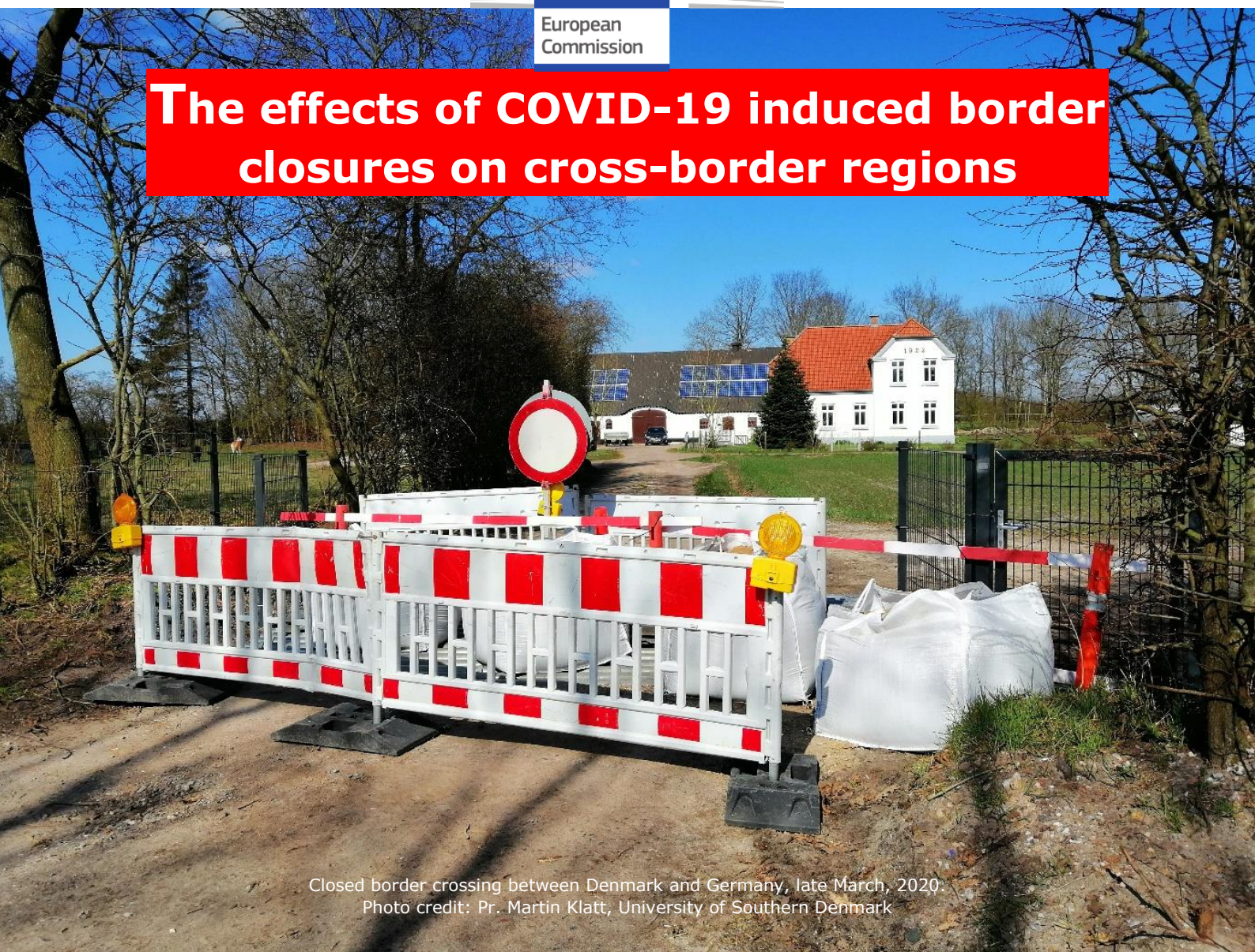




The effects of COVID-19 induced border closures on cross-border regions



Closed border crossing between Denmark and Germany, late March, 2020.
Photo credit: Pr. Martin Klatt, University of Southern Denmark

**An empirical report covering the period
March to June 2020**



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INTRODUCTION

The European Union is a place of many countries and hence many national borders. Between the Member States and Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Andorra, there are close to 40 land borders. Around 150 million Europeans live in border regions.

In recent years, work undertaken by the European Commission services has highlighted a number of legal and administrative obstacles along many EU internal borders. Over the past 5 years, the European Commission has unveiled evidence to demonstrate that significant obstacles negatively affect life in border regions. Many aspects are affected such as difficult access to employment, to healthcare, complex access to education and training, use of different technical standards, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of local cross-border public transport. Even in sectors where there is a comprehensive European legal framework, obstacles appear which can be clearly linked to the presence of a national border.

In March 2020, Europe was confronted to its most severe crisis since World War II when it was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The infection created havoc across Europe and many Member States took a series of far-reaching measures to fight the pandemic. Prevention measures to contain the spreading of the virus are unquestionably necessary.

However, these should lead neither to unjustified constraints of movements, nor to violations of fundamental European principles, such as the four freedoms. Sanitary measures should be taken based on their public health effectiveness, and not based on administrative boundaries. For example, it does not make sense to prevent citizens from circulating within one city simply because it is crossed by a national border.

Among the measures taken by Member States, some have touched upon national borders in a disproportionate way. Most MS closed their national borders, including with Schengen and/or EU neighbours. The overnight closing of normally very open borders has had serious consequences for the cross-border communities: health care services have been affected as workers from a neighbouring town or region could not reach their places of employment; frontier workers were prevented from either going to work or returning home; families were split, people in care were separated from their loved ones for long periods of time, etc. Emergency measures taken to financially support enterprises or self-employed individuals badly affected by loss of business have sometimes discriminated cross-border entrepreneurs.

The present document aims at drawing lessons from an assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 measures along EU internal borders on cross-border communities at large (businesses, workers, citizens) and presenting recommendations for the future, addressed to the European Commission on how the resilience of cross-border regions could be improved in case further crises emerge.

Preliminary research has consisted in mapping the measures directly linked to borders taken by all MS and Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein – border by border, from March to end of June 2020. The immediate impact of these measures on cross-border communities has been outlined, analysed in-depth, and illustrated with 20 concrete illustrations. The reactions of Member States to the "Guidelines

concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak” issued by the European Commission on 30 March 2020 and the “Guidelines on EU Emergency Assistance in Cross-Border Cooperation in Healthcare related to the COVID-19 crisis” adopted on 3 April 2020, and their effect on border closures (lifting of restricting, exemptions, special regimes, etc) have been outlined under a separate confidential deliverable. The effects of the COVID-19 measures on the governance of cross-border regions, the role of cross-border legal structures and formal cooperation agreements in the process of deciding and implementing those measures, have been assessed.

This work has been performed through desk research and video calls. It has integrated existing information from reliable sources such as for instance the Joint Research Centre, the Committee of the Regions’ Corona Crisis Platform or the European Parliament’s Research Service, the DG Migration and Home Affairs information on Temporary Reintroduction of Border Control and the website SchengenVisaInfo.com. Further information has been obtained from important stakeholders from the cross-border community throughout Europe, with a special mention for the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI).

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- **CHAPTER 2:** Analysis of the impacts of the border-related measures on cross-border territories and their communities
- **CHAPTER 3:** Analysis of the role and of the added value of cross-border structures and agreements during the pandemic
- **CHAPTER 4 :** Border regions: Lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis and recommendations for the future
- **ANNEX :** COVID-19 induced border closures on cross-border regions - 20 case studies

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I. CHAPTER 1:

MAPPING OF THE BORDER-RELATED MEASURES TAKEN BY ALL MEMBER STATES, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND AND LIECHTENSTEIN

A. Introduction

The leaders of the 27 member states, during a meeting via videoconference on 17 March 2020, approved the closure of the EU's external borders for an initial period of 30 days. At the same time, several European countries took unilateral measures in their national territories closing the majority of their land border crossings with their neighbours - member states of the European Union (EU) and the Schengen area.

In this report, the period around mid-March 2020 is described as a vast "border closure process" and the period around mid-June 2020 is described as the "reopening of borders". It should be noted that this report does not describe any border closures or new restrictions on movement implemented by certain states after 1 July 2020.

The first part is devoted to the reintroduction of land border controls by the Member States of the European Union (EU) and the Schengen Area.

The second part is devoted to the measures taken by EU and Schengen Member States to reopen their borders or at least to suspend border controls.

Finally, the last part details border by border the closing and reopening measures taken by EU and Schengen Member States.

B. Reintroduction of land border controls in the EU and the Schengen Area

16 March 2020: Commission presented guidelines¹ for border measures to protect health and keep goods and essential services available

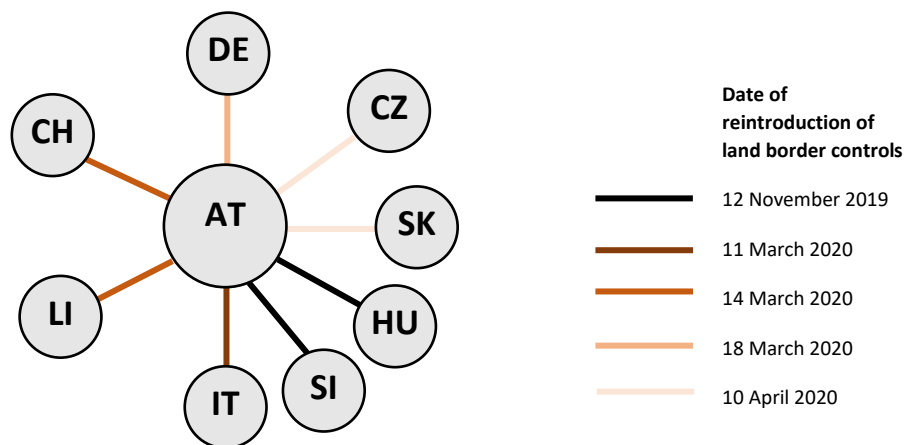
- ⇒ "Member States should preserve the free circulation of all goods. In particular, they should guarantee the supply chain of essential products such as medicines, medical equipment, essential and perishable food products and livestock"
- ⇒ "Member States should facilitate the crossing of frontier workers, in particular but not only those working in the health care and food sector, and other essential services (e.g. child care, elderly care, critical staff for utilities)."
- ⇒ "Member States, and in particular neighbouring Member States, should closely cooperate and coordinate at EU level to ensure effectiveness and proportionality of the measures taken."

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20200316_covid-19-guidelines-for-border-management.pdf

Austria notified the Commission on reintroducing controls on its land border with Italy on 11 March 2020; land borders with Switzerland and Liechtenstein on 14 March 2020; land border with Germany on 18 March 2020; land borders with Czech Republic and Slovakia on 10 April 2020. Controls on land borders with Slovenia and Hungary had been reintroduced since 12 November 2019 due to secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders.

Measures to enter Austria:

- Entry into Austria was only possible upon the presentation of a medical certificate of a negative test for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), which should not be older than 4 days.
- An exception to this rule applied to: Austrian citizens or other persons who provided a proof of temporary, permanent or habitual residence in Austria and signed a declaration binding them to remain in home quarantine for 14 days after entering Austria. If they took a COVID-19 test within these two weeks and the test results were negative, they may have ended the quarantine.
- Transit through Austria was allowed, but without stops.
- Exceptions: transport of goods and transport for business purposes (except passenger transport), and daily commuters. In particular, drivers and workers were subject to random health checks at borders.²



Belgium notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 20 March 2020.

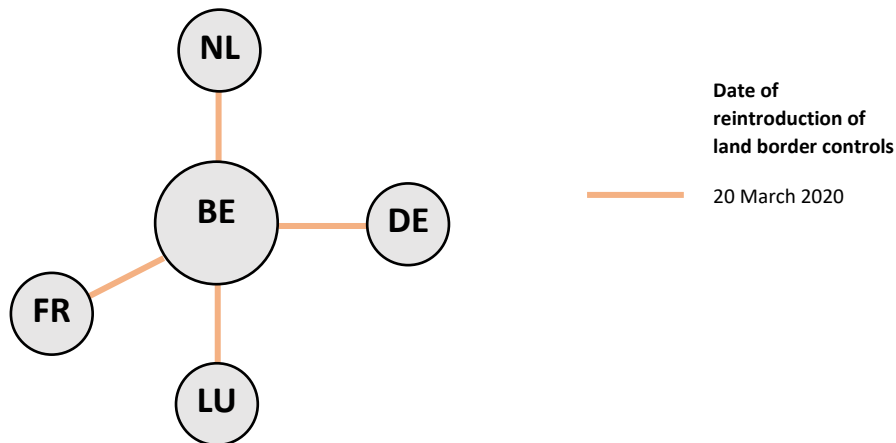
Measures to enter Belgium:

Border workers and others who had to cross the border could still do so. In doing so, they had to take into account specific rules:

- Cross-border workers who did not work in a vital sector or did not exercise a crucial profession had to prove, by a declaration from the employer, that they were crossing the border to work.
- Frontier workers who worked in a vital sector or who occupied a crucial profession could use a special sticker made available by the Belgian authorities. This sticker allowed them to cross the border.

² <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2020-03-19-austria-introducing-border-controls-with-germany/>

- It was not allowed to go through Belgium to get from point A to point B in the Netherlands, including commuting between home and work. However, an exception was made for people working in vital sectors and having crucial professions who travelled on business and held a vignette.



Bulgaria is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. Bulgaria introduced a temporary ban on the entry into its territory of nationals from risk countries on 20 March 2020.

Croatia is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. Croatia adopted the "Decision on the temporary ban on crossing the state border at the border crossings"³ on 19 March 2020. Exempt from this decision were healthcare professionals, healthcare researchers and collaborators, experts in care for the elderly, and persons requiring urgent medical treatment, as well as cross-border workers or goods carriers and other transport personnel to the extent necessary.

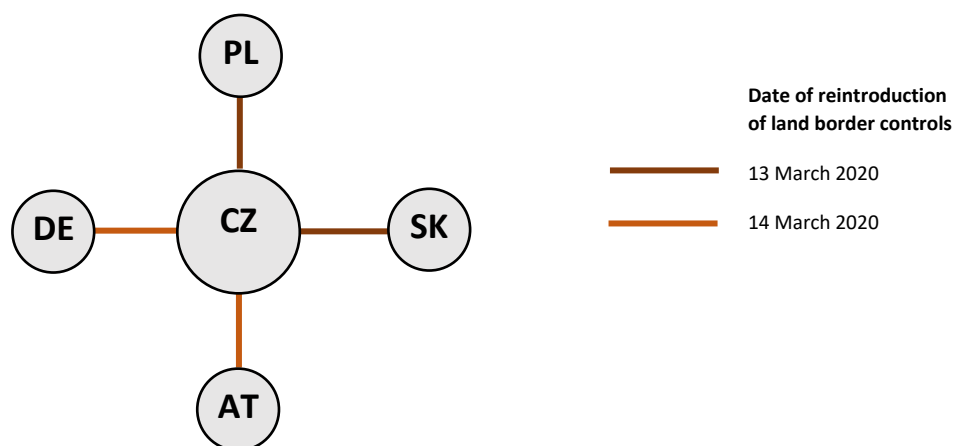
Cyprus is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. "Cyprus introduced an entry ban for all persons (except for its citizens, legal residents, and European or third-country nationals working in Cyprus) on 16 March 2020. Those allowed to enter should present a recent medical certificate and need to observe a 14-day compulsory quarantine at designated accommodation facilities"⁴.

The Czech Republic notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Austria and Germany from 14 March 2020. Poland closed its borders on 13 March 2020. At the same date, Slovakia has banned the entry into Slovakia of non-resident foreign nationals except foreign nationals who are close relatives of Slovak nationals, and cross-border workers in Slovakia. In fact, the Czech Republic closed its borders with these two states by reciprocity.

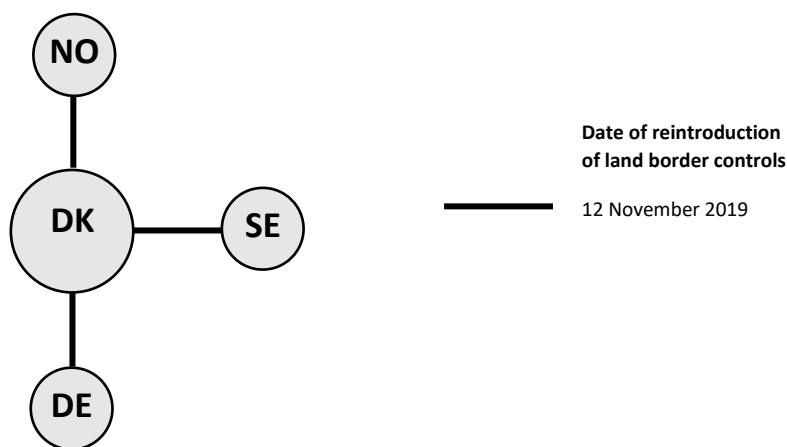
³ <http://www.mvep.hr/files/file/dmku/au/200421-produljenje-odluke-granicni-prijelazi.pdf>

<http://www.mvep.hr/en/news-and-announcements/decision-on-the-temporary-ban-on-crossing-the-state-border-extended,60561.html>

⁴ European Parliamentary Research Service, The impact of coronavirus on Schengen borders, April 2020

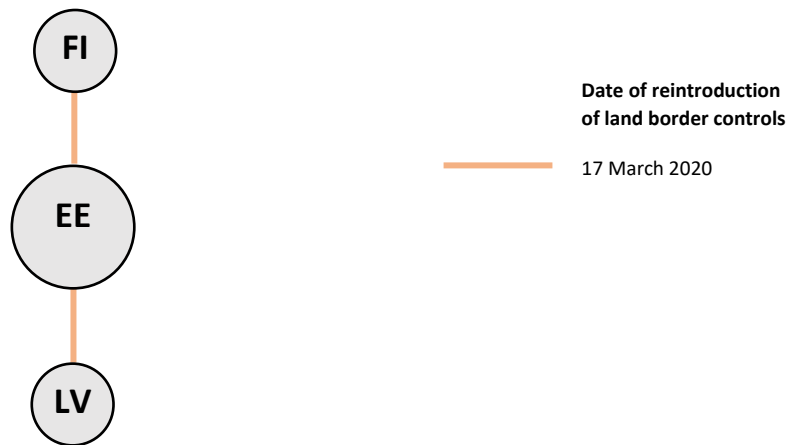


Denmark notified the EU Commission and the other EU Member States, including Sweden and Germany, that effective on Saturday 14 March 2020, the existing temporary border control (notified the Commission on 12 November 2019) would be expanded to include control of all of Denmark's borders as part of the effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. Persons wishing to enter Denmark had to expect to be denied entry at the Danish borders, including in Danish airports, unless they had a specific purpose for entering the country, e.g. if the person lived or worked in Denmark or had been commissioned to provide goods or services in Denmark. As regards the transport of goods, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of maintaining them. Therefore, there were no blanket border control inspections of goods transport⁵.

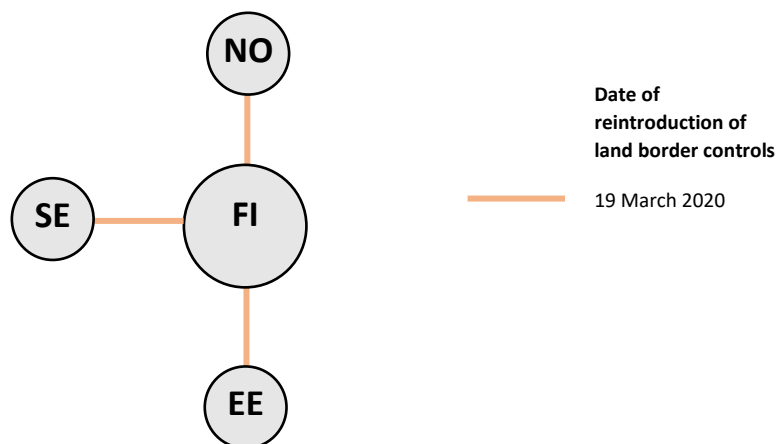


Estonia notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders from 17 March 2020. It concerned the land border with Latvia and the sea border with Finland. People's travel documents and symptoms were checked at the border. The government also approved the isolation of anyone entering Estonia for two weeks.

⁵ <https://politi.dk/coronavirus-i-danmark/in-english/ministry-of-justice-12-03-2020>

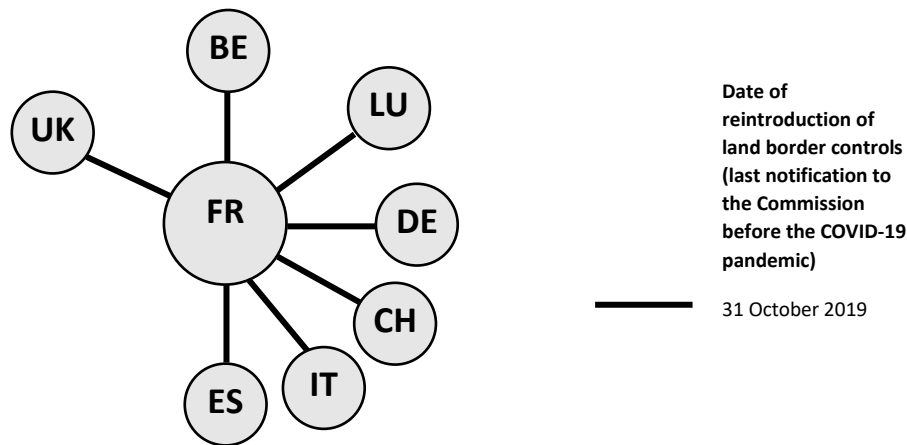


Finland notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders (for foreseeable events) from 19 March 2020. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs said that “the restrictions will not apply to cargo and freight transport across the border, nor to essential business travel within the European Union. The purpose of the exceptions is to guarantee the supply of medications and daily consumer goods and to prevent the national economy from coming to a complete halt.”⁶ Minister of the Interior Maria Ohisalo underscored that the closure of border crossing points had not to rob anyone of their right to seek international protection by filing an asylum claim. All passengers returning from abroad had to be placed in quarantine for 14 days.

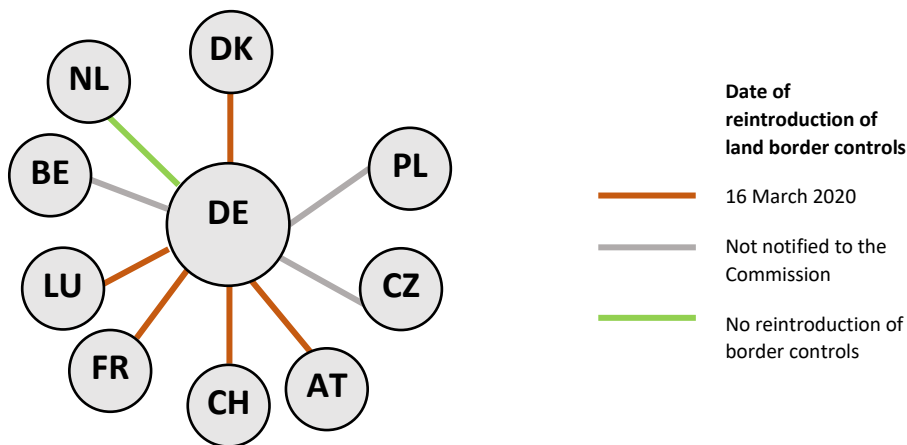


France notified the Commission to include the coronavirus threat as a reason for maintaining controls, introduced in 2015 for foreseeable events, on all internal borders, which it extended on 31 October 2019 and were set to expire on 1 May 2020. The controls were extended to the 1 November 2020. On 17 March 2020, France entered lockdown and decided to close all the borders with non-EU and non-Schengen countries during 30 days. If France did not officially close its borders with neighbouring countries, it nevertheless recommended avoiding non-essential travel abroad. Citizens wishing to travel abroad had to complete an international travel certificate.

⁶ <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/17450-finland-to-close-borders-to-non-essential-travel-at-12am-on-thursday.html>

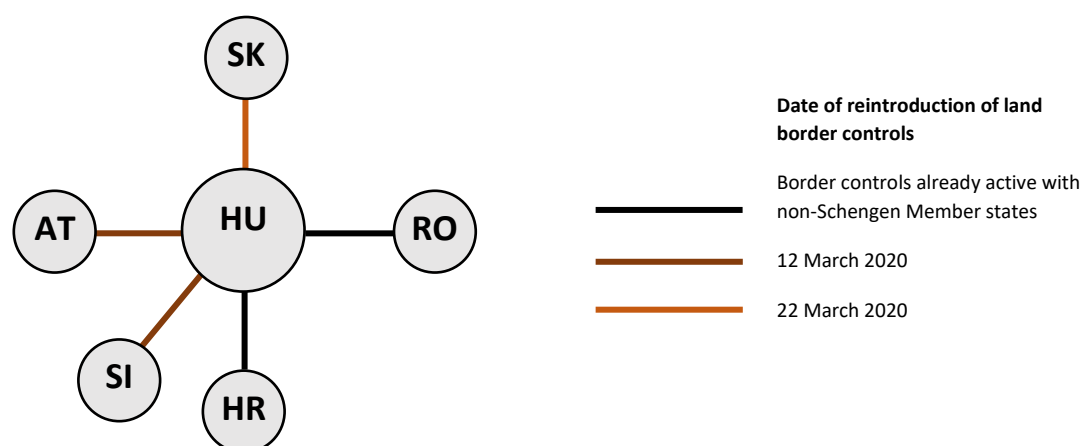


Germany notified the Commission on 16 March 2020 of the reintroduction of controls at its land borders with Denmark, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland and Austria. A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission. The German Ministry of the Interior required frontier workers to carry a certificate when crossing the German border and to present it on request.



Greece is a member of the Schengen area and shares a border with Bulgaria which is a EU member state but not a Schengen country. Controls on this border were already active.

Hungary notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Austria and Slovenia from 12 March 2020 and on its land border with Slovakia on 22 March 2020. Border controls on the border with Romania and Croatia were already active because these countries are non-Schengen Member states.

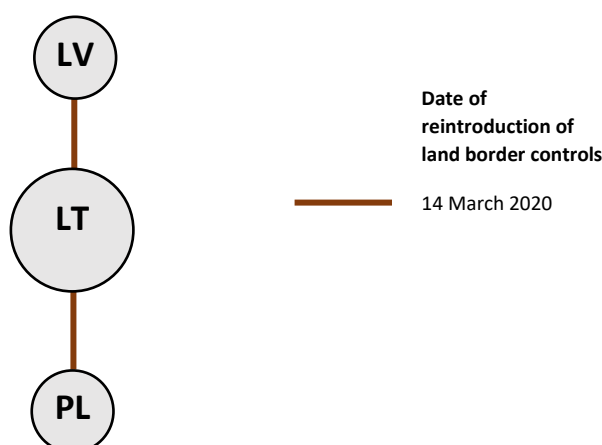


Ireland is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. Ireland imposed a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all persons entering the country, except for people coming from Northern Ireland and staff working in supply chain services.

Italy did not notify the Commission though it introduced a ban on non-essential travel in the country, as of 14 March 2020⁷.

Latvia did not notify the Commission of the reintroduction of controls at internal borders though it introduced a ban and prohibited the movement of passengers and vehicles through border-crossing points.

Lithuania notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 14 March 2020. A list with authorised border crossing points has been sent to the Commission.



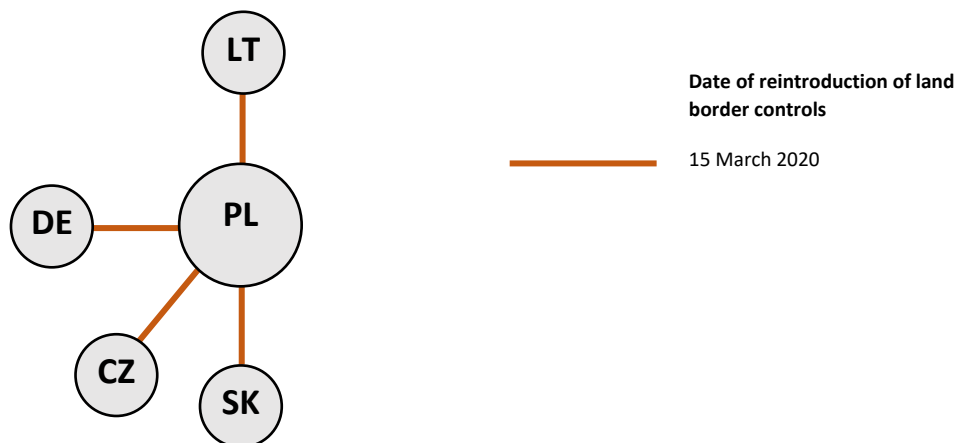
Luxembourg did not notify the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders but restrictions have been implemented to avoid non-essential movements. Agreements on freezing the number of teleworking days had to be reached with France, Germany and Belgium.

Malta did not notify the Commission though it announced restrictions on border crossings from 11 March 2020 with several European countries. Malta banned travel with Italy from 9 March 2020.

The Netherlands did not officially reintroduce borders controls on its land borders.

⁷ European Parliamentary Research Service, The impact of coronavirus on Schengen borders, April 2020

Poland notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, and Lithuania on 15 March 2020. A list with authorised border crossing points was sent to the Commission⁸. The borders were closed for all foreigners (except foreigners residing in the country, cross-border workers and other particularly justified cases).



Portugal notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land border with Spain from 16 March 2020. Circulation was permitted for entry of nationals and holders of residence permits in their respective countries, as well as for cross-border workers and the transport of goods.



Romania is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. Romania passed a military ordinance⁹ on 22 March 2020. The Article 6 says "it is forbidden to entry the territory of Romania, through the border checkpoints, for foreign nationals and stateless persons". Exceptions were made for "transit through corridors organized in agreement with neighbouring countries". Among other exceptions they were: family members of Romanian citizens; family 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

Slovakia announced on 13 March 2020 that it would be closing off its borders to all foreigners, except citizens of Poland. Slovakia notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders from 8 April 2020. "Slovakia's Council of Ministers decided to reintroduce border controls with Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, starting from today, due to coronavirus pandemic. Slovakia has affixed signs to the entrances of the territory for border crossing points, indicating truck drivers the possibility of using Green Lines (used by police to allow internationals cross border transport for essential purposes)"¹⁰. After 17 April 2020, "cross-border workers will need to have their

⁸ <http://www.dziennikustaw.gov.pl/D2020000043401.pdf>

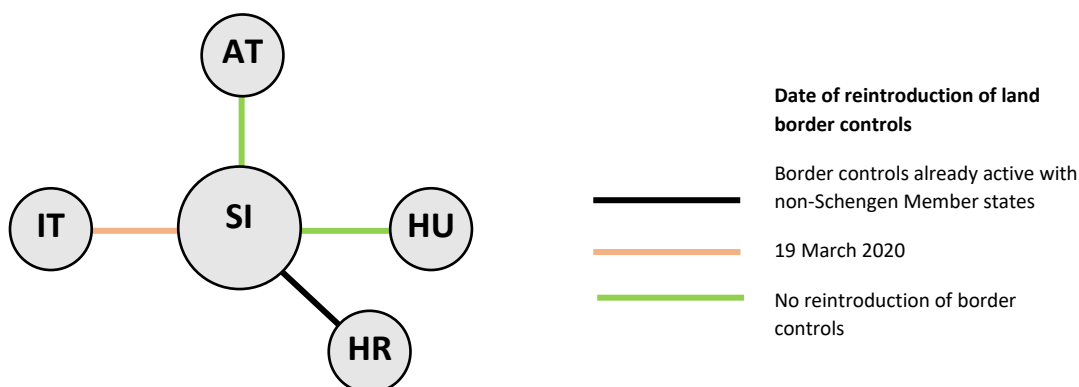
⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/notificationjj9023c-annex-2-om-2-en/16809e126c>

¹⁰ <https://www.schengenvisa.info.com/news/slovakia-reintroduced-border-checks-with-four-schengen-countries/>

negative coronavirus test result at hand when entering Slovakia. They are not required to go into state-run quarantine facilities after they enter Slovakia”¹¹.

