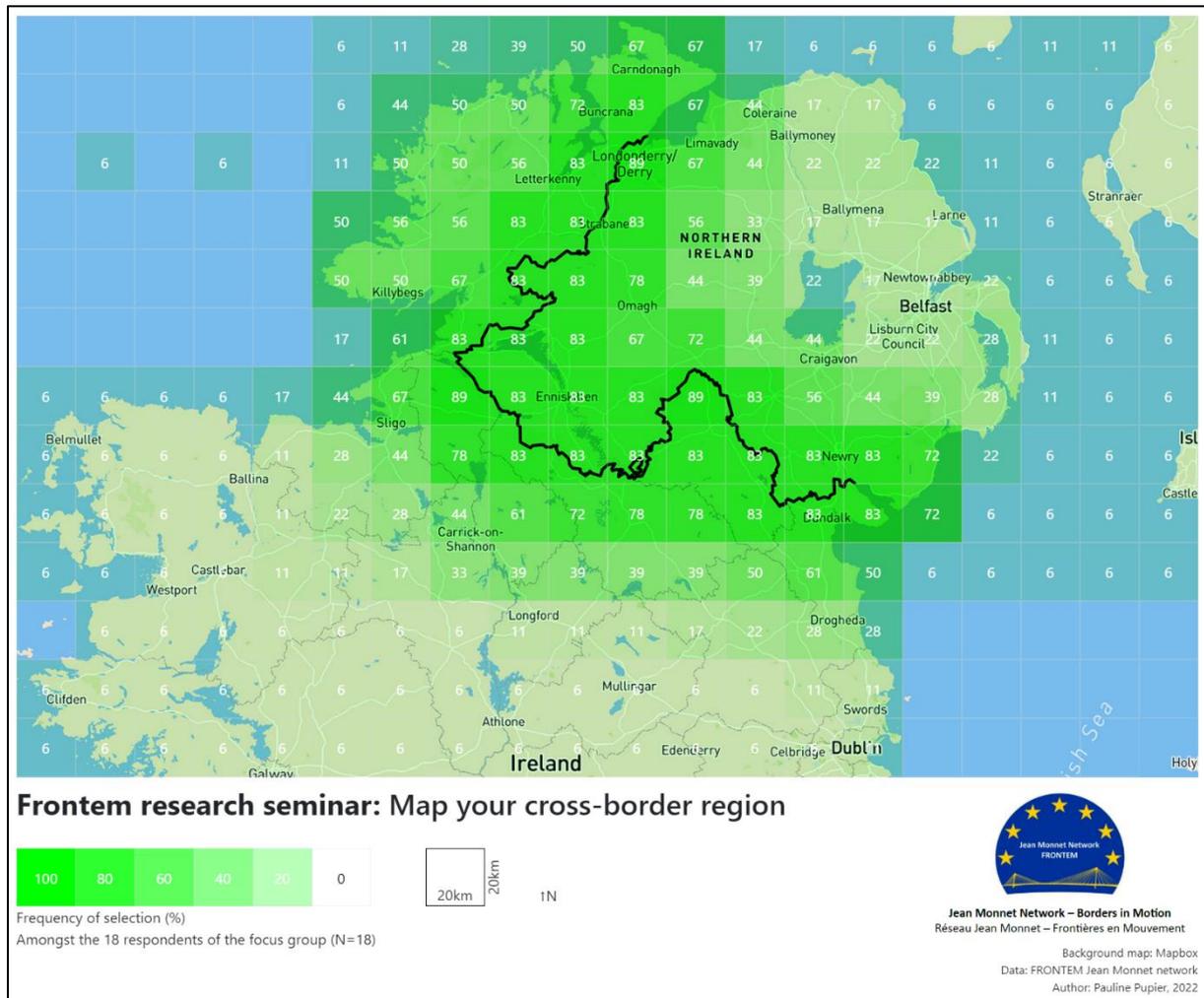
In this way, various maps were created that reflected the individual perceptions of the area of the border region. These different maps were then merged to generate one map per border region. This map, depending on the strength of the colour, shows, which boxes have been ticked most often and thus which areas are most perceived as belonging to the border region. Thus, these “interpretative mental map” visualise the consensus and the dissensus about the perception on a specific border area.

To ensure comparability of the maps, care was taken to ensure that the same number of people used the online tool. In this way, the participants of the focus groups, i.e. a small group of 20 people in each border region, were able to participate. The cartographic research project was thus conceived as a qualitative analysis, without claiming to represent a major part of society.

Border	Respondents
France - Belgium	21
France - Germany	20
Ireland - Northern Ireland	18
Denmark - Germany	20
Romania - Hungary	22

In the following, the results of the mental maps at the five borders in the FRONTTEM project are summarised. However, these results must be considered with caution. Given the qualitative approach of the research, a very small targeted panel of 20 respondents were asked to answer the question. Moreover, the respondents were citizens and stakeholders participating in the focus groups, thus leading to an over-representation people who usually have a background and knowledge of the border region in the sample surveyed. Due to this sample bias, the results of the mental maps were mainly used to foster discussions about the border during the FRONTTEM focus groups.

Mental mapping the Irish border

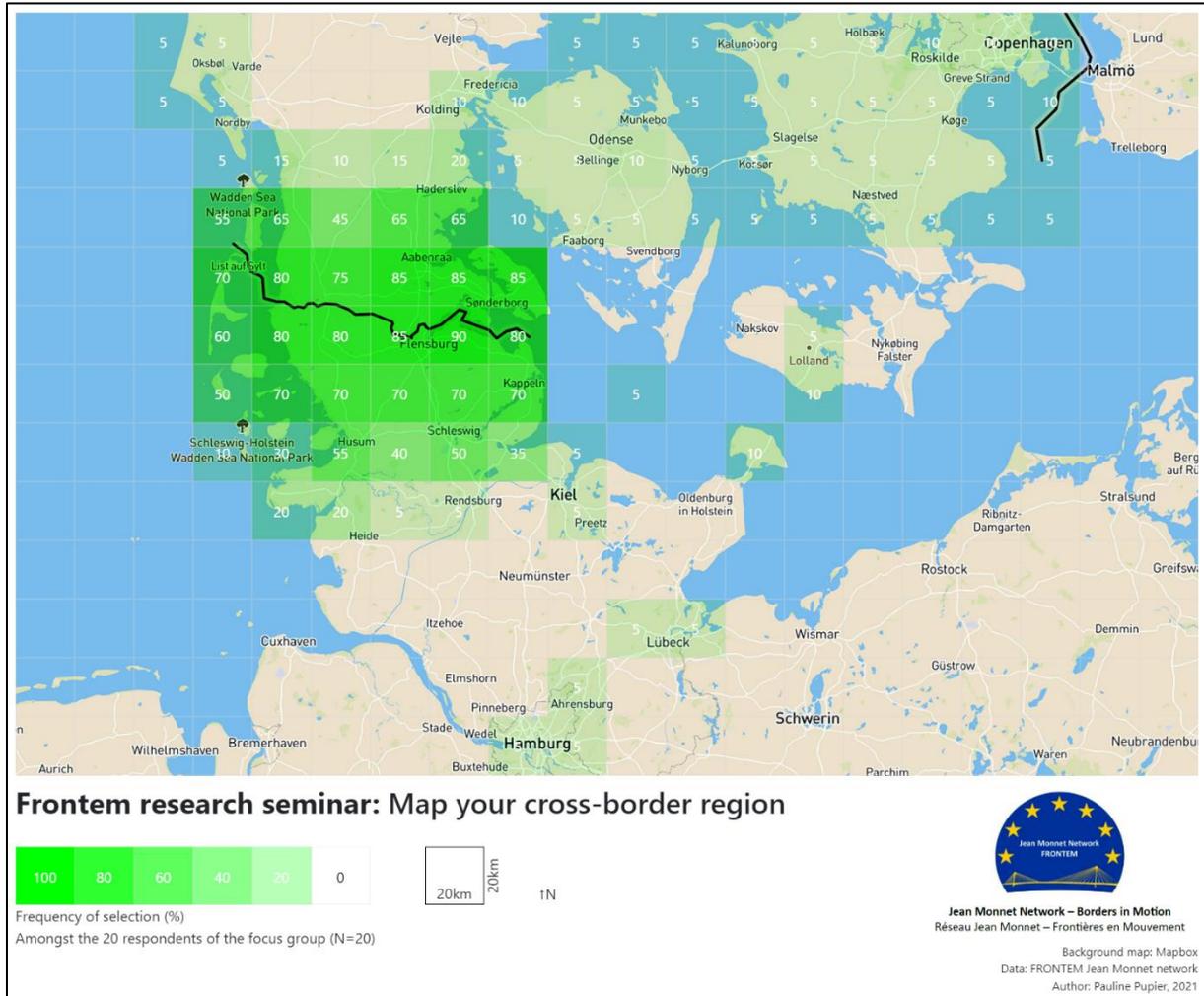


The mental map of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland shows that the highest frequency of selection is 89%. The percentage is high but does not show a consensus among respondents. People tend to focus on the important border cities when asked to define the cross-border region, here, the locals centres of the cross-border region are Londonderry/Derry, Sraud/Garrison and Emyvale/Killybrone/Aughnacloy having the highest frequency of selection.

The mental map is clearly focused on locations that span the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo), and parts of the Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland immediately abutting the border. They correspond in large part to the flows of cross-border mobility related to employment and cross-border shopping, but are narrower than the cross-border region as delimited in terms of the eligible area for the EU’s Interreg A and PEACE programmes (now combined into the new PEACE PLUS programme for the 2021-2027 period), which is constituted by all of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland. Indeed, on the Northern Ireland side, the mental map shows how the focus groups’ participants imagined the cross-border region to not

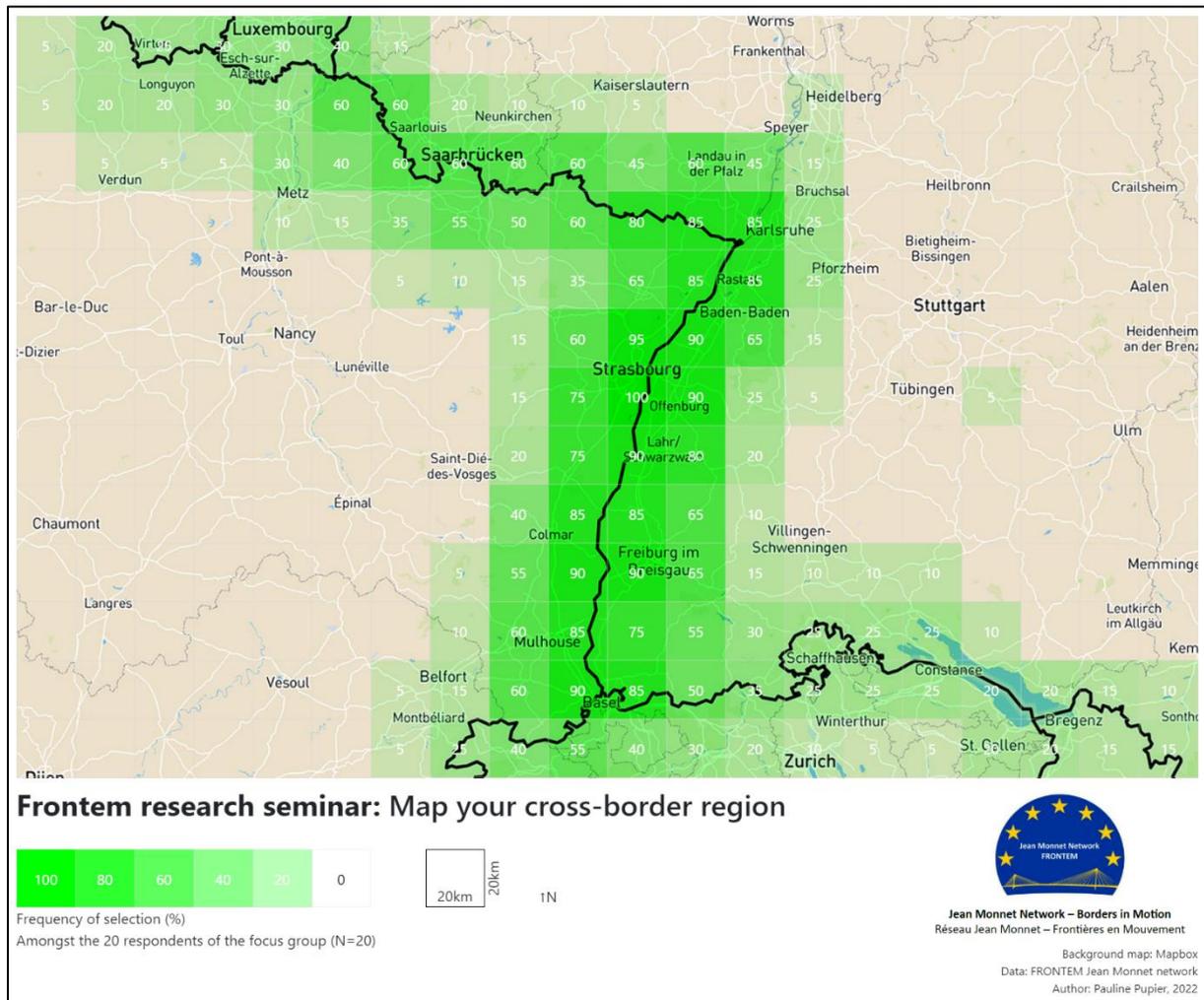
encompass to a significant extent the entirety of the Local Government Districts adjacent to the border.

Mental Map of the Danish-German border



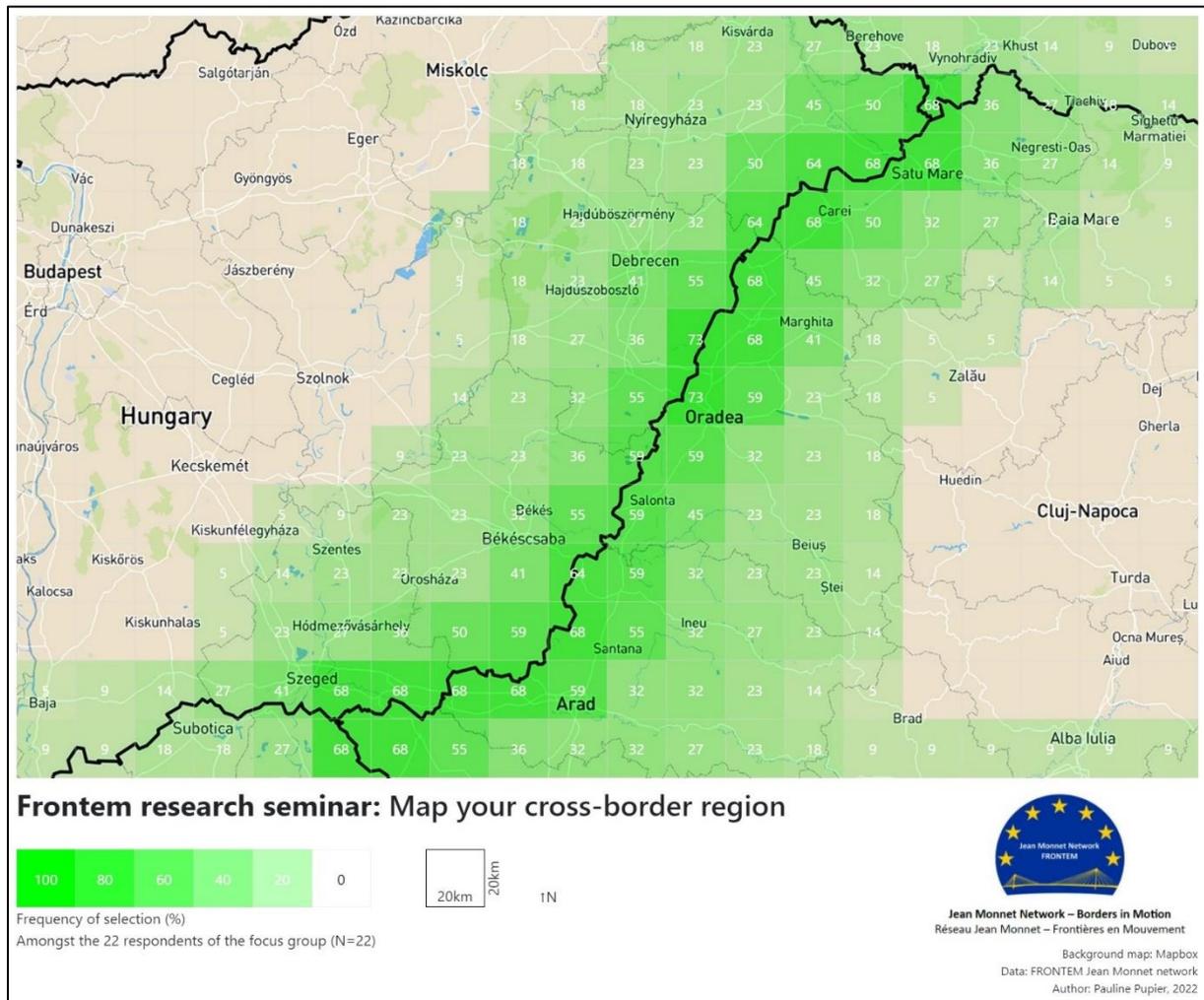
The map of the border region between Germany and Denmark presents an interesting singularity: the cross-border region is not necessarily continuous. Following the perception of two respondents, it can rather be understood as a network of major cities like Flensburg/Sonderborg at the border but also Copenhagen and Hamburg. Due to the specific geography, a few respondents include maritime borders in their representation of the cross-border region. Here, two respondents highlighted the German island of Fehmarn and the Danish island of Lolland which will be linked by an underwater tunnel by 2027. Stretching over 68 km, the Danish-German land border is very short in comparison with the other studied European borders. Accordingly, the cross-border region appears rather small, with an average selected area of 9.200 km².

Mental Mapping the Franco-German border



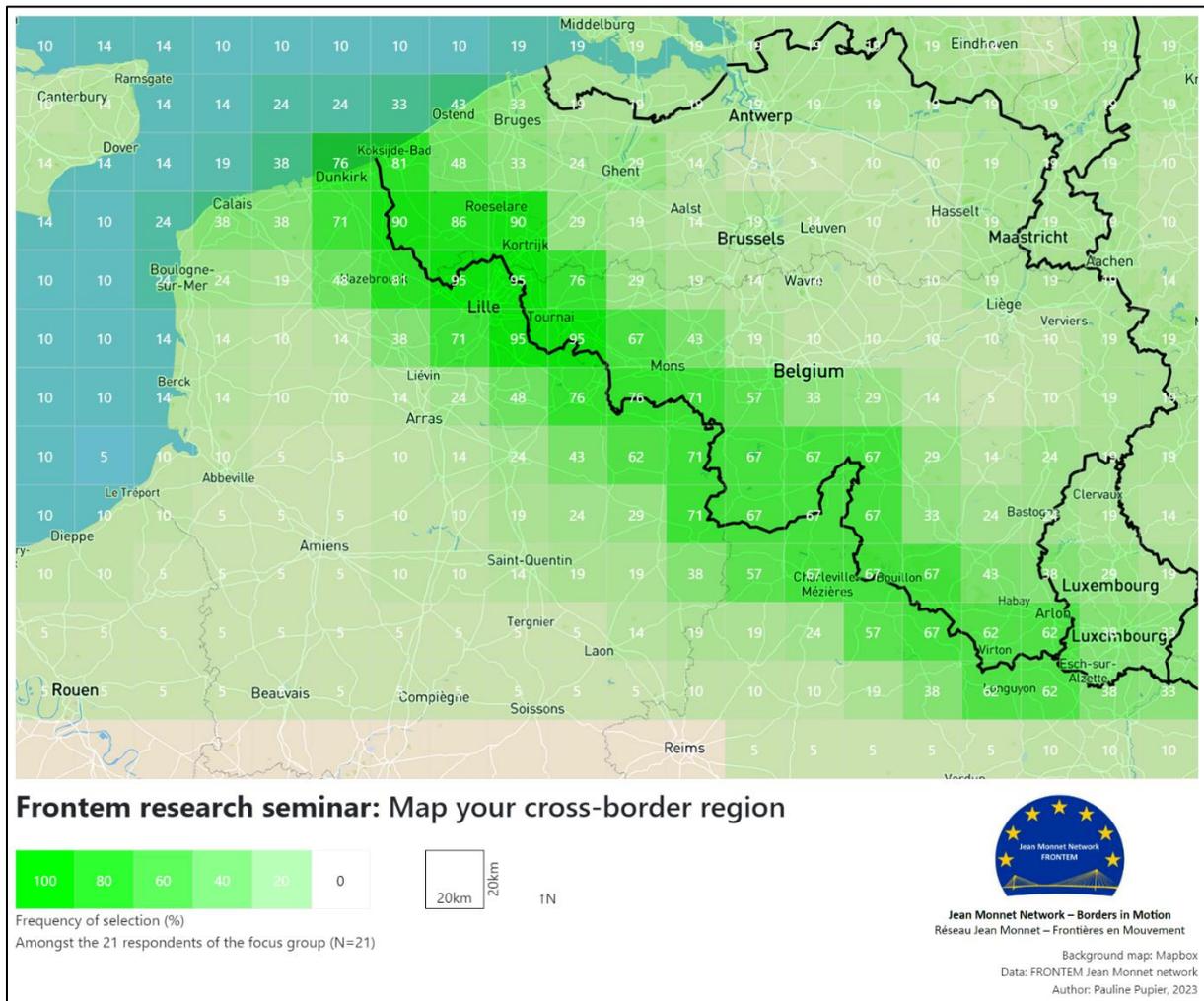
Regarding the Franco-German border, the cross-border region follows the border in a narrow strip of 30-50 km on each side. This map is the only one which presents a consensual selection frequency of 100%. The unique square is around the European capital and cross-border city of Strasbourg, where the focus group took place. The largest selected region, however, comprises 103 boxes and thus 41,200 km², which mainly relates to the length of the Franco-German border and the region thus extends less to the east and west around the border line. This is interesting as the focus group took place in the Upper Rhine Region; the question to “draw your border region” thus referred for the participants to this border region and less to the whole Franco-German border. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a strong concentration of 85 to 90 % along the Upper Rhine; more than three quarters of the respondents highlighted the Upper Rhine region, from Karlsruhe to Basel. However, also the Franco-German border of the Greater Region between Saarland and Lorraine is selected by two thirds of the respondents, and the other borders with Switzerland, Luxembourg and Belgium are selected by a quarter of respondents.

Mental Map of the Hungarian-Romanian border



As the mental map of the Romanian-Hungarian border shows, the highest selection frequency (73%) is quite low. It is located near the Romanian metropolitan area of Oradea and the neighbouring small Hungarian towns of Artand, Biharkeresztes and Pocsaj. This indicates that several respondents selected only a part of this 448 km long border. Tri-national border points are relevant for two thirds of respondents, whether on the border with Ukraine in the north or with Serbia in the south. The aggregate mental map of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border region corresponds rather to a diffuse cross-border strip whose importance decreases with the distance to the border. One can see that the respondents of the survey do not consider anymore the border line as a separating factor, instead they interpret the borderland covering Oradea and Debrecen, Satu Mare and Mátészalka, Szeged and Arad as a common space of living. The perceptions of the Romanian-Hungarian border are determined by its permeability allowing or preventing cross-border flows, the level of participation of the border citizens in cross-border activities, the level of mutual trust between Hungarian and Romanian citizens and the identity building factors (see next chapters).

Mental Mapping the border between Belgium and France



Regarding the Franco-Belgian map, despite the Brexit, the British coast, the Channel and the whole maritime area are included in some representations of the cross-border region. Although the focus group discussed the French-Belgian border, up to a third of the panel includes other international borders, here notably with the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg. The result is a very large cross-border region, with an average area of 24,400 km². The cross-border conurbation of Lille clearly appears as the main centrality of a vast cross-border region. This coincides with the perimeter of the institutional cooperation of the EGTC Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai.

Role of citizens

Introduction

The term civil society refers to an area within society that can be situated between the state as political and the economic sector. Civil society encompasses the sum of the engagement of a country's citizens - for example, in NGOs, associations and diverse forms of initiatives and social movements. It includes all activities that are not profit-oriented and not dependent on party-political interests.³¹⁷ In some countries or languages, the definition of civil society can slightly differ. Thus, we can come across the word “organised civil society” (when talking about NGO, associations etc.) in addition to the ‘normal’ use of “civil society”, which then encompasses citizens and citizen's initiatives.

Even if often used as synonyms, it is essential to distinguish between the terms of citizen engagement and citizen participation: citizen engagement is more considered as a top-down initiative and a formalised procedure established by a governmental body, it thus requires an active, intentional dialogue between citizens and public decision makers. Citizen participation, however, can come from citizens in a bottom-up approach.³¹⁸ Examples for the latter would be citizen initiatives or petitions whereas participatory budget or city surveys could be listed examples for citizen engagement.³¹⁹

When referring to the role of the citizen, and a bit similarly to this distinction, one should also differ between *deliberative* and *participatory* democracy. As *deliberative* democracy is about the participation of citizens in public communication, their interaction of deliberation in a decision-making process, citizens' assemblies and panels require a small number of randomly selected and well-informed participants. *Participatory* democracy refers to an approach with a self-selected participation that is about a diversity of opportunities for political engagement for everyone who wants to be involved.³²⁰

At the European level, several programmes and means exist to strengthen citizen participation in the decision-making process, for instance the *Conference on the Future of Europe* that ran during 2021-2022, which included numerous events, panels and discussions.³²¹ To strengthen explicitly the representation of citizens and regional and local authorities from border and cross-border regions, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic, the *European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance*, was launched in 2020.³²²

³¹⁷ Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, „Lexikon der Entwicklungspolitik“ [online], <https://www.bmz.de/de/service/lexikon#lexicon=14976>, Accessed 23 March 2023.

³¹⁸ Lodewijckx, I., “The difference between citizen engagement and participation”, *Citizenlab* [online], 9 October 2020, Retrieved from <https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/civic-engagement/what-is-the-difference-between-citizen-engagement-and-participation/>, Accessed 23 March 2023.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ OECD, (2020), “Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions”, Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/innovative-citizen-participation-new-democratic-institutions-catching-the-deliberative-wave-highlights.pdf>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

³²¹ See <https://futureu.europa.eu/en/>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

³²² It is an initiative aiming to better the life of European citizens living in the EU's border regions and gathering multiple stakeholders. For more information, see: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/pages/cross-border-alliance.aspx>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

Border regions face several challenges, to which citizen engagement could be partly a solution. Citizen engagement and participation enable politicians, administrations and therefore also cross-border institutions to know what is important for citizens in the border region. Furthermore, citizens have a say through their own involvement, through which they not only receive information, but also a better understanding of politics. Citizen participation therefore not only leads to better policy results that take into account people's experiences, but also to more trust into political affairs and the belief that citizens actually can have an impact on political decisions.

There is a wide range of methods on how to involve citizens, which differ from consultation over participation to co-decision. However, these participatory initiatives should be improved if one believes that cross-border cooperation should better involve citizens in their decisions.³²³ In order to place the citizen in the centre of cross-border cooperation, local initiatives have emerged at some border regions, aiming, amongst other functions, at involving citizens via different projects. Depending on the border region, different forms exist, such as eurodistricts, neighbourhood dialogues, cross-border youth parliaments or citizens' forums, often carried out with the support of cross-border actors. As another means to foster the presence of civil society in cross-border cooperation and to mobilise the population to engage in cross-border projects, so-called People-to-People (P2P) projects have been launched. P2P allows citizens, associations, municipalities, churches, and many more beneficiaries to apply for small-scale INTERREG projects. In order to be widely accessible, the programme applies simplified rules regarding the application procedure or reporting. P2P projects englobe a wide range of fields such as culture, sport, economy or science and initiate interaction between people on different sides of the border.³²⁴

A specific example for citizen engagement in border regions Europe-wide is the *TEIN4citizens* project³²⁵ that took place between March 2019 and April 2021 and was funded by the EU's *Europe for Citizens Programme*. This project, conducted by nine partners from five cross-border regions within the Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN) was about engaging civil society in cross-border regions for the debate on the future of Europe. Main conclusions include, amongst others, the need to facilitate more active participation in projects and discussions and easier access to EU funding; often citizens do not feel enough informed about the possibilities

³²³ Trillo-Santamaría, J.-M., "Cross-Border Regions: The Gap Between the Elite's Projects and People's Awareness. Reflections from the Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion", *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 29(2), 2014, pp. 257-273.

³²⁴ Branda, Pavel, "Promoting people-to-people contacts through cross-border cooperation programmes in Eastern Partnership countries", CORLEAP [online], Retrieved from https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Documents/CORLEAP/Pavel_Branda_People_to_People_Contacts_final_EN.pdf. Accessed 23 March 2023.

See also chapter 1.6 „Funding“

³²⁵ For more information on the project, the TEIN4citizens movies and final project reports, see <https://transfrontier.eu/tein4citizens/>. Accessed 23 March 2023.

to get involved.³²⁶ This project enabled TEIN also to reflect more generally on how to engage citizens efficiently in border regions.³²⁷

Perceptions and attitudes of the citizens living within border areas are keys in order to grasp the reception of cross-border cooperation-based policies. Aiming to find out more about this, the European Union launched a survey about cross-border cooperation in 2015 and 2020, asking about the awareness of cross-border cooperation programmes running in the citizens' region, general trust, obstacles to cross-border cooperation etc.³²⁸ The survey's results show that living in a border region is mainly considered as an opportunity with the greatest challenges of language differences and legal or administrative discrepancies. The authors conclude notably that more awareness is needed to increase citizens' support for the European Union in border areas.

France-Germany

In both, the Upper Rhine and the Greater Region, there are numerous cross-border associations and projects that promote exchange between people, such as the *European Eifel and Ardennes Association* (EVEA) in the Greater Region, an international citizens' initiative that was founded in 1955 and mainly organises youth meetings, sports events and annual congresses. Another example is the cross-border seniors' association *EUROP'age* in the Greater Region, which has built up a network with partners from Luxembourg, France and Belgium. Public participation is therefore encouraged in many ways via numerous associations.³²⁹

The Eurodistricts in the Upper Rhine, as geographically delimited cross-border areas, promote projects of encounter and exchange between citizens from both sides of the border. For instance, citizens can contact the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau if they would like to apply for funding up to a maximum of 100 000 € for encounter projects, financed via the INTERREG small project fund, also known as people-to-people (P2P) or micro-projects. However, during the current programming period 2021-2027, INTERREG is still working out the exact details of this fund. The Eurodistricts also support more specific projects of encounter: the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau has set up a fund of 40 000 € to support small structures from the cultural sector.³³⁰ In addition, bilingualism is promoted, for instance through the 'class encounter fund'

³²⁶ Having this objective in mind, five forums took place in different cross-border regions on various topics, such as EU citizenship and Human rights or Minorities and Integration. They brought together local, regional as well as EU level stakeholders, representatives of NGOs and experts from various border regions. In total 680 persons from 24 European countries participated in the forums, conferences, workshops and panel discussions.

³²⁷ See <https://transfrontier.eu/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021-09-22-Citizens-engagement-in-CB-regions-V2.pdf>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

³²⁸ European Commission, "Cross-border Cooperation in the EU", *Gallup International*, July 2020. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/survey-2020/cross-border-survey-2020-report_en.pdf. Accessed 7 June 2023.

See also chapter 2.3 „Mutual trust“

³²⁹ For more projects, see <https://www.granderegion.net/en>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

³³⁰ For more information on the funding opportunities of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau, see <https://eurodistrict.eu/de/unterst%C3%BCtzung-f%C3%BCr-grenz%C3%BCbergreifende-projekte>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

of the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel to promote school exchange projects.³³¹ Overall, various funding opportunities are available to promote encounters between citizens in the border region. Apart from funding for projects, the Eurodistricts, but also other organisations and associations along the Franco-German border, organise dialogues, where citizens come together and discuss specific issues in order to promote citizen's engagement in the border regions. Besides the positive effects of people coming together, learning from each other and actively participating in the cross-border living area, citizens' dialogues also go along with difficulties. One challenge is already the question of who will be invited, which is, on the Franco-German border, a very practical one: on the German side, due to the obligation to register, the principle of random sampling could simply be applied and citizens selected in this way. On the French side, this is problematic because there is no obligation to register. Another challenge are the different languages and the difficulty of understanding. Communication during and after such a citizens' dialogue can also pose a problem - all parties must be aware of the objective of the dialogue, what information is being communicated and needed by the citizens as well as what is going to happen with the results of the dialogue afterwards.³³²

With regard to an institutionalised form of citizen participation, the Greater Region has an *Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region* (WSAGR), which brings together representatives from economic, social and professional associations. In the Upper Rhine region, participation of economic and scientific actors is ensured within the respective pillars of the *Trinational Metropolitan Region* (TMR). The TMR was established in 2010 in order to create a meta-network for coordination and strategy and to promote the region's development into an economically strong and attractive living space. Alongside policy, business and science, civil society has also been formally given a place as it forms the fourth pillar of the TMR. This pillar carries the idea of actively involving citizens in the process of building the region by coordinating and pooling interests and cooperation of and between citizens, associations, foundations etc. and thus promoting a bottom-up approach.³³³ Following this goal, the TMR has anchored in its adopted *Strategy 2030* to actively promote civic engagement (e. g. cross-border voluntary initiatives, projects for and by young people).³³⁴ However, this long-term objective still lacks substance, since civil society is not (yet) systematically involved in the processes of cooperation and development of the region. Also the INTERREG Upper Rhine programme emphasises in their programme the necessity to further involve citizens and civil society actors in cross-border cooperation in order to increase interest in the neighbouring country.³³⁵

³³¹ More information on the funding opportunities of the TEB, see <https://www.eurodistrictbasel.eu/de/ueberblick/foerdermoeglichkeiten.html>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

³³² For instance to answer the following questions: will the citizen's suggestions be politically evaluated? Will they be checked and commented on and even be translated into a concrete project? How does this information reach the participants in the aftermath of the civil dialogue?