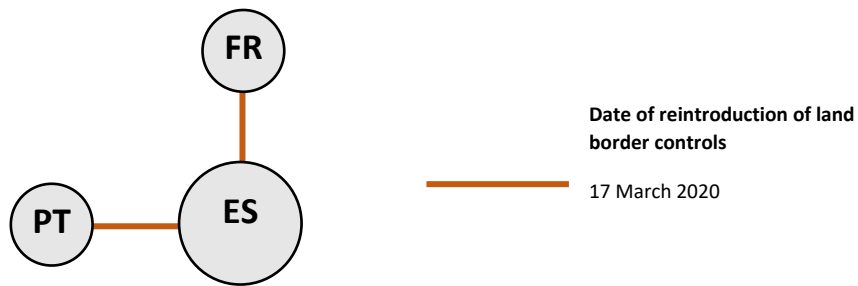


Slovenia did not notify the Commission though it established special conditions of entry into Slovenian territory from Italy from 19 March 2020. The government signed a Decree on the Ordinance on imposing and implementing measures related to prevent the spread of epidemic COVID-19 at the border crossing points at the external border and inspection posts within national borders of the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the RS 68/20 and Official Gazette of the RS 71/20).



Spain notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all land borders from 17 March 2020. No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Only Spanish citizens were allowed to enter the country by land, as well as persons residing in Spain, cross-border workers and those who proved causes of *force majeure* or a situation of need.

¹¹ <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22385972/crossing-the-border-into-slovakia-government-has-passed-new-rules.html>



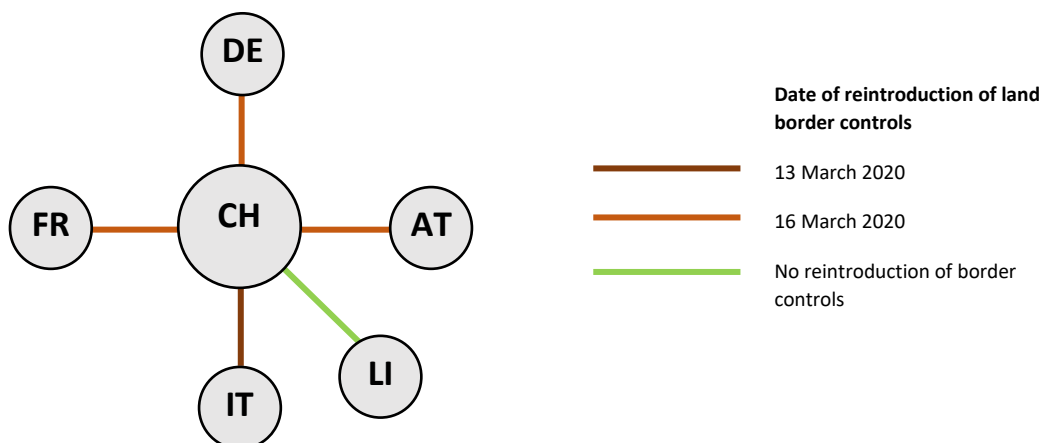
Sweden did not reintroduce controls at its land borders. However, the country notified the Commission on reintroducing border controls due to “terrorist threats, shortcomings at the external borders; to be determined but may concern all internal borders” on 12 November 2019. This measure is active until 12 November 2020.

Liechtenstein did not reintroduce controls at its land borders

Norway is a member is EEA and member of the Schengen area. The government notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 16 March 2020.



Switzerland is a member is EEA and member of the Schengen area. Switzerland notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at the border with Italy from 13 March 2020, then at the border with France, Germany and Austria from 16 March 2020 except its borders with Liechtenstein.



Iceland notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 24 April 2020.

C. Release of land border controls in the EU and the Schengen Area

*8 May 2020: Today the Commission invited Schengen Member States and Schengen Associated States to extend the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU for another 30 days, **until 15 June 2020***

*11 June 2020: Today the Commission recommends to Schengen Member States and Schengen Associated States to lift internal border controls by **15 June 2020** and to prolong the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU until **30 June 2020**; and sets out an approach to progressively lifting the restriction afterwards.*

The Commission recommended to Schengen Member States and Schengen Associated States to lift their border controls on 15 June 2020. While some countries agreed to follow these guidelines, other States anticipated this decision and others delayed it.

1. Countries that have anticipated the opening of their borders

Sweden never closed its borders but its neighbours (Denmark, Norway and Finland) kept the controls on their borders.

Luxembourg never closed its borders but its neighbours (France, Germany and Belgium) kept the controls on their borders until 15 June 2020.

The Netherlands never closed its borders.

Liechtenstein never closed its borders but land border controls were led by Austria until 4 June 2020.

Czech Republic reopened its borders with Slovakia and Hungary with restriction on 27 March 2020. Borders with Austria and Germany reopened on 5 June 2020. The border with Poland was reopened on 13 June 2020.

Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia re-opened borders to each other from 15 May 2020. Borders with other EU and Schengen countries reopened with restrictions on 1 or 3 June 2020. The border between Lithuania and Poland reopened on 12 June 2020 and the border between Estonia and Finland reopened on 15 June 2020.

Slovenia reopened its borders with Austria and Hungary on 15 May 2020 declaring an end to its coronavirus epidemic but left the border with Italy closed until 15 June 2020.

Croatia opened its borders to its neighbours (Hungary and Slovenia) and other member states on 28 May 2020 with no restrictions.

Bulgaria opened borders on 1 June 2020 to E.U. and U.K. visitors, as well as to medical workers and family members of Bulgarian citizens, as listed on the government website. All arrivals were to self-isolate for 14 days.

Italy reopened its borders on 3 June 2020 for all Schengen area and European Union national but its neighbours (France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia) maintained controls on their borders until 15 or 16 June 2020. At the border with France on 3 June 2020, controls were being maintained by French authorities causing queues and incomprehension among Italian border residents. At the border with Slovenia, Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica

(Slovenia) the dismantling of the barrier that separated them was celebrated on 15 June 2020.

Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) except its border with Italy¹². However, Austria notified the Commission on reintroduction border controls with these neighbouring countries until 15 June 2020.

Slovakia removed border restrictions with Austria and Hungary on 5 June 2020, after previously lifting border controls with the Czech Republic on 3 June 2020.

Cyprus permitted on 9 June 2020 entry of visitors from Greece, Malta and other EU member states with the presentation of a health certificate proving they are virus-free three days prior their departure, a requirement that will end by June 20.

Hungary abolished all border checks at their part of internal Schengen borders (Austria, Slovakia, and Slovenia) on 9 June 2020¹³.

Poland decided to put to an end to the temporary border controls at the internal borders of the European Union, as well as the mandatory quarantine, on 13 June 2020¹⁴.

2. Countries that applied a reopening of their border on 15 June 2020

Denmark reopened its borders with Germany and Norway on 15 June 2020 but left the border closed with Sweden.

Belgium reopened its borders with the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg and France on 15 June 2020. However, the decision taken by Belgian authorities at the beginning of June to allow people to cross the border with neighbouring countries to visit their loved ones created a big confusion at the Dutch and French borders.

Finland reopened its borders with Norway, Denmark and Estonia on 15 June 2020 but left its border with Sweden closed until 18 August 2020.

France reopened¹⁵ its borders with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland and Italy on 15 June 2020 but maintained the border with Spain closed until 22 June 2020.

Germany lifted the controls reintroduced on the basis of coronavirus at the borders with Austria, Switzerland, France, Denmark and Italy as of 15 June 2020. At the same date, on the border with Luxembourg, it was no longer necessary to carry any kind of attestation or certificate to cross the border. The border with the Netherlands was never closed and the border with Poland was opened on 13 June 2020.

Greece reopened its border on 15 June 2020 to several countries among them Bulgaria and Cyprus.

Romania reopened its border on 15 June 2020 to some countries exempted from quarantine or isolation measures, among them Bulgaria but not Hungary¹⁶.

¹² <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/italy-criticizes-austrias-decision-to-keep-their-common-border-closed/>

¹³ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-abolishes-border-controls-at-its-internal-schengen-borders/>

¹⁴ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/poland-reopens-its-borders-on-june-13/>

¹⁵ With the exception that the controls established in 2015 are still ongoing.

¹⁶ <http://www.cnsct.ro/index.php/liste-zone-afectate-covid-19/1798-lista-zonelor-afectate-valabila-de-la-15-06-2020/file>

Switzerland reopened its borders with France, Germany, Austria and Italy with no restriction on 15 June 2020.

Norway reopened its borders with Denmark and Finland on 15 June 2020 but maintained restriction for visitors coming from Sweden (except from the island province of Gotland).

3. Countries still closed or partially closed after 15 June 2020

Spain reopened its border with France on 22 June 2020 but left its border with Portugal closed until 1 July 2020.





Ireland never closed its border with Northern Ireland (UK) but reopened its borders with the EU countries after 14 July 2020 with restrictions.

Malta reopened its border on 1 July 2020 to certain EU and EEA countries.







Portugal reopened its border with Spain on 1 July 2020.

D. Border by border, the measures taken by MS, Switzerland, Norway and Liechtenstein








Legend

-  EU Member State and Member of the Schengen Area
-  EU Member State but not member of the Schengen Area
-  EFTA Country and member of the Schengen Area
-  Non-EU country and not member of the Schengen Area

Border closures

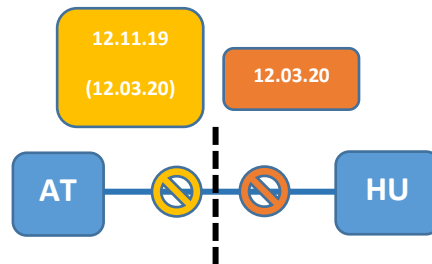
-  External border of the Schengen Area already controlled before the pandemic
-  Introduction of border controls on one side of the border (first country to introduce controls)
-  Introduction of border controls on second side of the border (second country to introduce controls)
-  Coordinated introduction of border controls
-  Heath controls at the border
-  Certificate required to cross the border.

Reopening of the borders

-  Border reopening in March, April or May 2020
-  Border reopening before 15 June 2020
-  Border reopening on 15 June 2020
-  Reopening of the border after 15 June 2020
-  Border remained closed after 15 June 2020
-  Coordinated opening of the border
-  Quarantine required

1. Austria - Hungary

Borders controls were extended by Austria from 12 November 19 until 12 May 2020 due to secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime and the situation at the external borders, and internal land borders with Hungary and Slovenia. Austria decided to maintain its borders controls adding the threat of Covid-19 to its justifications for closing the borders on 12 March 2020. Hungary notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land borders with Austria from 12 March 2020.



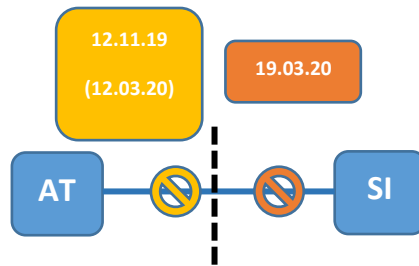
Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the border with Hungary. However, Austria notified the Commission on the reintroduction of border controls with these neighbouring countries until 15 June 2020. Hungary has abolished all border checks on their part of internal Schengen borders (including Austria) on 9 June 2020¹⁷.



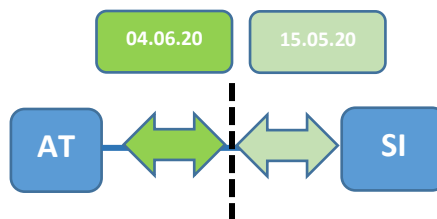
2. Austria - Slovenia

Borders are controlled from 12 November 19 due to secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders. Austria decided to maintain the controls including the coronavirus threat as of 12 March 2020). Slovenia introduced special conditions of entry from Austria on 19 March 2020.

¹⁷ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-abolishes-border-controls-at-its-internal-schengen-borders/>

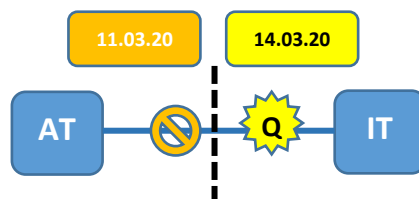


Slovenia reopened its borders with Austria on 15 May 2020 declaring an end to its coronavirus epidemic. Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including Slovenia. However, Austria notified the Commission on the reintroduction of border controls with these neighbouring countries until 15 June 2020.



3. Austria – Italy

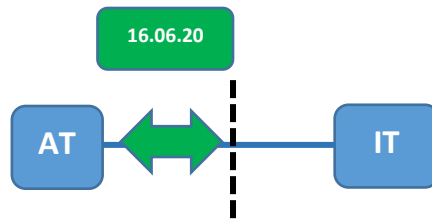
First border to be quasi closed: “Austria will ban from entering all Italian citizens, due to the spread of coronavirus, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz announces”¹⁸. Austria notified the Commission on 11 March 2020 on reintroducing land border controls with Italy. Italy did not notify the Commission though it introduced a ban on non-essential travel in the country, as of 14 March 2020. Italy established a self-quarantine regime for travelers returning to Italy.



Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) except its border with Italy¹⁹ which was reopened on 16 June 2020

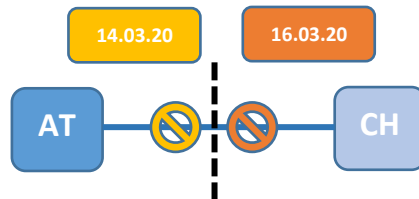
¹⁸ Source : www.schengenvisainfo.com

¹⁹ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/italy-criticizes-austrias-decision-to-keep-their-common-border-closed/>

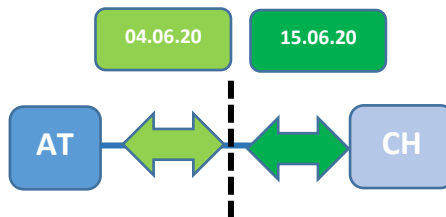


4. Austria – Switzerland

Austria introduced border checks with Switzerland and Liechtenstein on 14 March 2020. Switzerland introduced controls on 16 March 2020 on its border with Austria.

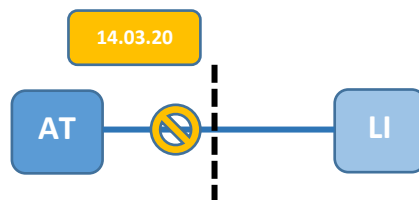


Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the border with Switzerland. Switzerland reopened its border Austria with no restriction on 15 June 2020.

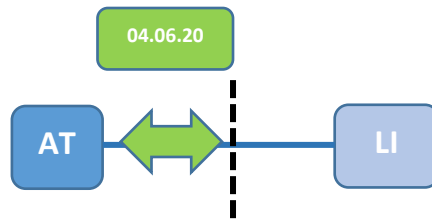


5. Austria – Liechtenstein

Austria notified the Commission on reintroducing controls on its land border with Liechtenstein on 14 March 2020.

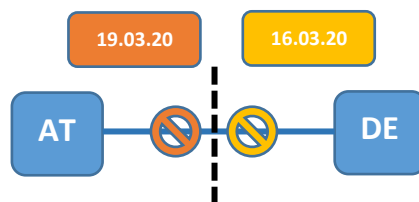


Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the border with Liechtenstein.

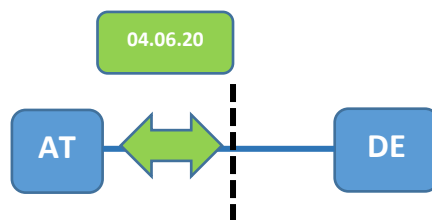


6. Austria – Germany

On 19 March 2020 at 12.00, Austria introduced border controls with Germany, imposing the same measures as those already applied on the borders with Italy, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Germany reintroduced border controls with Austria on 16 March 2020.

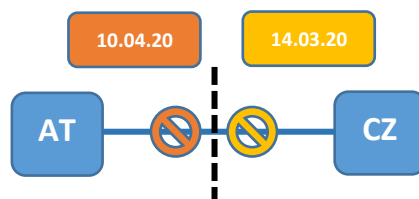


Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the border with Germany.

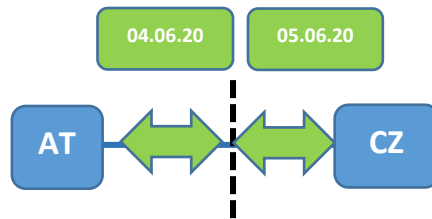


7. Austria-Czech Republic

On 10 April 2020 Austria notified the Commission on reintroducing land border controls with the Czech Republic. The Czech government only notified the Commission on 14 March 2020 on reintroducing border controls with Austria.

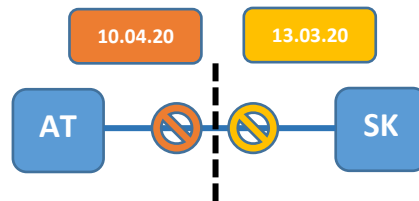


Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the Czech Republic. Czech Republic its border with Austria on 5 June 2020.



8. Austria-Slovakia

On 10 April 2020 Austria notified land border controls with Slovakia. Slovakia notified the Commission on reintroducing border controls with Austria on 8 April 2020 but it had already adopted restriction on border crossing since 13 March 2020.

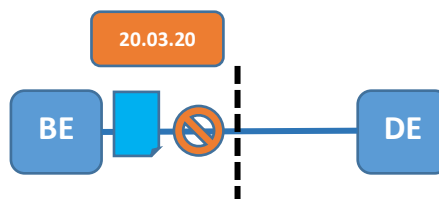


Austria reopened its borders on 4 June 2020 with most of its neighbouring states including the border with Slovakia. Slovakia removed border restrictions with Austria on 5 June 2020.



9. Belgium – Germany

On 20 March 2020, Belgium forbade all entry to the country without an essential reason. Border checks were put in place and there had to be justifications for crossing the border. Belgium also introduced a ban on non-essential inbound and outbound travel, as of 18 March 2020. No list of authorised border crossing points has been received by the Commission. Exceptions applied, such as with regard to Belgian citizens returning from abroad, cross-border workers (who were advised to carry a certificate from their employer), health staff, and people involved in the transportation of goods. Germany never shut the links with Belgium. Germany did not notify the Commission on reintroducing border controls with Belgium.



Certificate proving the need to cross the border

Version 1.0 - 20200318



Certificate proving the need to cross the border

This form, drawn up by the Belgian government, is provided to the employer to certify the employment relationship with the employee. This certificate serves as proof of the need to cross the border in the COVID-19 situation.

Employer's data

Company name (business name)			
Surname of the representative		First name	
Street		Number	
Postcode		City	
Phone number			

Employee's data

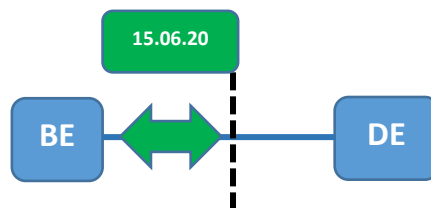
Surname of the employee		First name	
National identification number			
Street		Number	
Postcode		City	
Nationality		Country	

Place	Date (dd-mm-yyyy)	Place	Date (dd-mm-yyyy)
(Employee's signature)		(Employer's signature and stamp)	

It is confirmed that this declaration is complete and accurate. The undersigned employer hereby declares that the above-mentioned employee is employed by him/her. In accordance with the legal provisions on data protection, the undersigned are hereby informed that the answers given in this form may only be used as proof of the need to cross the border.

Source: Federal Public Service (Belgium)

Belgium reopened its border with Germany on **15 June 2020**.

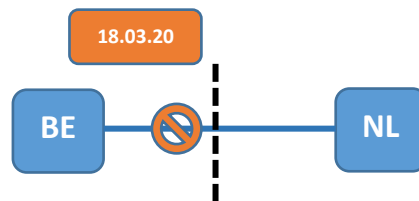


10. Belgium – Netherlands

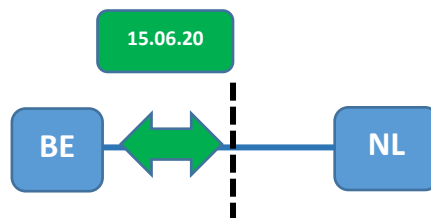
On 20.03.20, Belgium forbade all entry to the country without an essential reason. Border checks were put in place and there had to be a justification for crossing the border. Belgium also introduced a ban on non-essential inbound and outbound travel, as of 18 March 2020. No list of authorised border crossing points were received by the Commission. Exceptions applied, such as with regard to Belgian citizens returning from abroad, cross-border workers (who are advised to carry a certificate from their employer), health staff, and people involved in the transportation of goods.

"On 18 March 2020, Belgium imposed a ban on all non-essential travel to other countries, including the Netherlands. The Belgian authorities are carrying out border checks and several border crossings have been closed. A special vignette has been introduced in order to prevent key workers being held up at border checks. It is the result of consultations

between Dutch justice and security minister Ferd Grapperhaus, Dutch interior minister Raymond Knops, and Belgian interior and security minister Pieter De Crem²⁰



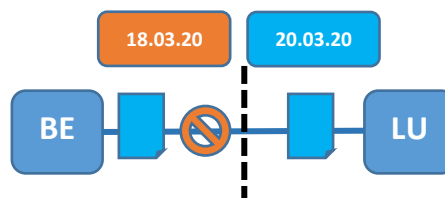
Belgium reopened its borders with the Netherlands on 15 June 2020. However, the decision taken by Belgian authorities at the beginning of June to allow people to cross the border with neighbouring countries to visit their loved ones created confusion at the Dutch border.



11. Belgium – Luxembourg

On 20 March 2020, Belgium forbade all entry to the country without an essential reason. Border checks were put in place and there had to be a justification for crossing the border. Belgium also introduced a ban on non-essential inbound and outbound travel, as of 18 March 2020. No list of authorised border crossing points were received by the Commission. Exceptions applied, such as with regard to Belgian citizens returning from abroad, cross-border workers (who are advised to carry a certificate from their employer), health staff, and people involved in the transportation of goods.

On 20 March 2020, the Luxembourg Government also issued a certificate to facilitate the crossing of the border by Luxembourg workers residing in Belgium, France or Germany. On presentation of this certificate, these workers were exempted from the restrictions on border crossings.



²⁰ <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2020/03/22/cross-border-commuters-working-in-crucial-sectors-can-get-vignette-to-pass-belgian-border-with-priority>

Certificates for cross-border workers to prove the necessity to commute to Luxembourg from Belgium and to Belgium from abroad

Certificat prouvant la nécessité de traverser la frontière pour les travailleurs frontaliers résidant en Belgique

Ce formulaire, établi par le gouvernement luxembourgeois, est fourni à l'employeur pour attester la relation de travail avec le salarié. Ce certificat sert de preuve de la nécessité de franchir la frontière entre la Belgique et le Luxembourg dans le cadre de la situation COVID-19.

Données concernant l'employeur

Nom de la société:
(raison sociale)

Nom du représentant: Prénom:

Rue: Numéro:

Code postal: Localité:

Téléphone:

Données concernant le salarié

Nom du salarié: Prénom:

Numéro d'identification national:

Rue: Numéro:

Code postal: Localité:

Nationalité: Pays:

Lieu: Date: Lieu: Date:

(Signature du salarié) (Signature et cachet de l'employeur)

Il est confirmé que la présente déclaration est complète et exacte. L'employeur soussigné déclare par la présente que le salarié susmentionné est employé chez lui. Conformément aux dispositions légales en matière de la protection des données, les soussignés sont informés que les réponses données dans ce formulaire ne peuvent être utilisées que comme preuve de la nécessité de franchir la frontière.

Certificate proving the need to cross the border

This form, drawn up by the Belgian government, is provided to the employer to certify the employment relationship with the employee. This certificate serves as proof of the need to cross the border in the COVID-19 situation.

Employer's data

Company name (business name)	
Surname of the representative	First name
Street	Number
Postcode	City
Phone number	

Employee's data

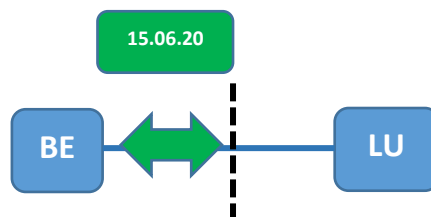
Surname of the employee	First name
National identification number	
Street	Number
Postcode	City
Nationality	Country

Place	Date (dd-mm-yyyy)	Place	Date (dd-mm-yyyy)
(Employee's signature)		(Employer's signature and stamp)	

It is confirmed that this declaration is complete and accurate. The undersigned employer hereby declares that the above-mentioned employee is employed by him/her. In accordance with the legal provisions on data protection, the undersigned are hereby informed that the answers given in this form may only be used as proof of the need to cross the border.

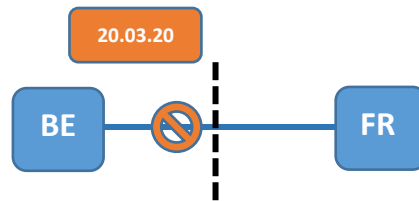
Source: Government of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Federal Public Service (Belgium)

Belgium reopened its borders with Luxembourg on 15 June 2020. Luxembourg never closed its borders but its neighbours (including Belgium) maintained controls on their borders until 15 June 2020.



12. Belgium – France

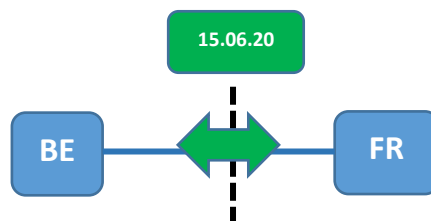
On 20 March 2020, Belgium forbade all entry to the country without an essential reason. Border checks were put in place and there had to be justification for crossing the border. No list of authorised border crossing points were received by the Commission. Exceptions applied, such as with regard to Belgian citizens returning from abroad, cross-border workers (who were advised to carry a certificate from their employer), health staff, and people involved in the transportation of goods.



Sticker allowing to cross the border for certain type of workers



Belgium reopened its border with France on 15 June 2020 in coordination with France. However, the decision taken by Belgian authorities at the beginning of June to allow people to cross the border with neighbouring countries to visit their loved ones created confusion at the French border.



Invitation to the symbolic re-opening of the French-Belgian border on 15 June 2020



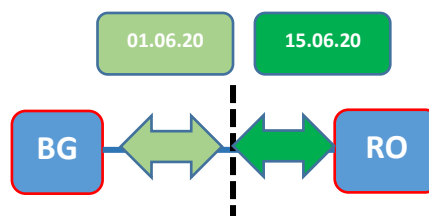
Source: Town of Florenville (Belgium)

13. Bulgaria – Romania

Romania passed a military ordinance applied on 22 March 2020. Among the new measures, there was a measure banning the entrance of foreign citizens and stateless people on Romania's territory due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



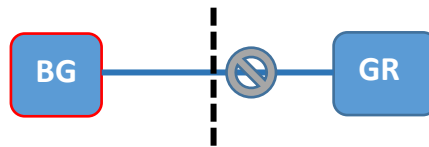
Bulgaria opened borders on 1 June 2020 to E.U. and U.K. visitors, as well as to medical workers and family members of Bulgarian citizens, as listed on the government website. All arrivals had to self-isolate for 14 days. Romania reopened its border on 15 June 2020 to some countries exempted from quarantine or isolation measures, among them Bulgaria²¹.



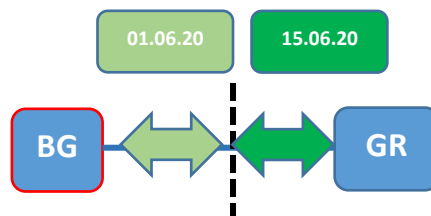
²¹ <http://www.cnsctb.ro/index.php/liste-zone-afectate-covid-19/1798-lista-zonelor-afectate-valabila-de-la-15-06-2020/file>

14. Bulgaria – Greece

This border is an external border of the Schengen area. Controls were already active before the pandemic.

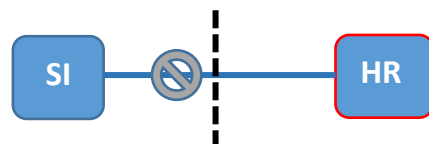


Bulgaria opened borders on 1 June 2020 to E.U. and U.K. visitors, as well as to medical workers and family members of Bulgarian citizens, as listed on the government website. All arrivals must self-isolate for 14 days. Greece reopened its border on 15 June 2020 to several countries among them Bulgaria.

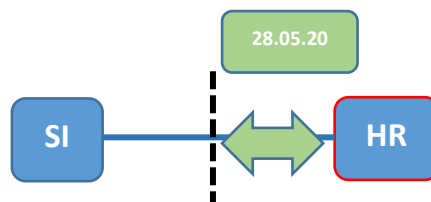


15. Croatia - Slovenia

This border is an external border of the Schengen Area and is already controlled. In addition, a fence has been erected by Slovenia on these border since the migration crisis of 2015. Entry into Croatia was forbidden to all travellers, except for Croatian citizens working abroad (self-isolation), citizens of the EU and EU-resident third-country nationals returning home (subject to advance consent)²².



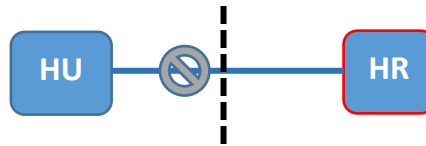
Croatia opened its borders to Slovenia and other member states on 28 May 2020 with no restriction.



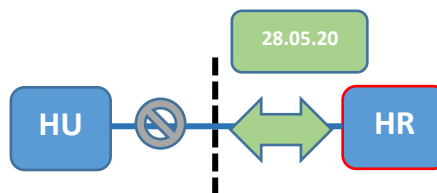
²² <https://www.gov.si/en/news/2020-04-14-crossing-the-state-border-during-the-coronavirus-epidemic-40860/>

16.Croatia - Hungary

These border is an external border of the Schengen Area and is already controlled. In addition, a fence has been erected by Hungary on these border since the migration crisis of 2015.