³³³ More information about the Trinational Metropolitan Region and the pillar 'civil society': <https://www.rmtmo.eu/de/zivilgesellschaft.html>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

³³⁴ „Strategie 2030 für die Trinationale Metropolregion Oberrhein“, November 2019. Retrieved from <https://science.rmtmo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Strategie-2020-TMO-D-compress%C3%A9.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

³³⁵ „Interreg Oberrhein Programm 2021-2027“. Retrieved from <https://www.interreg-oberrhein.eu/wp-content/uploads/programm-interreg-oberrhein-2021-2027-genehmigt-am-29042022.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

According to the survey results prior to the focus group in the Upper Rhine, a majority of respondent stated that citizens have an important influence and play a major role regarding the development of the border region. In terms of obstacles that respondents encounter in their projects, administrative and legal regulations (70 %) and language skills (40 %) were mentioned the most, closely followed by the real border closure due to Covid (37 %). The citizens in the focus group all agreed that it was necessary to break down language barriers in order to promote cross-border exchange. Language learning should be placed at the centre of the education of people living in the cross-border area, as it is perceived as a vehicle for exchange. In order to do so, citizens were in favour of promoting meetings and exchanges to learn the neighbouring language (e.g. a neighbourhood festival), especially in light of English as a more attractive language that would hinder to learn French or German. Regarding the role of the citizen within cross-border cooperation, participants stated a general lack of communication, since some citizens would not even be aware of the existence of cross-border cooperation institutions. Therefore, the main question should be, how information could be channelled to end up where it is needed and how to make the offer more accessible for everyone. Furthermore, ‘the citizen’ was considered to be the main beneficiary of cross-border cooperation, hence, its role is mainly to benefit from the action of the institutions at the Upper Rhine. Actors of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Rhine agreed that the citizen played a central role. Language learning was also discussed among the actors and the knowledge of the neighbouring language seen as essential for the cohesion of the Upper Rhine Region. For some years now, there have been several initiatives in the region to promote the neighbouring language, especially on the French side. Moreover, this focus group stated problematic that, even though the Upper Rhine region could bear witness to a long history of cooperation and many joint civic projects and initiatives, many of the citizens living in the Upper Rhine region were perceived not to be interested in their neighbour and in cross-border cooperation. Therefore, central questions should focus on how to raise interest, how to communicate better and which communication channels should be used to reach citizens.

France-Belgium

The role of citizens in borders areas take multiple forms. One of these forms is the inclusion of the participation of citizens in Interreg projects. It is the case in the Interreg “Qualicanes” project at the border between French and Belgian Flanders, built on a model project which aims to involve local officials, companies and inhabitants in participatory workshop in the redevelopment of the area around the former customs post of the village of Callincanes. A participatory network has been set up by the preparatory project to “Qualicanes,”³³⁶ “Partons 2.0,”³³⁷ that aims at local inhabitants and shopkeepers. A similar participatory approach was at the core of the project “The Future of the River Scheldt”, based in the area of the *Eurométropole*. Two projects on the Franco-Belgian were designed to strengthen the participation of citizens as political actors: the project “Eureka”³³⁸, itself comprising 3 model

³³⁶ See the website of the project here : <https://www.qualicanes.eu/fr/portail/380/index.html>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

³³⁷ See website of the project here : <https://www.partons2-0.eu/fr/portail/108/index.html>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

³³⁸ See website of the project here : <https://interreg5.interreg-fwvl.eu/fr/eureka>. Accessed 15 May 2023.

projects between 2019 to 2022, and a few years earlier the project “Participation Citoyenne,”³³⁹ between 2007 and 2011 on the France-Wallonia section of the border.

The EGTC *Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai* created a consultative assembly, which acts as an interface between local citizens to elected representatives of the *Eurométropole*. This assembly was created on the initiative of the board of the *Eurométropole*, first as the “Conseil de développement transfrontalier” in 2008 [Council of cross-border development] and then under the name “Forum of the Eurométropole Lille- Kortrijk-Tournai-” in 2009. The forum is either mobilised by the board of the *Eurométropole*, or may itself decide to cover an issue of its missions. It meets between three and four times a year. The forum which is also a place for information exchange and debate, aims to evaluate the *Eurométropole*’ cross-border action and may formulate proposals.

The Eurometropole is now seeking to become a privileged place for citizens to meet. For example, an innovative project has been launched in 2021. Called 'Espace citoyen de l'Europe', it aims to propose meetings to establish a dialogue between volunteer citizens and representatives of European institutions (elected representatives, senior civil servants, etc.).³⁴⁰ In 2018, the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* and the Jacques Delors Institute conducted a series of consultations as part of the European Citizens’ Consultations³⁴¹ in cross-border regions, for which European Integration is likely to have direct impact on everyday social and spatial practices. One was held in the Belgian city of Tournai, at the Franco-Belgian border. Conclusions of this consultation are the construction of Europe should more focus on intercultural exchanges (such as learning the neighbour’s language from elementary school onwards), and on making life easier for people living near borders (such as harmonising rules and providing more funding tools at the European level).³⁴²

Denmark-Germany

The minorities on both sides of the German-Danish border have experienced a rising importance for capacity building. This is not always the case in other European border regions, and it did not use to be like this in Schleswig either. Today, people belonging to the minorities claim quite often that their minority status is “no longer a factor for segregation as for many generations before but a uniting moment.”³⁴³ In our interviews with representatives of the Danish minority we heard several times the argument that material considerations (money) had

³³⁹ See brochure of the project here : [99-fr.pdf \(interreg4-fwvl.eu\)](#). Accessed 15 May 2023.

³⁴⁰ See description of the project: <https://www.eurometropolis.eu/fr/participation/espace-citoyen-de-leurope>. Accessed 14 August 2023.

³⁴¹ See the evaluation report of the European Citizens’ Consultations by Corina Stratulat and Paul Butcher here : https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2018/The_european_citizens_consultations.pdf. Accessed 15 May 2023.

³⁴² Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière & Institut Jacques Delors, “Synthèse du cycle de 5 consultations citoyennes transfrontalières,” see the consultation held in Tournai in 2018 at p. 41. Retrieved from: http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Themes/Societe_civile/2018_synthese_CCE_transfrontalieres.pdf. Accessed 15 May 2023.

³⁴³ S. B. Frandsen, “The Danish-German Border Region: A critical introduction”, In B. Wassenberg, *Frontières en Mouvement: Which models for the EU?*, Manuscript in preparation.

been a motivation to become part of the minority. Nevertheless, after a certain period of being part of the “Danish minority”, the emotional factor and the feeling of pride to belong to it became very strong.³⁴⁴

The presence of the Danish and German school systems is very important on both sides of the border. This aspect was mentioned during the focus group interviews. Both Mats Rosenbaum, Deputy chairman of The Youth Organisation in South Schleswig (SSW Ungdom) and Käthe Nissen (The German School and Language Association for North Schleswig) underlined the importance of the minority schools.³⁴⁵ While the schools still function as institutions of formation and training of young people within the minorities there has been a growing tendency that young people from the minorities moving across the border subsequently choose the school system of the other minority. One reason for this could be the fact that minority schools are dealing much more openly with bilingualism and cultural diversity. This is of course an observation that can be related to a post-national society, and it might also be a reason why such “minority-switching” is not very popular with the official representatives of the minorities – in this case particularly the Danish minority.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

In its introduction, the *New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands*, developed from 2015 to 2019 by civic society organisations on the island of Ireland and Great Britain, states that it came about partly:

*“in recognition of the need for cross-border and cross-boundary cooperation to be independently valued and enacted at the grass-roots level, with people and communities setting their own priorities and advocating for their inclusion in regional and local strategies. Without this engagement, it will continue to be hostage to the political environment and the time-limited pursuit of European funding, hampering the ability of cross-border and cross-boundary cooperation to contribute to the development of meaningful and productive relations among people and communities [...]”*³⁴⁶.

One of the aspirations voiced by the *New Common Charter* is to ‘Improve policy-making by matching it to the realities on the ground and identifying cross-border opportunities to collaborate to solve shared problems or exploit common resources’ (p.5). As a set of principles devised by civic society organisations, the *New Common Charter* promotes a vision of civic participation that stresses a bottom-up approach that goes beyond mere consultation and results in policies that support the realities of border communities and are encouraging of cross-border cooperation. It also highlights the need to develop genuine and ongoing cross-border relations

³⁴⁴ Interviews with members of the Danish minority, Thinking beyond borders, 19-23 June 2022 (Deutsches Museum Nordschleswig, Sønderborg).

³⁴⁵ Käthe Nissen. Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

³⁴⁶ “A New Common Charter for Cooperation Within and Between these Islands”, *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], p. 3. Retrieved from: <https://crossborder.ie/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/New-Common-Charter-Evaluation-Seminar.pdf>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

that are recognised by communities as inherently valuable, and which should not be entirely dependent on funding.

The experience of developing the *New Common Charter* showed how civic society organisations were generally dissatisfied with the levels of participation in policy-making and the design of funding programmes, both of which were directly influencing the lives of citizens in the border area, either by creating obstacles to their cross-border lives or by failing to achieve the potentials they represented. Moreover, civic society organisations felt that the absence of genuine participation and co-decision making resulted in policies and funding programmes to which they had no substantive connection in terms of ownership, although also conscious of the need for final decisions to be made by democratically elected representatives in a transparent manner.

Brexit provides a prime example of a policy that simultaneously demonstrates policy-making blind to the realities of living in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region and where co-design with border communities was entirely absent, and one that jolted civic society organisations into recognising the value of cross-border mobility and cooperation, which had been assumed to be part of everyday (sometimes unconscious) routine and, therefore, not worthy of the attention paid to single-jurisdictional issues.

The potential of Brexit to create obstacles to cross-border mobility, and to organisations' ability to undertake cross-border cooperation activities (particularly if EU funding were no longer available), suddenly made many realise they had taken these things for granted. Once, however, that threat became a reality, civic society mobilised, with the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation representing an all-island effort by civic society organisations to protect cross-border cooperation,³⁴⁷ and Border Communities Against Brexit as an example of efforts by citizens resident in the border region.³⁴⁸

Faced with the consequences of Brexit, civic society organisations operating in the border region have also been stressing the importance placed by the EU on participatory governance, the principle of partnership and Community Led Local Development (CLLD), and calling for these ways of working to be retained in the post-Brexit context. With a specific theme dedicated to "Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration", PEACE PLUS, the European Territorial Cooperation programme for 2021-2027, represents a continuing presence in the eligible area (Northern Ireland and the six border counties of Ireland) of working in partnership, participation and CLLD. In terms of the latter, however, border rural civic society organisations in Northern Ireland will no longer benefit from EU Rural Development Programmes (LEADER), where CLLD had an important role.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Convened by the Centre for Cross Border Studies, the [Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation](#) draws together a range of organisations from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to act as the prime contact point for purposes of meaningful consultation between cross-border civic society and regional, national and EU bodies on matters relevant to cooperation.

³⁴⁸ In 2017 *Border Communities Against Brexit* was awarded a European Citizens Prize in recognition of its efforts. See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170720IPR80209/border-communities-against-brexit-winners-of-the-european-citizen-s-prize-2017>.

³⁴⁹ Rural Community Network and the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network jointly commissioned a report: McAreevey, Ruth, "Looking Back to Go Forward: A Review of Rural Development Funding Processes and

In terms of wider EU Cohesion Policy and its associated funding programmes, in 2014 the Centre for Cross Border Studies highlighted its impacts within Northern Ireland in the Centre's response to a consultation on this EU policy initiated by the UK Government. This consultation formed part of a much wider review of the balance of competences between the United Kingdom and European Union and indicative of the growing Euroscepticism that would eventually lead in June 2016 to the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU. As set out in a Position Paper on EU Cohesion Policy, the Centre's view was that:

“Northern Ireland presents an exemplary case for the objective of the reduction of social and economic disparities between European Regions; its exposure to these sources of European funding has proved pivotal in addressing its particular social and economic needs. In the absence of the EU structural funds, we feel it highly likely that many cornerstone schemes of Northern Ireland's continuing economic and social development would be place in jeopardy. The continental scale of the funds' remit necessarily incentivises the provision of funding to regions like Northern Ireland which, while marginal in importance within the scope of their parent member state, provide significant potential for growth and social development through cooperation with neighbouring regions within other member states”³⁵⁰.

However, the experience of civic society organisations in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region reveals that the potential of Cohesion Policy and its associated Partnership Principle and CLLD has not always been realised. In response to the 2017 *White Paper on the Future of Europe*,³⁵¹ and its argument that misunderstandings over what the EU achieves for citizens were because ‘the EU's positive role in daily life is not visible if the story is not told locally’ (p.12), the Centre for Cross Border Studies proposed that this would not “close the gap” between the EU and citizens. It suggested:

“As currently framed, this will not substantially “close the gap”. The solution should not principally be about telling the story locally; it should be about getting local citizens participating in making the story. This is what Cohesion Policy and its funds enable, and it could do so even more if certain measures were taken in relation to its administration and implementation and other existing measures reinforced”³⁵².

Delivery”, *Rural Community Network* [online], 03/2022. Retrieved from:

https://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/app/uploads/2022/03/A_Review_of_Rural_Development_Funding_Web_jun22.pdf. Accessed 13 July 2023.

It offers a critical overview of rural development and proposal on how to retain CLLD in any post-Brexit local rural development programme.

³⁵⁰ Centre for Cross Border Studies, “Position Paper on European Union Cohesion Policy”, *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], 05/03/2018, pp. 2-3. Retrieved from: <https://crossborder.ie/reports/centre-cross-border-studies-published-position-paper-european-union-cohesion-policy/>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

³⁵¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, “White paper on the future of Europe : reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025”, *Publications Office of the European Union* [online], 01/03/2017. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/66626>. Accessed 13 July 2023.

³⁵² Centre for Cross Border Studies, “Position Paper on European Union Cohesion Policy”, *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], 05/03/2018, p.6 Retrieved from: <https://crossborder.ie/reports/centre-cross-border-studies-published-position-paper-european-union-cohesion-policy/> Accessed 13 July 2023.

Indeed, many of the shortfalls in the operation across the EU of the Partnership Principle identified by the 2018 review of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP) were familiar to civic society organisations in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region. These included a general ‘lack of awareness of the ECCP and its principles’, the ‘absence of adequate participation channels for genuine stakeholder engagement in programme design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation’, a ‘lack of diversity in selection of partners’, insufficient transparency and a ‘limited exchange of learning’ efforts.³⁵³

Without wishing to minimise the challenges to genuine citizen participation, the implementation of European Territorial Cooperation programmes in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic of Ireland provided a significant impetus to cross-border cooperation and the nurturing and strengthening of cross-border relations. The four iterations of the PEACE programme in particular enabled cross-border and cross-community projects to broaden the range of actors and citizens involved in cross-border cooperation activities.

Although the INTERREG programme also provided an invaluable support for cross-border cooperation,³⁵⁴ the PEACE programme was specifically created for the post-conflict context of the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region. As a special EU initiative to address ‘the specific problems caused by the conflict’,³⁵⁵ the first PEACE programming period was from 1995 to 1999, therefore coming immediately in the wake of the ceasefires of 1994 and including the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. With a further three programming periods, the PEACE programme has, according to the European Parliament:

“Provided opportunities for participation and dialogue, and has brought decision-making and responsibility for community development closer to the people (i.e. it has applied a ‘bottom-up’ approach). It has funded a wide range of projects, including projects to support victims and survivors, young people and SMEs, infrastructure and urban regeneration projects, and projects in support of immigrants and of celebrating the ethnic diversity of society as a whole”³⁵⁶.