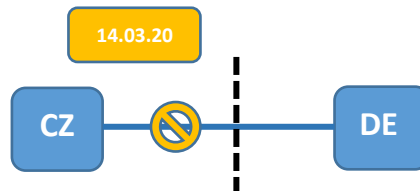


Croatia opened its borders to Hungary and other member states on 28 May 2020 with no restriction.

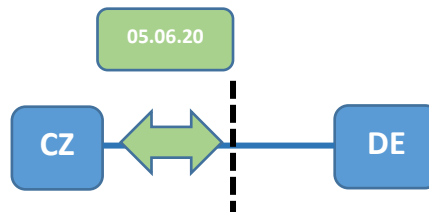


17.Czech Republic-Germany

On 14 March 2020, the Czech Republic notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its land border with Germany. Germany did not notify the Commission on reintroducing border controls at its land border with Czech Republic.

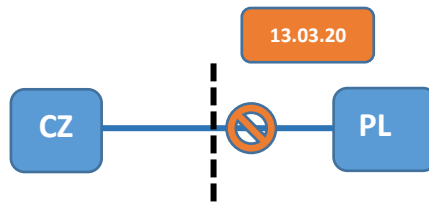


Czech Republic reopened its borders with Germany on 5 June 2020.

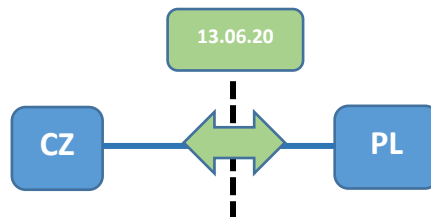


18.Czech Republic-Poland

On 13 March 2020, Poland decided to close some of its border crossings with the Czech Republic. However, border could be crossed in 15 designated border crossings (road, rail and pedestrian crossings). The Czech government did not notify the Commission on a border closure with Poland.

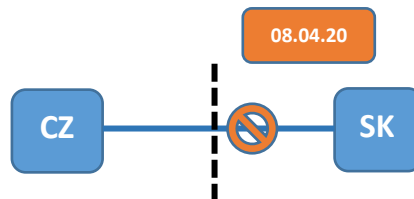


The Czech Republic reopened its border with Poland on 13 June 2020. Poland decided to put to an end to the temporary border controls at the internal borders of the European Union, as well as the mandatory quarantine, on 13 June 2020²³.



19.Czech Republic-Slovakia

On 8 April 2020, Slovakia's Council of Ministers decided to reintroduce border controls with neighboring countries among them the Czech Republic.



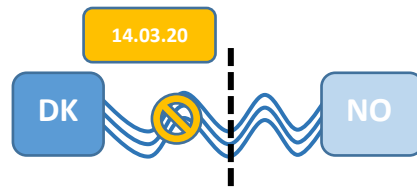
The Czech Republic reopened its borders with Slovakia with restriction on 27 March 2020. Slovakia removed border controls with the Czech Republic on 3 June 2020.



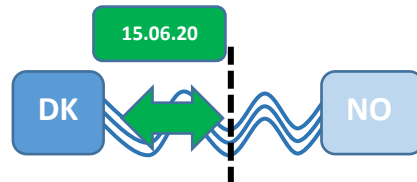
20.Denmark-Norway

Denmark maintained controls at its borders introduced on 12 November 2019 (for foreseeable events). Since 14 March 2020, most of the ferry routes from Denmark to Norway were closed.

²³ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/poland-reopens-its-borders-on-june-13/>

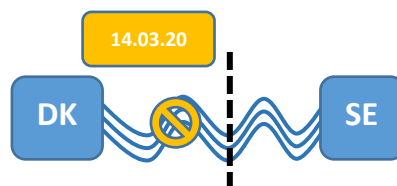


Denmark reopened its border with Norway on 15 June 2020.

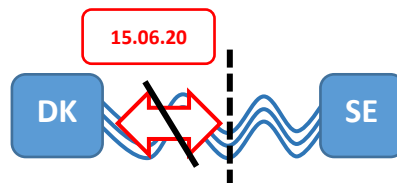


21. Denmark-Sweden

From 14 March 2020, the Øresund Bridge continued to be open for freight traffic, trips to Sweden, and with stricter entry rules from Sweden to Denmark. People who wished to travel to Denmark could expect to be rejected at the Danish border, if they did not have a valid reason, such as living or working in Denmark, or delivering goods to Denmark. Danish citizens could enter Denmark, according to the authorities.

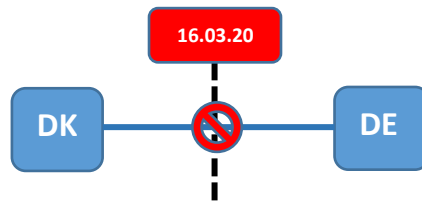


Denmark reopened its borders with Germany and Norway on 15 June 2020 but left the border closed with Sweden.

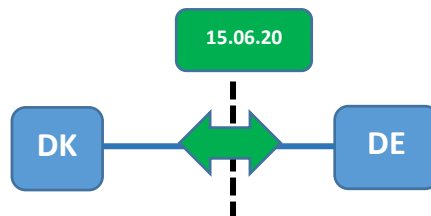


22. Denmark-Germany

From 16 March 2020, Germany introduced border controls with Denmark to slow coronavirus spread. Germany said the closure was being coordinated with the new Danish border controls²⁴.

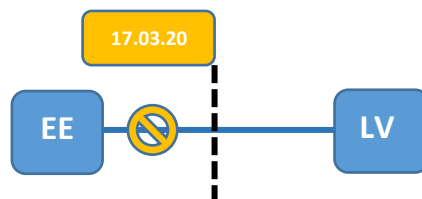


Denmark reopened its border in coordination with Germany on 15 June 2020.

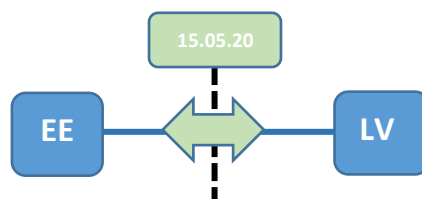


23. Estonia-Latvia

Estonia notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders from 17 March 2020. Latvia did not notify the Commission on reintroducing at its border with Estonia. Information published by the authorities in Estonia on 21 March 2020 specified that under certain circumstances Latvian and Estonian residents could cross the border between the two countries for work purposes. The cross border workers of Estonia and Latvia could go to work and return home without having to stay at home for 14 days. From 21 March 2020, all residents of Estonia and Latvia could cross the border between the two countries to commute between their place of work and home.



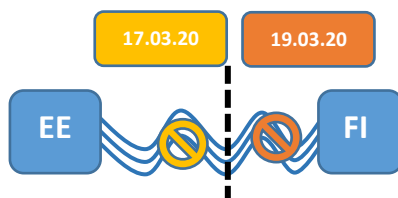
Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania re-opened borders to each other from 15 May 2020.



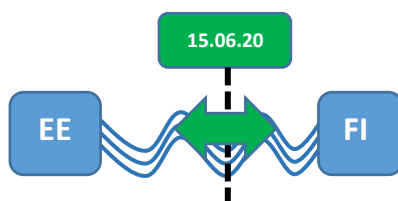
²⁴ <https://www.thelocal.dk/20200316/germany-is-closing-border-with-denmark-on-monday>

24. Estonia-Finland

Estonia notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its internal borders from 17 March 2020. From 19 March 2020, Finland only granted entry to Finnish citizens and those with a registered right of residence in Finland. All others, including Estonians who went to Finland to work but were not in this category, were not allowed into the country. Finland was closed to passenger ferries from Estonia from 11 April 2020. Exemptions include truck drivers conveying essential goods, essential service providers and the diplomatic corps.

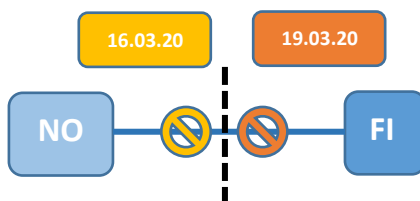


The border between Estonia and Finland reopened on 15 June 2020.

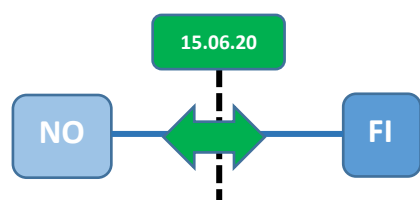


25. Finland-Norway

Norway notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 16 March 2020. Finland did it from 19 March 2020.



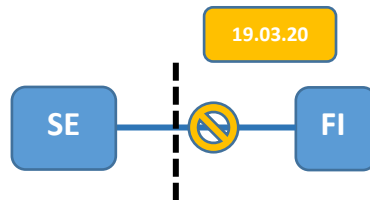
Finland reopened its borders with Norway on 15 June 2020²⁵.



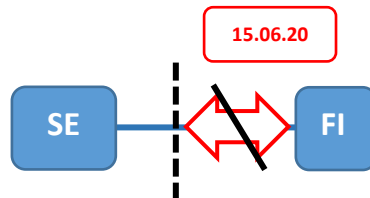
²⁵ <https://www.foreigner.fi/articulo/tourism/norway-to-open-its-border-to-tourists-from-finland/20200612161945006429.html>

26. Finland-Sweden

Norway notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all internal borders from 19 March 2020. Sweden did not reintroduce controls at its land border with Finland.

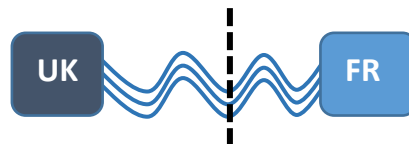


On 15 June 2020, Finland closed the border with Sweden until 18 August 2020.

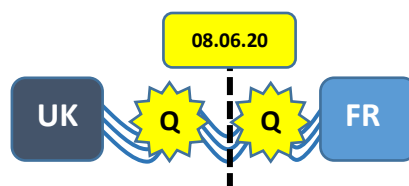


27. France-United Kingdom

The decision to close the borders with non-EU countries did not affect United Kingdom.

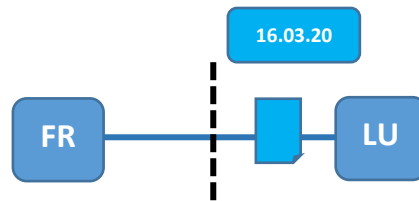


From 8 June, Anyone arriving in the UK from overseas must observe a 14-day quarantine. Travellers from the UK travelling to France will have to a quarantine by reciprocity.




28. France-Luxembourg

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg did not close its borders, however a certificate proving the need to cross the border for cross-border workers residing in France was required from 16 March 2020. Crossing the France-Luxembourg border was not forbidden to non-frontier workers, but police in both countries gave priority to the flow of working cross-border commuters.



Certificates for cross-border workers to prove the necessity to commute between France and Luxembourg

 LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

**Certificat prouvant la nécessité de traverser la frontière
pour les travailleurs frontaliers résidant en France**

Ce formulaire, établi par le gouvernement luxembourgeois, est fourni à l'employeur pour attester la relation de travail avec le salarié. Ce certificat sert de preuve de la nécessité de franchir la frontière entre la France et le Luxembourg dans le cadre de la situation COVID-19.

Données concernant l'employeur

Nom de la société:
(raison sociale)

Nom du représentant: Prénom:

Rue: Numéro:

Code postal: Localité:

Téléphone:

Données concernant le salarié

Nom du salarié: Prénom:

Numéro d'identification national:

Rue: Numéro:

Code postal: Localité:

Nationalité: Pays:

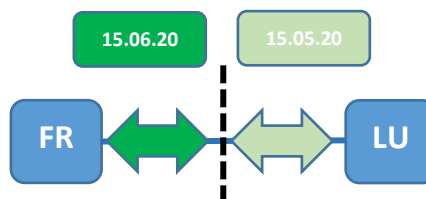
Lieu: Date: Lieu: Date:

(Signature du salarié) (Signature et cachet de l'employeur)

Il est confirmé que la présente déclaration est complète et exacte. L'employeur soussigné déclare par la présente que le salarié susmentionné est employé chez lui. Conformément aux dispositions légales en matière de la protection des données, les soussignés sont informés que les réponses données dans ce formulaire ne peuvent être utilisées que comme preuve de la nécessité de franchir la frontière.

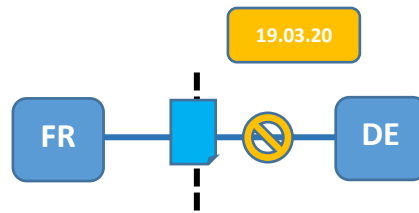
Source: Government of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Luxembourg was the first country to re-open Schengen and lift border controls starting by 15 May 2020. But France maintained restrictions and border controls until 15 June 2020.





29. France-Germany

Germany notified the Commission on 16 March 2020 of the reintroduction of controls at its land borders with France. Border controls were introduced on 19 March 2020. The two States declared that the French and German controls did not constitute a closure of the common border. Their objective was to limit unnecessary exchanges between both countries in order to limit the spread of the virus. Whatever the case, it will be allowed to cross the border at the various land crossing points: cross-border workers living on both sides of the border and freight carriers. A certificate for cross-border commuters was asked by German authorities. From 2 June, a single Franco-German border-crossing certificate in a bilingual version was put online on the websites of the French and German Ministries of the Interior.



Franco-German border-crossing certificate

 **Bundespolizei**  **Autodéclaration**

(à produire au moment du passage de la frontière terrestre)

L'usage de ce document est strictement réservé aux frontaliers résidant dans les départements du Bas-Rhin, du Haut-Rhin et de Moselle et dans les Länder du Baden-Württemberg, de Rhénanie-Palatinat et de Sarre.

Je soussigné(e)

Nom, prénom : _____

Né(e) le : _____

Nationalité : _____

Demeurant : _____

certifie que mon déplacement relève du motif valable suivant (cochez la case, s. v. p.) :

☐ Motifs professionnels

☐ Motifs familiaux

☐ Motifs médicaux

☐ Motifs liés à l'école/à la formation/aux études

À cet égard, j'ai compris les détails des motifs valables en vertu du droit national, dont la présentation des justificatifs de ces motifs est obligatoire.

Pour les motifs susmentionnés, je rendrai visite aux personnes ou me rendrai dans les établissements suivants :

Nom, prénom / établissement : _____

Adresse : _____

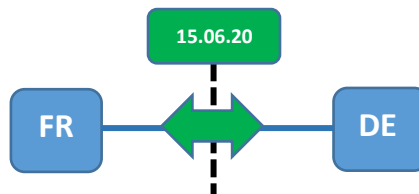
Numéro de téléphone : _____

Par la présente, je déclare que je respecterai les réglementations sanitaires nationales (p. ex. respect de la distance minimale/mesures de protection lors du contact avec d'autres personnes). Je certifie avoir fait toutes les déclarations ci-dessus en âme et conscience et qu'elles sont exactes et complètes. Je suis conscient(e) du fait qu'une utilisation abusive peut être sanctionnée conformément au droit national.

Lieu, date : _____ Signature : _____

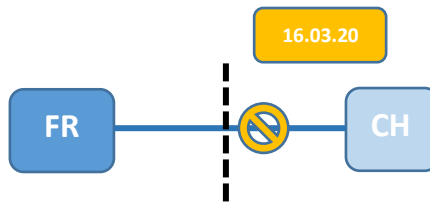
Source: French Ministry of the Interior

The Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly met on 28 May 2020 and have announced a complete reopening of the border on 15 June 2020.

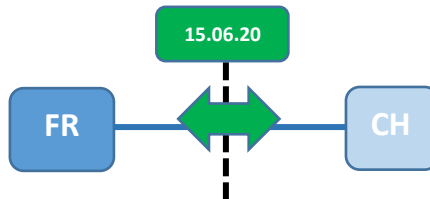


30. France-Switzerland

On 16 March 2020, Switzerland introduced restrictions on access to its territory from France. Around ten border posts were maintained out of 60. Various categories of persons are still allowed to travel to Switzerland: carers and health personnel in general, rescue services, persons working in Switzerland with a "registration certificate" (equivalent to a work permit in France), persons residing in the Swiss Confederation, etc.

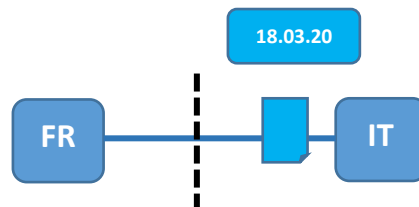


France reopened its border with Switzerland on 15 June 2020 with the maintenance of certain controls on the Swiss side.

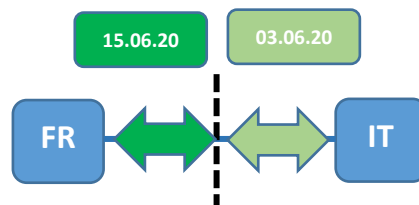


31. France-Italy

In Italy, there were no restrictions on crossing the border, but movement was restricted throughout the territory, except for proven professional reasons or basic necessities. Random checks were carried out at the border. A self-declaration had to be presented to law enforcement authorities in the event of a check, in order to justify entry into Italian territory. In Italy, there were no restrictions on crossing the border, but movement was restricted throughout the territory, except for proven professional reasons or basic necessities.

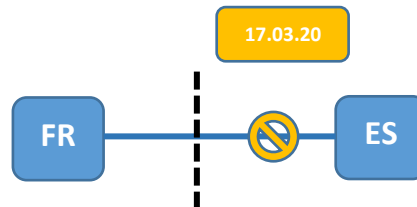


Italy reopened its border with France from 3 June 2020 but France maintained controls with Italy until 15 June 2020. Before 15 June 2020, Italians could not stay in France without a valid, compelling or professional reason. Since 15 June, it is possible to circulate in both directions.

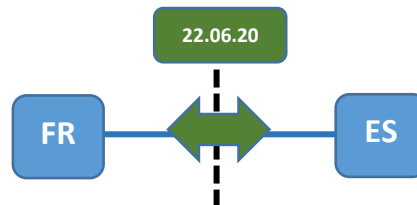


32. France-Spain

Spain introduced border controls from 17 March 2020 within the framework of the state of emergency. Only Spanish citizens, foreigners residing in Spain and frontier workers were allowed to enter. French nationals who officially resided in Spain could leave and re-enter Spanish territory on the same basis as Spanish citizens. However, in order to enforce the lockdown, several communes in the French Cerdagne decided to close their border with Spain. Concrete blocks were installed on the roads²⁶.

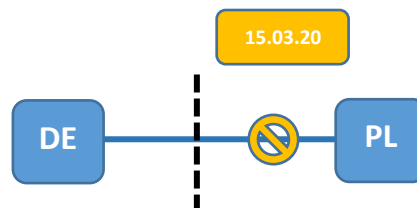


Spain and France maintained their border closed until 22 June 2020.



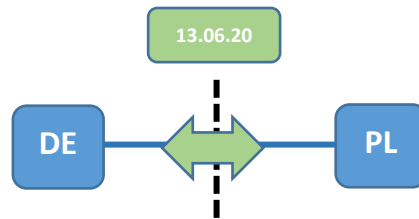
33. Germany-Poland

Poland introduced controls on its border with Germany on 15 March 2020. Controls of the temperature of travellers were made by Polish authorities at four points of the DE-PL border provoking very heavy traffic jams. Borders with Germany could be crossed in 15 designated border crossings (road, rail and pedestrian crossings). Germany did not notify the Commission on reintroducing border controls with Poland.



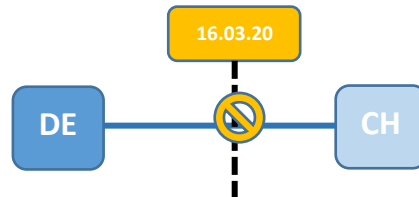
The border between Germany and Poland reopened on 13 June 2020.

²⁶ <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/international/coronavirus-les-maires-de-cerdagne-ferment-plusieurs-routes-frontiere-avec-des-blocs-de-beton-1586444915>

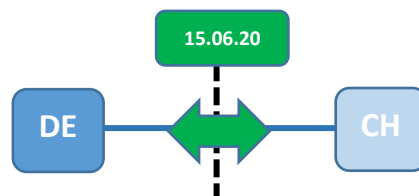


34. Germany-Switzerland

Germany and Switzerland introduced controls on their border on 16 March 2020.

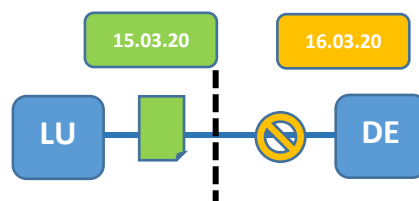


Germany lifted controls reintroduced on the basis of coronavirus at the borders with Switzerland from 15 June 2020.



35. Germany-Luxembourg

Germany introduced border controls with Luxembourg on 16 March 2020 but Luxembourg did not introduce border controls with Germany. The German Federal Police issued a uniform certificate for commuters. This certificate was valid from 16 March 2020, but the form provided by the Luxembourg government on 15 March 2020 remained valid and continued to be accepted by the German Federal Police. Luxembourg never closed its borders but its neighbours (including Germany) maintained controls on their borders until 15 June 2020.



Certificates for cross-border workers to prove the necessity to commute between Germany and Luxembourg

Bescheinigung für Berufspendler

Hiermit wird bescheinigt, dass die aufgeführte Person zwischen Wohnung und Arbeitsstätte über die deutsche Bundesgrenze pendeln muss.

Wohnung
 Staat: _____ PLZ, Ort: _____

Arbeitsstätte
 Staat: _____ PLZ, Ort: _____


Angaben zum Pendler
 Name: _____ Vorname: _____
 Geburtsdatum: _____ Staatsangehörigkeit: _____

Firmenbezeichnung: _____
 Vertreten durch: _____ (Name, Vorname, Telefon)

Ich versichere, dass ich die vorstehenden Angaben nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen gemacht habe und dass sie richtig und vollständig sind. Mir ist bewusst, dass eine missbräuchliche Verwendung als unbefugter Grenzübertritt sanktioniert werden kann.

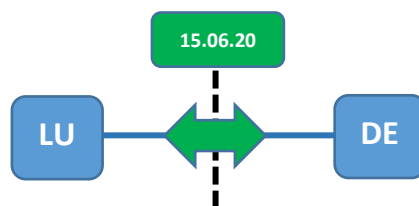
Datum, Unterschrift und Firmenstempel

Die Pendlerkarte kann zur Beschleunigung der Kontrolle in die Windschutzscheibe gelegt werden. Diese Bescheinigung ist mitzuführen und auf Verlangen vorzuweisen. Die Pflicht zum Vorlegen eines gültigen Passes oder Passersatzes und ggf. eines gültigen Aufenthaltstitels bleibt unberührt.



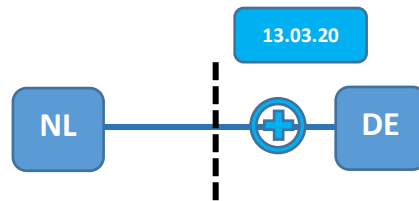
Source: Government of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

As of 15 June 2020, on the border Germany-Luxembourg, it was no longer necessary to carry any kind of attestation or certificate to cross the border.

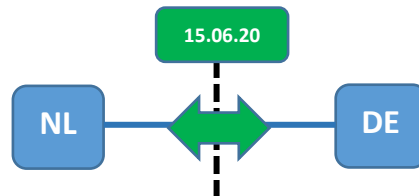


36. Germany-Netherlands

The Netherlands did not introduce border controls with Germany. Germany did not officially introduce border controls with the Netherlands but some health checks were led from 13 March 2020.

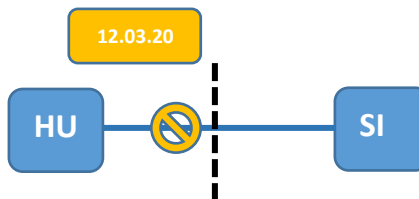


From 15 June 2020, health checks were removed for travellers from the Netherlands going to Germany.

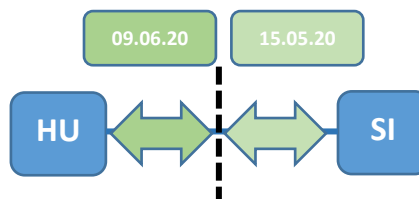


37. Hungary-Slovenia

Hungary introduced control on its border with Slovenia on 12 March 2020. The measure was effective on 17 March 2020. Slovenia did not notify the Commission on reintroducing controls at its border with Hungary.



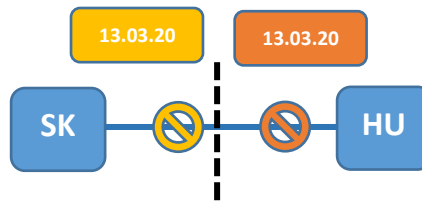
Slovenia reopened its border with Hungary on 15 May 2020 declaring an end to its coronavirus epidemic. Hungary abolished all border checks at their part of the border with Slovenia on 9 June 2020²⁷.



38. Hungary-Slovakia

Slovakia introduced border controls with Hungary on 13 March 2020. However, the Slovak government notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at all its borders on 8 April 2020. Hungary notified the Commission on 22 March 2020 on reintroducing controls on the Slovakian border.

²⁷ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-abolishes-border-controls-at-its-internal-schengen-borders/>

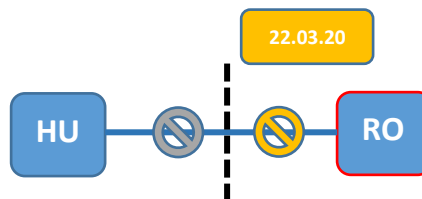


Slovakia removed border restrictions with Hungary on 5 June 2020. Hungary abolished all border checks at their part of the border with Slovakia on 9 June 2020²⁸.

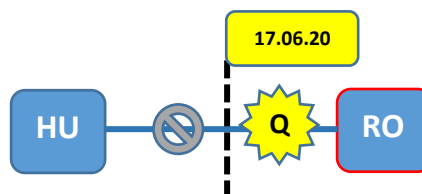


39. Hungary-Romania

The HU-RO border is an external border of the Schengen Area and was already controlled on the Hungarian side. Romania passed a military ordinance applied on 22 March 2020. Among the new measures, there is the one banning the entrance of foreign citizens and stateless people on Romania's territory due to the Coronavirus epidemic.



From 17 June 2020, the Romanian Authorities extended the state of alert by another 30 days. Each week, the National Institute of Public Health publishes a "Green zone" and "Yellow zone" list. All persons coming to Romania from countries not included in the "Green zone" (including Hungary) were subject to 14 days quarantine.



40. Ireland – United Kingdom

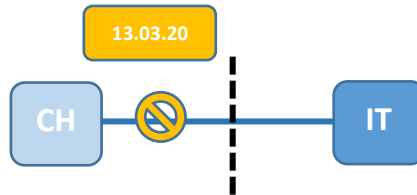
Ireland is a MS of the EU but not a Schengen country. Ireland imposed a mandatory 14-day quarantine for all persons entering the country, except for people coming from Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) and staff working in supply chain services.

²⁸ <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-abolishes-border-controls-at-its-internal-schengen-borders/>



41. Italy-Switzerland

Switzerland notified the Commission on 13 March 2020 on reintroducing land border controls with Italy. Switzerland partially closed the border with Italy. Italy did not notify the Commission on reintroducing controls at its internal land borders.

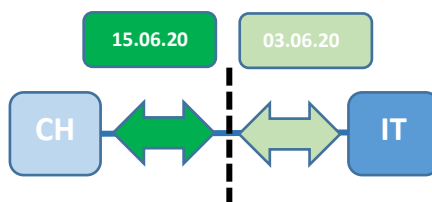


Self-declaration justifying the movement in case of entry into Italy from abroad

<p align="center"><u>AUTODICHIARAZIONE GIUSTIFICATIVA DELLO SPOSTAMENTO</u></p> <p align="center"><u>IN CASO DI ENTRATA IN ITALIA DALL'ESTERO</u></p> <p align="center"><u>(da consegnare al vettore in caso di utilizzo di mezzo pubblico di trasporto)</u></p> <p>Il/la sottoscritto/a _____, nato/a il ____/____/____ a _____ (____), cittadinanza _____, residente a _____ (____), via _____, consapevole delle sanzioni penali previste in caso di dichiarazioni mendaci e di formazione o uso di atti falsi, nonché delle sanzioni previste dall'articolo 4 del decreto-legge 25 marzo 2020, n. 19</p> <p align="center">DICHIARA SOTTO LA PROPRIA RESPONSABILITÀ</p> <p>1) di essere a conoscenza delle misure di contenimento del contagio da Covid-19 vigenti in Italia e, in particolare, delle prescrizioni contenute nel decreto del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri 17 maggio 2020;</p> <p>2) di non essere sottoposto alla misura della quarantena e di non essere risultato positivo al Covid-19;</p> <p>3) di entrare in Italia dalla seguente località estera _____, tramite il seguente mezzo di trasporto (in caso di mezzo privato indicare tipo di veicolo e targa; in caso di mezzo pubblico estremi del volo / corsa ferroviaria o stradale / tratta marittima): _____</p> <p>4) il/la sottoscritto/a si trova in una delle seguenti condizioni (indicare una opzione):</p> <p>A) equipaggio dei mezzi di trasporto;</p> <p>B) personale viaggiante;</p> <p>C) cittadini e residenti nell'Unione Europea, negli Stati parte dell'accordo di Schengen, in Andorra, Principato di Monaco, Repubblica di San Marino, Stato della Città del Vaticano e nel Regno Unito di Gran Bretagna e Irlanda del nord che fanno ingresso in Italia per comprovati motivi di lavoro;</p> <p>D) personale sanitario in ingresso in Italia per l'esercizio di qualifiche professionali sanitarie, incluso l'esercizio temporaneo di cui all'art. 13 del decreto-legge 17 marzo 2020, n. 18;</p> <p>E) lavoratori transfrontalieri in ingresso e in uscita dal territorio nazionale per comprovati motivi di lavoro e per il conseguente rientro nella propria residenza, abitazione o dimora;</p> <p>F) personale di imprese aventi sede legale o secondaria in Italia per spostamenti all'estero per comprovate esigenze lavorative di durata non superiore a 120 ore;</p>
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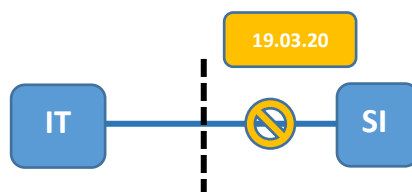
Source: Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Italy)

Italy reopened its borders on 3 June 2020 for all Schengen area and European Union national but its neighbours (including Switzerland) maintained controls on their borders until 15 June 2020.

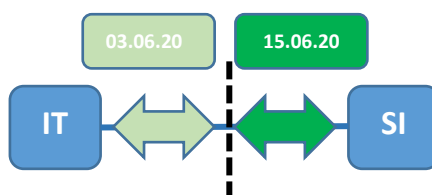


42. Italy-Slovenia

On 19 March 2020, Slovenia did not close its border with Italy but had to impose health checks of passengers to contain the spread of the coronavirus. No restrictions for Slovenian citizens. Non-Slovenian nationals and persons without permanent or temporary residence in Slovenia had to be subject to health checks of passengers crossing the border. Persons crossing the border were required to submit certificates issued by a competent authority and indicating that they tested negative for the coronavirus. Freight transport was not subject to border checks.

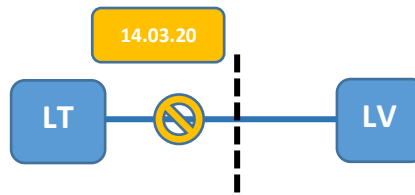


Italy reopened its borders on 3 June 2020 for all Schengen area and European Union national but its neighbours (including Slovenia) maintained controls on their borders until 15 June 2020 or 16. At the border with Slovenia, Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia) celebrated on 15 June 2020 the dismantling of the barrier that separated them.



43. Lithuania-Latvia

Lithuania notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its border with Latvia from 14 March 2020. Some health checks were led by Lithuanian military personnel at the border.

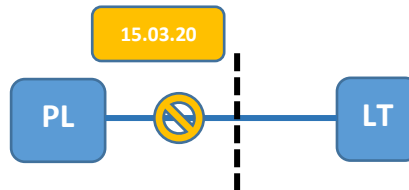


Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia re-opened their borders to each other from 15 May 2020.

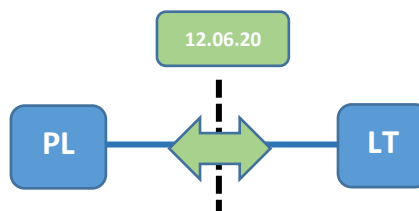


44.Lithuania-Poland

Poland notified the Commission on reintroducing controls at its border with Lithuania from 15 March 2020. Thousands of trucks were stuck in a traffic jam at the border between Lithuania and Poland after Polish health authorities were ordered to test every driver for coronavirus symptoms. Border with Lithuania could be crossed in 2 designated border crossings (road, rail and pedestrian crossings). Heavy traffic congestion was reported at this border.



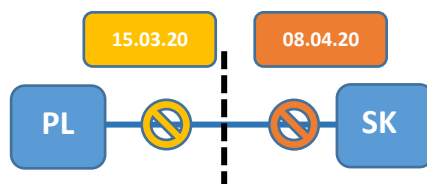
The border between Lithuania and Poland reopened on 12 June 2020.



45.Poland-Slovakia

On 15 March 2020, Poland decided to reintroduce land border controls with Slovakia but Polish citizens were still allowed to enter Slovakia at border crossings with Poland. Many Poles work in Slovak factories and mines or go on skiing vacations in the Slovak part of the Tatra Mountains. Border with Slovakia could be crossed in 5 designated border crossings (road, rail and pedestrian crossings). Even after 13 March 2020, Polish citizens were still allowed to enter Slovakia at border crossings with Poland. Many Poles work in

Slovak factories and mines or go on skiing vacations in the Slovak part of the Tatra Mountains. But Slovakia introduced border controls with Poland after 8 April 2020.

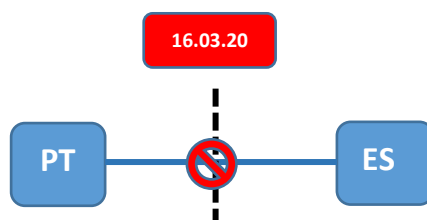


Poland decided to put to an end to the temporary border controls at the internal borders of the European Union, as well as the mandatory quarantine, on 13 June 2020²⁹.

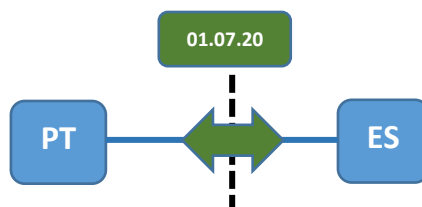


46. Portugal-Spain

On 16 March 2020, Portuguese prime minister announced the closure of the border with Spain for tourism and leisure activities after concertation with the Spanish prime minister. Spain introduced border controls with Portugal from 17 March 2020 within the framework of the state of emergency.



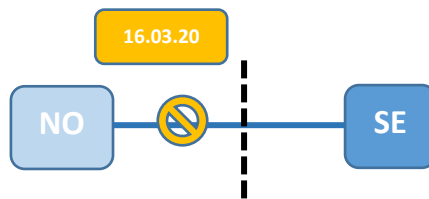
Spain reopened its border with France on 22 June 2020 but left its border with Portugal closed until 1 July 2020.



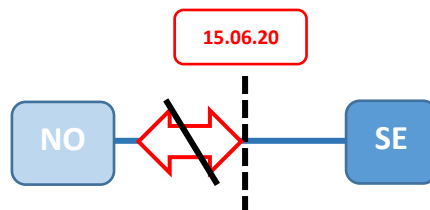
²⁹ <https://www.schengenvisa.info/news/poland-reopens-its-borders-on-june-13/>

47. Sweden-Norway

On 16 March 2020, the Government of Norway introduced border controls at its border with Sweden.



Sweden never closed its borders but its neighbours (including Norway) maintained the controls on their borders. On 15 June 2020, Norway maintained restriction for visitors coming from Sweden (except from the island province of Gotland).



48. Liechtenstein-Switzerland

Switzerland introduced land border controls with its neighbouring countries from 13 March 2020 and 16 March 2020 except its borders with Liechtenstein.



II. CHAPTER 2:

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACTS OF THE BORDER-RELATED MEASURES ON CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIES AND COMMUNITIES

A. Introduction and methodology

The objective of this chapter is to outline and analyse in-depth the immediate impact of border-related measures on cross-border communities, illustrating these effects with a variety of example from different EU border regions.

More specifically, this chapter investigates the impact of these measures on six domains:

1. on cross-border mobility
2. on cross-border workers
3. on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)
4. on economic activities
5. on social and cultural activities
6. Citizens' acceptance of border-related measures

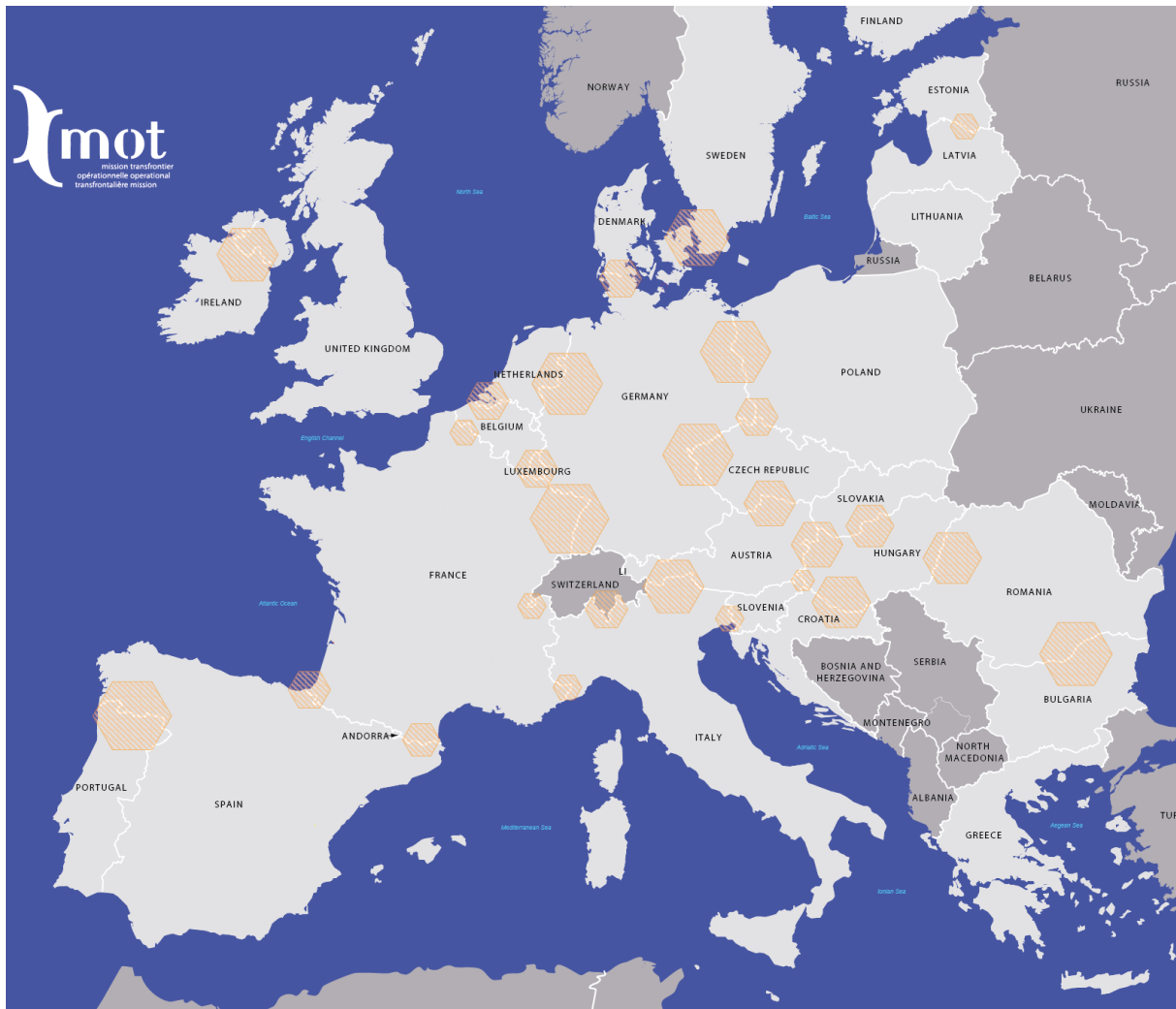
To successfully lead this assignment, 21 interviews corresponding to 20 EU borders were conducted between mid-July and August 2020. The list of interviewees can be found in the table below.

While selecting interviewees, different criteria were taken into account:

- Borders where diverging strategies to tackle the pandemic at national level had been taken (e.g. DK-SE)
- Border region where the pandemic hit hardest on one side than on the other, provoking hospital beds saturation (e.g. FR-DE)
- Borders around Northern Italy, epicentre of the pandemic in Europe, where neighbouring countries where the first to react (e.g. IT-CH; IT-AT; etc.)
- A diversity of stakeholders, corresponding not only to CB structures, but also transport companies, small border municipalities, emergency services, info points, etc.

N.	Border	Interviewee	Structure
1	CZ-AT	Siegfried Weinert	Austrian Red Cross
2	IE-UK	Anthony Soares	Centre for Cross-border studies
3	AT-IT	Matthias Fink	EGTC Euroregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino
4	IT-SI	Ivan Curzolo	EGTC GO
5	FR-ES	Arola Urdangarin	EGTC NAEN
6	BE-NL	Stuey Hamelink	Euregio Scheldemond
7	CZ-DE	Ruediger Kubsch	Euroregion Elbe-Labe
8	ES-PT	Xosé Lago	Euroregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal
9	DE-PL	Carsten Jacob	Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober
10	HU-RO	Tünde Kresz	Gate to Europe EGTC
11	NL-DE	Sonja Adamsky ; Linda Blom	GrenzInfoPunkt EUREGIO
12	HU-AT	Szilárd Kövesdi	GYESEVE director
13	RO-BG	Bogdan Musat	Joint Secretariat RoBg/ CBC (Calarasi, RO)
14	HU-SK	Vince Kis	Mayor of Rajka
15	HU	Ferenc Horváth	MMÖNK president
16	HR-HU	Dr. Ágota Nagyné	Mura Régió EGTC
17	SI-HU	Bálint Papp	Muraba EGTC
18	DK-SE	Sandra Forsén	ÖresundDirekt
19	IT-CH	Francesco Quattrini	Regio Insubrica
20	DE-DK	Peter Hansen	Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig
21	PL-CZ-DE	Hynek Böhm	Technical University of Liberec (CZ)

Additionally, regarding the case-studies along the French borders, the report is based on the paper published by MOT in June 2020, entitled "*La crise du Covid-19 aux frontières françaises*". This analysis is the result of a call for experiences issued to all of its members. More than 20 members of the MOT's network have voluntarily contributed by responding to a very detailed questionnaire.



1. Mapping of the cross-border case studies covered within this assignment

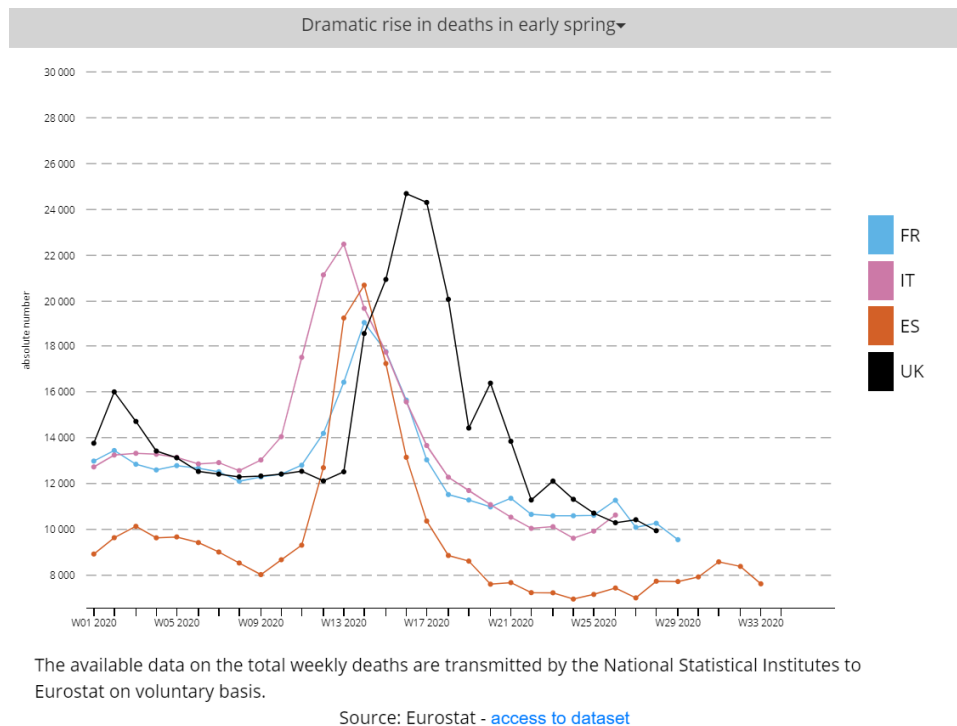
CONTEXT OF THE ASSIGNMENT

This report was written during August 2020, in a time when the coronavirus - despite a lower incidence compared to the spring- was still active in Europe. It is hard to predict if new border closures will occur in the weeks or months to come as a consequence of a possible 'second wave'. However, a first sign was sent by Hungary on August 28th,³⁰ when the member state announced a second border shutdown for all foreigners starting from the 1st September 2020.

The pandemic situation was very different in terms of incidence but also in terms of temporality depending on the region. According to Eurostat³¹, preliminary data from 24 European countries show that there were around 160 000 more deaths from March to May 2020 than the average number of deaths during the same period in 2016 to 2019.

³⁰ <https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-hungary-to-close-borders-starting-september-1/>

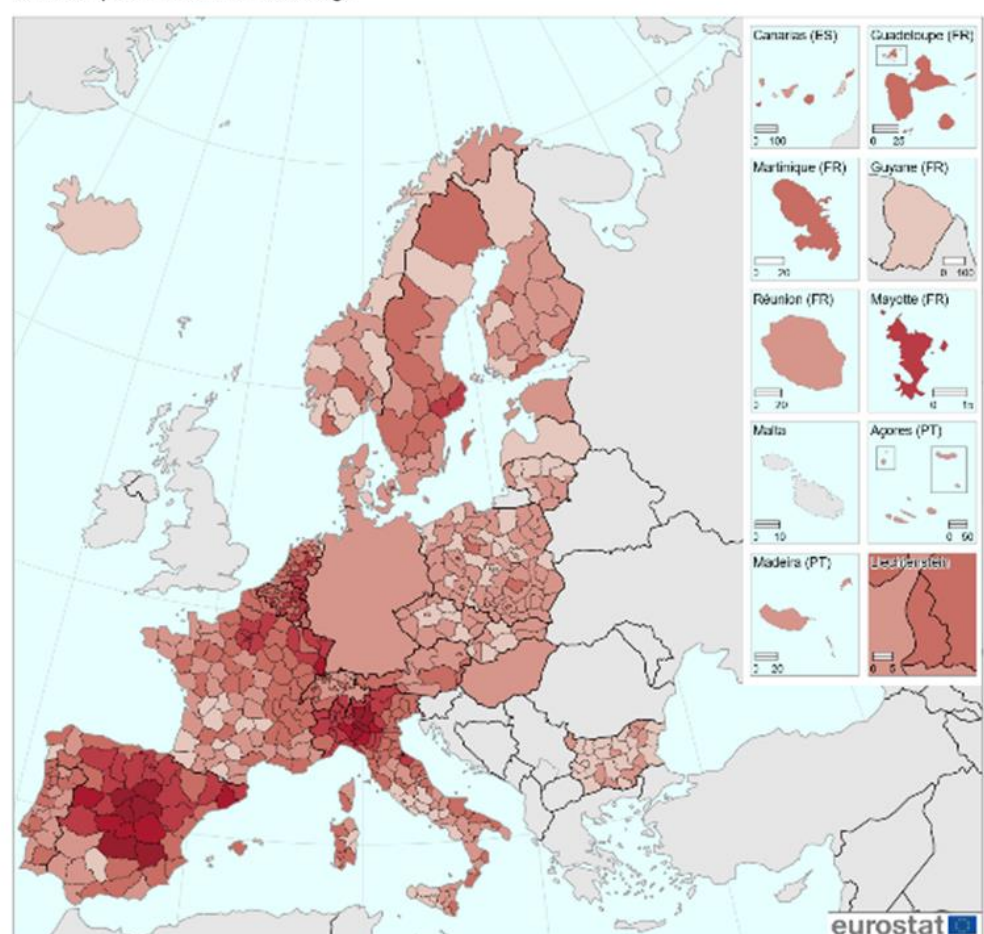
³¹ Weekly death statistics, Data extracted on 21 July 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Weekly_death_statistics&stable#Dramatic_rise_in_deaths_in_early_spring



2 Eurostat: Dramatic rise in deaths between mid-March and April in Italy, Spain, France and the UK.

Moreover, considerable differences could be noticed between European regions. In the Map below, the deaths in 2020 over weeks 10 to 19 are expressed in comparison with the same weeks in 2016-2019. Regional data (available at up to NUTS 3 level depending on the countries) show how in some areas in Europe, the increases in the number of deaths were especially significant. Some of the worst hit regions were: the north of Italy, the central zone of Spain around Madrid, the east of France and the region of Paris, several of the Belgian and Dutch regions.

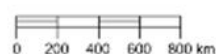
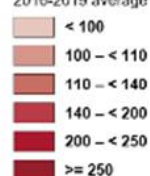
Deaths from week 10 to week 19
2020 compared to 2016-2019 average



Dataset online: [demo_r_mwk3_t](#)

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat
Cartography: Eurostat – IMAGE, 07/2020

2016-2019 average = 100



Week 10 to week 19 correspond to the period 2 March to 10 May 2020
Source: Eurostat

B. Impact on cross-border mobility

1. Cross-border road traffic: types of controls, reduced crossing points and their effects

Rapidly implemented border shutdowns and sudden decrease in border permeability

Most of the authorities which set up border controls took the decision very quickly, without assessing the future consequences for border areas. In some cross-border areas, barriers were installed overnight. In the following days and weeks, corrective measures were adopted, following a strong lobbying by local authorities, in order to remediate adverse effects.

- **HU-SI:** A few days after borders shutdowns, both countries gave clear feedback of the negative impact of this measure to which **solutions were quickly found to restore order**: borders were no longer closed for cross-border commuters, farmers and owners of property in the neighbouring country. They came to an agreement to leave the most important border crossing points open to passengers and to freight transport. **Governments acted rapidly and in an organised manner**: the restrictions for passenger traffic in Órség and freight transport in Lendava were quickly lifted.
- **IT-CH:** The Ticino canton is the only one located South of the Alps. The proximity with the Lombardia Region, the first to be hit extremely hard by the pandemic, meant the Ticino had a few weeks of 'advance' from the rest of the country (CH) regarding the spread of the virus. In the first period, Ticino took some very strict and pioneer measures, while the rest of Switzerland seemed to seize less the gravity of the situation to come. On the 11th of March, Ticino (CH) closed 9 minor crossing points among the 22 in total which are shared with Italy. The aim was to **concentrate the flows in order to better implement controls**. Controls were introduced on March the 13th. Unlike Austria, **no health checks were ever performed at the border between IT and CH**. On March the 16th 5 other minor crossing points were closed. 3 additional crossing points were closed on March 23rd leaving only 5 border points open, in total. The Regio Insubrica was in contact with Italian mayors as these gradual **border shutdowns generated car congestion issues**, especially between 6 and 8 in the morning. This dialogue allowed the gradual reopening of some of them.
- **ES-PT:** Border shutdowns were decided by the central governments of the two states, **leaving only eight border crossings between Spain and Portugal**, one of the longest border of the EU. Only after a while a ninth crossing was reopened.

In Galicia-Norte, the Valença-Tui International Bridge was left open, another in the Chaves-Verín Eurocity, one on the border closest to the coast and another on the inland border.

"On a map, this seems fair, but this section of the border is the busiest of all the Spanish-Portuguese border, and there are three EGTCs and four Eurocities, which gives an idea of the importance, permeability and interrelationship of these territories. These Eurocities were cut off, in many cases they are simply separated by a bridge and they were completely divided." (Xosé Lago, Euroregion Galicia-Norte de Portugal)

In addition, steps were being taken with very dubious criteria. For example, areas were being opened up that united two towns that had 400 inhabitants, while at the same time **some Eurocities with 30,000 inhabitants did not even have an open border crossing.**

On the Galicia-Norte border, there are more than 12 000 cross-border workers who cross every day and they had to make journeys of at least 50 km and in some cases 100 km or even more due to the border closure.

- **SI-IT:** In the EGTC GO, the beginning was quite traumatic: when Italy prohibited inter-regional movement, Slovenia did not receive any formal information as a neighbouring country. A complete lack of coordination was experienced when Italy declared the lockdown, Slovenian authorities got scared and **closed the secondary crossing point over night, sometimes by installing large rocks in the middle of the street.** Only two international crossings were left open (with controls): at the beginning, this situation became quite chaotic as many trucks found themselves stuck in congestion at the border (Slovenia is a transit countries between Eastern and Western Europe). After the first shock, border crossings started operating more smoothly and people who could prove they had work requirements on the other side were allowed to pass. Throughout the whole period, controls were always operated exclusively by the Slovenian authorities. Some farmers even found their fields split in two without the possibility to use their usual country road.
Another problem was linked to the fact that one of the crossing points corresponded to the highway, so **pedestrians (or cyclists) were not allowed to use it.** So people started requesting the reopening of an additional secondary crossing for pedestrians.

Most of the time, reduced border crossings caused longer journeys for commuters as well as increased traffic congestion:

- **PL-DE:** The unilateral decision of Poland caused many difficulties: in the first place, it generated traffic, which affected heavily the logistic field. Big **congestions** were experienced at the very beginning, as many Polish people wanted to return to Poland as long as it was possible. Long queues built up at border crossings and continued throughout the border closure – the situation resembled the 1990s when Poland was not yet part of the European Union and border controls were still active.

- **ES-FR:** the French Prefecture closed almost all the border crossings. Only 4 border crossings were still open in the NAEN Euroregion. This engendered **large congestion along these 4 crossings**, especially in Navarra, a region where CB citizenship is particularly developed. At open crossings there were **double controls** from Spanish and French authorities. Only CB workers and freight were allowed.
- **HU-SI:** At the **HU-SI** border, instead of the usual 30 km, some people had to travel 100 km to cross the border.
- **DE-CZ (Elbe-Labe):** Border controls were carried out only by Czech police, leading to the decision to open only 4 crossing points – while there are many more crossing points. Some were only for frontier workers, and some for all. The only critique that came up openly during this period was that frontier workers had to do long detours to cross the border. This is why the authorities ended up reopening some crossing points in order to ease the crossing for frontier workers. **Detours sometimes took over 1 hour and a half for trips that usually take about 5 minutes** – so this was a burden for frontier workers.
- **DK-DE:** Frontier workers were asked to present a certificate, which caused some congestions at the border crossing points, as out of **13 crossing points only 5 were kept open after the initial 3** at the beginning. This caused the formation of traffic in those areas where frontier workers crossed the border.

As for groups allowed to travel across the borders (employees and people with a reason to cross the border), there were many questions on exceptions: what is considered as a crucial job, what are accepted as good reasons). **Often media reported measures before these had been made legally binding, which created a lot of confusion and frustration in the population.**

During the summer 2020, the area was confronted with many problems linked to border controls, as for example traffic at crossing points, with **congestion causing up to 90 minutes waiting time** for frontier workers. This is affecting negatively the local population.

Border shutdowns: initially, only employees, deliverers/suppliers and crews of transport means were allowed to travel from Germany into Denmark. Exceptions were introduced for funerals, or family members with need for special care. However, families and friends who wanted to visit each other were not allowed to cross the border.

As measures were relaxed, it was possible to visit family members as well as citizens from the neighbouring German regions.

As for Germany, travel restrictions were introduced with the exception of “just cause”: for work, to visit family members which needed a proven certificate.



3. Closed border crossing between Denmark and Germany, late March, 2020. Photo credit: Pr. Martin Klatt, University of Southern Denmark

- **CH-FR:** As of the 17th of March, Switzerland introduced border controls and closed its borders to people from countries at risk, including France. However, there were **exceptions** for the following cases: persons of Swiss nationality, persons with a residence or work permit in Switzerland, a residence permit or a visa issued by the Swiss authorities, persons coming to Switzerland for professional reasons in the context of a self-employed activity, professionals transporting goods and possessing a delivery document attesting to this, persons wishing to pass through Switzerland on their way to another country, without staying in the country, persons in a situation of absolute necessity, etc. **Border controls caused peak traffic jams until 11 May, when the lifting of border controls in France began and systematic controls on the Swiss side of the border were lifted.**

Some rural or mountainous areas experienced less traffic congestion problems:

- **BE-NL:** In the territory of the Euregio Scheldemond border controls were carried out quickly, no congestions were created. However, this was the case in more densely populated border regions.
- **IT-AT:** No border congestion was recorded during the lockdown period.
- **HU-SI:** On the other side, reduced CB flows also engendered some positive reactions among the inhabitants of **small "transit" border towns and villages** such as in the case of some locals living at the HU-SI border, who were happy that the village became **quieter with less road traffic.**

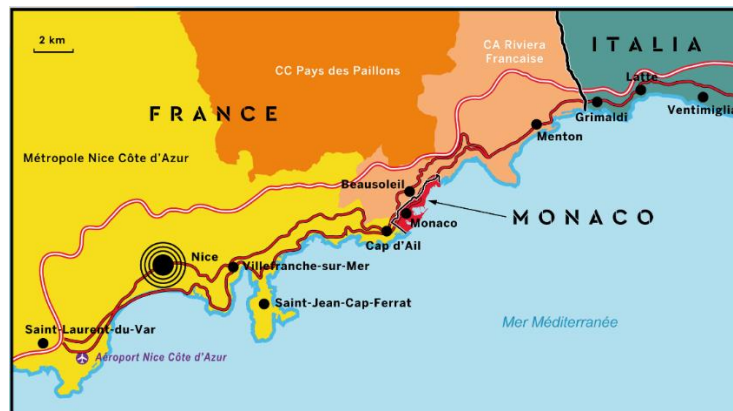
Type of border controls performed and restrictions applied:

Strict restrictions such as travel authorisations and certificates' controls applied along most of the EU borders. Depending on the border, the authorities decided to implement systematic or random checks:

- **FR-DE:** Germany closed its border with France on 16 March after the Grand Est Region was officially declared a "high-risk zone" by the Robert Koch Institute. The German authorities introduced various types of checks, which focused on the reason for entry into Germany. Border workers, although they were asked to stay at home, were allowed to pass if they had a certificate, unlike people who wanted to purchase specific products (petrol, cigarettes, food, etc.). However, they had to endure **long waiting times at the border crossing**. The border around Strasbourg saw the deployment of a health system (**tent or mobile box for health checks**) in addition to police checks. Similarly, some checks were also carried out within the municipality of Kehl in application of the ban on stopping points for cross-border commuters on the route to and from their place of work (restaurants, petrol stations and food shops) in accordance with the Baden-Württemberg state health emergency decree.

Barriers materialising the ban on border crossings were installed everywhere. For the few crossings that were still open for the movement of border workers, a thorough check was carried out with compulsory **presentation of certificates** from both countries concerned.

- **IT-FR-MC:** Italian commuters employed in Monaco, who have to travel through France, had to present **three different travel authorisations** for moving across the three border controls.



- **FR-BE:** During the lockdown period, crossings were not allowed, except in the case of derogations concerning the custody, visits, or continuation of schooling of a child, as well as for nationals of the European area who had compelling economic reasons and an employment contract, in particular seasonal agricultural workers. An **international travel form** is required when crossing the border in both directions. Moreover, a specific certificate targeted cross-border workers.

All the crossing points were methodically listed and managed either by police checks (especially on motorways or main roads) or by the **installation of**

concrete blocks, mounds of earth and barriers. The idea was to completely prevent access to Belgian and French territories via the border.

- **DE:** Saxony adopted its own set of measures on 17 March. Nonetheless, the Federal Government did not introduce border controls: **random checks** were made in the territory, but not at the border itself. People were allowed to enter Saxony for 72 hours on condition of having a good reason to travel. These rules were only valid for the state of Saxony – protection from infection is a competence at the state level.
- **RO-BG: Exceptions** to border crossings were **not allowed** at the Călărași–Silistra axis, **only on Giurgiu-Ruse and Vidin – Calafat border crossings**. Among the effects noticed, less people are crossing the border now even though it is allowed. Cars crossing are still less frequent, but heavy traffic is quite similar. This is due to the fact that traveling from Romania to the Bulgarian seaside became much less common during the summer.
- **HU-SI:** Another effect of these measures was that more and more people living in Slovenia **registered for Hungarian citizenship** (at the beginning, it seemed that the possibility of crossing the borders could be linked to citizenship).