³⁵³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Stott, L., “Review of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)”, *ESF Technical dossier No. 7* [online], 07/06/2018, pp.10-12. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/418803>. Accessed 13 July 2023. See also the Centre for Cross Border Studies, “[Strengthening the Partnership Principle in Border Regions: For greater cross-border cooperation](#)”, 11/2018.

³⁵⁴ On how the INTERREG programme supported cross-border cooperation among local authorities, for example, see Arthurs, Pamela, 2015, “The Local Authority-Led Cross-Border Groups: An early example of cross-border best practice along the Ireland/Northern Ireland border area?”, *The Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland*, 10/2015, pp.8-19.

³⁵⁵ Kołodziejcki Marek, “Northern Ireland PEACE PLUS programme”, *European Parliament* [online], 04/2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/102/northern-ireland-peace-programme>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

It should be noted that although the PEACE programme was a European Territorial Cooperation programme, unlike the INTERREG programme the EU regulations provided for a special derogation to allow the funding of single-jurisdiction projects.

Hungary-Romania

Citizen's participation in cross-border structures

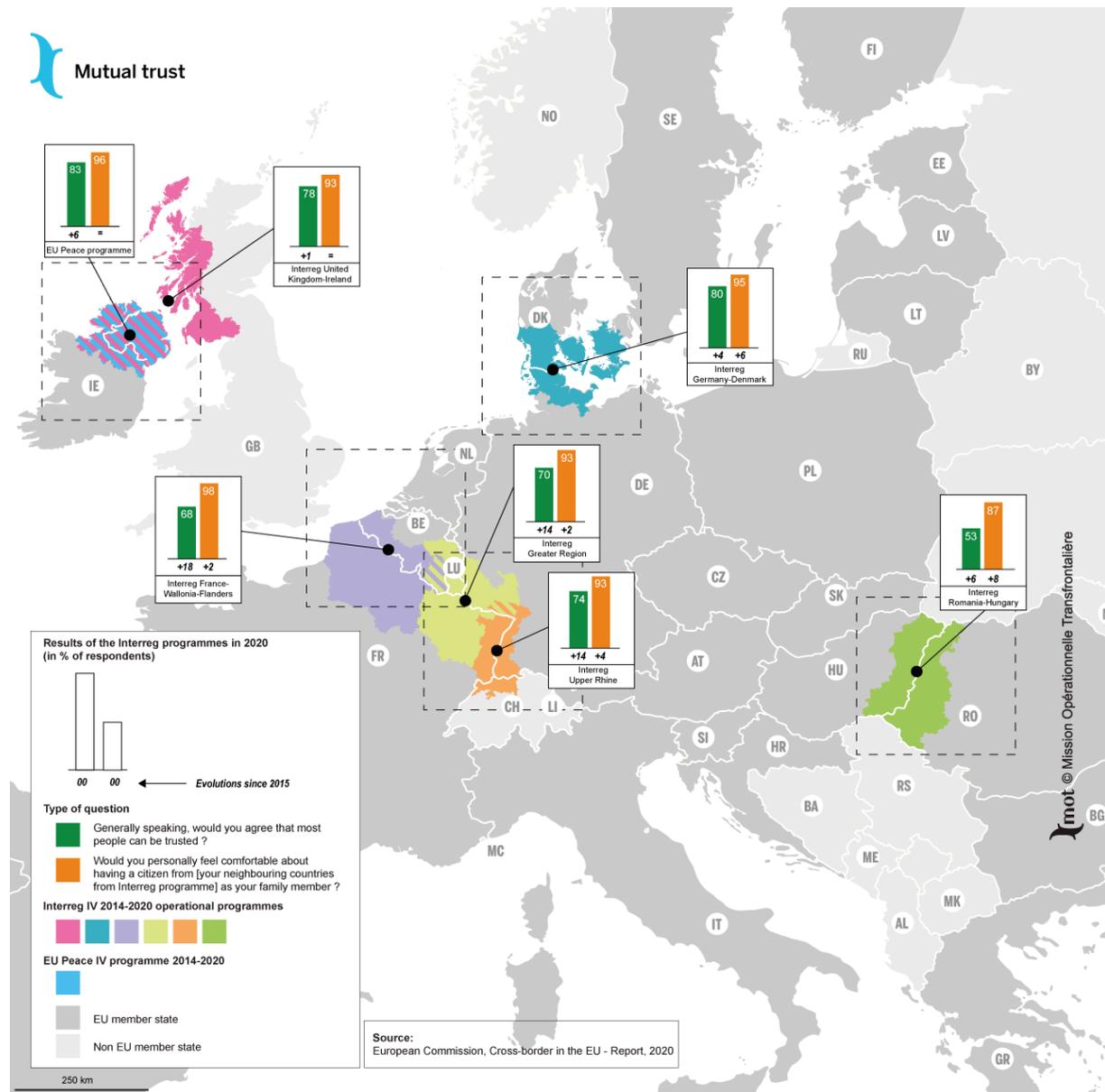
Generally speaking, two features characterise citizens' participation: the willingness and the possibility to participate. Cross-border cooperation at the Romanian-Hungarian border is still the playing field of local authorities; it has not yet achieved a level in which the involvement of citizens, civil society organisations and stakeholders exists. Therefore, it is not easy to involve citizens in cross-border decision-making due to the institutional nature of the cooperation. At the moment, at the Romanian-Hungarian border region, there are no mechanisms in place for the direct involvement of citizens. Even within the existing cooperation frameworks members are generally nominated by city councils or officials. Currently, no deliberative civil fora exist, no consultative bodies have been set up. As such, although the willingness might be there, the possibility to participate, at least directly, is non-existent.

Projects targeting civic participation

In terms of projects focusing on citizen's participation, not many good examples can be found. The project *CivilCity: A sustainable model to involve civil society in the decision making processes of local authorities* was finalised in 2012, which aimed to jointly solve two problems: scarce involvement of civil society in public affairs and decreasing funds at disposal of the local authorities by conducting research in these fields and drafting a model to guarantee greater civic involvement in the local decision-making process. In 2014, the Gate to Europe EGTC was awarded by the CoR EGTC Platform's Honourable mention for the establishment and operation of a cross-border farmers' club which does no longer exist. There are many more projects aimed at enhancing civic participation in the border area, but they do so only in name, the majority of them consisting only of cultural cooperation events. The most important actors in this context are the twin municipalities organising encounters at least once a year.

Mutual trust

Introduction



Mutual trust is among the most important pillars of development and of the economic, social and institutional resilience of cross-border cooperation. It therefore has a major impact on capacity building. Mutual trust materializes among all cooperation stakeholders: populations, institutions, businesses and NGOs.

Although mutual trust is difficult to measure, the European Commission's survey on cross-border cooperation in the EU attempted to measure it with questionnaires sent to local

populations living in border regions that are covered by an INTERREG programme (2020)³⁵⁷. According to the report, a large majority of people living in EU border regions would feel comfortable about having a citizen from a neighbouring country as a neighbour. Moreover, this mutual trust is relatively stable, as the comparison with the same study conducted in 2015 shows, and which obtained similar results.³⁵⁸ However, trust depends on the specific situation: 91 % of the respondents would accept cross-border foreigners as neighbours, but only 89 % as colleagues, 88 % as family members and 82 % as managers.

Moreover, trust also depends on the border zones studied. According to the same report, more than 95 % of people living along the United Kingdom / Ireland border area feel comfortable with the idea of having a citizen from the other side of the border as neighbour, against 80 % of respondents living in the German-Polish border area. These differences could be explained by several reasons: wars that affected especially the older generations, recent political crises that repel investments (Brexit) or political instability. Cultural differences and current territorial disputes may also influence mutual trust between populations. The COVID-19 crisis has also had an important influence on mutual trust, leading to a 'reborderisation' in terms of attitudes and a rise in discrimination.

Trust also depends on people's level of education. For example, 80 % of people who finished their schooling before the age of 15 would accept foreign border residents as neighbours, compared to 93 % of trust of people who finished their schooling at the age of 20 or more. However, despite situations that are sometimes difficult, local actors often set aside their prejudices to act in their own economic interests and thus, to cooperate. This is particularly the case when it comes to receiving European co-funding; regarding INTERREG A, this requires cooperating across borders.

The map on mutual trust shows the percentage of respondents, i.e. citizens living in the INTERREG programme areas, to two questions asked in the EU survey on cross-border cooperation 2020. The two questions allow conclusions to be drawn about the level of mutual trust: both the agreement that most people can be trusted and that most would feel comfortable if a resident of the neighbouring country were a family member have increased compared to 2015. We can therefore speak of an increase in mutual trust in border regions within the past years. The following border-specific contributions give an insight about the situation of mutual trust in the five border regions within FRONTEM.

³⁵⁷ European Commission, "Cross-border cooperation in the EU", *Gallup International*, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/survey-2020/cross-border-survey-2020-report_en.pdf. Accessed 29 August 2023.

³⁵⁸ European Commission, "Cross-border cooperation in the EU", *Flash Eurobarometer 422*, 2015.

France-Germany

The issue of trust is very difficult to grasp. One of the most known sources to approach this topic is the study on cross-border cooperation in the EU, conducted by the European Commission in 2015 and 2020. The study explicitly asked about trust in border regions within the scope of the respective INTERREG programmes, and tried to determine it through certain categorisations. The survey asked if respondents would feel comfortable or not when people from programme partner countries were their managers, work colleague, neighbour or family member.

When asked whether they would feel comfortable if a citizen of the neighbouring country were their neighbour, 94% of respondents of both the Upper Rhine and the Greater Region answered “comfortable”. The same question with regard to a family member or work colleague is also answered with a similarly high percentage. Respondents answered only the question about a citizen of the neighbouring country as manager below 90 % “comfortable”, with 89 % for the Greater Region and 86 % for the Upper Rhine Region. Nevertheless, also with regard to this category, the number of responses that voted to feel comfortable has increased compared to the survey results of 2015. Consequently, it can be stated that in both border regions there is mutual trust in the sense that people have a positive attitude towards their neighbours and would feel comfortable if they had a place in their lives. Furthermore, the survey interrogated about the general trust in other people in European countries. It is interesting that the percentage of respondents who agree that most people can be trusted has increased by 12 % both in Germany and France. In Germany, the level of general trust herewith lies at 74 %, in France 62 %. While border residents generally seem to have a high level of confidence on the German side, France is almost in the bottom third. At this point, it is worth to mention a study by Decoville and Durand (2019) that interrogated about the relationship between cross-border interactions and practices and perceptions of the population through the level of mutual social trust by referring to the EU’s cross-border survey 2015.³⁵⁹ Their findings show, amongst others, that levels of trust within cross-border regions are not necessarily reciprocal and that a high intensity of border crossing does not necessarily mean a high notion of trust. This could even lead to the question of whether frequent border crossings might even reinforce negative perceptions of the neighbour. Furthermore, they interrogated about the relation between a higher mutual social trust the longer a state is member of the EU due to increased cross-border experiences over time. However, France (and other states being long time members within the EU), showing a relatively low level of trust towards its neighbours, the authors conclude that time is not the sole and sufficient criterion for achieving a high level of trust and despite cross-border activities, “borders remain in some cases relatively present in the minds and attitudes of individuals, despite sometimes intense cross-border practices.”³⁶⁰

Regarding the Upper Rhine, the INTERREG programme 2021-2027 mentions mutual trust-building as its specific objective E2, in particular by promoting contacts between the populations. It aims at strengthening cooperation between citizens and at encouraging civil society to participate in cooperation and coexistence in the border region. Citizens' encounters

³⁵⁹ Decoville, A., Durand, F., “Exploring cross-border integration in Europe: How do populations cross borders and perceive their neighbours?” *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 26(2), 2019, pp. 134–157.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

should thus take place to strengthen people's trust and sense of belonging to the cross-border region. Similar to this, the topic of mutual trust appears also in the Greater Region's Interreg programme 2021-2027. Among four policy priorities, the last one deals with a better governance of cross-border cooperation in the Greater Region.³⁶¹ This priority's second objective explicitly mentions "building mutual trust, in particular by promoting cooperation between citizens". This financial promotion of trust through cooperation projects reveals that the issue of mutual trust is one that should and must be deliberately pushed.

The focus group of citizens dealt with the topic of mutual trust in the context of the pandemic. Generally, COVID-19 has had the effect of drastically reducing mutual trust among citizens along the Franco-German border. There are testimonies, especially from French people on the German side, who have experienced discrimination; French were perceived as 'the ones carrying the virus', thus, reinforcing the fear of 'the other'. The actors of cross-border cooperation discussed also about the topic of mutual trust. Regarding the link between the COVID-19 crisis and mechanism for maintaining trust, they stated that there were no real mechanisms for maintaining trust between actors during crises. Different mechanisms would need to be found depending on the respective crisis. During crises, nation-states often turned inward and fell back on themselves, stated the actors. Consequently, the pandemic had led to a break between border regions and nation-states: when shutting down the border and not including the border regions in the decision, with short-term changes and no coordinated and concerted regulations, elected representatives in the capitals had seriously affected the relationship of trust. The participants stressed that having and keeping confidence was something that needs to be worked on over long term, cross-border cooperation thus needs to be reinforced.

France-Belgium

"Convivialité" (friendliness) is often an adjective given to characterise relations across the border. It is therefore normal that a high score of mutual trust is observed through the whole border area. The territorial stability and settlement of the place of the border is certainly not stranger to this phenomenon, but an element that also stresses this point is the shared cultural references on both sides (as the thereafter example of the "chôlage" in Hainaut illustrates, cf. p. 170). Some practices also demonstrate this mutual trust at the level of local cross-border cooperation, as the fact that mayors of bordering towns invite other mayors (or members of the elected list of the municipality) for ceremonies like commemorations of the First World War³⁶² or official (local) New Year's greetings.

This formal entente is echoed by the local practices. Polls from the 2015 Flash Eurobarometer 422 "Cross-border cooperation in the EU"³⁶³ showed that 96% Belgians and 97% French would feel comfortable about having a citizen from the other side of the border as family border. This

³⁶¹ "Kooperationsprogramm Interreg VI-A Großregion". Retrieved from: http://www.interreg-gr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Kooperationsprogramm_Interreg-GR_genehmigt-KOM-des-07.10.2022.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2023.

³⁶² See J.-J. Thomas, "Chimay: une commémoration doublement transfrontalière", [Webpage], 13 November 2021. Retrieved from: <http://jjthomas.canalblog.com/archives/2021/11/13/39216224.html>. Accessed 5 June 2023.

³⁶³ European Commission, "Cross-border cooperation in the EU", *Flash Eurobarometer 422*, 2015.

tendency was confirmed and even moderately reinforced in the same report for 2020³⁶⁴ since it topped all other respondents with 98% interviewed answering ‘yes’ to the aforementioned question. The exact same numbers for 2015 were measured for the same question with neighbours instead of family member; tendency confirmed by the 96% respondents feeling comfortable with this situation in 2020.

In these two barometers, the question of mutual trust in work is also addressed. This is perhaps one of the most relevant for what concerns cross-border cooperation, especially in the economic (functional) field. To the question “Would you personally feel comfortable or uncomfortable about having a citizen from [Belgium or France] as your work colleague?”, 94% of Belgians and 96% of French answered ‘yes’ in 2015, to 96% in general in 2020. The same question was asked with a manager instead a family member coming from the other side of the border. This time again, French (93%) and Belgian (89%) respondents declared being comfortable having a manager from the other side of the border. In 2020, 93% of respondents felt this way.

In both Eurobarometer measures, the scores are among the highest in Europe. Added to the practices at the local scale, the Franco-Belgian border is one of the borders where mutual trust across the border is the highest. This situation however has to match with concrete cross-border cooperation results outside of the framework given by the Interreg programme, like for instance a bus liaison between the cities of Hazebrouck (France) and Poperinge (Belgium).³⁶⁵

Denmark-Germany

An element of mutual trust is existential to the development of cross-border relations and a well-functioning cooperation. The shattering of mutual trust in the Danish-German border region was a very prominent outcome of the national conflict of the 19th century. Neither Danes nor Germans trusted each other as a consequence of the nationalised alienation, and especially in the Danish narrative the loss of trust – provoked by German lies and intrigues in the course of the Schleswigian conflict – was given a very prominent position. The settlement of a national border in 1920 did not change the picture decisively and National-Socialism and the occupation of Denmark by Germany (1940–1945) compromised the relations even further.