Some neighbouring countries adopted very different approaches in terms of border controls:

- **DK-SE:** the Danish border was not entirely closed: cross-border workers were always allowed to circulate as long as they could show their employment contract and an ID. During the first phase, only CB workers and people which had a valid reason (e.g. transfer traveling, funeral, sick relatives) were able to commute and cross the border. On the other hand, the **Swedish border remained open the whole time**.
- **BE-NL:** The border was literally **closed with containers, blocks and fences** – only a few points were left open for frontier workers, and the police would always be there to control people going in and out of Belgium (**only Belgium closed the border**). The check was only based on the justification: work (certificate from the employer was requested for employees), or self-made justification.
- **UK-IE:** Unlike most of the other EU borders, the Northern Irish-Irish border **remained open throughout the whole period**. Occasionally, there were police controls. Police in the South was very active: stopping people, asking why they were traveling. However, **the police had no enforcement to stop people**. In this area, the authorities **relied on the individuals** and their personal responsibility. The police delivered a message on personal responsibility and tried to raise awareness via a three “E” principles:

"educate, explain and encourage." There was **no official printed document to be presented** at any time, like in other EU regions. Despite the open border, a **significant fall in cross-border traffic** was recorded, except for goods.

- **HU borders:** different types of restrictions applied depending on the border: there **was 30-30 km or 50-50 km in-depth restriction on one section**, or there were no restrictions, or there were **chronological restrictions. Moreover**, the allowed crossing's purposes could differ. However, people were not divided based on having or not having symptoms. Only passenger traffic was suspended and freight transport was working. The role of internal Schengen border crossing points became more important, people had been working on **removing the customs buildings in poor condition, but now border guards wanted to reuse some of them**. This has led authorities to reconsider the demolitions of these buildings.

In some cases, a mandatory self-isolation applied, in other health checks were operated. These health-condition based measures were more common in Eastern and Central Europe.

- **AT-IT:** The three Alpine border crossings were only open to people working in the critical healthcare sector and citizens going back to their homeland. In these cases, the crossing was allowed without a COVID test. **By presenting a negative COVID test, the crossing of the Austrian border was always allowed**. After April 6th free circulation was allowed again for CB workers. Apart from CB workers, all the other people had to **self-isolate during 14 days** when arriving in the other country.
- **RO-HU:** Body temperature was checked in March and after the quarantine too, it was checked on the Romanian side, but on the way back it was not checked on the Hungarian side.
- **PL-DE:** Poland closed the border on 15 March 2020 with a very short notice - the official announcement was made 36 hours before. The border was closed then for 90 days, with a reopening only in the night between 12 and 13 June. The border was completely closed: frontier workers were strongly affected as they could not go to work: **crossing the border would have meant to quarantine for 14 days**, mandatorily. This was valid for all workers. As for the controls, these were based on **measurement of temperature** as well as on pass controls carried out at the border by Polish border police. As the border opened gradually to frontier workers, controls included the certification/reason of cross-border work.
- **CZ:** In Czechia, the Government Decree of 13th of March 2020 prohibited the entrance to all foreigners without residence permit or working permit. Border controls were first based on **random samples of temperature checks** at the border. Groups of people allowed to access the territory of

the country were: Czech citizens; Diplomatic personnel with families; Foreigners with residence or work permit.

Restrictions were also imposed to Czech people living abroad: to enter the country they had to quarantine for 14 days or to leave Czechia within 24 hours, and only on condition of a "good reason" – yet it was not clear what would be recognized as a "good reason", and sometimes also visiting the own family was not recognized as such.

In general, it was often not really clear what the rules were, both for people affected and for the police. At every crossing point, at every shift, **different decisions were made due to the lack of clear indications**. The unpredictable situation was very uncomfortable for people who wanted to cross the border.

- **HU-AT:** At the Austrian border, in Rábfüzés, **body temperature was checked**, at smaller border crossing points there was no such thing, crossing the border was therefore easier.

Exemptions to the national regulation:

Some rare exemptions were adopted targeting specific CB areas and aimed at easing the life of their residents, as well as avoiding a too large impact on the local economy:

- **EE-LV:** The borders between Estonia and Latvia closed on March 16th with controls requiring a 14-day quarantine period for all people entering Estonia. In Valka-Valga twin city, an exemption³² was made by Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas, **allowing residents of the twin towns of Valka and Valga to move across the Estonia-Latvia border** for 'valid reasons'³³. A valid reason was considered to be a job, family or residence in Estonia, but residents had to be included in the list prepared by the Valka Municipality and had to present a passport or ID card when crossing the border. These rules were taken in an effort to **cause as little disruption as possible to daily life and the provision of services**.
The requirement for all Estonian border crossers to complete a questionnaire on their state of health was abolished after a few weeks after the border closure, but the police still had the right to request it, for example, if a person shows symptoms of the disease.
- **HR-HU:** Along this **rural** border, **farmers** from the Croatian side who own a vineyard on the Hungarian side were able to cross the border.
- **HU-RO:** similarly, along this border, an owner of an agricultural land was able to cross the border in a **30 km distance to cultivate their land. This measure was observed by the Romanian state too**. It was also possible to cross the border for health treatment (not only in 30 km distance). There

³² Amendment to the Prime Minister's Order, March the 17th, <https://static.lsm.lv/documents/ri.pdf>

³³ LETA, *Estonia eases restrictions for cross-border workers from Latvia*, 2020 March 19th, <https://news.err.ee/1064992/valga-valka-checkpoint-still-open-for-those-working-across-border>

was a rule in Romania: one can cross the border and stay a day, in 30 km distance the purpose didn't have to be justified, Romanian citizen could come too, they would get **a sticker on their car** and it was monitored. It was a good measure considering cross-border cooperation, but **from an epidemiological point of view its effectiveness is questionable**. For the employees the employment verification was necessary and they were not allowed to stay more than 24 hours.

The proportionality of border controls and restrictions with regard to the pandemic situation in the CB region was not always respected:

- **PL-DE:** Measures were not considered proportional with the situation in the region by many people: the Euroregion Spree-Neisse-Bober being quite rural, **the incidence of the pandemic was extremely low**. Also, there were no reported deaths due to Covid-19 in the territory of the Euroregion – in this sense, some people can be sceptical about the proportionality of measures to close the border.
- **NL-BE:** At first, measures concerning the border made sense, because there was an obvious difference between the Dutch and Belgian approach. However when time passed by, the disease-prevention measures became more or less harmonized and could be considered similar. Therefore the **length of the border closure was not proportional**. Formally, the borders opened at the 15th of June, but from the 1st of June it was practically impossible for the police to control the reasons for passing the border.

CB road traffic and performed border controls in a nutshell :

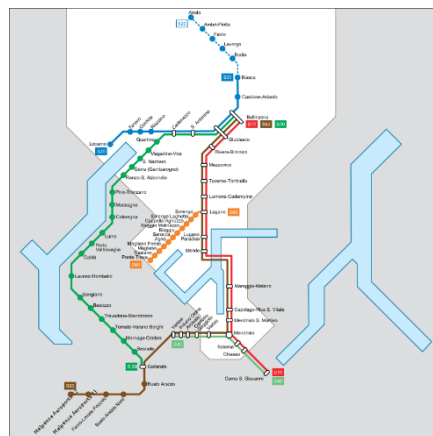
- ✓ **Most border regions saw the number of border crossing points drastically reduced in order to better perform more or less strict controls**
- ✓ **Lower border permeability was encouraged, resulting in many cases in traffic congestion and long *detours* for commuters**
- ✓ **Border controls and restrictions did not always respect a principle of proportionality in relation to the health situation of the CB region**
- ✓ **A large variety of restrictions and controls was observed across the EU internal borders**
- ✓ **Several Central and Eastern countries introduced health and temperature checks; some of them even introduced mandatory self-isolation, even for CB workers**
- ✓ **Some MS opted for chronological restrictions and other for a kilometeric radius in a buffer zone along the border**
- ✓ **Very few MS adopted local exceptions targeting the most integrated border areas**

2. Impact on cross-border public transport

In addition, cross-border public transport lines, generally heavily used by commuters, were cancelled, reduced or interrupted. Nonetheless, very contrasting situations emerged across the continent. Due to a divergence on national prevention measures, integrated cross-border transport networks did not always prove their resistance to shocks and could not keep operating during the crisis.

In most CB areas, public transport lines were abruptly interrupted since the introduction of border controls. Quite surprisingly, this interruptions concerned even some of the most integrated cross-border functional areas:

- **FR-DE:** In Strasbourg, the Strasbourg-Kehl tramway line interrupted its cross-border service and the *Passerelle des Deux Rives*, crossing the Rhine, was closed to the public.
- **CH-IT:** Trains between Italy and the Canton of Ticino were stopped during a full month because of a lack of coordination between the two countries in disease-prevention management: in fact, in Italy, face masks and a 50% seats occupancy were made compulsory while in Switzerland there were no such measures and no will to align. This shutdown involved both the international trains (Zurich-Milan) and the "TILO" regional CB trains. CB public transport reopened only in June.
- **AT-IT:** While freight was always allowed to cross the Alps, passenger trains stopped several km before the border.
- **HU-SK:** The train to Bratislava ran only until the Slovak border, where it turned back; but freight transport was uninterrupted.
- **PL-DE:** Although public transport is not strongly developed in the cross-border region, the only existing bus line connecting the German and the Polish twin cities of Guben-Gubin (starting in Forst (Lausitz)) was interrupted. Today [summer 2020] the line runs again.
- **IT-SI:** All CB bus lines in the twin-city were suspended. As well as all the train connecting Udine and Ljubljana.
- **RO-HU:** Buses, trains were not operating: MÁV suspended international train services, which restarted only in July.



4. Ticino-Lombardia cross-border railway network. Source: Wikipedia

- **ES-PT:** Cross-border transport was completely **non-existent**, although it is true that this border already has poor preconditions in terms of cross-border public transport. As an exception, there were a few buses from Porto airport, but this was very anecdotal. There were no regular lines.
- **DE-CZ-PL:** Until the end of March some connections and cross-border facilities kept operating, but following new rules followed which proved to be, once again, mostly against the logic of the cross-border dimension. For example, the tri-national railway connecting Czechia, Poland and Germany remained operational but **travellers were not given the possibility to leave the trains on the German and Polish territory**. In general, until the end of May, most of the international and cross-border transportation services were interrupted.
- **NL-BE:** In the Euregio Scheldemond there is very limited CB transport, so the effect was minimal. There still were possibilities on the Belgian-Dutch border **to cross it by train**, with justifiable reasons to cross the border. As for existing cross-border bus lines, **buses stopped at the border**.

Some CB transport networks had to reduce or readapt their service in order to comply with national prevention regulations:

- **DK-SE:** When Denmark initiated a border control, they also had to cut down the number of trains crossing the Öresund, which are part of the integrated commuting system in DK and SE. The **lack of dialogue between the two countries also meant a lot of confusion also for train operators**. After a while, the transport operator was asked to **reduce to 50%** the number of available seats on CB trains: this was a **challenge for commuters as they had to book their tickets via an app on their phone**, as before it was not necessary to pre-book.



5. Danish border control at Copenhagen Airport station in Kastrup. The control has been established since Denmark, due to the corona pandemic, partially closed the border on 14 March 2020.

Photo: News Øresund - Johan Wessman

- **DE-NL:** there were **changes on the timetable** of public transport during the crisis; an emergency plan was set up, and less people made use of trains and buses. Due to restrictions to individual mobility, generally it could be generally noticed that there was a decrease of movements while the strictest rules were implemented. Generally, it can be said that **problems arose when different managements were adopted on the two sides** of the border.

Finally, in some areas, CB public transport kept operating all throughout:

- **HU-HR:** Public transport services were not suspended. The virus did not have such a big importance in the area and the risk was lower.

- **AT-HU:** During the crisis, the cross-border company GISEV / Raaberbahn had to reflect the Austrian and also the Hungarian decisions at the same time. The train is not the most used vehicle when traveling to Austria, but it does have a significant passenger throughput, mainly in regards of commuting workers.

In general, the company dealt with the entire situation as a whole quite outstandingly as **there were no periods when trains did not operate**. There was only one period when the trains operated with **reduced frequency**, in line with the Austrian regulations, the trains ran according to specific Saturday timetables. There was a period when one could get off only with restrictions: after a health check and questioning, **there were times when employment verification was obligatory** too, but the system was not that strict, while at the same time people respected it.

If regulating their staff, including the protection of their health in accordance with the regulation of the two countries, was quite easy, **what was more complicated was to track the permeability of borders**, as **rules changed day after day** and were not the same in the two countries.

Sopron (HU) was the most interesting case, because its station is affected from three sides. The company conducted a traffic corridor **to ensure the Austria-Austria transfer too through Hungary**, while transportation was banned by Hungary. In the end, the company solved this issue as there were historical antecedents and the technology was ready (there was a



6 The Raaberbahn or GySEV is a Hungarian-Austrian railway company.

Source: Wikipedia

period when it was not permitted to get on or get off vehicles in Hungary). The most important part of this process was the possibility to acquaint decision-makers about CB traffic issues too, and that they should consider it when defining rules and regulations.

During the crisis, **the capacity utilization of the trains was reduced by 20-30%**, but it was fluctuating depending on the restrictions. Today, full capacity has not been reached but it operates around 70-80%.

Many CB lines were reopened in the summer when border controls were lifted:

- **DE-CZ-PL:** At the beginning of June the first lines were restored. **Number of passengers and general features are surely different** than before the crisis and **many people still don't feel comfortable in leaving their own country** even if it is only to go few kilometres away, therefore, it is highly probable that there will be long-term negative effects.
[Good practice] Moreover, to counterbalance this negative trend, **new services were implemented**. For example, in the territory of the Euroregion Nysa, a new **"joint week-end" bus line** was created to allow citizens and tourists to visit more than 5 different places of cultural and historical interest located within the territory of the three countries.
- **ES-FR (NAEN Euroregion):** Stops on the other side of the border were cancelled. However, **since the reopening everything resumed:** train, public bus, private buses. These lines should not be affected in the long term as people using them will still need them.
- **CZ-DE (Elbe-Labe):** Public transport was completely suspended while the border was closed: busses and trains, both local services and long distance services. However, this was resumed as soon as restrictions were lifted, so **there should be no consequences on the long term**. Goods and logistic continued to be transported across the border.

Impact on CB public transport users in a nutshell :

- ✓ **Where border controls were applied, most public transport lines were suspended or stopped on one side of the border**
- ✓ **Interruptions involved both local bus or tramway lines, but also regional or international trains**
- ✓ **In several CB regions, a reduction in the number of seats or pre-booking on regional trains was introduced.**
- ✓ **The lack of dialogue or of compatibility of these measures caused, sometimes, the stopping of the service. The lack of coordination between neighbouring countries caused confusion for both users and transport operators**
- ✓ **Most CB lines reopened during the summer. A lower attendance is generally recorded since the reopening**
- ✓ **Generally speaking, all interviewees agree on the point that the negative impact on CB public transport lines was more severe than on non-CB services, which continued to operate during the crisis**

3. Evolution in border controls and effects related to the lifting of border controls

The effects of the lifting of border measures on CB mobility varied depending on the border section. Border shopping, for instance, was not always allowed:

- **IT-CH:** Ticino started reopening some activities on April the 13th, with several restrictions. Italy started its post-lockdown phase on June 3rd, reopening faster than Switzerland all of its borders. Crossing the border for Swiss citizen was then possible again, **except for border shopping**. Usually, shopping in Italy is in fact very common as prices are lower. This measure was taken to avoid too large queues at the border, in order to facilitate the controls of the border security personnel, who was limited.
- **FR-ES:** Since the reopening of the border on June 21st, thousands of French citizens rushed to 'ventas' border shops, generating large queues in front of tobacco shops. This concerned both the "Basque" and the "Catalan" areas.

7. *Le Courrier International*, 22.06.2020

- **IT-SI:** Since the reopening of the border on June 15th, all residents in Italy and Slovenia were able to cross again. This was **not the case of people from other countries**, which meant that controls were still active on the main international borders. Some workers from Romania and from other Eastern countries working in Italy are now **taking secondary border crossing to avoid the mandatory border checks** which they are supposed to be submitted to.



National post-lockdown plans were rarely coordinated:

- **ES-FR (NAEN):** Post-lockdown **plans never mentioned border regions nor CB inhabitants**.
Political initiative: The President of the Basque country wrote a letter to the French Prime Minister and to the President of the Government of Spain requesting to take into account CB people in post-lockdown measures. The President of the Euroregion asked to implement some exceptions: to let CB citizens and project promoters cross the border inside a limited buffer zone around the border, including for health consultations. However, this letter did not receive any answer. Luckily, every Sunday the Spanish regions had

meetings where the Presidents of Navarra and Euskadi were able to raise awareness around the issue of cross-border areas at the national level.

A complete lack of coordination was perceived locally in the post-lockdown de-containment measures.

On the 21st June, the Spanish border reopened, one week later than in most of the EU countries. **When borders reopened, the national authorities mainly did it for the benefits of the tourism industry.** They never mentioned CB citizens.

All along the crisis border measures were national, regional authorities didn't have any possibility to take their own decisions. **Since the lifting of containment measures, the main border crossings experienced large traffic jams.**

During the summer, Spain's epidemic indicators worsened again, which implies a risk of a new border closure between the two countries.

In some cases, border controls were still operational during the summer:

- **DK:** during the summer, Denmark was **monitoring the surrounding regions' data** in order to identify possibilities to open the country to inhabitants of these regions. Since the reopening, a lot of tourists from Scandinavia started crossing the border for their holidays. That was a challenge too as some areas of Denmark suddenly became very crowded. **Denmark required to have a booking for at least 6-nights.** The accommodation booking had to be provided when crossing the border.

Effects of the lifting of border controls in a nutshell:

- ✓ **The "lifting of border measures" phase was rarely coordinated across borders**
- ✓ **Decisions were mainly taken at national level with regional authorities hardly involved Most national authorities opened border for the sake of the tourism industry, while CB communities were neglected**
- ✓ **Border shopping restarted as soon as borders were reopened. Except in Switzerland, where this type of mobility was prohibited.**

C. Impact on cross-border workers

1. The many challenges faced by CB workers: from remote working taxation to rapidly-evolving and stricter border controls

More or less fluidity experienced at border controls depending on the coordination capacity:

- **NL-BE:** Due to the large community of cross border workers, **this problem was tackled very quickly**. Cross border workers could cross the border with a permit, stamped by their employer and essential workers or **keyworkers** even **got a pass to skip the queue at the border control** (nurses, workers of the sea-port and other relevant industries): they could download an auto-certificate, a sticker, which could be put on the car's window. Other exceptions were made for non-professional caretakers or emergency doctor visits.
By showing a pass to cross the border, all border patrols would let you through: **rules were strict, but police/border patrols applied them with flexibility** and allowed people to cross the border with the minimum required justification.
- **CZ-DE:** In terms of coordination, and particularly with regard to compensation measures for employees during the pandemic, some gaps emerged as some financial support funds were to be distributed on the basis of nationality/residency. This meant that Czech employees who could not come to Germany to work because schools were closed in Czech Republic were not eligible to receive the funds that the German employees would instead receive. There are **some measures for financial support which do not apply to cross-border workers – which contradicts the values of freedom of movement of the EU**. The closure of the border affected directly employees: the fact that frontier workers were not able to go to work was **perceived as a problem of the individual employee**, under his/her own responsibility.
- **AT-HU:** Cross-border workers from Hungary were able to commute to Austria. This decision was made, because **Austria relies on Hungarian employees**: it could not even operate, mainly in the healthcare sector, which was particularly important to operate smoothly. Hungarian commuters (50.000 from Sopron's area) in Austria mainly work in the field of agriculture, hospitality and healthcare, mainly in Wien and in the border regions. It was in Hungary's interest too, because if commuters cannot go to work, they would have no income, and local social systems would be overloaded, since they cannot be left without provision.
The decision on commuters was made on a national level, but it was **not precise and exact enough**, therefore stakeholders solved it between each

other, they were keeping in touch both with Hungarian and Austrian bodies, and have been dealing with the situations ever since.

Finally, the fact that commuters had the possibility to move around was disapproved by many, because they could infect others. But the two regions were not significantly infected, so in the end there were no major problems.

- **HU-RO:** Seasonal workers were among the most affected categories: in the beginning it was problematic, because they didn't fall into the "24 hour rule", as they come for 3-4 months, but afterwards they were also part of regulation.
- **Borders of FR-(Grand Est) with DE, CH, and LU:** In the context of the health crisis, all neighbouring states to the Grand Est Region (FR) are seeking to encourage the use of teleworking. The legal uncertainty linked to the social security system applicable to frontier workers was removed until 31 December 2020.³⁴
- **ES-FR:** The lack of coordination between the two states led to a **lack of harmonization on the papers** to be presented by CB workers at border controls, who asked for a single official paper like in other European CB regions. Moreover, no agreement was signed between the two member states on remote working.

CB workers experienced several housing issues related to border measures. These problematics revealed the interdependencies between neighbouring countries, where employer had to provide accommodation solutions for key workers.

- **IT-CH:** Italian CB workers represent 27% of Ticino's workforce. On March the 7th a first decree was adopted in Italy which prohibited mobility between one IT region to another, including CB mobility. This decree was followed by a long night of exchanges with the Ministries of the two countries as Ticino, a canton with a population of 350 000 inhabitants, receives everyday 67 000 CB workers, among whom around 4 000 are active in the healthcare service. **A total closure of the border would have represented the collapse of Ticino's economy and healthcare.** An agreement was found to enable CB workers to commute between IT and CH. Thanks to several internal measures (e.g. teleworking) taken by Ticino to limit the spread of the virus, the number of Italians crossing the border during the crisis was reduced to around 9 000.
Until measures regarding CB workers crossing did not become completely clear and stable, Swiss employers and hospitals requested their employees to find housing solutions to remain in Switzerland. To do so, **employers immediately booked rooms at local hotels.** Many employees welcomed this initiative. Some others, felt forced by their employers and were afraid of being separated from their families in Italy. Trade unions reported these

³⁴ <http://www.frontaliers-grandest.eu/fr/actualites/teletravail-et-securite-sociale-aucun-risque-jusqu-au-31-decembre-2020>

cases to Regio Insubrica which then transferred them to the “COVID emergency” task force (which was not cross-border).

- **DE-PL:** Germany imposed self-isolation at home in case of border crossing. Only in territories of Cottbus and Spree-Neisse, 2 870 registered employee commute from Poland daily – and this does not even include people working in logistic and construction works. With the border closure, more than 3 000 people were directly affected.
Already in March, the government of Brandenburg (state authority) issued a decree addressing frontier workers, which were **offered 60 Euros per day, plus 20 Euros per day for relatives**, if they decide to stay in Germany. Some employees decided to make use of this and stayed then in Germany while the border was closed. This measure was offered from the very beginning of the border closure, until the end. The states of Mecklenburg Vorpommern and Saxony issued similar actions, too.
- **CZ-PL-DE:** Neither Czechia nor Poland put restrictions to the entrance of cross-border commuters from the neighbouring country(ies) but **criteria** to regulate the border crossing became soon absolutely unfeasible for their own country nationals working abroad.
In particular, the Czech government introduced the **compulsory stay of Czech commuters in the neighbouring country for a period of 21 days followed by an obligatory 2 weeks quarantine at home. Exceptions** to these procedures were made for people employed in healthcare, social sector and emergency services.
The same situation was registered for Polish citizens commuting in the neighbouring countries: workers started to be requested for **negative Covid-test on a daily basis, making the border passing and the professional activities nearly impossible.**
Finally, the decision to keep open only few border crossing points, contributed to increase the annoyance for commuters who had to drive many kilometres more than usual to be able to go to the “other side” while undergoing long queues.
To find alternative solutions, **Czech and German employers started to offer paid accommodations** to the Polish commuters for one month, allowing them to stay on the other side of the border for an extended time to avoid daily checks at the border. Paradoxically, thus, we could say that **the main problems faced by commuters were posed by their own countries of origins.**
- **HU-SK-AT:** Rajka is a Hungarian border settlement to Slovakia and Austria. In the area, the settlement was considered to be particularly endangered, due to the high number of Slovak settlers and commuters. 1.500-2000 people commute to Austria and 4.000-5.000 people to Slovakia. The border closure was a problematic issue, it took 1-2 days until an agreement was reached, which allowed to commute between residence and workplace. A **local particularity** has to do with the fact that a **high number of Slovaks settled down without registration in the settlement**, and because of

this unsettled legal status **they could not take the opportunity to commute between their residence in Hungary and workplace in Austria.** It took 3-4 weeks to solve this problem, during this some commuters worked from home, while others could go to work, but could not return, therefore they were **living at relatives' or in hotels.**

The impact of remote working on social security represented a significant additional administrative burden. In most cases, agreements on exceptions were found quite rapidly:

- **SE-DK:** When cross-border commuters start working from home in the country they live, this has immediate legal effects on taxes and social security. During the weekend in which the border was closed, the ÖresundDirekt information centre worked hard **pointing the many effects and obstacles that these measures would engender.** The Center immediately wrote a letter to the responsible Swedish Minister in charge of social security and civil issues to raise awareness on the obstacles to come. People who received social security from Denmark **would have had to apply and register to the social security in Sweden at the same time.** Potentially, 18 000 commuters could have been concerned. This would have also meant a big **administrative burden** for the administrative authorities of both countries. Many CB workers did not realise the impact of working from home on the administrative level. ÖresundDirekt initiated the **dialogue between the two national social security agencies.** These agencies were afraid that people might get paid twice and that many of them would have to pay back later on due to this misunderstanding. The Swedish appointed an expert team together with the Danish authorities which decided that this would be a **"force majeure" exception** which would keep the legal framework as it was before the COVID crisis, as if people were still commuting to the other country. This way people did not have to apply to another administrative system. It took almost 3-4 weeks to get to an agreement between the legal experts.
- **ES-FR:** regarding CB workers, several problems emerged: first of all in terms of **available information** as everything was **unclear.** Another example were social benefits such as partial unemployment. The **Spanish employment agency does not allow online payments towards foreign bank accounts.** So CB workers living in France were not able to perceive these benefits unless they would open a Spanish bank account. Some people who did not manage to open a Spanish bank account did not perceive any benefits.
- **NL-BE:** Agreements of exemptions on consequences for teleworking and taxes and social security between BE and NL were concluded rapidly. **In normal times, for structural agreements on this subject, it is almost impossible to get to an agreement.**

New taxation agreements were quickly adopted to allow remote working. However, negotiations did not always succeed:

- **SE-DK:** Taxation was another major border issue in the region: in the Nordic countries there is a specific tax agreement stating that people pay taxes in the country where they physically work. This was an issue as, in this agreement, **exceptions** (remote working from another country than the usual one) was **limited to a 3-month period**. Without intervention, this would have meant for these commuters they would have to pay taxes in the two countries and therefore prepare two different national declarations at the end of the year. This represented a huge **administrative burden on the individuals and also on the tax authorities**.
Moreover, people from Denmark commuting to Sweden benefit from a flat-rate tax, which is quite advantageous. When they started working in Denmark, this would have meant that **they would have had to pay much higher taxes than they usually did**. In order to avoid the impact on this group of Danish commuters, ÖresundDirekt wrote letters to the two governments, via the Nordic Council of Ministers. Unfortunately, **the tax authorities proved themselves less flexible and pragmatic than with the social security issue**. The Swedish government explained that this would have needed a revision of the Nordic agreement, which could have taken a few years. The problem is that CB commuters did not always have the possibility to choose whether they would work from home or not.
- **IT-CH:** Remote working: an agreement was first negotiated between CH and FR. A taxation problem soon emerged on the IT-CH border as well and an exemption to the law was adopted. As of July, this exemption was valid until August 31st. Discussions were going on during the summer on its reinstatement for the months to follow. Remote working has a **very critical potential impact in CB relations**, as it represents a risk of reduced tax receipts for Switzerland and a **source of political conflict**.
- **FR-MC:** During the lockdown phase, France and Monaco reached an agreement on taxation regarding remote working for the thousands³⁵ of CB commuters concerned.
- **LU-FR:** The teleworking phenomenon led to difficulties in tax matters, following a social security limit for teleworking: the limit for teleworking was set in the last tax agreement at 29 days of teleworking per year. Above this threshold, income must be taxed in France and not in Luxembourg. **Adaptations to the Luxembourg labour code** have been made to secure the situation for cross-border workers, students and apprentices during the period of border closures (agreements to extend teleworking).

³⁵ There are 38,426 frontier workers in Monaco, 3,696 of whom come from Italy (9.6%). The rest come from France with 34,370 frontier workers. (INSEE, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4164642>)

If it is still too soon to measure the long term impact on the employment in the CB area, border regions might suffer more than others because of the effects of border closures and their inter-dependent economy:

- **PL-CZ:** Polish citizens working in Czechia were the ones suffering the most, as the majority of them was employed in non-qualified professions that could not be carried out during the crisis. This will probably have an effect on employment rates and on general **economic performance of the cross-border area in the long-term**. The other categories of cross-border commuters were generally able to telework from home.
- **AT-HU:** people from Hungary who work in factories in Austria, were better off, as they earned a 4 week wage for 3 weeks of work. Most people employed in Austria were able to keep their job.
- **DK-SE:** Young people commuting between DK and SE are among the ones who will suffer the most in the long-term as they were the first to see their job contract interrupted.

Effects on CB workers and remote working in a nutshell:

- ✓ **CB work was severely impacted. The crisis made visible CB interdependence. In most cases, agreements were settled to tackle the situation; but the crisis revealed the need to build or improve CB agreements, or even legislate at EU level, including on the issue of CB working taxation.**
- ✓ **On the borders with the strictest border controls, several “receiving countries” employers (hospitals, businesses...) provided accommodation to CB workers who would have had to self-isolate in their home country.**
- ✓ **Remote working had direct implications for CB workers on their social security and on taxation**
- ✓ **The risk of potential additional charge in terms of administrative burden was avoided by the signature of several agreements between national agencies in charge of these aspects**
- ✓ **Thanks to the crisis, negotiations on teleworking arrangements generally succeeded much easier than in normal times**
- ✓ **Due to border shutdowns and their consequences, border regions may suffer more because of this crisis than other regions, in the long-term. This is especially true for jobs that could not be replaced by teleworking (e.g. less qualified jobs in production).**

D. Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)

1. Healthcare provision to CB citizens

As some regions were hit harder than others, some patients were transferred across national borders, in a spirit of solidarity.

- **FR-DE-CH-LU:** An emergency request from the Grand Est region, jointly with the Prefecture and the Regional Health Authority (ARS), was received by the border Länder, as well as the Luxembourg and Swiss authorities,

which organised the transfer of **almost 200 COVID-19 patients from saturated hospitals** in the Grand Est region (Alsace and Lorraine) to Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg.