The *Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations* of 1955 represent a very important first step towards a new beginning and a cautious reconstruction of a relationship based on mutual trust. How difficult this was and how many reservations remained on the Danish side was demonstrated by the unusual way in which the declarations were agreed upon and signed: in separate procedures in Bonn and Copenhagen, without a common ceremony.³⁶⁶ Not least, the Danish reluctance of entering any bilateral negotiations with the bigger neighbour was considered a decisive lesson learned in the past. This reluctance seems to exist even today as an obstacle for a direct and constructive cross-border strategy in Danish politics. It played an important role in

³⁶⁴ European Commission, “Cross-border cooperation in the EU”, *Gallup International*, 2020.

³⁶⁵ J.-L. Ployart, “La ligne Hazebrouck-Poperinge pour l’été 2023?”, *L’Indicateur des Flandres*, 1 March 2023.

³⁶⁶ S. B. Frandsen, “Schleswig: A Border Region Caught Between Nation-states”, In: K. Stokłosa, & G. Besier, (eds.), *European Border Regions in Comparison. Overcoming Nationalistic Aspects or Re-Nationalization*, 2014, pp. 79-97. See here p. 94.

the unsuccessful efforts to build a proper Euroregion too. The pragmatic, but also cautious and reluctant Danish approach to cross-border cooperation is often justified with the argument that the other side does things “differently”. A similar position is not prominent on the German side, but the Germans have understood to take a certain Danish reluctance into consideration.

It is often claimed that earlier efforts to develop a closer relationship and a less-felt border were supported by individuals who developed trust and a mutual understanding during their negotiations. This was especially true during the Euroregion negotiations. As the Euroregion plan had to be abandoned, cooperation went on at a more modest level, but still with personal contacts playing an important role.³⁶⁷ A few years later, the administrative reform in Denmark abolished Northern Schleswig (*Sønderjylland*) as a unity and transferred it to the new region of Southern Denmark. This resulted in a loss of immediacy in the cross-border contacts that had existed before.³⁶⁸

Given that the cooperation in the border region still takes place in the spirit of the Bonn-Copenhagen declarations and is therefore much more pragmatic and case-related lack of mutual trust is hardly an issue in the border region itself. Again, it is rather the national or regional government levels that cause difficulties from time to time. The solitary Danish approach in decisions regarding the suspension of the open Schengen border, the wild boar fence (2019) or the COVID-19 closure did not, of course, exert a positive influence with regard to mutual trust. Decisions taken in Copenhagen without consultations with the partner on the other side of the border or without inviting the stakeholders from the region are met with disappointment in the region and in German politics.

These decisions have also created friction among both national minorities. In the past, they have had their trust issues mostly with their respective national or regional governments, but especially during the COVID-19 crisis, both minorities were rather critical with the politics of the Danish government. As it was formulated by one of the interviewees it had seemed “that Denmark protects its borders at any cost,”³⁶⁹ and this went very much against expectations in the Danish minority which had never before experienced to be so clearly excluded from Danish national politics.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

There can be little doubt that mutual trust has been improved between officials from the two jurisdictions working within the North-South institutions established by the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and among those who regularly participate in EU-funded cross-border programmes. Both FRONTEM focus groups at the Ireland-Northern Ireland border remarked on how cross-border cooperation had intensified the frequency of their dialogues with counterparts in the other jurisdiction, increasing their levels of understanding and building their levels of trust. Even at the local authority level, where some elected representatives in Northern

³⁶⁷ J. Andresen: “Grænseoverskridende samarbejde i den dansk-tyske grænseregion”, Interview 6 March 2020 (Steen Bo Frandsen), in *Økonomi og Politik*, 2020, Danske Grænser, pp. 69-78.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ M. Rosenbaum. Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

Ireland belong to parties that may have historically been suspicious of cooperating with those from the Republic of Ireland realised, according to one of the participants in the focus group of key actors, that one of the motivating factors for increased cooperation was “the hard evidence that cooperation for cross-border development benefits everyone in the region, regardless of political persuasion”.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the challenges of achieving mutual trust in a post-conflict context. In any context, mutual trust is an ongoing construct. It requires constant attention, constant dialogue. Without this, cross-border cooperation and relations are built on fragile foundations that can be quickly fractured when faced with moments of crisis. Where, as in the case of Northern Ireland, there are societies divided by the very question of what the border represents to them and its legitimacy, achieving mutual trust on a cross-border basis can be a significant challenge.

Indeed, although the 1998 Good Friday Agreement marked the definitive move away from conflict, the new PEACE PLUS programme refers specifically to its role in supporting projects that will build mutual trust. Under the theme of “Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities” it states it will fund ‘Projects which facilitate positive cultural expression within diverse communities, and will lead to mutual trust and respect for each other’.³⁷⁰ Similarly, Investment Area 6.2 under the theme of “Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration” is to ‘Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions’.³⁷¹ The fact that more than two decades after the peace agreement investment is still being made in building mutual trust should not be seen as a sign of failure. We have come a long way since 1998, but the task of ensuring mutual trust on a cross-border basis is unfinished business.

The focus group with civic society representatives showed how the issue of trust is intertwined with the border acting as a psychological barrier. This was, according to the participants, particularly the case in terms of how those living south of the border viewed what, and who, lay across the border, and that this was increasingly likely depending on the distance from the border. The legacy of the conflict plays a large part in nurturing such feelings of suspicion and mistrust, particularly among older generations. Indeed, one participant noted how this mistrust of what the border region represents affected how some people she knew from a county in the southwest of the Republic of Ireland were reluctant to travel to a border county within their own jurisdiction:

“I have friends in Kerry and they wouldn’t travel up to Monaghan because it’s too close to the border”.

Compounding the enduring legacy of the conflict, Brexit has presented new challenges to maintaining levels of mutual trust. At the focus group with key actors, it was noted how the UK’s departure from the EU had removed shared frameworks supportive of cross-border relations between local authorities, and how the existing cross-border networks of local

³⁷⁰ Special EU Programmes Body, “Peaceplus programme 2021 – 2027 Programme overview” [online], p.10. Retrieved from: https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/2023-05/PEACEPLUS_Overview_24052023.pdf. Accessed 21 July 2023.

³⁷¹ Ibid. p. 55.

authorities now contained elected representatives from councils within the EU and others that were now from councils within a “third country”. The mutual trust that had been built up over years was now threatened by political divisions in Northern Ireland, stemming from the fact that some elements within Unionism were increasingly viewing the Irish Government as being in large part responsible for the development of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and, as they saw it, the creation of a border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. A participant in this focus group set out how cross-border networks of local authorities addressed this challenge to mutual trust:

“Networks like ours faced the reality that half of our membership remains in the EU and that politicised discussions of the consequences of Brexit weren’t constructive. In this context, networks asked local authorities to recommit themselves to cross-border cooperation and, in our case, to agree a shared charter for ongoing strategic cross-border cooperation”³⁷².

The quarterly surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation undertaken by the Centre for Cross Border Studies have shown how trust has been eroded in the wake of Brexit. However, the breakdown in trust is not necessarily between organisations involved in cross-border cooperation, or between citizens, and rather between civic society and some political representatives and the UK Government in particular. The latter’s unilateral actions in relation to the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland and what it had agreed to with the EU undermined confidence in how the UK Government was approaching its relations with the EU, and in its relations with the Irish Government. Mistrust grows when parties to agreements renege on what had been agreed, as illustrated by this response to the Centre’s quarterly surveys: “So many ‘untruths’ or ‘not sures’ so people have problems in who they can trust”.³⁷³

A recent report by the European Economic and Social Committee, informed by the views of the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the Ad-Hoc Group for North-South and East-West Cooperation, highlights the consequences for cross-border cooperation and relations as a result of political instability:

“CSOs [Civic Society Organisations] in the Republic of Ireland (particularly smaller ones with more limited resources) are reducing their collaborations with counterparts in Northern Ireland. The reasons for this are the “chilling effect” arising from the negative political context and relations surrounding discussions on the Protocol, and the emergence of obstacles to cooperation.

³⁷² Members of the East Border Region cross-border network signed a Declaration of Commitment, which begins: ‘The member authorities of East Border Region hereby declare our joint commitment to continue to work together to address the issues arising from the Ireland/N Ireland border in order to protect and improve the prosperity of citizens of the Region and the public and private services they can access’: “EBR Charter”, *East Border Region* [online], 09/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.eastborderregion.com/ebr-charter/>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

³⁷³ Soares, Anthony, “2021 Quarterly Surveys on the conditions for North-South and East-West cooperation: Report on the findings from the four Quarterly Surveys on North-South and East-West cooperation in 2021”, *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], 09/05/2022, p. 25. Retrieved from : <https://crossborder.ie/reports/2021-quarterly-surveys-on-the-conditions-for-north-south-and-east-west-cooperation-report-on-the-findings-from-the-four-quarterly-surveys-on-north-south-and-east-west-cooperation-in-2021/>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

*This means that such organisations begin to prioritise their activities within their own jurisdiction, as well as within the European networks they may be involved in [...]*³⁷⁴.

What needs to be stressed here is how political instability and division in one jurisdiction can undermine mutual cross-border trust. It is not that actors in one jurisdiction no longer trust their counterparts on the other side of the border, but rather that they no longer have the confidence that their counterparts are operating from a stable context and, indeed, that that context now appears negative to them. Moreover, it should also be stressed that a breakdown or interruption in cross-border relations and levels of mutual trust is less likely where those cross-border relations have been properly developed and given the levels of attention necessary to make them more resistant to external negative factors.

Hungary-Romania

Mutual trust between Hungary and Romania

Mutual trust is an important, albeit somewhat controversial, topic at the Hungarian-Romanian border. On the one hand, it is recognised that mutual trust can help in fostering positive relationships and cooperation between the two countries. On the other hand, there are certain signs showing that the prevailing lack of trust leads to tension and mistrust, which can hinder cross-border cooperation and obstruct the development of the region. For instance, the European Commission conducted a survey of 9,300 undergraduate students across 43 cities and 18 countries between 2009 to 2012, called "European Union & the world seen from abroad" (EUROBROADMAP), to gain a deeper understanding of mental maps of the world both inside and outside the EU. A study found that Hungarian students had negative perceptions of Romania, with it being the top country they did not want to live in, ahead of even the then war-zone Iraq. Similarly, polls in Romania regularly produce the general view that apart from Russia, the Romanian citizens consider Hungary the biggest threat to their home country.

The level of mutual trust between Romania and Hungary has varied over time and has been influenced by a number of factors, including political, historical, and cultural differences. Historically, the two countries have had a complex relationship, with periods of both cooperation and tension. Transylvania and Hungary were both part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but after World War I, former Hungarian territories were attached to Romania following the decisions of the Treaty of Trianon. This caused serious and long-lasting tensions between the two countries, and the relationship between them was deeply strained. Still today, extremist Hungarian groups reclaim the detached territories and the use of symbols of the so-called 'Great Hungary' is a general phenomenon regardless that a bit more than 1 million Hungarians live in Transylvania today, representing approximately 20% of total population there.

³⁷⁴ "Information Report : The implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland", *European Economic and Social Committee* [online], 25/01/2023, p. 48. Retrieved from: <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/implementation-eu-uk-withdrawal-agreement-including-protocol-ireland-and-northern-ireland>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

The situation was not helped by the pursuit of Romania's "one people one country" principle either³⁷⁵ which is unequivocally formulated to this day in the first line of Romania's constitution stating that "Romania is a national state, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible, without any mention or regard to the national minorities living in its territory". This further exacerbated the assumed or real ethnic conflicts in the wider region further deepening the lack of mutual trust.

Over the last three decades there has been a gradual easing of the suspicious, untrusting and consequently often tense relations the process of which was somewhat sped up by both countries entering the European Union and NATO. Consequently, the relationship is now improved and remarkable efforts were made to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in areas such as trade, energy, and regional development. The implemented projects and the results of the joint developments undoubtedly caused positive changes in the relationship of the two countries nowadays and mutual trust started to grow, it is very difficult to annihilate the prejudices gathered for decades or centuries.

Mutual trust in the border area

Interviews conducted with local stakeholders from the cross-border region show that there is a declared good level of trust. For example, when asked whether people would buy used cars from the other side of the border, usually the answer is yes. At the same time when, specifically, businessmen are probed with these questions, a certain cautiousness is visible as they claim that the corporate culture is different on the two sides of the border and they cannot always trust that an agreement will be entirely respected according to the decided terms and conditions. Probably this mixed picture is not surprising if the evolution of mutual trust is taken into consideration at the Romanian-Hungarian border.

Scholars studying the Romanian-Hungarian border also observed a tendency that the importance of prejudices, perceptions and trust are decreasing and the actors in the border region started to rather base their decisions and actions on what serves best their interest. Since the majority of the EU's funding mechanisms require cooperation, the stakeholders comply with this and put aside their existing mistrust in order to be able to receive funds. With each successful joint project, as a side-effect, trust is also built.

Structures such as euroregions have been playing an important role in conscious trust building. These entities regularly organise events where people from both sides of the border can meet, get to know each other, and spend time together which is vital for trusting each other. Furthermore, there are other organisations (such as Chambers of commerce) which have targeted initiatives for trust building such as markets, campaigns, conferences where representatives of companies can participate and find partners for their goals from the other side of the border. Finally, the INTERREG projects, especially the people-to-people cross-border cooperation projects play a role in creating mutual trust. During the past two budgetary periods all in all 9 projects, involving 21 partners, mentioned in their mission to tackle the different aspects of mutual trust.

³⁷⁵ Andersen, D. J., Klatt, M., & Sandberg, M. (Ed.), *The Border Multiple. The Practicing of Borders between Public Policy and Everyday Life in a Re-scaling Europe*, Routledge, 2016.

Cross-border identity

Introduction

We all hold different identities, different roles that we take on in our lives and different characteristics that shape our individual personalities. Searching for a clear definition of identity, one easily runs the risk of wanting to reify it, as it might be less complex to consider it as something immutable and stable.³⁷⁶ Instead, our identities are alterable and hybrid. Each individual has several collective identities, which in turn overlap, intermingle and delimit themselves from one another, just as an onion.³⁷⁷ A collective identity can be constituted of different elements, such as culture, language, norms, myths and history, but also space and territory are considered main attributes of common identities. Indeed, the territorial dimension implies the delimitation of a social group and is often related to its political dimension, as we all possess national identities attached to clearly circumscribed territories. In this sense, the notion of collective identity is a political construct of state building.

When referring to border regions, the territorial dimension and the term of regional and spatial identity becomes even more important as borders are markers of the limits of identity. They divide the national, political and geographical territories we were born in. This implies not only a separation of different sovereignties, but also of cultural codes and norms, shared by a group of citizens living in these territories. The national border might therefore seem as the most significant element in constituting a cross-border identity in a border region. Inevitably linked to a sense of collective belonging are, however, also common projects, language, heritage and interaction between citizens from neighbouring border regions. It can be said that convergence of two spatial entities on each side of the border can not only be assessed from a structural point of view, meaning to focus on territorial disparities, but also from an ideational perspective based on citizens' perceptions and a shared sense of belonging.³⁷⁸

Furthermore, cross-border identity can be linked to cross-border cooperation as the latter might influence the former and vice-versa. The institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation can increasingly produce forms of identification: through common goals, strategies, projects, exchange, through intensive and specified interaction, a cross-border identity can be consciously built up. Whether this actively performed construction also necessarily leads to a cross-border identity and a sense of belonging remains however largely subjective. At this point, one can also distinguish between 'identity of a region' on the one hand and 'regional identity' on the other.³⁷⁹ The former refers to characteristics of landscape, people or culture, which politics, regional marketing, science etc. use in discourses and classifications to differentiate between regions; the latter means regional consciousness and identification of people with institutional practices, territorial boundaries, discourses and symbols of a region.

³⁷⁶ Reitel, B., "Cross-border identity" In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 229-231.

³⁷⁷ L. Monrouxe & G. Poole, "An onion? Conceptualising and researching identity", *Medical Education*, vol. 47, n°4, 2013, pp. 425-429.

³⁷⁸ Sohn, C. and Durand, F., "Cross-Border Integration", In B. Wassenberg & B. Reitel (eds.), *Critical Dictionary on Borders, Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration*, Peter Lang, Brussels, 2020, pp. 236, 237.

³⁷⁹ Paasi, A., "Region and place: regional identity in question", *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(4), pp. 475-485. DOI:[10.1191/0309132503ph439pr](https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132503ph439pr)

Since border regions are also referred to as laboratories of European integration, the question of European identity arises here more than in other regions. Besides the national and regional level is the European level, since citizens of the EU hold a European citizenship. Is the emergence of a European / transnational identity due to everyday life in a border area stronger compared to other regions? Can cross-border identity be seen as complementary, in competition or simply in parallel existence with European identity?

Questions about identity and the sense of belonging are difficult to answer, as we find ourselves in a terrain that is difficult to research and assess. Little data depicts the perception of citizens regarding their degree of belonging and identity in border regions. Therefore, the focus groups conducted among citizens in the five border regions of the FRONTEM network could sometimes represent a way to get closer to finding some answers to these questions. Most of the focus groups took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which also raised a complete new set of questions regarding the topic of cross-border identities. The focus groups served at times as an outlet to talk about the changing perceptions of citizens: the border closing not only had real practical consequences for people in the border regions, but also made the border even more visible and present, which was previously often not perceived in everyday life. Therefore, the question also arises to what extent the pandemic has stimulated mental border demarcations and a return to the national and thus also to national identity.

France-Germany

Even if a border region is an integrated area, this does not automatically entail a common cross-border identity of the population living in this area. There can be a gap between the degree of institutionalization and projects of cross-border cooperation on the one hand and the awareness of the population about this cooperation and cross-border living area on the other. This juxtaposition goes hand in hand with the distinction between ‘identity of a region’ on the one hand and ‘regional identity’ on the other. The former refers to characteristics of landscape, people or culture, which politics, regional marketing, science etc. use in discourses and classifications to differentiate between regions; the latter means regional consciousness and identification of people with institutional practices, territorial boundaries, discourses and symbols of a region.

Both the Upper Rhine Region and the Greater Region have geographical characteristics like the Eifel and Moselle or the Rhine, Black Forest and the Vosges. The two euroregions are spatially constructed with a precise territorial delimitation and both have a specific name that is echoed by several institutions and projects, e.g. by the respective Interreg programmes. In view of their intensive institutionalisation and active cross-border cooperation, the two regions have a functional, strategic identity, thus, an ‘identity of the region’. Several initiatives aim to strengthen a sense of belonging in the respective regions, following thus a top-down approach: The cooperation fund of the Summit of the Greater Region, launched in 2019, serves as an example by aiming at strengthening the citizens' sense of belonging through citizen-oriented cross-border cooperation projects.³⁸⁰ An example in the Upper Rhine region is the idea of a *Live*

³⁸⁰ “Kooperationsfonds der Großregion: Projektauftrag 2023”, website Greater Region, 12 April 2023, <https://www.grossregion.net/content/download/6383/102714>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

Valley, which has recently circulated as an example of regional marketing. This concept, which is based on Silicon Valley, should act as an impetus for cross-border cooperation and not only initiate new practice- and people-oriented projects, but also strengthen a common identity.³⁸¹

As the focus groups took place in the Upper Rhine, we will focus on this border region: According to the INTERREG Upper Rhine programme, citizens in the Upper Rhine do strongly identify with the border region: more than two thirds of the people have a strong or very strong sense of belonging to the Upper Rhine as a border region.³⁸² In the past years, several studies were conducted with the objective to measure people's sense of belonging and cross-border identity. In 2007, the Franco-German Institute conducted a study about the expectations of stakeholders and citizens for the future of the Upper Rhine.³⁸³ The question as to whether cross-border cooperation had led to a stronger regional identity until then, was negated by the majority or could not be answered. Although respondents considered the motive of identity development as legitimate, it was perceived as distant from the citizen and normatively exaggerated. Back then, national identity was the most pronounced one which goes hand in hand with the findings of the survey conducted in 2019 on behalf of the Upper Rhine Conference among young people in the Upper Rhine region. Even though the study does not refer to the population as a whole, the results are nevertheless interesting: for the space-related identity of young people, the Upper Rhine seemed to play a minor role compared to the belonging to Europe, their country, their national region or their area of residence.³⁸⁴ Respondents stressed language in particular as a connecting or separating element; in general, young people's foreign language skills were rather limited and it is concluded: "The better the foreign language skills, the more similar and positive are the attitudes and evaluations of the surveyed topics for a 'common space' Upper Rhine". In the sociolinguistic study on the status of German and Alsatian in Alsace, published in May 2022, the Collectivité européenne d'Alsace referred also to this connection between language or language competence and (spatial) identity.³⁸⁵ When furthermore asked about the link between language and identity, 76% of respondents associate the dialect with the identity of Alsace, by affirming the statement that with the disappearance of the Alsatian language, Alsace would also lose its identity.

In the focus groups, language was also perceived a feature of identity, as well as a common history or the fact of actually being able to *see* the neighbouring country: "The dialect creates identity", stated a participant. Citizens discussed also the complexity of the question of the existence of a cross-border identity: the majority of participants were of the opinion that such

³⁸¹ Reck, R. „Oberrheingebiet als Live Valley“, *Kehler Zeitung*, 25 May 2022.

³⁸² „Interreg Oberrhein Programm 2021-2027“. Retrieved from <https://www.interreg-oberrhein.eu/wp-content/uploads/programm-interreg-oberrhein-2021-2027-genehmigt-am-29042022.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2023. Referring to the results of a study, described in „[Blick auf den Oberrhein: Eine Momentaufnahme der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit in der Trinationalen Metropolregion](#)“, May 2017. Accessed 29 August 2023.

³⁸³ Deutsch-Französisches Institut und Fondation Entente Franco-Allemande, (2007), *Welche Zukunft für den Oberrhein? Die Erwartungen der Akteure und Bürger*. dfi compact 5.

³⁸⁴ Gfs-Zürich (2019). *Management Summary. Repräsentative Befragung der Jugendlichen im deutsch-französisch-schweizerischen Gebiet der Oberrheinkonferenz*. Retrieved from: https://www.oberrheinkonferenz.org/de/jugend/downloads.html?file=files/assets/Jugend/docs_de/management-summary-umfrage-juengere-generation.pdf&cid=3117

³⁸⁵ Collectivité européenne d'Alsace, *Etude sociolinguistique sur l'alsacien et l'allemand. Rapport de présentation* [PPT], May 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.alsace.eu/media/5491/cea-rapport-esl-francais.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

an identity would not exist, however, opinions changed during the discussion and it was difficult for them to position themselves clearly in light of the difficulty to define the term ‘identity’ itself. According to most of the participants, it is not possible to speak of an ‘Upper Rhine identity’, however, they stressed that there was in any case an intercultural synergy with similarities on both sides of the border: “I think we who are sitting here are the best example of such an intercultural synergy that is developing in this region”.

The actors of cross-border cooperation who took part in the focus group stressed that there might be more a ‘Rhineland identity’ than a cross-border one. They suggested to replace the as strong perceived term ‘identity’ with ‘cross-border awareness’. When asked whether a cross-border identity needs to be strengthened, most stakeholders agreed that it was not the identity of the region that needed to be strengthened, but rather the common ‘living space’. If such a regional cross-border identity existed, it was very much an unconscious process, because citizens would not say consciously that they belonged to the Upper Rhine. The fact that citizens are sometimes not very familiar with the territorial construct of the Upper Rhine, is also shown by the results of the mental maps.³⁸⁶

In addition to the focus groups’ discussions, the survey, conducted prior to the focus group in the Upper Rhine, asked also about the existence of a cross-border identity: 55 % of the total respondents affirmed, whereas 25 % negated that such an identity existed and 20 % were not sure about it. Furthermore, respondents have a strong or very strong sense of belonging to the Upper Rhine region (74 %) and they take part in cross-border projects and initiatives for several reasons: to promote a cross-border identity was also named as a motivation for these projects.

France-Belgium

The Franco-Belgian border is often referred to as a political line dividing people belonging to a similar cultural cluster. Even if speaking French, Walloon people do not feel belonging to the French culture. This conception of the border is at least common among some French Flemish people, especially regionalists, who very often state that they are Flemings, mere cousins of Flemish people from the other side.³⁸⁷ This can be seen in the word “schreve” [pen stroke] for designating the border between Armentières and Dunkerque. Despite the common thought that the border is, in fact, closer to a “phantom non-border”³⁸⁸ in the mind-set of inhabitants, the word “Flanders” however has two different interpretations, which tend to differ from one part

³⁸⁶ See ‘mental maps’ in the introduction of part 2 ‘Border Perception’.

³⁸⁷ See Valentin Belleval (mayor of Hazebrouck and president of the Communauté de Commune de Flandre Intérieure)’s preface of the white book of the Interreg Project “Qualicanes”. His very last sentence is worded as follows: “I particularly thank the province West-Flanders and its deputy Jan de Bethune, for the conferred trust and their will to develop together our beautiful region that is Flanders” [“Je remercie particulièrement la Province de Flandre occidentale, et son Député Jean de Bethune, pour la confiance accordée et leur volonté de faire évoluer ensemble notre belle région qu’est la Flandre.”]. V. Belleval, “Préface”, In S. Singer, F. Tieberghien, B. Bassez, D. Lemanski, E. Hochart, B. Paret & J. Polin, *Livre Blanc. Faire vivre les espaces transfrontaliers. L’exemple de la frontière franco-belge et de l’ancien poste frontière de Callicanes*, 2022.

³⁸⁸ “Phantom non-border” refers to the notion of “Phantom border”, identified by Béatrice von Hirschhausen, which defines it as an “earlier, mostly political demarcations or territorial divisions that structure space despite their previous institutional abolishment”, quote from B. von Hirschhausen, “Phantom borders (Thematic issue)”, in *L’Espace géographique*, vol. 46, n°2, 2017, pp. 97-173.

of the border to another.³⁸⁹ On the French side, regionalist and cultural associations tend to refer to a more historical-cultural conception of what Flanders is, matching with the historical county of Flanders before the French annexations between 1659 and 1678.³⁹⁰ To this, a cultural dimension of the border adds up since the northern part of French Flanders was historically in the Dutch linguistic (and cultural) area. Belgian Flemings, however, refer to Flanders as the current-day region of Flanders, encompassing historical parts of Flanders, but also Brabant, Liège, Mechelen and Limburg. Today, the Flemish region encompasses the two Belgian provinces of West and East Flanders, as well as the provinces of Antwerp, Flemish Brabant and Limburg.

Julia Bomand and Eiki Berg demonstrated that a common cross border historical-cultural background could foster cooperation, but not as much as when there is a favourable institutional frame, in which case an institutional identity emerges.³⁹¹ When the two exist on a given territory means that ‘institutional’ cross-border cooperation is superposed and contributes to the reinforcing of the historical-cultural identity. In the context of the Franco-Belgian borderland, this could be materialised in the constitution of a zone of concentration of the EGTC’s actions, designated as “Proximity cooperation” [“Kerngebied” in Dutch, “Coopération de proximité” in French] in 2009 that corresponds, for the French part, to the historical county of Flanders.³⁹² For instance, the flag of the historical county of Flanders is used on both sides of the border, on the Belgian side as the flag of the Flemish government (region and community) and in France sometimes as the flag of the *département* of the *Nord*, but more usually hanged at town halls in the region which is said to be historically Dutch-speaking. The flag was proudly brandished during a football match where a local football club, *U.S. Pays de Cassel* played against the Parisian *PSG*.³⁹³ The flag has a much more ‘nationalistic’ tone however on the other side of the border (even in its version with red tongue and claws)³⁹⁴, and is less *readily* used than in French Flanders.³⁹⁵

³⁸⁹ G. Hamez, “Du transfrontalier au transnational: approche géographique. L’exemple de la frontière franco-belge”, [Thesis in Geography], Université de Paris 1, directed by J. Malézieux, 2004.

³⁹⁰ 1659 is when the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed to end the Franco Spanish war (1635-1659), recognising the French sovereignty over the coast of French Flanders, and 1678 is when the Treaty of Nijmegen, ending the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678) by the annexation of the bailiwicks of Bailleul and Cassel. France also annexed bailiwicks of Poperinge and Ypres, but handed them back in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that enshrines France’s northernmost borders, and that was confirmed by the Treaty of Kortrijk in 1820 between France and the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

³⁹¹ J. Boman & E. Berg, “Identity and institutions shaping cross-border co-operation at the margins of the European Union,” *Regional & Federal Studies*, vol. 17, n°2, 2007, pp. 192-215.

³⁹² Map of the EGTC available here : <https://www.egts-gect.eu/fr/gect#les%20cartes> Accessed 17 May 2023.

See also P. Pupier, “Spatial evolution of cross-border regions. Contrasted case studies in North-West Europe,” *European Planning Studies*, vol. 28, n°1, 2019, pp. 81-104.

³⁹³ For an analysis of the match in terms of identity in French Flanders, see D. Van Assche, “Un match de football qui avive le sentiment flamand dans le nord de la France”, *Les Plats Pays*, 20 February 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.les-plats-pays.com/article/un-match-de-football-qui-avive-le-sentiment-flamand-dans-le-nord-de-la-france>. Accessed 5 June 2023.

³⁹⁴ RTBF, “Drapeau flamand ou flamingant: quelles différences?”, *RTBF*, 17 August 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.rtbf.be/article/drapeau-flamand-ou-flamingant-quelles-differences-10293915>. Accessed 5 June 2023.

³⁹⁵ Despite it being forbidden under French Law, many affix stickers of the Flemish historical coat of arms (a black lion on a golden field) on their license plates... The black lion is very commonly used in French Flanders.

This common belonging across the border is also visible in the southern sections of the border, such as the French town of Quarouble,³⁹⁶ of which one of the community councillors was a guest at a focus group in Mons in February 2023. He recalled that there is a festive tradition in Quarouble, historically shared with other Belgian town on the other side of the border, namely the “chôlage”.³⁹⁷ Other events are by nature shared across the border, like the tradition of carnivals and fairs of the giants.

Apart from regional cross-border identities, an “identity” or a sense of belonging (which is, by nature, multi-layered), is also observable in the way cross-border cooperation is structured. Indeed, if for some reasons local actors decide to build a common institution, then it is highly probable that they refer in same terms from a part to another of the border in what regards cooperation. In that sense, the Eurométropole as a structure is a witness of the feeling of a common belonging, and this is also the case for the EGTCs (in Flanders or in the *Grande Région*). But this is even truer when looking at the cultural dimensions of various Interreg projects, the way actors of the natural parks meet each other at the yearly festivities, etc. This institutional identity superposes to the cross-border identity inherited from the historical-cultural context.

Denmark-Germany

In the past, Schleswig was a flow-region without anything like a nation state border. Today, as a region that no longer exists as an entity and that has been reduced to being a divided historical landscape, separated, and integrated in different states, it can now only be defined by the border. The Danish-German border region has never been seen as an element of a cross-border identity. Quite in the opposite – the entire construction of separate borderlands illustrates the will to reject such an identity. The question is if people living in the region today believe to hold a specific cross border identity – that the border actually helps to define their identity.³⁹⁸ There is no consensus on this, and within the focus groups there existed different opinions. Most participants of the focus group interviews were of the conviction that a sort of regional identity exists: “A lot of people from the region do not yet feel either Danish or German. They are from the region.”³⁹⁹ A “cross-border identity” is more probable to be found among members of the minorities or those of the majorities that are very much involved in activities on both sides of the border.

A couple of focus group participants adhered to a “Schleswigian” identity, celebrating the diversity and the different cultural elements of this specific region. They were tendentially ready to include the border as an element of this identity. Perhaps it would also be fair to understand the tendency among young people to go to the school of the other minority when crossing the

³⁹⁶ Quarouble is located in the territory of the EGTC Plaines Scarpe Escaut. Vincent Dochez was the elected official who participated to the focus-group in Mons on 28th February 2023.

³⁹⁷ This tradition is also done in Vicq and Onnaing, and was historically practiced also in Belgian Hainaut like in Anvaing, where it is also known as “crossage”.

³⁹⁸ The film “Os på grænsen”, Jørn Loftager 2021. “Das unsichtbare Band. Grenzgeschichten von Dänen und Deutsche”, Wilfried Hauke, 2020 are examples of this - and in fact quite a different perception of the border than in the official culture of celebration.

³⁹⁹ Katrine Hoop. Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

border instead of joining the schools of the majorities as a sign of a certain regionality. And it is, of course, mostly those coming from the minorities that have doubts or issues with their minority identity that are more inclined to define themselves differently and in a more hybrid way.

Others, however, have reasons to doubt or reject the existence of a cross-border identity. One of the arguments concerned the fact that particularly the Danish minority is much too dependent on financial aid from Denmark to consider any loosening of the ties. South of the border, a Schleswigan identity is not a popular idea among Danes, whereas the German minority seems to have embraced it as a constructive way out of their isolation. In later years the German minority successfully promoted "Schleswiganess" in their regional election campaigns.

One could also choose the smallest denominator and argue that the core of being Schleswigan has now simply become a "confession to a good relationship".⁴⁰⁰ A strong argument against the existence of a Schleswigan identity is the fact that hardly anyone in the border region has tried to mobilize regional sentiments – even in situations where nation state politics could be said to harm regional interests. This did not happen in the earlier discussions of the border as there was, for example, no regional political movement to be identified in the matter of the wild boar fence or the COVID-19 closure. Regional sentiments remained diffuse and never matured into a political position.