- **ES-FR:** the Basque side of the border was not very affected by the disease, so patient transfer wasn't necessary. However, the existing research laboratories working in the health sector continued exchanging information and preparing new innovative projects (masks, tests...).
- **PL-DE:** The pre-existing services were continued, with services being offered in both German and Polish at the German hospitals. There was no **need to accept patients** from the area – as the area was little affected by the pandemic.
- **AT-IT:** The **CB task force** made the **exchange of information on the necessary equipment standards to tackle the pandemic** in hospitals possible, as the situation in Austria came later " than the Italian situation. Moreover, since the number of intensive care beds soon reached full capacity on the Italian side, Tirol (AT) offered a **patient transfer to 8-10 Italian citizens**. However, this healthcare cooperation does not represent something new as it is based on the 50 years of cooperation and agreements between Südtirol and Tirol.
- **BE-NL:** Even though some Belgian politicians were rather sceptical to receiving Dutch patients in their hospitals, **a couple of patients were transferred to Belgian hospitals in the same Euroregion**. The most important reason to this transfer is the **proximity** of these Belgian hospitals to the Dutch border area compared to the closest Dutch specialist hospital. Moreover, the Belgian local fire department made **hand gel** and made sure **the colleagues on the opposite side of the border received a significant amount** as well.
- **NL-DE:** The largest placement of patients was actually on the Dutch border with Germany: some 58 residents of the Netherlands were treated in German intensive care units when the Dutch ICU system reached full capacity at the first peak of the coronavirus pandemic in April.³⁶

Access to healthcare on the other side of the border and emergency vehicles' crossing

- **AT-CZ:** the Austrian Red Cross was constantly in contact with the Czech embassy on a very friendly and supporting level. This way, handling the situation was not complicated. Whenever travel restrictions changed, the two institutions informed each other. The Czech government **excluded the "Integrated Rescue Systems" in their border restrictions** which

³⁶ "Germany picks up costs for Dutch Covid-19 patients treated in German ICU's " , NL Times, 8 August 2020, <https://nltimes.nl/2020/08/08/germany-picks-costs-dutch-covid-19-patients-treated-german-icus>

covered the police, fire brigade and ambulance. In Austria, these 3 corps are not integrated but separated, so this term did not apply to them. After the Red Cross contacted the Czech Embassy in Vienna, the latter passed this information to the Czech Ministry of Interior which changed the denomination by stating that Austrian ambulance services have the same status and can cross the border. This was only a small formal step, but it shows the intentions of cooperation.

Other forms of cooperation in the healthcare sector: equipment, exchange of information, green ways...

- **IT-CH:** The region experienced a **lack of coordination at the beginning** of the crisis. Regio Insubrica immediately got in contact with the healthcare authorities in Lombardy. On February the 25th the healthcare authorities of Ticino and Lombardy held their first **exchange meeting**. Ticino never saw its intensive care beds saturated.
- **HU-SI:** Although the Hungarian government **sent equipment** to the hospital of Murska Sobota and municipalities cooperated as well, the exchange of medical equipment and devices was a common procedure. Even though cooperation does not seem to be established in the long run, from now on, hygiene products and medical equipment needed for tackling the epidemic may flow regularly from the Hungarian side to the Slovenian.
- **ES-FR:** The Cerdanya hospital, the first cross-border hospital in Europe, demonstrated the usefulness and effectiveness of cross-border cooperation in the field of health at the height of the health crisis. This cross-border hospital was able to distinguish itself in its management of the crisis thanks to a major asset, its dual nationality.
The COVID-19 health crisis had dramatic consequences for all hospitals, and in particular that of Cerdagne, which had to cope with the closure of the French-Spanish border, the shortage of protective equipment for care providers and the **shortage of intensive care beds** in reference hospitals for patients. The dual nationality of this cross-border hospital proved to be a valuable asset in tackling all these obstacles.
Faced with the closure of the French-Spanish border, the hospital and the Spanish and French law enforcement agencies agreed to **establish a greenway allowing the free movement of the hospital's carers and patients**. Throughout the crisis period, **intensive care beds** in the Centre Hospitalier Intercommunal des Vallées de l'Ariège, in Foix, on the French side, were **made available to Spanish patients in critical condition**. Whereas under normal circumstances, patients needing to be transferred are sent to facilities located in the patient's country of origin.

Some hospitals, usually involved in CBC, decided refocusing on their own national territory, pausing their CB activities:

- **CZ-PL:** A Czech hospital located at the border with Germany **reduced drastically the cooperation with the neighbour** during the crisis. The main argument of the hospital administration, was that similar crises might happen again in the future, so **the hospital should be ready to face them autonomously, without relying on the help of external actors**. This is emblematic of the rhetoric that was used in the country, as the sole fact of being in the middle of a pandemic should have instead provided the perfect ground to foster the cooperation in the healthcare field.
- **DE-DK:** The **cross-border emergency medical service had been paused** due to the border closure. The service has now been resumed, and while they could not provide their regular service they collected data on the local situation.

Border crossing conditions for healthcare professionals and housing solutions:

- **CZ-DE:** On 12 March the Czech government announced the closure of schools and of the borders, which would enter into effect on 13 March. In the following days intense communication between German and Czech authorities followed, whereby the German authorities both at state and federal level **pressured the Czech government to make exceptions for frontier workers**. The German health system, and in particularly the Saxon one, are particularly **dependent on workforce coming from Czech Republic**, including frontier workers. A lack of medical and paramedical staff during the pandemic would have heavily affected the German health sector. As a consequence, exceptions for people working in relevant jobs were introduced.
- **FR-CH:** Thanks to cross-border cooperation between the hospitals of Annecy, Alpes Léman, Geneva and Lausanne for the reception of patients, it was possible to **establish joint management of the border crossings of nursing staff** and border workers more generally, with the support of the Ain and Haute Savoie Départements and the canton of Geneva (**establishment of expressways** and creation of car stickers for key workers).
- **CH-IT:** Similarly, hospitals in Ticino booked **hotel rooms** to many of the 4 000 key CB workers in the healthcare sector.
- **LU:** In Luxembourg, in order to facilitate the daily life of cross-border staff, some special **kindergartens** were set up near Luxembourgish hospitals.
- **PL-DE:** From 4 May, the Polish government allowed frontier workers to cross the border again to go to work in Germany – yet **this did not apply to medical staff**. CDU Secretary General Paul Ziemiak said that he had “no

understanding of why the urgently needed medical staff could not enter in Germany from Poland and travel back again.”³⁷ He added that there was “desperation” in the border region because of the closure. Only after 16 May medical staff was also allowed to cross the border without difficulties.

Finally, some emergency services experienced some CB obstacles during their CB solidarity activities:

- **AT-HU:** During the COVID situation there were emergencies on the Austrian-Hungarian border. However, since Lower-Austria has no border with Hungary (only Burgenland has), when the Austrian Red Cross from this region sent ambulances to the border adjacent to Hungary’s motorway the Hungarians **sent bills for traffic violation**. The Red Cross called the embassy and asked for support to find a systemic solution for the moment. The different parties are working on a **solution which allows ambulances to use the highways free of charge**.

Healthcare provision to CB citizens

- ✓ **Some patient transfers between neighbouring countries were organised in the most tense situations, the most emblematic case being the solidarity with the FR Grand Est region**
- ✓ **Cooperation worked where dialogue channels were already well established: this also allowed the emergence of crisis management task forces**
- ✓ **In most cases, medical staff were allowed to cross the borders. When it was not the case, hospitals depending on CB workforce took the initiative to pay rooms and temporary accommodation to these key workers.**
- ✓ **Local ‘Green ways’ for patients, medical staff and ambulances appeared in many cases**
- ✓ **However, some counter examples showed that CB cooperation agreement do not always resist in time of crisis: two hospitals interrupted all their cooperation activities.**

2. Information provision to citizens on cross-border issues

CB information centres, information had to be collected, double-checked, harmonised, translated and made available online.

- **FR-DE:** Because of the scale and urgency of the needs (uncoordinated border controls, saturation of French hospitals, etc.), substantial cross-border crisis management work was carried out in the area around the Grand Est region, in the continuity of the exchanges related to the implementation of the Treaty of Aachen and its Cross-border Cooperation Committee.

³⁷ “Growing resistance in Germany against quarantine for returnees from abroad”, Euractiv, 13 May 2020 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/growing-resistance-in-germany-against-mandatory-quarantine-for-returnees-from-abroad/>

A **network of cross-border structures** (Infobest, Frontaliers Grand Est, CEC, MOSA, Maison du Luxembourg, etc.) was immediately set up **to more efficiently inform consumers**, cross-border workers and users of their rights, to **identify their difficulties** and to pass them on to the respective national authorities. Lobbying actions were also maintained by the Eurodistricts and the Rhineland Council.

We also record the creation of a "**local contact group**" bringing together the Grand Est Region, the Prefecture, the Border Departments, the CCI and the Eurodistricts after the first week of the **crisis** to disseminate information, identify needs and expectations, testify to the obstacles at border crossings and share the information gathered with their respective partners.

- **FR-DE (PAMINA):** To inform its members and the local crisis teams, the EGTC Eurodistrict PAMINA also began producing a daily bilingual information letter with up-to-date figures and news. A lot of information was also made available on the Eurodistrict website, on a dedicated page and through the social media.
- **NL-BE:** During the start of the crisis, **a lot of actors were active on communication and information**. Officially the crisis-organisation on both sides of the border had an exclusive position to providing information and handling the crisis. However, it became clear quickly they were nationally orientated and had **a blind spot for everything that happened at the border**.
Therefore organisations like the Euregios, border information points, governors and the cross-governance structure took action. With their cross-border network it was an efficient communication turntable. **Providing information or tackling cross border obstacles became daily work** for these local actors, with support from the Dutch Ministry of interior and the Belgian and Flemish diplomatic team who could easily dispatch things through to the departments.
- **SE-DK:** The OresundDirekt office had to physically close but the centre was very active collecting information, answering questions by phone and email, and trying to interpret national information.
- **DK-DE:** On this border, information was shared with citizens fairly quickly and effectively.

Nonetheless, CB information still has many challenges ahead and will require reinforced coordination and an improved crisis governance in order to be fully effective:

- **IE-UK:** The creation of an **App to track the virus** and to alert the people who were potentially in contact with infected individuals represents an example of serious **lack of coordination** across the Irish border. This public measure was conceived by the Northern Ireland government **without**

allowing any compatibility with the other side of the border. It engendered political tension in Northern Ireland.

Another example is the *Memorandum of understanding* which was signed between the Ministers of health. This text is more about exchanging information and implies **very few practicalities**. However, practical problems linked to a lack of coordination still kept arising during the weeks which followed: the Republic of Ireland introduced a regulation making it **mandatory to wear face masks on public transport**. In NI, masks were not mandatory for passengers.

- **AT-IT:** the EGTC struggled in collecting all the official information which was **changing every week**. Information in time of crisis will be a strategic element for the **future Interreg programming period**.

Information to CB citizens

- ✓ **Collecting information was a real challenge for CB structures, as it was changing every day**
- ✓ **In CB regions there was a well-established dialogue, which resulted easier in easier organisation and structure crisis management information**
- ✓ **CB structures and information centers played an essential role in this period, sharing the collected obstacles with different institutional levels**

3. Border measures affecting CB education: pupils and students

- **AT-IT:** The University of Innsbruck hosts more than 4000 Italian students. After a few weeks, also these students who were renting a flat or a room in Austria were classified among those who could cross the border to return 'home' in Italy.
- **LU-DE-FR-BE:** At the level of the Greater Region, the six partner universities set up a common teaching platform which enables students from the universities of the Greater Region to follow most of the lessons offered online.³⁸
- **SE:** In Sweden, the approach chosen was less strict than the Danish one. Schools and day care for children remained open during the whole period. Only high schools were closed. This and other measures had **a real impact on the confusion that CB people experienced** during the pandemic, as the **two Member States had completely different agendas on how to deal with the pandemic**. CB citizens did not know who to follow and listen to between the two different national positions.

³⁸ http://www.uni-gr.eu/sites/tst-uni-gr.univ-lorraine.fr/files/users/documents/cp_unigr_et_covid-19_fr_14.04.20.pdf

- **PL-DE:** Pupils were affected by the Polish border measures, as there are many schools hosting Polish pupils in Germany. The county Spree-Neisse found solutions to this situation, **offering accommodations and allocating dorms to students of the high schools** so that lessons could be started again, and especially so for those **students facing graduation exams** and university students.
These positive and spontaneous actions, **at costs of the county**, taken at the local level, really benefitted the Polish youth.
- **CZ:** Closing schools affected heavily Czech people working in Germany, and especially so **single parents**: with no care services for children, it wasn't possible for them to go to work.
- **HU borders:** The situation of **graduating students** was also problematic: they are not commuters, but they had to **cross the border during the week of final exams**, without quarantine, possibly with their attendants. In the end, everything was fine, the National Police was very flexible.

Finally, an example was reported on how this insecure period offered renewed interest to Erasmus destinations located just on the other side of the border:

- **ES-FR (NAEN):** Proximity student mobility abroad on the other side of the border has been receiving more interest since the crisis. More students sent their application for this type of scholarship this year than ever before. In this uncertain context, some students could be searching for destinations closer to their homes.

Effects on CB Education

- ✓ **Students attending University in the neighbouring country found themselves in difficult situation as they did not benefit from the same exemptions of CB workers to be able to cross the border**
- ✓ **Housing solutions were provided by some local authorities to students from the neighbouring country**
- ✓ **CB universities experimented new online training modules**
- ✓ **Some neighbouring countries chose very different approaches on schools restrictions : this provoked confusion and frustration among CB citizens**

4. Other cross-border public services

- **RO-HU:** During the crisis, Săcueni experienced an inland water inundation. **In normal times, volunteers, firefighters from the Hungarian side offer their help**, but due to the coronavirus **they were not able to go**. They tried to send tools, food, but the situation was resolved as the neighbouring settlements in Romania joined their forces.

- **CZ-PL:** In April a forest fire went off nearby the border in Czech Republic: **notwithstanding the closure of the border, the German firemen went to help** putting the fire off.
- **DE-DK:** The **cross-border fire fighter's service continued**, about which the Euroregion was very glad, being this being a well-established service in the region.

Effects on other CPS

- ✓ **Most CPS which continued operating during the lockdown are involved in firefighting and natural hazards management**

E. Economic activities

The single market and freedom of movement have largely contributed to the emergence of functional areas across the EU internal borders, where people often seize this opportunity to purchase goods and services at lower prices on the other side of the border, and where businesses develop CB activities. In many areas, especially where products' taxation differs, many border shops have been set up for years. These shops, are entirely reliant on cross-border customers. Similarly, many people, often self-employed, have their business across the two countries and were therefore severely affected by the crisis.

Finally, the impact on CB touristic activities was very important. Even though we will see that some 'proximity' tourism trends have sometimes emerged.

This chapter will try not to focus on sectors which suffered for solely being locked down, but due of the closing of the border.

1. Cross-border shopping and retail experiencing their complete dependence on CB customers

Border shops generally experienced a strong reduction in the number of customers:

- **ES-FR:** Spanish Border shops, also known as "*ventas*", were extremely affected: **more than 90% of their customers are from the other side of the border**. Because of the absence of usual customers, these shops **shut down completely during 3 months**. However, since the borders reopened, **life has restarted almost as before**.
- **BE-NL:** There was an enormous impact on shops on the Dutch side of the border, who are **highly dependent on Belgian customers**. They were allowed to stay open in the NL but due to the border controls there were no customers.
- **DE-NL:** Naturally, entrepreneurs from one country who depend very much on customers from the other country, were more affected than those entrepreneurs whose customers are in the same country.
- **FR-DE:** In the city of Kehl, border shops and a large part of the city's economy are entirely reliant on French customers. The health crisis and the closure of borders **revealed to shopkeepers the importance of cross-border purchasing volumes** of certain everyday consumer products (tobacco, petrol, etc.) with high tax differentials. The city of Kehl officials speak of a situation of "**economic asphyxia**" with **medium-term effects on the decrease in public resources and investments**.
- **IT-SI:** Local economies of the two cities of the EGTC GO are extremely intertwined: several people from Italy go to shop, eat at restaurants or play at Nova Gorica's Casino. The impact was severe, since especially **Nova**

Gorica's economy especially depends on Italian customers and consumers. Nova Gorica's Mayor complained several times about these national decisions as its city was the one suffering the most. It is clear that the **impact of the lockdown** was, in this case, **amplified by the border closure**.

- **HU-SI:** During the lockdown, when it comes to shopping in Hungary, the changes in attendance were noticeable: more people would have gone the other side if they had been allowed to.

Nonetheless, if the side were people used to go shopping the most before the shutdown is the most penalised, shops on the other side sometimes saw the benefits of this closure, receiving more customers than usual:

- **DK-DE:** With regard to cross-border activities, the biggest impact hit cross-border trade, which was completely and suddenly halted as people could not cross the border to shop. This also heavily affected retail. Subject of debates are for example "frontier shops": many Danes go to Germany to buy products which are cheaper. **This trend makes smaller shops in Denmark run out of business. This changed** while the border was closed, and as soon as the restrictions were lifted the **debates** commenced again, with **renewed vigour**.

In some areas, the impact of these shutdowns is sometimes still perceived on people habits a few months after:

- **PL-CZ-DE:** the essential shopping for food and primary necessities was **only allowed in the country of residence** with no possibility to cross the border – even if shops on the other side(s) were the closest ones. The borders closure had, then, a **big impact on the economic habits** of many citizens, as the access to certain goods at a more convenient price sold in the neighbouring country was suddenly forbidden. Now the situation is much better compared to some months ago, but **many people are still a bit hesitant** to cross the boundaries so **regular selling features have not been restored yet**.

In some other CB regions, the impact was lower:

- **CZ-DE (Elbe-Labe):** In the Euroregion there are not many cross-border shopping activities. Just some individual shops which sell products that are cheaper in Czech Republic (cigarettes and petrol) were affected, but this is **not a very wide-spread phenomenon**.

2. A serious challenge for businesses:

In terms of businesses and enterprises, some groups or sectors were more affected than others:

- **NL-BE:** Cross border 'free-lancers' or one-man-business service providers were hit very hard by the crisis. There's been a lot of pressure from the Euroregions to the national level to adjust the supportive measures to support this group as well. At the moment the Dutch consider this supportive measure bound to country of residence and Belgium considers this linked to contributions to their social security. Therefore a **Belgian independent worker who provides his/her services in the Netherlands, doesn't qualify for support in neither country**. Both governments were addressed by parliamentarians, but neither budged and both are unwilling to adjust their conditions for the support.
Generally speaking, a lot of support was given to workers both in Belgium and in The Netherlands, but **cross-border free-lancers were left behind** – and **this has not been solved yet**. This is expected to concern several thousands (approximately five thousands – a precise evaluation is not available).
- **ES-PT:** Due to the reduction of border crossings, workers with their businesses a few feet from their homes found they had to make vast detours to get there.
- **AT-IT:** Among the most affected groups we can count the **transport companies** offering journeys across the border.
- **HU-SI:** Employees in trade and commerce were among the most affected groups.

Sometimes, effects are still there a few months after the end of the lockdown:

- **AT-HU:** In normal times, in Szentgotthárd (HU) there is an important service sector: people from Austria use to come to eat in restaurants, to have a cup of coffee, to ride their bikes. During the crisis, this business disappeared. Today, **the situation is still not the same as before**: Austrians are coming back, but it is still not the same. For example, clients of masseurs in the area are not coming back: people are still afraid.

Finally, the reopening of business activities did not happen without a few challenges:

- **CZ:** From Mid-May Czechia allowed also allowed **business trips** as good reasons to enter, on condition of testing negatively to coronavirus, allowing thus also allowing frontier workers in non-relevant jobs to enter. They needed to repeat the test every 30 days. Covid-19 tests were quite expensive in the beginning (about 200 Euros per test). Many **Saxon companies took over the costs of the tests for their Czech employees**. Some initiatives were taken also at the regional level to support companies (e.g. the county south of Dresden), as the relevance of Czech employees for the economy of the area was evident.

- **ES-PT:** Another issue was when **economic activity was relaunched but borders** were not opened. This affected many businesses that depend on the arrival of people from the other side, the most obvious being hotels, tourism, restaurants and similar. One example is the **survey** carried out by the Confederation of Businessmen of Northern Portugal to its members, in which it was found that, in many cases, especially in cases of catering, up to **60% of their business depended on Galician citizens**. This was aggravated by the fact that **they could formally open, but did not have the clientele** since they could not cross the border.
Good practice: In Cerveira-Tomiño they have an institution called "As Valedoras do Eurociudadano" (The Eurocitizen's Advocates) that made a **report** in which they spoke about the **economic and labor activity**, the **negative economic effects**, the difficulties to access to certain services and a fourth one that is the maintenance of many familiar and social relations.

3. Impact on touristic activities across the border and on second homeowners

Touristic flows were completely reduced during the spring. The economic loss is consistent, especially when it comes to destinations relying on tourists from the other side of the border.

- **AT-HU: Smaller accommodations are the ones that suffered the most in the long run:** many places with 10-15 rooms were not able to restart their business, because tourists tend to turn to main solutions: either in a big, reliable hotel, or in private apartments, where they can stay with their family. Also, the Easter holidays fell into the period of restrictions: in Órség or Vendvidék there were still many visitors so the mayors had to introduce some restrictions for example sending back the people from Budapest.
 The hospitality sector collapsed in Austria too, that is the reason why **several CB commuters from Hungary lost their job**.
- **AT-SK-HU:** In Rajka and its surrounding area restaurants, guest houses, accommodations suffered. One of them which provided accommodation for guest workers has already closed. **Transit tourism is popular in this area, but it dramatically reduced**, which is perceptible on a small city economy.
- **DE-DK:** Tourists were also confronted with some difficulties due to restrictions in Denmark, which raises many questions (due to the **minimum of 6 days stay**) which were addressed to the consulting service of the Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig. The region was hit with **massive economic losses**, especially in tourism – **one of the main industries of the region**. The tourism sector as well as **entertainment** were affected by

the closure of the border – normally, many Danes go to Flensburg (DE) to dine out and Germans go to theatre in Denmark.

- **RO-BG:** Businesses in the Bulgarian seaside are happy that Romanians are still coming as **coastal tourism is lagging behind**, according to the TV news.

Several residents on one side of the border own second homes on the other side. These people were not always able to cross the border to reach their properties:

- **FR-ES:** In Cerdanya Valley, close to the Spanish border, strong tensions arose in certain sectors, particularly in the higher cantons, due to the presence of many Spaniards from Catalonia who **did not comply with the isolation regulations and went to their second homes**. Following these events, the French local officials formulated requests for the reinforcement of border control measures.
- **AT-HU:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary received a special request from its Austrian counterpart: **Austrian citizens own summer houses at Lake Balaton**, their lawn had to be mowed and they could not cross the border, but also family reunification demands etc.
- **IT-AT:** This area was among the first EU borders which had two phase the outbreak of the pandemic. The first question had to do with the **winter touristic season**, in order to know whether they were allowed to continue or not. On March 15th, Tirol decided to close ski facilities. Moreover, many **Austrians own second houses in Italy** and also requested to be able to cross.
- **ES-FR (NAEN):** Many Spanish people from Irun **own a house and live in Hendaye**. These were among the most affected as they could not cross the border to go to Spain.

The reopening was a crucial moment for the tourism industry:

- **CZ-DE:** At the end of May, Czech Republic announced its plan to ease the restrictions: from the 15th of June a system gradually allowing EU citizens to enter Czech Republic was to be introduced. However, as the **Czech prime minister visited the border area** of Karlovy Vary, a region heavily relying on German tourists, he was very **impressed seeing the impact of the closure of the border**, which apparently was not clear to him before. The same evening he announced that the day after the border would be opened. This happened **11 days before the planned re-opening**, and contributed to the loss of trust among the population: the plans that had been prepared, were suddenly abandoned.
- **LU-FR-DE:** In the post-lockdown phase, to relaunch alternative types of tourism within the Quattropole network (Luxembourg City, Metz,

Saarbrücken and Trier), a call was launched with the goal of promoting cross-border cycling tourism. The idea was to boost solutions to **support the local tourism industry while ensuring the physical distancing of people**. Quattropole also published a bilingual brochure encouraging the public to use bicycles in Luxembourg City, Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier.

On the other side, a few positive effects on local CB tourism were also observed:

- **SE-DK:** Around 10 000 people from Denmark own a cottage in Sweden. **CB tourism increased this summer**. Denmark was less strict with its nationals who went on holidays in Sweden, while for Swedish people coming to DK it was more difficult, as they had to present a **6-night booking** for instance.
- **HU-SI:** Hungary became a popular destination because people living in Slovenia would actually prefer going on holiday in this direction given that Slovenia is mildly **crowded** and the number of new infections rose in Croatia. A positive effect of the lockdown was the **growth of local tourism**.
- **DK-DE:** An unexpected positive effect is that the restrictions might **bring a renewed curiosity about the neighbouring country**: since people were not allowed to visit areas in their regions that are located on the other side of the border for some time, they might be more willing to go visit them once the restrictions are lifted. However, uncertainties and the need to be cautious are still very present – and there is the impression that on one side people are more cautious than on the other one.

Impact on economic activities (shops, businesses, tourism)

- ✓ **Border shops were hit hard by border measures as their clientele mainly comes from the other side of the border**
- ✓ **Since the reopening, most customers restarted their shopping as before, even though numbers are still not the same. Some border areas even recorded a massive afflux of border shoppers during the day of the border reopening (especially for tobacco, etc.)**
- ✓ **People who had their businesses across the border experienced a difficult time, especially in the case of self-employed individuals, who, in some cases, did not receive any help by the national government because of their specific status**
- ✓ **A heavy impact was recorded on touristic destinations who rely on tourists from the neighbouring country or on "transit tourism"**
- ✓ **Border reopening were often conceived as a way to boost tourism. Since then, some new "proximity" tourism trends were observed during the summer**

F. Social and cultural activities

Cross-border interactions are not limited to economic flows of people goods and services. The daily life of citizens living in these places, which share common cultural and human ties, was extremely disrupted. Many people found themselves separated by a border that, for many, had been forgotten.

Some stakeholders stressed the importance of also taking into account the effects of these decisions on people mind-sets. We report below the quote by an interviewee on the DK-DE border:

"Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig (DK-DE) is taking records of the developments, and hopes that a comprehensive study will be made, taking into account also the psychological consequences, and not only economic and financial ones, utilising this to learn lessons on the cultural level."

1. Impact on family life and social interactions

- **FR-BE:** The EGTC of the LKT Eurometropolis received a large number of **testimonies** and requests from people who experienced this division in their own family or couple. If spousal visits were allowed in Belgium, Franco-Belgian **couples could no longer see each other** because of the ban on crossing the barriers.
- **AT-IT:** the EGTC received more than 50 complaints from separated families who could not visit each other without the obligation to self-isolate. Different definition of a family were applied in the two countries: Italy considered 'families' as the households, while Austria had a larger legal definition of a family (relatives, including grandparents, cousins...).
- **FR-CH:** Articles in the press reported in particular on the problems linked to the **reunion of cross-border couples**, with special measures taken by Switzerland, for example, to enable them to move around and meet up. **10,000 special permits were issued** by the Swiss Confederation.
- **NL-BE:** 18th of May was **Mother's day** and several mayors and a governor in the Belgian border region, communicated an **exception to cross the border for family visit**. The Belgian Minister of Interior forbade it. Socially speaking it was hard for cross border families and friends. Whereas in both countries it was possible at one point or another to see and speak to each other, this was **not the case in a CB situation**.
- **DK-DE:** Border closure meant separation in many ways, and to regulate private reasons was particularly challenging. This **affected particularly minorities** which live in the area, having **familiar and personal ties on both sides** of the border. Some German-Danish couples, especially some

elderly ones, received a striking press coverage during this period. Some of these “divided lovers” met at the border every day to spend time together.³⁹

- **HU-SI:** Among individuals, the situation was worse in close-knit families, where a certain part of the family moved to the other side of the border.
- **CZ-PL-DE: Quarantine measures for CB workers led several employees to the impossibility of seeing their families for a long period of time.** Emblematic was the case of a Polish bus driver who decided to remain in Czechia in a flat that was literally just few meters far from the border. From there, he could see his wife and children on the other side, as no physical barriers were posed, but they could not spend time together on the same territory.
- **CZ-DE:** Families, partners with no official documents, friends: private relations were halted for the whole period of the border closure.

Sometimes borders which had reopened got closed again just a few weeks after the reopening. This engendered some problematic cases:

- **HU-SI border:** as an example, the daughter of an elderly man from Kétyölgy (HU) was not able to cross the border to take care of him, because she was married, lived in an adjacent Slovenian village and did not renew her Hungarian papers and did not own a property. Therefore she applied for a unique request to cross the border, but she got it only 10 days later. **By the time she received the permission, the borders got closed again.** What made the situation even more complicated is that the existing property was not enough, **a land use certificate was requested.**

2. Cultural events and activities

Many important cross-border cultural celebrations had to be cancelled because of the new restrictions. However, local CB cooperation structures tried as hard as possible to keep the cooperation spirit alive during these difficult times.

- **IT-SI:** Between Gorizia and Nova Gorica, barriers appeared overnight. The two cities, which are currently presenting a joint bid to become **European Capital of Culture 2025** (with a final decision to be taken by the jury), used this crisis as an opportunity to promote the “Borderless” spirit which distinguishes this CB urban area. Although **many cultural events related to the ECoC bid were cancelled**, the EGTC GO started filming people who organised informal meetings with friends and relatives in front of the barriers separating the two countries. Some pictures of the local volleyball team playing across the new metal grids were mediated via social

³⁹ Love in time of coronavirus: octogenarians picnic at Danish-German border, Reuters, 3 April 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-germany-separated-idUSKBN21L2DR>

networks. Symbolically, the two mayors also organised a face-to-face meeting by installing two tables right next to the new fence.

- **DK-DE:** This crisis brought a particular political note to the issue, particularly in the year in which Sønderjylland-Schleswig celebrates its **100-year anniversary of the border drawing** as a result of the referendum following the Versailles Treaty and the birthday of the national minorities⁴⁰, which became the **official Danish-German year of cultural friendship**⁴¹. All **events were cancelled**, the celebrations for the year of German-Danish cultural friendship had to be cancelled as only a small part could have been substituted by online events.
- **CZ-PL-DE:** the events industry is extremely affected, as most of the initiatives envisaged during the summer were cancelled or ceased to exist. The **Euroregions** proved to be important also in **organising grassroots events to keep the moral** of local population and of people engaged in cross-border cooperation high.
- **CZ-DE:** A long term effect is that exchanges and get-together for pupils on the two sides are also affected: Saxony restricted the movement of **school trips which are not allowed to take place abroad for this year** at least. And this **affects some of the local EGTC's projects**, which now cannot be implemented.
- **BE-FR:** In Chameleux (Florenville, BE) local officials organised a symbolic CB party⁴² for the reopening of the border. The local shopkeepers started displaying stickers in shop windows and prepared a week of "Belgian-French friendship" between 7 and 14 July.