This lack of regionality might also be explained by the difficulties that many people in the region have with seeing themselves as "Schleswigians". Members of the Danish minority often react quite idiosyncratic when described as "Schleswigians" – although they are actually known as *sydslesvigere* (South Schleswigians) in a Danish context. They still mostly represent an almost forced-seeming confession of being Danish, often subscribing to a somewhat anachronistic Danishness that does not even exist in their kinstate any longer, and they feel obliged to be loyal to their nationality as it is not unusual to be seen by people living in a diaspora. Critics often claim this to be closely related to the generous economic support the minority receives from the Danish state and private organisations.

Although "Schleswigan" has a long tradition in a Danish context,⁴⁰¹ it is now more related to the German-speaking population. The German minority has a much stronger regional identity, which can also be partly explained by the difficult past and the wish to detach oneself from a German history that took a different path than many had expected. The Danish majority population in the north is more inclined to use the designation *sønderjysk* (south jutish) that was strongly promoted by the national movement to distance the Danish minded population from their German oriented neighbours. The minority south of the border does use the designation south Schleswigians, but it is much more inclined to identify with a Danish than a Schleswigan identity.

Quite many young people from the minorities actually leave the region behind, at least for a while. This is partly due to a lack of qualified jobs, but some of them also mention that they get

⁴⁰⁰ Interview Thede Boysen 29 September 2022.

⁴⁰¹ Henningsen, L. & Hansen, H. S., "'Sønderjylland' og 'Slesvig'", *Sønderjyske Årbøger* vol. 109, 1997, pp. 5-26.

a feeling of freedom when they live in other places far from their home region so they can emancipate themselves from the all-pervasive discourses and narratives.

In general, there are still noticeable differences between the minorities and the majorities as usually only the former are constantly reminded about national issues, language diversities and the border as a dominant feature of their lives in the region.

In the Danish-German borderland the prospect of Denmark joining the Schengen Agreement led to nationalist demonstrations and even to a failed initiative to create a human chain across the peninsula inspired by the much more impressive actions in the Baltic countries in 1989. Most of the activists came from afar and had little relation to the border region itself.⁴⁰² The efforts to create a Euroregion were rejected by many Danish citizens in the border region itself – demonstrating the detachment of the majority population towards a closer cross-border cooperation.⁴⁰³ The latest three border "crises" have been of a different nature. The Danish government decision to build a fence across Schleswig along the border to protect from invading wild boars, infected with the African swine fever and threatening the pork production had economic reasons. The decision was taken in the – often felt – distant capital, hereby illustrating the effectiveness of a centralized decision making.⁴⁰⁴ It also illustrated the fundamental Danish belief that the border is *our* border, and that the Danes can do with the border as they please. A restricted ability to see the situation from other perspectives was demonstrated by the fact that especially the German neighbours who were strongly influenced by the experience of the inner German border experienced the fence totally differently: they were not convinced that Europe should again be one of border walls and fences. The wild boar fence also was a shock to people in the border region. The solid fence suddenly made the border manifest and reintroduced the experience of no longer being able to just simply cross the border. The construction provoked many protests and a lively debate – protagonists from the minorities for instance organised volleyball games across the border fence.⁴⁰⁵ In a border region context the fence reinforced an already existing feeling of being overheard and of being subject to political decisions taken without much respect for the region, its inhabitants and its interests.⁴⁰⁶

The "temporary" suspension of the Schengen Agreement following the refugee crisis in 2015 was another demonstration of centralised decision-making with considerable costs and inconveniences to people and the economy in the border region.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis led to the first full closure of the border. Without going into any speculations if this was useful or if it was appropriate how this situation was managed appropriately, it can be said for sure that it had a strong impact on the border region. The events left the local population in a state of feeling powerless.

⁴⁰² Ejlskov Röhrig, L., *Sønderjylland - hvad kan det bruges til?*, Specialeafhandling Syddansk Universitet, 2006.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Pohl Harrison, A. A. (Aarhus Universitet), "Project: Fencing descriptions Responses to the wild boar security barrier in the Danish-German Borderlands."

⁴⁰⁵ Eilrich, G. & Lange, M. F., "Ungdomspartier spiller volleyball over vildsvinehegn. Vi vil have åbne grænser.", *DR.DK*, 18 May 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/syd/ungdomspartier-spiller-volleyball-over-vildsvinehegn-vi-vil-have-aabne> . Accessed 20 January 2023.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview Mats Rosenbaum, 27.10. 2022.

Ireland-Northern Ireland

It is difficult to speak of a cross-border identity in the context of the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region. The border itself has been at the heart of the conflict in terms of what it represents to what remains a divided community in Northern Ireland. To some its existence is a guarantee of their British identity and of Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom. To others its removal is a necessity to achieve their aspirations for a united Ireland, and to complete their sense of Irishness. It could be argued that in this situation a cross-border identity makes no sense. For some the border is not accepted as a legitimate feature, so to identify as "cross-border" would be to assimilate that which is not recognised as having legitimacy. For others, to identify as "cross-border" would be to take in the "other" and thereby in some senses deny their Britishness.

While citizens living in the Ireland-Northern Ireland border region have a sense that their realities are distinctive from those who live outside it, and that their interests are not always understood or addressed by the administrations in Dublin and Belfast (and London in the case of Northern Ireland), that does not equate to them recognising a cross-border identity. As could be seen in the focus group with civic society representatives, citizens in the border region have a different geographical outlook and scope of operation, often referring to how their "hinterland" encompasses both sides of the border.

Instead of speaking of a cross-border identity, what is often referred to is "border communities". This term is used both by policy-makers and key actors, and by those who live in the border region themselves. It was a term used frequently by both focus groups, and it can be seen in key documents, such as the 2020 New Decade, New Approach agreement which, for example, contains a section entitled "Investment in the North West and Border Communities".⁴⁰⁷ Usage of this term avoids explicitly attaching a cross-border identity to communities, while allowing cross-border concerns to be addressed.

Shared UK and Irish membership of the EU could be said to have provided a European identity capable of offering a wider dimension that overcame some of the tensions surrounding questions of identity in the context of Northern Ireland in the first instance, and in how citizens positioned themselves in terms of cross-border relations. Brexit has denied citizens this wider identity.

Given the nature of a post-conflict society where the question of identity is a source of division, institutional attempts to promote a cross-border identity would be contested. Although welcomed by many, the Irish Government's Shared Island initiative and its associated funding

⁴⁰⁷ United Kingdom Government and Irish Government, "New Decade, New Approach", *United Kingdom Government* [online], 01/2020, p. 59. Retrieved from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf. Accessed 21 July 2023.

programmes is seen by some within the unionist community in Northern Ireland as a means of pathing the way to a united Ireland.⁴⁰⁸

If cross-border cooperation were to be used to instil a cross-border identity, it would run the serious risk of being increasingly viewed by some as a political ploy to change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. As the Centre for Cross Border Studies saw during its implementation of the “Towards a New Common Chapter” project, unionist communities in Northern Ireland can be cautious in engaging in cross-border cooperation initiatives unless they are sure they are not part of what they describe as the “greening” process. This is where they suspect politically motivated cross-border cooperation as a means of working towards a united Ireland.

It is for these reasons that, although this may not be the case in other border regions, it would be detrimental to cross-border cooperation if it were to be used in the Ireland-Northern Ireland case to actively promote a cross-border identity. Cross-border cooperation needs to be seen as of mutual benefit to all communities, regardless of their constitutional preferences and associated identities, and something worthy of everyone’s support.

Hungary-Romania

Determining factors of identity in the border area

In general, we cannot speak about a cross-border regional identity in the Romania-Hungary border area. The citizens’ identity is determined by their ethnicity (Romanian vs Hungarian), their religion (the Romanians are Orthodox or Greco-Catholic of Romanian language; the Hungarians are Catholic or Calvinist, some of them are Greco-Catholic of Hungarian language) and their locality (the city or the village where they live). The glue factor between these social groups is not the border area but their common European citizenship (the support for the EU in both countries is among the strongest ones of the member states).

From this point of view, the permanent cancellation of the Romanian accession to the Schengen zone generates frustration and holds cooperation back. In daily practices, the status of the border has an influence in a multiple way on the (lack of the) development of a regional identity.

(1) The ethnic minorities could serve as a bridge between the two nations but the low density of operational border crossings hinder the organisation of encounters (festivals, exchanges, visits). The authorities made it possible that the majority of the not-yet-inaugurated crossing points are open once a week for 12 hours. It means that if the leaders of a local municipality would like to attract their neighbours for a local event, they had to limit their program by time.

⁴⁰⁸ According to the Irish Government, the ‘Shared Island initiative aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future’; “Shared Island initiative”, *Department of the Taoiseach* [online], 06/10/2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c3417-shared-island/#>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

(2) The phenomenon of cross-border residential mobility appeared after Romania had joined the EU and it was rising during the 2010s. But – as numerous testimonies published in online journals show – the wave of resettlement was terminated and several families moved back to their home country due to the uncertainties relating to the crossing times.

(3) The political contacts between the two countries are still very weak. The mutual distrust of the national decision makers poisons the relationship between the local and regional actors as well. Especially the Romanian authorities discourage the development of identities which do not respect territorial sovereignty (see the Treaty of 1996) and try to hold the regional authorities back from the establishment of cross-border governance structures due to the fear of persisting (even if hidden) Hungarian territorial claims. To sum up, the major identity building factors generate diversity instead of cohesion and the main separating factor is the still pertaining Schengen border impeding interpersonal encounters and stronger cooperation.

Examples of identity building efforts

The euroregional movements in the 1990s and 2000s represented the first efforts to create cross-border identity. Especially with the help of the University of Debrecen and the University of Oradea, the local and regional stakeholders were enabled to start cooperating on a scientifically well-based fundament neglecting the above determining factors. Although, every euroregion brought its own geographical identity and developed their slogans and projects, with the exception of the DKMT Euroregion, they could not generate tangible results and in parallel with the termination of the terms of the mayors and county council presidents, the local priorities have changed and the euroregional activities have gradually emptied out. Similarly, the EGTCs have their logos, websites, their own territorial scope which lacks geographical continuity, but without tangible results, their attractive power is disappearing. None of them can generate cross-border regional identity. Finally, as in other cases in Europe (see the Greater Region, Greater Geneva, the cross-border metropolitan area of Bratislava, etc.), the new settlers moving from larger cities to the small municipalities on the other side of the border form a closed community which does not communicate with the indigenous people, as also the cross-border commuters remain foreigners in the factories.

Perception of borders during the COVID crisis

Introduction

The coronavirus has taken the world by surprise and so did the measures taken to contain it. People could not prepare for the many different measures that came with it: Curfews, contact bans, need for appropriate proofs, regular testing, carrying certain forms. For border regions within the European Union, the virus and the measures that responded to it had yet other consequences and residents of border regions could not adjust to the uncoordinated closure of national borders. While the movement of goods and services continued with relatively few obstacles, the movement of people was largely controlled and restricted, creating a certain emotional impact. Families were separated for weeks and particularly for commuters, for whom crossing the border had been relatively easy and no longer synonymous with administrative procedures, the situation was very difficult. During the period of border closure, people were authorised to cross the border because they belonged to the “right” category, meeting the respective government requirements. The national bordering measures all over Europe implied that the virus could be stopped at a national border, not taking into account integrated living areas that border regions represent. In some cases, borders divided also formerly separate villages that have grown together into one place thanks to Schengen.⁴⁰⁹

These re-established physical borders, a re-bordering promoting re-nationalisation, thus separated again national affiliations: individuals were associated with the virus and the current status of covid cases in their home country through their national affiliation. Cases of discrimination have been recorded and various initiatives have been launched to address burgeoning discrimination in the wake of Covid.⁴¹⁰ This shows that the re-established physical border closures spilled over onto the mind of the people; one can state that a national bordering process was followed by a mental bordering process. However, one could observe also public expressions of solidarity and protest actions along European borders, which shows that these national bordering processes were confronted with opposite movements initiated by citizens of the border region.

What is clear either way is that the crisis has made evident that borders, some of which were before no longer perceived as such, have once again become the focus of attention. This chapter looks at how COVID-19 has changed people’s perceptions of and on borders in the five FRONTEM border regions.

⁴⁰⁹ For example, a village on the French-German border: <https://bnn.de/karlsruhe/das-ehemals-geteilte-dorf-in-pfalz-und-elsass-ist-durch-das-coronavirus-wieder-geteilt>, Accessed 23 June 2023.

⁴¹⁰ For instance, the following information on the WHO’s website: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19/information/social-stigma-discrimination>, Accessed 23 June 2023.

France-Germany

Along the Franco-German border with two strongly integrated border regions, the Covid-19 crisis and border closures have changed the perception of the border in different ways and provoked a wide range of emotions. The pandemic was not the first crisis in the course of which national border controls were reintroduced, France, for instance, controlled the borders again after the attacks in November 2015. At the border from Strasbourg to Kehl, these controls led to prolonged traffic jams, which had a very practical impact on work in terms of changing working hours and rhythms of commuters, as these were times before mobile work was common. However, the Covid-19 crisis “outshines” these crises and border controls. Despite the strong cooperation, the border region was marked here in particular by a process of re-bordering as a regained importance of national borders, physically, but also mentally. Even after 60 years of cross-border cooperation and 30 years of Interreg programme, the pandemic revealed the vulnerability of cross-border relations. The *Cross-Border Impact Assessment 2020: The impact of the corona crisis on cross-border regions*, published by ITEM/TEIN, includes a regional report on the Upper Rhine Region with interviews conducted as part of the study.⁴¹¹ Here, various observations and assumptions were made in the very early stage of the pandemic, which came to light in the course of the interviews: the feeling of being discriminated, especially of French citizens working in Germany, was reinforced by media reports, e.g. on incidents such as discriminatory statements from Germans or destroyed cars with French licence plates. In general, it can be stated that the communication was somewhat striking; official institutions contributed to the fact that the people in the respective regions could be easily “categorized”, due to the division of risk area, virus variant area, etc. Besides this association with negative effects, the study also points to the possible optimistic effects on the cohesion of the Upper Rhine region after the pandemic: citizens who previously took open borders for granted might become much more aware of the importance of the free movement and they would appreciate this freedom even more after the crisis.

The findings and assumptions of the report go hand in hand with the results of the survey, conducted in preparation of the focus group in April 2022. With regard to the pandemic, it was asked *To what extent has the pandemic-related border closure changed your perception of the border and cross-border cooperation?* In total, 64% of respondents answered to this open question: even though many different experiences regarding the perception of the border during Covid were mentioned. Respondents stressed in particular that they had not really perceived the border as such before; suddenly it had become present and was perceived as an obstacle and separating element. In line with this, respondents often reflected on the previous self-evidence of open borders and described them as an achievement. The closing of the Franco-German border had evoked different feelings among the citizens: from disbelief and shock to sadness and fear, also regarding a possible future repetition of the situation. Differences between France and Germany became more present for the citizen, e.g. about the different political arrangements in the neighbouring countries, unilateral decisions, different measures etc. Cross-border cooperation was described as fragile and even suspended. The situation of border closure

⁴¹¹ Euro-Institut, (2020), *Dossier 1: Auswirkungen der Coronakrise auf Grenzregionen (TEIN)* — Kapitel 4: Regionalbericht Oberrheinregion. Retrieved from: https://www.euroinstitut.org/fileadmin/user_upload/07_Dokumentation/Publikationen/Download/GREFRAP20_dossier_1_corona_DE_ch4-Oberrhein_kaft.pdf. Accessed 11 June 2023.

was also perceived as a step backwards and as a reminder of past times: “I felt that half my living space had been taken away and that I'd been set back at least 40 years.” Other respondents mentioned recurring nationalisms, old prejudices and hostility between German and French citizens: “Suddenly, separation and demarcation were lived, not only spatially, but also in attitude.”

The focus group participants unanimously felt that their perception of the border had changed since the health crisis. The evolution of cross-border flows and cross-border cooperation was perceived as fragile and as constantly “under construction”. According to participants, this went hand in hand not only by the need but also by the commitment to maintain relations. Regarding the border closure and the impossibility of entering the neighbouring country, a citizen stated: “I wish that something like this will never happen again in Europe.”