Impact social interaction and cultural activities

- ✓ **Many families and couples had to spend months separated from each other**
- ✓ **This aspect affected particularly minorities with relatives on both sides**
- ✓ **A few exceptions were made and some countries delivered special permits**
- ✓ **EGTC and Euroregions played a vital role in keeping the cooperation spirit alive during the crisis**
- ✓ **Cultural events were cancelled. In some areas, local initiatives to celebrate the reopening of the border were organised**

⁴⁰ https://schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Themen/V/volksabstimmung_100_jahre.html

⁴¹ <https://tyskland.um.dk/de/kultur-und-kreativitaet/freundschaftsjahr-2020/>

⁴² France Bleu, « Une fête franco-belge, à Florenville, pour célébrer la réouverture des frontières », <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/insolite/une-fete-franco-belge-a-florenville-pour-celebrer-la-reouverture-des-frontieres-1592210873>

G. Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures

1. Frustration, discriminatory acts and loss of mutual trust

In many cases, there was a general acceptance and support for border shutdowns, at least during the strict lockdown period experienced by many countries:

- **AT-HU:** People accepted it, there were no revolts; obviously there were people who did not like it, they wanted to go shopping, to visit relatives. The crisis intensified the feeling of the border's existence, because earlier it was possible to travel freely, but the situation was different, the border became visible, which recalled the previous times, but it was not that traumatic, since the border crossing was not completely impossible. In this area, **people did not consider the border as a risk, they were rather afraid of people coming from farther places, not from direct neighbours.** Therefore people did not consider the flows of commuters as dangerous.
- **CZ, PL:** Despite the actions of solidarity and closeness carried out by some groups residing in the border regions, the great majority of the citizens in Czechia and Poland **strongly supported the closure of the border.** A national poll administered in Czechia, showed, for example, that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the population was in favour of the measures undertaken, at least on as temporary solutions. Therefore, we could surely say that **borders were mainly perceived as a protection towards "external" risks.**
- **CZ-DE:** The closure of the border was **not questioned**, and there was hardly any media attention. Loss of mutual trust and fear of the neighbour started spreading fast. The media, including the press, have a big responsibility.
- **ES-PT:** In the EGTC Norte-Galicia, these measures did not respect a principle of proportionality: if the situation was really difficult in the Greater Madrid area and in Catalonia, this was not the case in Galicia. However, the **Portuguese press**, except for some very specific media from the North, **talked about the situation in Spain in general and not about the situation in Galicia.** The **breakdown of reliability** in the other was strong, while in reality the data for Galicia and Northern Portugal were quite similar and even better in Galicia than in Northern Portugal. But since only the data from Spain was published in the press, this reality was not taken into account. This generated a **very significant loss of confidence.**
- **RO-HU:** in Hungary it is often heard that *"it is so good that they closed the borders, because Romanians can't come here to infect us"* – statistically it is understandable that they are afraid, and the **border symbolizes this protection.** On the other side, in Romania, it is the opposite: people are more sceptical, they were rather angry about the border closure and that

they were the last ones to open them; they feel like opening the borders as last ones is about politics.

Discriminatory behaviours, such as verbal aggressions, represented some of the worst effects of the crisis:

- **NL-BE:** The closing of the border was kind of **welcomed in the beginning by the Belgians**, because the Dutch still followed the idea of '**herd-immunity**'. Thus a lot of Belgians were rather scared of the Dutch. However the Dutch soon left this approach and the statistics (excluding retirement homes) were more or less the same. When this happened, the feeling was very ambiguous to the border closure. For people who didn't have to cross it, it was all fine. For people who live a CB-life, it was a disaster. Mostly there was a complete incomprehension for the locals to see a Belgian car in the Netherlands or the other way around. There was **a harsh treatment and intolerance for the 'other'**. The closing of the border may have set CB-cooperation to clear the border in the minds of the people, years and years back. Media and social media reported **many events of verbal aggression** toward citizens of one country being in the neighbouring one. Partially, the situation of **loss of trust** is still present, mainly because some measures on social distancing implemented by Belgium and the Netherlands are different. **The main impact of the crisis is that the trust is gone, the progress took several steps back.**
- **FR-DE:** As Alsace and Moselle were among the first outbreaks of COVID-19 on French territory, most inhabitants of the neighbouring German regions experienced the closure of the borders as a **bulwark against the spread of the virus**. Thus, since the closure of the borders on 16 March 2020, French border residents had to justify their passage to Germany. The situation at the border quickly became **very tense**: French citizens felt **undesirable** in shops, while Germans continued to cross the border into France without any problems. According to the President of the Committee for the Defence of Border Workers, his association received many calls every day to denounce this **new form of discrimination**. These situations concerned French people, but also Germans living in France. However, these different cases reported **do not necessarily represent the general opinion** of the population. Saarland's elected representatives immediately **condemned these xenophobic acts** while recalling their attachment to France and cross-border ties. It should also be noted that these manifestations of hostility or even denunciation of the French were **less frequent in the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict**, probably because of the **great economic dependence** of the Rhine strip on the Strasbourg metropolis, painfully revealed by the closure of the border.
- **IT-CH:** the CB region, one of the most intertwined in terms of labour market, experienced serious tensions. Some **discriminatory acts** were

reported, as of course people from Lombardy were identified as '**virus carriers**'. On the other side, workers from Italy estimated that Switzerland had not taken the situation seriously enough and that the country was **not doing enough to tackle the pandemic**. They felt in danger under the Swiss 'looser' measures (e.g. no mandatory face masks for the Swiss).

With the sudden reopening on June 3rd, contagion rates in Lombardy were still quite high and several **local Swiss politicians demanded to keep in place all the border controls** until a clear sign of improvement of the disease situation in Italy.

Despite these acts, the diplomatic channels worked effectively and the Regio Insubrica managed to act as a CB facilitator and as an information provider, especially since most of the measures were not perfectly understood on the other side. These **pedagogic actions allowed preventing discriminatory acts**.

- **FR-BE:** On this border as well, some citizens provided local cross-border structures with evidence of the resurgence of hostile behaviour towards nationals of the neighbouring country.

CB citizens also started expressing their frustration and their confusion regarding the border closure restrictions by different means:

- **PL-DE:** Closure of the border was not very well accepted – as the region was not heavily affected by the pandemic. People were **ready to respect hygiene measures to prevent the spreading of the pandemic**, so it felt hard to understand why it would have not been possible to continue meeting project partners, for example, if **maintaining the required distance** and other measures.
- **SE-DK:** An online forum on Facebook used by CB inhabitants and commuters became the virtual place where people **shared their daily frustration**. Discussions were quite harsh sometimes. **This situation really divided this cross-border region in a way**. It was tough for people who benefit from the common market. There was a lot of frustration all along, many people had lost their jobs. **People felt split, as they received different recommendations from the two sides**. Also, the several media spoke of the "*Death of Öresund region*".

A lot of work was done with the Nordic council of Ministers. A **survey**⁴³ was sent out to commuters in all the Nordic CB regions. The results show that commuters expected much more precise information and clarifications from the national level.

⁴³ <https://surveys.analyzer.com/survey/linkindex?pid=s8cucf2c&langIdent=se>



- **ES-FR:** Enquiry carried out by the Euroregion NAEN: 70% of the CB citizen who contributed to the questionnaire consider they were entirely affected by the border closure. Almost **90% of them had to stop regular activities**. Families and personal relationships across the border are **very intertwined** in the area. The **sense of belonging to a common territory is really strong** and people did not understand why the border was closed in the same functional area.
- **DK-DE:** To travel to Denmark, already since 2016 controls had been introduced, so **in this region people are used to them**, but having to present a **justification and a certificate** confirming that the reason for crossing the border was legitimate was a novelty and created frustration. There are uncertainties now as for whether, once the pandemic is over, the controls at the Danish border will be resumed as they were before, or if they will be nullified completely. The **Danish public opinion on the border controls is divided**.
Measures introduced to contain Covid-19 were similar, yet very different for some aspects – In Denmark they were more flexible: for instance, the use of masks in Denmark had been imposed only limitedly. Such **differences brought some cultural misunderstanding and distancing**.
- **NL-BE:** The first phase and measures were very **unclear and confusing**. There was little clear communication – authorities communicated a lot, but because the needs of border regions were not taken into account, communication was not clear enough for border regions, and this had implications on how the measures were implemented. Consequently, measures were not followed nor implemented in an unambiguously manner. This was rather **frustrating for people, public information providers and not in the least the border police**.
- **AT-IT:** Since Italy reopened its borders on June 3rd, Austria –which had kept some border controls- **appeared to the eyes of many as “too strict”**, generating frustration among the citizens. Sudtirlö started a strong **lobbying** towards the Austrian federal government in order to ease the circulation between the Southern and the Northern Tyrol. **No discrimination acts** were recorded in this border area.

Along some borders, a change in the degree of acceptance was observed between the different periods:

- **RO-BG:** Back in March and April people accepted it much **more easily** because they were **scared**. However, during the **summer it is more difficult** to get people to accept and follow the recommendations to stay at home and not travel.
- **HU-SI:** Questions regarding **sense of belonging** and social inclusion came to light, especially among minorities. **Discontent began to increase** when Hungary started to lift travel restrictions with Vojvodina and not with Slovenia as well.

Most of the times, border shutdowns reopened scars from the past:

- **IT-FR:** On the French-Italian border, and more precisely in the Roya valley, these restrictions, badly experienced by French citizens who had to cross the Italian territory to get the French coast where jobs are, **reopened scars from past conflicts and crises**. André Ipert, mayor of Breil-sur-Roya, shared his discussion with a representative of the neighbouring town of Olivetta (IT), who told him, as if he was in a spirit of **revenge**, that the previous **migrant crisis** at the border and the French **anti-19-tonne** vehicles regulation had also harmed his own territory and its citizens.



8. Border controls at the France-Italy border, in Ventimiglia

- **SI-IT:** Italian people's first reaction to the Slovenia closing all its border crossings was quite **traumatic** as it was perceived as a way to "**close them into a lazaret**". This trauma may have an important negative **impact on 20 years of CB cooperation achievements**, especially on mind-sets. Especially on a border which has a **strong historic past of divisions and conflict**.

Luckily, local mayors played a very positive role: since the very beginning, the Italian Mayor of Gorizia kept informed the two mayors of the two Slovenian municipalities informed, with regular updates. They also launched some initiatives targeting national authorities advocating for increased consideration of border specificities.

- **HU-SI-AT:** As in the area we're dealing with small border crossing points, which are important for people's comfort, this new situation shocked them, as it **recalled situations going back decades**. People **restarted appreciating the value of open borders** and the value of the already acquired freedom has increased.

Finally, the following quote by an interviewee on the BE-NL border sums-up some of the challenges ahead in border areas as follow-up to the COVID-19 crisis:

"The real long term effect won't be measured in effects on shopping or tourism but on the breaking of the cross-border psychology. Clearing border inside peoples' heads to stimulate CB work/study/ and so on is a lengthy and difficult process. Every bad example of coordination of social security you have to combat with 3 wins. With the closing of the border and the creation of incomprehension and intolerance for the other, the work was set back with years and years. Trust between the people on the one hand and the social system and administrative procedures on the other hand, was hit hard. Comments in papers and on social media hardened concerning 'the other'. This will take a lot of time, resources and courage to fix. In this sense, cross-border relations, especially with regard to frontier workers and living in the cross-border areas will suffer a long term effect."

Border closures causing frustration, discriminatory acts and an increased lack of mutual trust

- ✓ **The fact of receiving different measures on the two sides caused a lot of confusion for CB citizens**
- ✓ **Frustration was the most common feeling among the people whose life extends across border**
- ✓ **However, in many places, border shutdowns were perceived as a barrier protecting from the virus**
- ✓ **Several discriminatory acts were reported in the most tense border regions, often corresponding to places where the pandemic was hitting hard**
- ✓ **Border restrictions often opened scars from the past, before Schengen agreements, and bringing CB cooperation years and years backwards**
- ✓ **The media played both a positive (information, documenting solidarity) and negative role, fuelling a climate of mistrust**

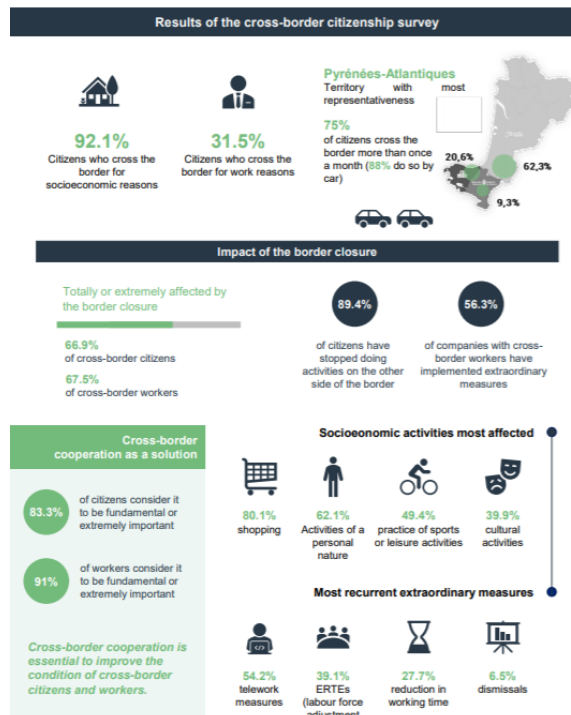
2. Demonstrations, petitions and other initiatives in favour of border reopening

Citizen reactions materialised in many different ways, depending on the border region, on the border measures and on the requests of the local inhabitants. This chapter aims at enlightening some of these initiatives.

Some online petitions targeting national authorities were started up by citizens or by local elected officials, requesting to ease the daily life of border inhabitants:

- **IT-FR:** In the Roya valley, which is shared between France and Italy, the introduction of systematic controls by the Italian authorities caused great tension among the inhabitants of the French side, for whom the shortest route to the coast runs through Italian territory. An **online petition** was therefore launched jointly by Laurence BOETTI-FORESTIER, Regional Councillor of the South Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region and Sébastien OLHARAN, Mayor of Breil-sur-Roya. This text asked for a **dialogue to be initiated between the French and Italian authorities** so that an agreement could be reached allowing the French to pass through Italy to reach the coast for medical or professional purposes.
- **FR-BE:** A Belgian citizen launched a petition on the online platform "Change.org" entitled "Freedom of movement between France and Belgium!"⁴⁴. This text, pointing out **the absurdity of these controls** for a cross-border territory as integrated as that of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, received **more than 6,000 signatures**.
- **NL-BE:** Petitions were started asking for the easing of restriction on border closure, especially **to allow family visits**, especially after the debacle on mother's day. The petition for reopening the border, by the 25th of May 2020, was **signed over 15 000 times**, and this might have increased in the following days. Moreover, the Euregion Meuse Rhine and Scheldemond started an action as well: **local mayors** were asked for their support by signing a **letter of support** for opening the borders and coordinating with the local governments in the CB-area.
- **ES-FR (NAEN):** citizens signed an **online letter targeting the French Prefecture** asking the reopening of the border. Also, at the end of the survey that the Euroregion carried out there was an option for **additional comments**: about 80% of the people who responded took this opportunity to express their wish to reopen this border or to stress the absurdity of this measure.

⁴⁴ https://www.change.org/p/les-gouvernements-belges-et-fran%C3%A7ais-la-libert%C3%A9-de-circuler-librement-entre-la-france-et-la-belgique?recruiter=854225969&recruited_by_id=7d96b310-09bc-11e8-80ee-afb301deeb44&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=petition_dashboard



9. Extract from the report published by the NAEN Euroregion, based on the survey: "Economic and social impact of closing borders"⁴⁵

- **PT-ES:** In the beginning of May, the "Iberian Eurocities" sent a strong message to the governments of Spain and Portugal: they declared that they wanted their Eurocitizens not to suffer anymore from the new "wall" at the border. They therefore called for *"the crossing of residents between border municipalities to be facilitated, under the same legal and public health control terms as they have in the other State"*⁴⁶. During the first online meeting, which was the first time that all the Mayors/Presidents of the seven Iberian Eurocities met in the same forum, Pablo Rivera, Secretary General of the Iberian Network of Cross-Border Entities (RIET), stated that *"in the crisis of the covid-19 pandemic, CB communities have not been taken into account among the consequences of the measures taken by the governments in Lisbon and Madrid"*.

On May 9th, Europe day, a joint Manifesto⁴⁷ (*Manifiesto Eurociudades de La Raya Hispano-Lusa*) signed by all the parties was published.



10. Logo of the Iberian Eurocities' network

⁴⁵ Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre, <https://www.e-docpro.fr/api/shared/document/ca848de4-cdac-11ea-ad18-15631c0902b9/Informe%20cierre%20frontera%20EN.pdf>

⁴⁶ 'Las Eurociudades lanzarán un manifiesto ibérico reclamando la libertad de circulación transfronteriza para sus ciudadanos', El Trapezio, May 7, 2020, https://eltrapezio.eu/es/espana/las-eurociudades-lanzaran-un-manifiesto-iberico-reclamando-la-libertad-de-circulacion-transfronteriza-para-sus-ciudadanos_8928.html

⁴⁷ « Manifiesto Eurociudades de La Raya Hispano-Lusa », May 9th <https://www.poctep.eu/pt-pt/2014-2020/manifiesto-eurociudades-de-la-raya-hispano-lusa>

- **BE-FR:** The Belgian mutual insurance company “Solidaris” also took a proactive role by publishing a Manifesto entitled “CALL TO ENSURE THE OPENING UP OF CROSS-BORDER AREAS IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES!”⁴⁸ and requesting the adoption and implementation of flagship measures in the field of CB healthcare cooperation.
- **LU-DE:** During the first week of May and on the Europe Day, Luxembourg's municipalities bordering Germany lowered the European flags hoisted in front of their town halls to protest against Berlin's decision to extend the closure of the border.⁴⁹ The same week, speaking in a radio interview, Foreign Affairs Minister Asselborn (LU) said: *“Germans, French and Luxembourgers have all grown up together here on the borders. They are used to seeing bridges, not borders, so when all of a sudden they see breezeblock barriers installed on the bridges, they just can’t understand it. These barriers have to go and soon.”*⁵⁰

Some groups also managed to successfully organise peaceful demonstrations in favour of border reopening:

- **DE-PL-CZ:** There was also a kind of “emotional” impact on the civil society: citizens who got used to live in constant contact with their neighbours, **felt their absence deeply**. This is why, several **demonstrations of reciprocal sympathy** were organised on either sides of the boundaries with the aim of **expressing closeness to the counterparts**. There were some **protests** against the border restrictions, mainly led by commuters facing the impossibility to carry on working activities regularly. Among others, the most significant demonstration took place in the divided town of Český Těšín/Cieszyn (PL-CZ) – where the highest levels of mutual interactions are usually observed. Besides this, there were several demonstrations of border closeness organised by Euroregions or simple groups of citizens, such as the “**border beer drinking**” promoted by Euroregion Nysa, through which people residing on the different sides of the tri-national border regions, “met” (even if separated) to cheer each other up. Furthermore, the case of the border city of Cieszyn, where **banners** showing solidarity and empathy to the neighbours were **hung on the bridge dividing the city** and **songs in both languages were sung** on both sides of the river.
- **PL-DE: Demonstrations** were organised all along the German-Polish border.

⁴⁸ Solidaris, APPEL POUR GARANTIR L’OUVERTURE DES ZONES TRANSFRONTALIÈRES DANS LE DOMAINE DE LA SANTÉ, EN TOUTES CIRCONSTANCES!, <https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21AD5R%5F%2DgVtKQWwpU&cid=F072C86BAB283E5E&id=F072C86BAB283E5E%21110&parId=F072C86BAB283E5E%21106&o=OneUp>

⁴⁹ « Pressions sur l'Allemagne pour une réouverture rapide des frontières », RTL.lu, 10.05.2020, <https://5minutes.rtl.lu/actu/frontieres/a/1515361.html>

⁵⁰ JAN WÖRNER, SPEECH GIVEN ON EUROPE DAY, DARMSTADT, MAY 2020, <https://blogs.esa.int/janwoerner/2020/05/12/speech-given-on-europe-day-2020/>

Also the Euroregion initiated activities: the President of the Euroregion appealed to the Polish Prime Minister and to the Polish President, and the appeal was co-signed by the German counterpart as well as by the other Euroregions along the border and distributed. The Euroregion also gave many **press releases via local media** to raise awareness of the situation and launched an online **photo campaign** to revive the contact with the Polish colleagues under the motto "**stronger together**". Many people followed it and welcomed the campaign.

A positive result of this situation is that the others were missed, and so was the daily "border-less" life, especially in the twin city. This made people **value more their 'normal' freedom**.

- **CZ-DE:** Starting from May, a **spontaneous grass-root movement organised meetings along the border**, where people got together at certain spots at the borders. These groups, organised via Facebook, where on both sides – yet more populated on the German side –, and brought together people who are in favour of cross-border cooperation. These meetings took place every 2 weeks on Saturdays until the borders opened again, and **gained visibility in the local media**. One of these **Facebook group gathered 1,500 people**, which is not irrelevant in such a sparsely populated cross-border region.

Local actors are now trying to maintain these groups and **keep its spirit alive** – the Euroregion El-be/Labe for example financially supported some meetings of these people, to **find ways to use this momentum**.

The fact that many people came together was a **positive effect which stemmed from the border closure**. Another positive aspect is that became clear the importance of having open borders became clear, and that this is not to be taken for granted.

- **LU-DE-FR-BE: Europe Day (9 May)** was an opportunity for many European citizens living in cross-border areas to organise events calling for the reopening of borders. Several **peaceful rallies** took place in Luxembourg municipalities. This was an opportunity to express the participants' dissatisfaction with the closure of the borders.
- **FR-DE:** On the same day, in Kehl, between 100 and 200 French and German residents of this city gathered next to the Rhine, just before noon, to **express their solidarity** with their neighbours and challenge the closure of the borders in a space as closely interconnected as this cross-border conurbation.

Other forms of initiatives targeting the cross-border community saw the light during the pandemic:

- **SI-IT:** the cooperation spirit was kept alive during this difficult period among the inhabitants, also thanks to the **initiatives taken by two mayors**, which aimed at raising awareness on the interdependencies.

As Nova Gorica and Gorizia are currently among the finalist cities to become European capital of Culture in 2025, the EGTC GO seized this border closure as an opportunity to communicate and publish videos of people playing volleyball and meeting on the two sides of the barriers that were installed on the borderline. People followed all these activities with enthusiasm.

This period also meant a **renewed interest towards the “other”**: 30 March saw the launch of free **online lessons to learn Italian and Slovenian**: an EGTC GO initiative to make Italians and Slovenians feel closer to one another in these difficult times. The first online lesson in each of the courses attracted 1 300 views: a success that exceeded all expectations. If, on one side, the border closure was somehow traumatic, on the other it awakened people’s consciousness on the **absurdity of “re-bordering”** the two cities.

- **IT-AT**: The 18 municipalities composing the “Wipptal Interreg Council”, the area between Vipiteno (IT) and Innsbruck (AT) launched a **common initiative** by preparing a resolution addressed to the President of the two provinces, inciting them to **reopen the border as soon as possible**.
- **IT-CH**: Regio Insubrica regularly received calls, mostly from local elected representatives, for border reopening or regarding critical situations experienced by CB workers.

Finally, the following quote by an interviewee on the CZ-DE-PL border region explains the need to capitalise on the spontaneous solidarity reactions of the civil society which emerged in the middle of the crisis:

“[People] expressed a clear need for positive feelings and solidarity and so I think that administrations at all levels should start capitalising on the small/positive stories with deep emotional impact – such as the many expression of reciprocal sympathy that border citizens showed to their neighbours. These could become a good starting point to build up on.”

Citizen reactions to border-related restrictions

- ✓ **Many spontaneous initiatives organised by inhabitants saw the light during the closed-border phase**
- ✓ **Local politicians and mayors mainly played a positive role, building bridges between communities and lobbying for border crossing exemptions**
- ✓ **Several petitions gathering thousands of signatures were addressed to national authorities to request measures more tailored to CB regions**
- ✓ **Peaceful demonstrations and gatherings along the border were organised in the most integrated regions, symbolising a strong sense of belonging to a single CB community**

H. CONCLUSION (CHAPTER 2)

The impact of border related measures taken by Member states, which have the competence to do so, was different depending on the domain (economic, family life, tourism, public services...) and on the border region, with factors such as the pre-existing degree of interdependence and the toughness of restrictions affecting more or less CB communities and local economies.

Cross-border permeability kept evolving week after week almost in each area. Member states took stricter (Poland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Portugal...) or looser border measures (Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands...). These measures were not always proportional with the incidence rate in the country, and most importantly with the one recorded in border regions. Especially during the first days of the reintroduction of border controls, several areas experienced cross-border road traffic congestion linked to new types of controls (health checks remained quite uncommon, while justifications for crossing the border were almost systematic), to the reduced number crossing points and also, to the complete halt of all CB public transport in almost all regions apart from AT-HU, DK-SE, DE-NL.

At the European level, the lifting of border controls was more coordinated than the sudden closure, with a lifting of the measures around mid-June for almost all countries. However, at local level, apart from places where a CB task force for crisis management was set-up, there was little to no coordination on the **post-lockdown** phase.

CB workers were heavily impacted, some of them losing their jobs because of restrictions; some others because of the lack of tourists from the neighbouring countries... Social security and regulation on taxation represented a real administrative burden for people, businesses and organisations that introduced remote working. In most of the cases, after long negotiations under a multi-level dialogue from the ground to the Ministries, exemptions for teleworking arrangements were successfully introduced.

Cross-border public services and their users were heavily affected: public transport was suspended and some hospitals stopped receiving patients from the other side of the border. In terms of education, the diverging national strategies to tackle the crisis (school closures) sometimes led to confusing situations for families and pupils. However, positive examples of healthcare cooperation were also recorded, with several examples of patients transfer (e.g. from Eastern France to neighbouring countries).

Information to citizens was a key service all along the crisis as a lot of CB inhabitants looked for answers to their questions (possibility to shop, travel, work, visit relatives across the border). Border information centres played a major role supporting local inhabitants all along.

In terms of economic activities, border shopping and retail figured out their complete dependence on CB customers. For businesses and border shops, the COVID19 crisis represented a serious challenge. Touristic activities across the

border and second homes' owners were heavily impacted, especially in those places relying on tourists from the other side.

The impact on family life and on social interactions for people whose family is located on both sides of the border was traumatic. Many examples of people meeting at the border, separated by fences or barriers, were reported in the media all across Europe. Many years of CBC may suffer a real step back due to this period of uncertainties.

Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures was extremely diverse, depending on the period, on the level of pre-existing CB interaction and on the type of restrictions implemented. For many, frustration was the most common feeling. Moreover, some discriminatory acts and a loss of mutual trust towards 'the other' were recorded in some areas. To counterbalance these negative effects, several spontaneous demonstrations, petitions and other initiatives in favour of border reopening emerged in several CB areas. These initiatives aimed at reminding national authorities that border regions were suffering more than other non-border regions because of these new measures, while expressing solidarity towards neighbours on the other side.

III. CHAPTER 3:

ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE AND OF THE ADDED VALUE OF CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES AND AGREEMENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

A. INTRODUCTION

This assignment made it even clearer that there are at least as many approaches to CBC as there are European borders. European borders are differently equipped with CB governance structures or agreements, with a risk of increased vulnerability in the case of border shutdowns for those borders where well-established ties are weaker (e.g. FR-IT border). On the other side, while some borders had little formal governance (e.g. IE-UK) the resilience of local actors and citizens of border regions allowed to overcome uncoordinated measures taken by the administrations and maintain cooperation.

The degree of efficiency and the role of these structures during the first phase of the pandemic were extremely diverse. In some areas, CB structures were on the frontline in managing and coordinating local stakeholders to tackle the crisis (Euregio Meuse-Rhine). In other regions, they were not empowered to do so and therefore limited their action in order to leave the lead to other local, regional or national authorities (e.g. Grand Est region). Nonetheless, even in this latter case, the fact that Eurodistricts did not take the lead does not mean that these structures did not play an active role. They were requested to focus on some specific activities (e.g. information, interpretation of evolving national measures, gathering local health stakeholders, etc.), as can be seen in the PAMINA Eurodistrict.

This chapter aims at discussing the effects of the COVID-19 measures on the governance of cross-border regions. It includes a preliminary assessment of the role of cross-border legal structures and agreements in the process of deciding and implementing those measures.

To do so, the links between the specificity of the measures taken and the existence of well-established cross-border legal structures or formal cooperation agreements will also be examined, in order to understand in which field they can represent a real added-value.

In most of the cases, CB structures were active in a large variety of actions, ranging from content creation to political advocacy, as can be seen in the case presented by an interviewee at the DE-PL border:

"In front of this unprecedented crisis, the Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober tried to be as reactive as possible: it took record of problems and addressed them to the right parties; it played an important role with regard to the citizens and helped taking contact, translating, etc. It served as a contact point for many stakeholders,

it raised awareness via the letter to the ministries lobbying to open the border, it informed various stakeholders on different political levels.”

In the following pages, we will therefore examine the different activities carried out by CB structures, their limits and the reasons which sometimes impeded them to go further.

The chapter is structured around the four following chapters:

- 1. Understanding the role played by cross-border structures during the first wave of the pandemic**
- 2. The added-value of cross-border structures and of cooperation agreements to tackle the specific effects of the pandemic in border areas**
- 3. Lessons learnt from the management of the crisis (successes and failures)**
- 4. Recommendations for the future regarding cross-border structures and agreements**

B. Understanding the role played by cross-border structures during the first wave of the pandemic

During the first wave of the COVID-19 in spring 2020, cross-border structures were active in a large variety of fields. The main typologies of activities carried out by these structures are summarised in the following table and will be further detailed with examples provided by interviewees in this chapter:



1. Lobbying and carrying on advocacy activities towards national authorities:

Many of the interviewed CB structures carried out advocacy activities mainly targeting national authorities. Some of them even managed to succeed in obtaining measures in favour of their CB regions and in raising awareness on the need of a differentiated approach for border areas.

This was the case, for instance, of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra Euroregion at the FR-ES border and of the Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion at the CZ-DE-PL border. For more details and examples, please refer to the section "*Positive results obtained by CB structures*" below.

These actions were sometimes conducted individually by the CB structures themselves (on behalf of its members), sometimes by associating larger networks, such as in the case of the federation of the Polish Euroregions.