However, survey respondents perceived the closure of the border also as an opportunity to be more aware of the importance and necessity of cross-border cooperation and Franco-German friendship as well as open borders. The achievements of open borders, cooperation and European freedom of movement were valuable, though reversible. During the pandemic, numerous public expressions of solidarity and protest actions took place at borders of the Greater Region as well as in the Upper Rhine Region. In the Greater Region, as a sign of solidarity and solidarity with their French partner municipalities, 19 mayors from Saarland recorded video clips of friendship, mainly in French. Like this, they sent a signal against prejudice and to promote support, especially towards the Grand Est region.⁴¹² For instance, in Strasbourg and Kehl, pro-European associations organised marches on both sides of the cross-border park as a sign of the Franco-German friendship. Moreover, some local and regional politicians published a manifesto called *The borders are closing, but not our hearts* with more than 400 signatures from elected representatives in Germany and Alsace, designed to safeguard cross-border cooperation.⁴¹³ Civil society mobilised also the eurodistricts in the Upper Rhine that led to several statements and resolutions, drafted by the Eurodistrict PAMINA and the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau.⁴¹⁴ These signs affirmed the wish to open the borders and demonstrated the attachment of the citizens to a common cross-border living space. According to the mentioned ITEM/TEIN study 2020, citizens did not simply accept the border closures, but they intensively dealt with the issue, informed themselves and advocated for a common solution with open borders.

The pandemic influenced border perception in terms of awareness about the border's existence and in that sense also stabilised, if not created, awareness of the border region. This illustrates that borders are given different meanings in times of crises, although no concrete and general effect on border behaviour can be identified after the pandemic: citizens continue to cross the border mainly for reasons of leisure and shopping for goods and services.⁴¹⁵ This highlights a

⁴¹² This declaration of solidarity can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgaUYwPbWqA>

⁴¹³ "Un manifeste pour préserver la coopération transfrontalière", *DNA*, 10 April 2020, Retrieved from <https://www.dna.fr/edition-haguenau-wissembourg/2020/04/10/un-manifeste-pour-preserver-la-cooperation-transfrontaliere>. Accessed 17 May 2023.

⁴¹⁴ “Resolution for a closer cross-border cooperation”, 20 April 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.goodnews4.de/images/downloads/pdf/Resolution.pdf>. Accessed 11 June 2023.

⁴¹⁵ Comparison between the results of the *Survey on Cross-border Cooperation* in the EU 2020 and the results of the survey conducted prior to the focus group in the Upper Rhine Region.

consistency in the perception of the border region as a coherent living space, as a cross-border interconnected space. The pandemic as well as previous crises, e.g. the migration crisis in 2015, has revealed a certain resilience in the cross-border areas along the Franco-German border. However, it has become clear that public authorities involved in cross-border cooperation as well as cross-border institutions need to work even more closely together to address and overcome the problems and observations of mental bordering made during the pandemic. Cooperation need to allow citizens to encounter and exchange, to develop public transport, to foster multilingualism and more in order to make the Franco-German border be seen as something positive.

France-Belgium

During the Covid-19 crisis, the border abruptly closed, leaving little to no place for crossings at the very first glance. However, this sudden materialisation of the border by concrete blocks cutting roads left the place to a smoother situation, allowing different types of workers to cross the border according to their ‘essential’ sector activity.

The border had been closed for the first time since decades at the beginning of the pandemic on the 18th of March 2020,⁴¹⁶ reopened on the 15th of June.⁴¹⁷ After this first period of total separation of the two sides, the concrete materialisation of the border manifested in the difference of legislation across, with frequent changes either in Belgium or in France. This meant difficulties in grasping what was *really, currently and actually* going on the other side, many declaring being “lost”, and many understanding the measures. Belgium for instance prohibited border crossings for touristic reasons on 27th January 2021, taking many Belgians and French by surprise.⁴¹⁸

This organised mess however did not prevent many from crossing the border for more or less justified reasons, especially in touristic seasons. The border was therefore seen not as a “line-obstacle” in itself, but rather police controls were the obstacles. Police controls were not made at ‘historical’ border crossing points,⁴¹⁹ but all around a blurry perimeter along the border, reinforcing more than ever the feeling of a “border-area” rather than a “border-line”.

⁴¹⁶ France closed its borders on May 18th, Belgium on May 20th.

⁴¹⁷ Both France and Belgium re-opened the same day, see B., Wassenberg, J. Beck, F., Berrod, E. Brunet-Jailly, J. Peyrony, B. Reitel, K., Stoklosa and A. Thevenet, “La crise de la Covid-19 aux frontières européennes” [Toolkit], 2021, pp. 7-8. Retrieved from: <http://centre-jean-monnet.unistra.fr/2023/04/04/toolkit-la-crise-de-la-covid-19-aux-frontieres-europeennes/>. Accessed 28 April 2023.

⁴¹⁸ J. Gasparutto, B. Six, M. Meckmans, C. Vanpée, C. Dalmar, A. Lepinay & D. Leborgne, “Covid-19: La Belgique ferme ses frontières”, *France Info*, 28 January 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/covid-19-la-belgique-ferme-ses-frontieres_4275163.html. Accessed 5 June 2023.

⁴¹⁹ By ‘historical’ border crossing point, I mean border posts that were left abandoned since the entry into force of Schengen.

Denmark-Germany

The results of a survey conducted in the German-Danish border region in July and August 2020 demonstrated that most inhabitants felt very much affected by the border closure. Respondents were mostly missing “visiting friends and family”, trips, shopping, commuting to and from work. The Euroregional office Infocenter was confronted with many issues regarding consequences of the border closure.⁴²⁰

The closure of the Danish-German border on 13th March 2020 had of course very significant consequences. It affected the everyday cross-border commuting that came to a halt. It could also be felt at the University of Southern Denmark as students and staff living on the German side of the border were barred from crossing the border. Even if the constraints were met quite effectively by the quick and general introduction of virtual teaching most students experienced the pandemic as an obstacle to free circulation and a big limitation of their study and daily life activities.⁴²¹ The situation totally differed from the one in the German-Polish border region where both sides demonstrated their success during the COVID-19 crisis with respect to cross-border co-operation at the grassroots level, regardless of the closed border and many restrictions. Alternatively, perhaps there was even more: Positive perceptions regarding the neighbouring country actually became stronger. Polish inhabitants of the German-Polish border region praised the German support for Polish inhabitants of the border region. The German side made it possible for Polish school and university students and workers on the German side of the border to cross the border regardless of COVID-19. From the perspective of the Polish inhabitants of the German-Polish divided cities, the German side of the border supported the Polish people more than their own government. The dominating picture on the Polish side of the border was of “friendly, pragmatic and well-organized Germans”.⁴²²

However, in the Danish-German border region the border closure also resulted in an increased awareness of loss provoked by the now suspended daily routine of cross-border flows, social interactions and shopping. A growing consciousness about the positive dimensions of living in the border region would accompany the closure.⁴²³

Almost all participants of the focus groups found the border closure very disturbing. They were particularly concerned with the national and bilateral dimensions of the process. As under a magnifying glass the pandemic has shown how fast a seemingly stable situation can change. Many people in border regions could not proceed to live their life as they were used to, now as things were more complicated in work and family meetings. It became much more complicated

⁴²⁰ Tarvet, R. & Klatt, M., 2021, “The impact of the Corona crisis on borderland living in the Danish-German border region with a special focus on the two national minorities”, in: *National Identities*, 25 (1), pp. 35-52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2021.1938522>.

⁴²¹ Stokłosa, K., “Introduction”, In *Living and Studying in the Pandemic. University Students' Experiences in the German-Danish and German-Franco Border Regions* (with Birte Wassenberg), Zürich/Wien 2021, pp. 4-10.

⁴²² Stokłosa, K., “The impact of the Covid-19 crisis in the Central Eastern border regions”, In, Ramos García, J.M., *Gestión de la Seguridad y Migración en las Fronteras de Europa y América del Norte*, 2001, pp. 11-13, here p. 12.

⁴²³ Tarvet, R. & Klatt, M., 2021, “The impact of the Corona crisis on borderland living in the Danish-German border region with a special focus on the two national minorities”, in: *National Identities*, 25 (1), pp. 35-52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2021.1938522>.

to live in the border region than in more central parts of a country. Still in November 2021, the Danish-German border region was struggling with the consequences of COVID-19.⁴²⁴

Ireland-Northern Ireland

It is important to understand that unlike many borders across the European Union, there were no closures of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland during the Covid-19 crisis.⁴²⁵ Nevertheless, discussions at both FRONTEM focus groups at the Ireland-Northern Ireland border revealed that participants noted disruptions to cross-border mobility as a result of the pandemic. Some of the participants in the focus group with key actors reported how their organisations' operations had been disrupted, although it was also stressed how they had redirected themselves to address the consequences of the pandemic, including on a cross-border basis, particularly within the health sector. In these instances the border was not seen as an obstacle.

There were some differences in emphasis when this issue was discussed in the focus group with civic society representatives. While the group with key actors had acknowledged the difficulties that differences in the application of public health restrictions between the two jurisdictions created for those who lived in the border region, this was expressed in much stronger fashion by the representatives of civic society. Moreover, memories of the border during the conflict were again present in these discussions about the pandemic.

Although the Covid-19 pandemic was identified as the cause of restrictions to cross-border mobility and mobility within each jurisdiction, what came through strongly were the memories of the border before the end of the troubles. As the discussion focused on why there might be legitimate reasons to monitor and restrict cross-border mobility, the comparison was immediately made with that earlier period and what crossing the border was like then. The possibility of introducing border closures or tighter controls at the border, as had occurred elsewhere in Europe, was strongly resisted.

When asked what citizens' reactions had been to restrictions on cross-border mobility, the overall impression was of a mixed reaction, with some acceptance of restrictions as inevitable because of the pandemic, but also feelings of frustration and confusion and even anger faced with the information being provided. The differences in the timings of the imposition and lifting of restrictions between both jurisdictions were seen as the principal cause of this frustration and confusion. As part of this, the situation of cross-border workers featured strongly, and particularly how the pandemic had highlighted issues related to taxation. With many cross-

⁴²⁴ Focus group interviews, University of Southern Denmark, Sønderborg, 19 November 2021.

⁴²⁵ For more on the cross-border impacts of the pandemic, see: O'Reilly, Maureen, 2021, "The impact of COVID legislation and policy on cross-border integration: The Case of Cross-Border (Frontier) Workers in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland", *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online]. Retrieved from: <https://crossborder.ie/reports/the-impact-of-covid-legislation-and-policy-on-cross-border-integration-the-case-of-cross-border-frontier-workers/>. Accessed 29 August 2023.

Unfried Martin, Soares Anthony, "Approaches to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Bordering on (non-) cooperation", *Centre for Cross Border Studies* [online], 30/04/2020. Retrieved from: <https://crossborder.ie/reports/briefing-paper-approaches-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-bordering-on-non-cooperation-2/> Accessed 29 August 2023.

border workers being forced to work from home as a result of public health restrictions, those living in the Republic of Ireland were faced with the prospect of being “double-taxed”, as they were considered to be working within the jurisdiction. Temporary exemptions were put in place by the authorities to address this situation, but cross-border workers continue to call for the exemption to be reinstated following the end of the pandemic and the greater use of remote working.

The focus group with civic society representatives also reflected on how, in some cases, the fact that there were those who exploited the lifting in restrictions in one or other of the jurisdictions had led to feelings of resentment. One participant, when considering citizens’ attitudes to cross-border mobility in general, made the following illustrative remark:

“I think in theory people will be very much in favour of cross border travel. In practice, as we saw during Covid-19, territorial feelings can come into play”.

What these comments reflect, as was the case with other participants, is how those on one side of the border who were living under restrictions would feel a degree of antipathy to those from the other side who were free from restrictions (or ignored them), and were travelling across the border. In such cases, feelings of anger could arise as those crossing the border were seen as potentially spreading the virus and putting additional pressures on local communities.⁴²⁶

The Covid-19 pandemic showed how important it is to deal sensitively with restrictions to cross-border mobility in a post-conflict context, where such restrictions evoke memories of a heavily securitised and monitored border. It also demonstrated the crucial need, whatever the context, for jurisdictions on either side of a border to communicate, consult and cooperate on a cross-border basis. The absence of this approach gives rise to confusion, frustration, and in some cases undermines cross-border relations.

⁴²⁶ For an example of this, see Duffy, Rónán, “Donegal locals 'angry and frustrated' that Northern Ireland day trippers are not covered by laws”, *The journal* [online], 27/04/2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.thejournal.ie/donegal-covid-19-5084585-Apr2020/>. Accessed 21 July 2023.

Hungary-Romania

Changes in cross-border mobility

COVID-19 has played out in Romania in a similar way to that in many other European countries. As presented before, border controls were not a novelty at this border, but the unprecedented scale of restrictions did have an impact on the citizens' travel behaviours. The data related to crossing the Romanian-Hungarian border indicate a massive decrease in traffic at the border.

Number of vehicles crossing the border of Hungary:

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
10,486,121	11,181,489	7,352,735	9,061,844	7,804,212

Source: KSH 2022

It must be stated that these data refer strictly to the number of those who crossed the Romanian-Hungarian border, without giving us any indication of their citizenship or the destination they come from. However, the data are relevant both from the perspective of the volume of border traffic, as well as from the perspective of the change in the pattern of this traffic. Regarding the preferred mode of transportation, during the pandemic not much has changed in this regard, as the use of personal cars remained the most preferred choice. During a pandemic this would seem rather normal, as the public transport system depends heavily on the imposed regulations, but the use of personal cars has been dominant even before the pandemic.

Citizens' perception during COVID

Romania has one of the largest diasporas in the European Union, with more than three million citizens living abroad. A large diaspora also implies the existence of a flow of people moving between Romania and the destination countries. Despite the government's appeal urging Romanians abroad not to return after the pandemic had broken out, for many of them it was simply not an option: they started returning home, especially from severely affected countries such as Italy or France. When Hungary sealed the borders in mid-March 2020, these Romanian citizens could not cross the country. In order to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe at the border crossings with Austria, the Hungarian authorities defined designated transit routes along by which the Romanian citizens could cross the country (they were not allowed to stop but only in the pre-defined petrol stations).

Romanians returning from COVID hotspots were initially asked to self-isolate at home upon filling and signing a compliance form, but the wide disregard of the law (for example, people trying to elude quarantine upon crossing the border by lying about where they came from) prompted the authorities to introduce mandatory self-isolation or institutionalised quarantine for those returning from moderately or severely affected countries. These actions heavily influenced public opinion, as Romanian expatriates were blamed and vilified for spreading the virus and for burdening an embattled healthcare system, resulting in the stigmatisation of returning citizens. Interestingly (which is a good sign), in Hungary, the Romanian citizens

crossing the border were not considered a threat which can partly be reasoned by the many Hungarians working in Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the UK who also returned home in that period: the similarities weakened prejudices.

At the same time, the COVID measures did not deeply affect the border perception of the border citizens. Mutual blaming of the neighbours were not detectable, the population understood the necessity of the measures and they were accustomed to hardly crossable borders. Perhaps, the hard nature of the border became stronger but no assessments are known on this topic.

Another crisis – Reaction to the Schengen veto

It has been ten years since talks began over Romania's entry the 'borderless' Schengen zone, a position it shares with Bulgaria. Romania completed the Schengen evaluation process in 2011, but remains outside the common travel area. According to the latest report, Romania now meets the CVM requirements, the country's preparedness to remove internal borders with the Schengen Area also being reiterated by the experts of the EU Commission, Frontex, Europol and several Member States in 2022. However, a vote on Romania's membership was held during the Home Affairs Council on December 8, 2022 at which Austria vetoed Romania's accession. The Austrian veto caused outrage and a strong popular backlash in Romania. Various voices have been calling for a boycott of Austrian businesses after Vienna's decision to block the country's accession to Schengen. Politicians (most notably liberal MEP Rareș Bogdan), businessmen, and sports clubs decided to stop working entirely with Austrian banks or Austrian-controlled companies. On social networks, Romanians did not lag behind in their dissatisfaction. The #boycottAustria hashtag has also gone viral on social media. Hundreds of posts called for a boycott of Austrian companies, such as Red Bull, Pfanner, Strabag, Swarovski, OMV, Raiffeisen and Erste.

Even Romania's Tourism Minister, Daniel Cadariu, encouraged Romanians to boycott Austrian ski resorts. As a result, many Romanians who were looking forward to spending winter holidays in Austria's tourist destinations have started calling off their bookings. Some sources have already concluded that Austria's veto will likely result in a rise in Euroscepticism and a boost in the popularity of national and conservative parties as it made people feel like 'second-class citizens' (according to polls, around 70-80% of Romanian citizens have this impression). It seems that, although the arguments about problems with the rule of law have long been received by the public with some understanding, Austria's reservations about the alleged mass transit of migrants through Romania are perceived deeply unfounded. The feeling is also deepened by the fact that Croatia, a country which joined the EU six years later than Romania, was accepted into the Schengen zone.