2. Coordination and crisis management alongside local, regional or national stakeholders

Different crisis management models have been identified as part of this assignment. The different approaches are reported in the table below:

CB crisis management model:	Role of the CB structure	Examples
Direct management	CB structures on the front line: <i>setting-up task forces, keeping track of the number of available beds in the region, organising the transfer of patients...</i>	Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR)
Indirect management	CB structures support the setting up of dedicated task forces gathering several stakeholders to manage border related issues	Euregio Tirol Südtirol Trentino (IT-AT) ; Regio Insubrica (IT-CH)
Agreements and existing committees	The Aachen Treaty and its Cross-border Cooperation Committee (CCC): two extraordinary CCC meetings were set-up for crisis management and for organising the post-lockdown phase	French-German border
Informal coordination based on networks	Specialised approach based on a diversity of stakeholders involved in crisis management depending on the thematic field (PEACE programme, InterTradeIreland, Police...)	Ireland-Northern Ireland border
Direct exchange between two local authorities	CB structures as facilitators, drafting summaries and policy briefs on the evolution of the restrictions and of the pandemic	EGTC GO (SI-IT)

Direct management - example:

- **DE-BE-NL:** The Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) was active in setting up a crisis team which coordinated and spread information around the different crisis centres in the region. It managed the number of available beds in the region and organised the transfer of patients to hospitals situated in the EMR. It helped maintain appropriate structures to inform cross-border residents, such as GenzInfopunkte. The EMR gave legal advice to cross-border

residents through the Institute for Transnational and Euroregional Cross-Border Cooperation and Mobility from the University of Maastricht (ITEM)⁵¹. It also coordinated advice with the different police forces of the EMR.

Indirect management - example:

- **AT-IT:** Starting from the beginning of the pandemic in Northern Italy, the Euregion Tirol Südtirol Trentino established an online CB task force based on weekly meetings between the Presidents of the three provinces. By also involving health authorities, this task force made the exchange of information possible on the necessary equipment standards to tackle the pandemic in hospitals, as the situation in Austria worsened later than the situation in the regions of Italy.
- **IT-CH:** The main output for the Regio Insubrica, which is a very small structure, was a dedicated web page with updated information from the 3 regions (Ticino, Lombardia and Piemonte). On a daily basis, Regio Insubrica was in close contact with political representatives in the area on the critical problems reported (workplace discriminations, requests for border crossings reopening...). Without the Regio Insubrica, which has direct personal contacts on the two sides, there would have been many more problems and negative results. Therefore, the outcome can be considered as extremely positive and the existence of a CB structure allowed a better coordination during the whole period. This period also led to the creation of a technical CB group on crisis management to continue the exchange of good practices on the two sides of the border and to anticipate decisions to be taken in the case of a second wave.

CB agreements and existing committees – example:

- **FR-DE, FR-LU, FR-BE, FR-CH:** Along the Eastern borders of France, the Grand Est region swiftly took the lead, by coordinating a network of cross-border structures and by setting up a local contact group. The intervention of the region allowed all the structures involved in CB cooperation to better coordinate among themselves and to clarify their own role in the management of the crisis. This reactivity of the Grand Est region can also be explained by the fact that its hospitals became soon saturated which led them to request help to its direct neighbours. Moreover, Grand Est covers the whole FR-DE border, which is now in the scope of the Aachen Treaty and its Cross-border Cooperation Committee (CCC). An emergency CCC was convened by the different parties after a few weeks after the breakout of the crisis to manage patients transfers, border obstacles for commuters and other inhabitants and to organise the post-lockdown phase.

Specialised and uncoordinated approach – example:

⁵¹ In partnership with the TEIN network, ITEM has been carrying out a study to examine the possible cross-border effects for four different cross-border regions across Europe. In addition to mapping the impact on these regions' citizens, businesses and society, this study also tests and further develops the methodology of the ITEM Cross-Border Impact Assessment throughout other parts of Europe:
<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/news/item-cross-border-impact-assessment-2020-corona-mainly-controls-cross-border-situation>

- **UK-IE:** According to the interviewee at the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS)⁵², at the Irish border, the crisis management was undertaken by a combination of stakeholders:
 - EU programmes (in particular the PEACE programme) were very important all along the crisis;
 - Networks established to work on Brexit benefitted from this pre-existing channel to jointly tackle the COVID-19 crisis;
 - Another organisation which played an important role was InterTradeIreland⁵³, coordinating information on both side of the border for businesses and workers;
 - Local authorities were very active finding local solutions.

Direct exchange between two local authorities:

- **SI-IT:** The EGTC GO mainly acted as a facilitator during the whole crisis. The two mayors were in close contact and knew each other very well so there was no need for the EGTC GO to organise a dialogue between the two local authorities. Instead, the EGTC did back-office work, producing content and analysing the main obstacles and the impact on the inhabitants' daily lives. It has to be reminded that the EGTC competences are very much linked to the ones of the municipalities, which do not have many powers in terms of health or crisis management.

3. Providing information to cross-border inhabitants and commuters

This activity was probably the most common among CB structures in this period; CB structures suddenly became well identified by local inhabitants who did internet research and turned to them with very precise questions regarding their specific situation.

- **SE-DK:** Øresunddirekt believes that the lack of clear information is the biggest obstacle to be solved. During the crisis, this task was taken even more seriously than usually. Starting from mid-March, they worked hard producing articles on how the measure would affect commuters, producing FAQ and also interpreting national information as soon they received it from the Ministries.
In this period, the information center was kept close for visits but the phone line was still active and was used much more often by citizens than during normal times.
- **BE-FR:** Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis was very active in the field of information and content production during the crisis. Many Belgian and French citizens turned towards the institution with questions related to their

⁵² <http://crossborder.ie/>

⁵³ InterTradeIreland is a Cross-Border Trade and Business Development Body which helps SMEs across the island with Business Funding, Intelligence and Contacts. <https://intertradeireland.com/>

specific situation. The Eurometropolis' website was regularly updated with information on new regulations adopted by France and Belgium:



11. Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis kept informing citizens through online bulletins and updates of its website during the whole crisis: <https://eurometropolis.eu/fr/blog/2020/09/07/covid-19-update/>

- **DE-CZ:** The only task that the Euroregion could take up was to give advice: provide the information on the ongoing situation. Information kept changing and needed to be made clear and accessible (for example through translation).
- **BE-NL:** What a cross-border structure could mainly do in the area was to share information and best practices, especially to local municipalities, but nothing more. Concerning information exchange and addressing CB obstacles, the Euregio Scheldemond definitely played its parts alongside actors like the Border Information Points. However, coordination was very strictly managed by the regional or national crisis centers and they did not allow any interference or information provision by any other stakeholders initially. This only eased down after a month or so leading to some attention to CB-situations.
The collaboration with the other Euregios located at the German-Dutch border was also very productive. With the setting up of a NRW-B-NL Taskforce, a high level turntable was created to address the departments for information or obstacles and to disseminate answers accordingly.
- **NL-DE:** The *Grenz Info Punkte* along this border have an information website: in the second quartile of this year they received around 380 000 visitors, which is much higher than the usual average. This means that during the crisis they had become the main provider for information on cross-border issues. According to the interviewees, it is very important to have one single place where people can find all the information.

- **HU-RO:** The main focus for the Gate to Europe EGTC was on information. During the crisis, they communicated in two languages about the continually changing information on the EGTC's Facebook page. This way, they reached much more people than usual, including many people who did not know the EGTC before.

- **DK-DE:** The Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig had a substantial amount of work trying to clarify questions on exceptions to cross the border for citizens.

The main work of the structure focused on sharing information, working on raising awareness of the situation at the border toward the national level and improving management where possible.

In the field of culture and language, the main tasks concerned keeping communication open and up-to-date, management of planned work (decide what events could take place, cancel those that were not possible, etc); with regard to consultation on cross-border labour market and frontier workers advise on new issues: communication and interpretation of the rules, spreading of information via media, etc.

The structure also took part in many interviews on different platforms: forums, newspapers, scientific journals, surveys. It produced and shared data, which will be useful for future studies.

- **IT-AT:** During the springtime, the Euregion Tirol Südtirol Trentino received a large number of calls per day with precise questions on border permeability conditions. The Euroregion made the choice to only inform citizens who turned to them with very precise questions, without constantly updating their website with new information from the three provinces. Instead, the CB structure decided to rather use its website to redirect to the up-to-date websites of the three provinces.

- **DE-FR:** Similarly, the PAMINA EGTC also began producing a daily bilingual information letter with up-to-date figures and news. A lot of information was also made available on the Eurodistrict website, on a dedicated page and through social media.

**Grenzüberschreitende
Informationen zu COVID-19**

**Eurodistrict
PAMINA**

Ausgabe: **Nr. 16/2020**
Stand: **08.04.2020**

EVTZ Eurodistrikt PAMINA | Europa:

Im Rahmen einer Telefonkonferenz des Oberrheinrats berichtete der Vorsitzende Josha Frey von der Landesgesellschaft BIOPRO Baden-Württemberg und der von dieser organisierten „Corona-Kooperationsbörse“. Sie dient dazu Unternehmen miteinander in Verbindung zu setzen, die dazu beitragen können in der aktuellen Situation notwendige medizinische Produkte herzustellen. Prof. Dr. Ralf Kindervater, Ansprechpartner bei BIOPRO wäre sehr daran interessiert, die Plattform auch für elsassische Partner zu öffnen. Die Region Grand Est hat zugesagt zu prüfen, ob und wie eine Teilnahme möglich ist.

Von der TechnologieRegion Karlsruhe erreichte uns die Nachricht, dass die kommunalen Spitzen sich ebenfalls für eine regionale Produktion von Schutzausrüstung aussprechen, um die Corona-Krise tatkräftig zu bewältigen. International tätige Konzerne und mittelständische Unternehmen der TechnologieRegion Karlsruhe und der Wirtschaftsregion Mittelbaden könnten Mund-Nasen-Schutz-, FFP2-Masken oder Schutzhelme herstellen, so die Landräte Toni Huber (Landkreis Rastatt) und Dr. Christoph Schnaudigel (Landkreis Karlsruhe). Auch Baden-Badens Oberbürgermeisterin Margret Mergen und Karlsruhes Oberbürgermeister Dr. Frank Mentrup sowie IHK Karlsruhe-Präsident Wolfgang Grenke unterstützen dieses dringende Anliegen.

Den EVTZ Eurodistrikt PAMINA erreicht als Reaktion auf die Pressemitteilung „Heute die Krise und morgen“ ein Schreiben des medizinischen Geschäftsführers des städtischen Klinikums Karlsruhe, Dr. med. Uwe Spetzger. Herr Spetzger dankt in dem Brief für die klare und treffende Analyse und bietet seine umfassende Unterstützung bei der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit an.

Situation in Deutschland: In Deutschland gibt es aktuell 103 228 bestätigte Fälle, das sind 4 003 mehr als am Vortag (+ 4%). Es gab bisher insgesamt 1 861 Todesfälle (+ 254).

Situation in Baden-Württemberg (MI) und Rheinland-Pfalz (PA): Bisher gibt es in Baden-Württemberg 20 680 bestätigte Fälle (+ 3% zum Vortag | 188 / 100 000 Einwohner) und 464 Todesfälle (+31). Aktuell gibt es in Rheinland-Pfalz insgesamt 4 148 bestätigte Fälle (+ 4% zum Vortag | 102 / 100 000 Einwohner) und 45 Todesfälle (+11).

	Positiv getestet	Todesfälle	genesen	kumuliert (von gesamt)
Kreis Garmersheim	102	1	43	58 (102)
Kreis Karlsruhe	669	17	284	624 (925)
Kreis Rastatt	379	8	136	349 (493)
Kreis Südliche Weinstraße	122	0	41	81 (122)
Kreis Südwestpfalz / VG Dahn	19	0	/	/
Stadt Baden-Baden	114	mit LK RA erfasst	mit LK RA erfasst	mit LK RA erfasst
Stadt Karlsruhe	256	mit LK KA erfasst	mit LK KA erfasst	mit LK KA erfasst
Stadt Landau	51	0	11	40 (51)

Kumuliert: grün (sinkend), rot (steigend)

4. Carrying out surveys to understand the main obstacles and the impact of these measures on local inhabitants

- **ES-FR:** The NAEN Euroregion carried out a very successful enquiry on the consequences of border closures since the beginning of the pandemic COVID-19: more than 2200 people took part in this initiative. This initiative provided a legitimacy to the president of the Euroregion to request further exemptions for people whose lives were organised across the border.



12 www.euroregion-naen.eu

- **DK-SE-FI-NO:** In the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council played an important role: by setting up a survey in partnership with Border Information Points (Øresunddirekt, Grensetjänsten Sverige-Norge and Nordkalottens Gränstjänst / Grensetjeneste) a total of 1669 responses to this survey were collected over the March-June period. As in this Nordic area most of these challenges and CB obstacles are common to all border regions, it was essential to activate this network. The Øresunddirekt has the tasks to identify obstacles and to pass them on to the Nordic Council of Ministers so they can solve them on a National level. To do so, Øresunddirekt wrote weekly reports for the Nordic Council's secretariat, which later addressed them to the responsible ministries: this functioning is based on highly structured multi-level interaction. Making politicians aware of facts and coming up with recommendations to solve obstacles were somehow the major tasks of the structure during the pandemic.
- **RO-HU:** The EGTC Gate to Europe also conducted enquiries via surveys, mainly on the economic impact of COVID-19 by interviewing local mayors.

5. Keeping the cooperation spirit alive in a difficult time

Cross-border cooperation is not only about economic and commuters flows: it is about people, it is about human ties and connections. Interviewees have stressed the importance of taking into account the psychological consequences of the crisis when analysing the impact of border-related measures, especially since it is known that many people were victims of discriminatory acts. CB structures were also active in avoiding that the cooperation spirit between people and institutions was lost during the pandemic. Here are just a few examples:

- **DE-PL-CZ:** In this area, Euroregions proved to be important in supporting the organisation of grassroots events to keep moral of the local population and of people engaged in cross-border cooperation high in such a difficult time.
- **SI-IT:** The EGTC GO also had an important role in keeping alive cross-border social cohesion among citizens during the crisis: they organised online Italian and Slovenian lessons and online “coffee debates”. They also worked on communication by producing films and short videos of local inhabitants from the two sides meeting at the border.

6. Drafting CB public policy proposals for recovery and reactivation plans

Although this action was not very common, an EGTC was entrusted with the preparation of a contribution for the post-COVID-19 period, for the CB area.

- **ES-PT:** The EGTC of the Euroregion Galicia-Northern Portugal was mandated by the Xunta de Galicia to work on a possible plan to reactivate cooperation on the border as a reaction to the effects of COVID-19, including the loss of mutual trust.

“If the border populations are already in an unfavourable situation per se in relation to the rest of the citizens of their country, they cannot have this added cost. What we have to do now is to ensure that these border closures do not take place anymore and that nobody thinks of closing our border as a solution because it is as absurd as closing one of the main streets of Madrid and separating one side of the street from the other.” (Interviewee from the EGTC Galicia-Norte)

The EGTC prepared a first draft plan where they also included the question of trust or the differences between the incidence rate in Galicia, the north of Portugal and Spain and they sent this document to the other EGTCs on the border and to the other Eurocities along the ES-PT border. Thanks to their contribution, they came up with a draft ready for approval during the summer, which led to a detailed contribution of the ES-PT Euroregions. This

contribution will be presented at the next Iberian Summit⁵⁴, and to the European Commission. The upcoming Cumbre Iberica (2nd October 2020) between Spain and Portugal will be dedicated to the approval of a strategy for joint cross-border regions' development.

This activation plan was conceived as an evolving document which will still be updated as the reality and border measures are still changing.



13. The 'Estrategia Común de Desarrollo Transfronterizo'⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Europapress, The Iberian Summit in Spain and Portugal will focus on cross-border territories and ecological transition, <https://www.europapress.es/sociedad/medio-ambiente-00647/noticia-cumbre-iberica-espana-portugal-centrara-territorios-transfronterizos-transicion-ecologica-20200706201348.html>

⁵⁵ La Moncloa, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge of the Government of Spain <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/transicion-ecologica/Paginas/2020/270820-portugal.aspx#:~:text=La%20Estrategia%20Com%C3%BAn%20de%20Desarrollo%20Transfronterizo%20establece%20cinco%20objetivos%20estrat%C3%A9gicos,y%20aprovechando%20los%20recursos%20a>

C. The added-value of cross-border structures and of cooperation agreements to tackle the specific effects of the pandemic in border areas

The added-value of cross-border structure during this crisis does not need to be proven. Their asset in the management of such a crisis relies on a multiplicity of specific characteristics, which have been summarised -below:

Familiarity with the two (or more) national legal and administrative systems

- During the pandemic, most CB structures provided detailed information on the evolution of national measures to local inhabitants
- This is particularly true in the case of Border Info Points, which all experienced a sharp increase in their activities

Perfect command of two (or more) languages

- Their capacity to facilitate the dialogue between “two worlds” that otherwise would hardly speak to each other, especially where two languages are spoken on two different sides, was crucial to interpret national measures and to make them available to all involved parties
- For instance, during the crisis many of these CB structures took the role of facilitators between stakeholders (e.g. healthcare authorities), including facilitating dialogue through translation during the meetings

Proximity to citizens and local embedding

- Thanks to their citizen engagement activities, these structures are becoming better identified by local inhabitants and associations: once activated, this solid embedding allowed them to receive large contributions in surveys, or to support small events between neighbouring towns.
- Many of these structures also became a door people could knock on to get answers to their specific questions
- They had the capability to do pedagogical work to raise awareness on specific issues faced by people whose life was organised across national borders.

Capitalising on pre-existent interactions and bodies by activating them during the crisis

- In concertation with their elected members, CB structures were able to activate existing task forces, working groups or committees during the pandemic in order to transform their usual partnership into a crisis management tool
- In many cases, the composition of these committees was even enlarged in order to cover specific thematic areas (health, taxation, social security). This was possible thanks to the cross-cutting follow-up of specific CBC cooperation projects made by CB structures, which provided them with precious contacts on both sides and with a clear overview of the stakeholders to mobilise depending on the thematic area

It has to be stressed that the added-value of CB structures became **even more tangible in places where no formalised CB governance exists**: in the case of the French-Italian border, people (including some healthcare workers) commuting from the Roya Valley to Monaco through Italy had no one to turn to. Local officials tried some lobbying but the lack of a well-established cooperation governance did not allow the emergence of concrete solutions. To quote a stakeholder from Nice Metropolitan Council:

"There can be no 'emergency cooperation' in the short term without well-established CB cooperation in the long-term".

D. Lessons learnt from the management of the crisis (main achievements and difficulties)

1. Main achievements obtained by cross-border structures:

In terms of advocacy activities towards national authorities, some structures **succeeded in obtaining measures in favour of the inhabitants of their CB regions and in raising awareness** on the need of a differentiated approach for border areas. Two examples are reported here below:

- **DE-PL-CZ:** The stakeholders leading the cross-border coordination in the area were the Czech and especially the Polish Euroregions. They supported the rights and necessities of cross-border citizens, commuters and other groups of people affected by the border restrictions in front of national and regional authorities. In particular, a prominent role was played by the **Federation of the Polish Euroregions**, which managed to obtain at least a partial lightening of the measures regulating the access to Poland of Polish citizens commuting to Czechia and Germany, stressing the fact that requesting Covid-test on a daily basis in addition to the quarantine requirement would have made crossing the border impossible. Thanks to a letter addressed directly to the Polish Prime Minister showcasing evidences of the unbearable conditions undergone by border commuters, the compulsory quarantine was removed and starting from April, only negative Covid-tests were requested to the workers every two weeks.
- **ES-FR:** For the first time, in June, the Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra was invited to give a presentation explaining cross-border issues at the Spanish Congress of Deputies, at the Commission for "Social and Economic Reconstruction", in a group dedicated to the European Union. This was the occasion to raise awareness in Madrid on the issues experienced by cross-border citizens and regions. The Euroregion presented concrete obstacles linked to the lack of coordination between the two member states. The Euroregion also made proposals for a *restart* taking into account the fact that European cohesion starts in CB territories. As a result, the report for the "reconstruction of Spain" post COVID-19 crisis mentioned the need to "strengthen the role of cross-border structures". It has to be mentioned that CB issues aroused interest of these commission, for which this topic seemed quite new. In fact, the Euroregion stressed a real lack of understanding of the Spanish Central government of the border regions' peculiarities, adding that, comparatively, the French state appeared more aware of border issues. **The fact that the Spanish and Portuguese governments are now working on a common Strategy of Cross-border development (see Chapter VI) may be the sign that the awareness on these issues at national level has increased during this period.**

2. Stronger impact due to networks and dedicated task forces:

- **DK-SE-NO-FI:** The combination of the Nordic Council and the local border information points really helped: this network allowed local structures to have a special access to the Ministries. Most CB obstacles are not just Danish or Swedish, they need to be solved on a macro-regional level. That is why coordination with other border contact points was also essential as they had been facing similar challenges and required joint solutions. Therefore, the possibility to “activate networks” can be considered as a real chance. Most importantly, this particular period stressed the importance of the added value of structures with a full “cross-border point view” and not just the national one.
- **NL-DE:** The establishment of a cross border Task Force Corona between the Netherlands and neighbouring German states was a real added value. On a regional level, existing networks were important to tackle arising problems jointly and identify issues, such as *Grenz Info Punkte* which were directly in contact with the people.
- **FR-DE, FR-LU, FR-BE, FR-CH:** In Eastern France, due to large number of cross-border structures and border info points, the Grand Est region decided to take the lead to better coordinate this large network in order to prevent these structures from dispersing and work more effectively. The different parties composing the Cross-border Cooperation Committee⁵⁶ -including all the FR-DE Eurodistricts- gathered for an online session on April 23rd. Then, a second meeting dedicated to a coordinated post-lockdown phase between FR and DE was held on June 10th.

Beyond CB structures, some cross-border agreements in the health sector also proved their effectiveness during this period:

- **AT-IT:** Well-established healthcare agreements between Austrian and Italian provinces turned out to be very effective during the crisis, revealing that long-term CB cooperation can have an impact in short-term management of crisis, with Südtirol citizens allowed to cross the border for health reasons. Here, healthcare cooperation is based on 50 years of cooperation and agreements between Südtirol and Tirol.

SUMMARY : Main achievements and lessons learnt regarding CB structures in a crisis context :

- ✓ **Effective coordination in time of crisis requires to have someone, if possible neutral, to rapidly take the lead**

⁵⁶ <https://www.haut-rhin.fr/content/%C2%A0comite%C2%A0cooperationtransfrontaliere%C2%A0-ce-dont-nous-avons-besoin-cest%C2%A0de%C2%A0plus%C2%A0de%C2%A0cooperation>

- ✓ **Mediation/facilitation and linguistic skills are required for the crisis' task force leader**
- ✓ **No effective crisis cooperation in the short term without well-established long-term cooperation**
- ✓ **There is no observed direct link between the intensity of border restrictions and the presence of one (or more) CB structures on a specific border segment**
- ✓ **Citizen engagement activities in the long run allow inhabitants to more easily identify these structures for answering their questions or supporting their solidarity initiatives in times of crisis**
- ✓ **When supported by elected representatives, CB structures can rapidly turn into effective advocacy tools**

E. Main difficulties encountered by cross-border structures in the implementation of their actions:

Cross-border structures often have very limited fields of intervention, with responsibilities still depending on local or regional authorities. This assignment also highlighted some examples where these structures perceived there were less possibilities for action.

- **BE-NL:** Because of its long tradition in CB cooperation, the Scheldemond Euregio has its network and culture of reaching out. However, CBC was not in the scope of the governments and crisis centers, leading to a reduced input by cross-border structures. The interviewee considers that there was very little impact.

Additionally, their added-value during the pandemic can be perceived differently depending on the border and depending on the type of interviewee:

- **AT-HU:** According to the interviewee from a transport company operating railway services between Austria and Hungary, the role of CB structures was not significant, with no real need for them in their sector: the problems that occurred in the field of transport technology and society was tackled by the company itself.

In terms of advocacy, despite some positive examples, CB structures did not always succeed in getting the voice of cross-border citizens heard by national authorities:

- **DK-DE:** Region Sønderjylland–Schleswig signed letters during the summer to ask for the opening of all crossing points to diminish congestion, suggesting to make quicker controls if the issue was linked to the lack of police officers. The Euroregion had to lobby to find solutions, interpret regulations and facilitate the situation in the border region. However, politicians and local authorities involved in the cross-border structure were focused on the crisis: cross-border cooperation was not a priority, nothing new could have been initiated, the focus was rather on maintaining cross-border cooperation ties when possible.

- **CZ-DE:** Local CBC structures had no real influence on the political decision. It was not really up to the local CBC structures, but rather thanks to intense exchanges between the governments at the state and national level that some instances could be modified and made more favourable to citizens of the cross-border region.

Moreover, when it comes to information provision and knowledge of legal frameworks, some CB structures experienced a **"learning phase"** when the crisis broke out. In fact, although information is already the core mission of Border Info Points, this is not the case for Euroregions or other EGTCs, which had to readapt their functioning to manage a sharp increase in requests and solicitations.

A testimony from the director of the Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig (DE-DK)

"the administration and management of the border controls was something new to us, as people were so free from the concept of border controls: the papers, the documents and the decision making process of allowances: how is it with spouses? And what about partners? What about the horse which is settled on the other side of the border – we have been confronted with many issues, which we are not following up on."

SUMMARY : Analysis of the role and of the added value of cross-border structures and agreements during the pandemic

- **The most common action led by CB structures was to produce content and to make up-to-date information available to local inhabitants. For some of these structures, this activity was relatively new.**
- **One of the biggest challenges consisted in the strong advocacy work towards national authorities to raise awareness on cross-border issues**
- **Cross-border structures were also involved or sometimes initiated task forces or focus groups on crisis management, becoming facilitators between stakeholders (e.g. healthcare authorities), including facilitating the dialogue through translation**
- **Several structures did not wait for the end of crisis to launch surveys and to carry out enquiries to get an overview of the impact of the border related measures on the inhabitants' daily lives in their CB region. A large number of contributions were received.**
- **Cooperation is also based on social interactions: this is why many CB structures felt the need to organise small initiatives to uphold a good dynamic among the citizens and the stakeholders involved in CBC**
- **In the areas with a well-established cooperation, where formal agreements exist, the possibility to cross the border for health reasons was respected (ex. AT-IT)**
- **When it comes to Interreg programmes, they were hardly mentioned by interviewees as a tool to be used during the crisis. This may be due to the timing required for the approval of an Interreg project, which is often**

very long. Nonetheless, a recently published report by InterAct ⁵⁷ has identified some currently co-financed Interreg projects across the EU which are now actively helping to fight the socio-economic effects/impact of the crisis.

- **In general, it can be observed that the existence of a cross-border structure represents a real added value: by its proximity to citizens (a door people can knock on to get information on CB issues); by its capacity to facilitate the dialogue between “two worlds” that otherwise would hardly speak to each other, especially when two different languages are spoken; by its capability to raise awareness on specific issues faced by people whose life is organised across national borders.**
- **This was even more visible along the borders where no CB governance exists: local officials tried some lobbying but the lack of a well-established cooperation governance did not allow for the emergence of concrete solutions.**
- **Nonetheless, one cannot state that border restrictions were weaker where a well-established CB structures exists: in fact, measures were prepared at national level, without taking into account CB specificities. Some countries such as Switzerland or Luxembourg, where foreign commuters represent a large share of the workforce seemed more aware of the danger of closing borders.**

⁵⁷ Report | Impact of COVID-19 on Interreg programmes and operations : <http://www.interact-eu.net/library/report-impact-covid-19-interreg-programmes-and-operations/pageflip>

F. Recommendations for the future regarding the role of cross-border structures and agreements in the field of crisis management

1. EGTCs and CB structures can show the way ahead

Local CBC governance structures – exemplified by EGTCs, particularly those acting at the level of CB living areas, have proven their relevance during the crisis, and shown the way ahead

During the crisis, at first, solutions were found on the ground by persons, not by organizations. The success of operations like the transfer of patients depended on the commitment of elected officials, civil servants, diplomats, etc. But this was facilitated by the pre-existence of cooperation frameworks or habitus, which persons managed to remobilize.

Where CB institutions did not exist, difficulties generally became quickly critical. Where they existed, their output was not always immediate, but some results were noticeable. Local CBC actors, close to citizens, such as the Eurodistricts on the French-German border involving the local communities were among the first to act.

Cross-border living areas should be acknowledged, and appropriate public policies favouring CB integration should be developed for persons living in border regions. This should be supported by a consolidated CB governance. In concrete terms, the challenge is to develop competences in the two meanings of the word: legal capacity of action, and technical capacity of action. Such structures should benefit from transfers of “*appropriate capacity, dedicated resources and accelerated procedures*” (under the terms of the Aachen Treaty between France and Germany) to overcome the obstacles to the implementation of their cross-border projects, allowing for the adequate combination of institutional (hard) and functional (soft) approaches, depending on how national contexts can inspire such institutional evolution.

⇒ Recommendation: Give EGTCs or equivalent structures a more prominent role, to support or coordinate CB actions in the different functional fields of CB integration (in ordinary situations as well as in crises).

The COVID crisis has put health issues on top of the agenda, and in border regions, cross-border cooperation has been part of the solution for patients, but also to rebuild trust. As no plan existed before the crisis, solutions had generally to be improvised. In the future, CB joint plans should be built for health emergencies (and more generally for risk management); **EGTCs and CB structures: should be empowered to manage them.**

⇒ Recommendation: **Joint Cross-Border Emergency “Plans** could be settled and constantly updated. Strategies (facilitation of border crossing for ambulances, CB management of patients, management of frontier working in all its aspects, better knowledge of the regulation in both countries, etc) should be prepared. They should determine the rules related to communication, web platform, information in both languages.

Communication should be factual, but also take into account the prevention of negative behaviours.

⇒ Recommendation: EGTCs and equivalent cross-border structures should be charged of **preparing and updating these plans**. They could act as **mediators** between domestic institutions across the border, and with regional and central governments, in order to increase the understanding of CB specificities. A **mandatory consultation** role should be given to them: they should be informed a day before the measures are adopted by national governments, in order to be able to **inform the inhabitants, the local and the regional administrations**, to explain why the measure were taken. Finally and most importantly, they should **alert national authorities on the impact** that these measures might have on these territories.

➤ **Support to CB Information**

People have the right to understand measures taken by public authorities, which should involve them, in a climate of mutual trust, also in the cross-border context, rather than infantilize them, leaving them subject to rumors. **CB structures (EGTCs etc...) have often played a major role to inform CB populations during the crisis, and should be given a more important role in the future.** More broadly, the crisis should be an opportunity to generate a better collective understanding of CB territories with their complex, multi-level interactions, through the development of cross border observation.

⇒ Recommendation: Information should be developed and communicated to citizens and businesses, not only on economic issues (market) but also about the situation and prospects of the CB territory, generally and in crisis situations. This requires to have access to **observatories, delivering sound, comparable, CB data**, allowing to build common understanding.

IV. CHAPTER 4:

BORDER REGIONS: LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A. Introduction

This chapter aims at drawing lessons from an assessment of the impact the COVID-19 measures along EU internal borders on cross-border communities at large (businesses, workers, citizens) and at presenting recommendations for the future, addressed to the European Commission on how the resilience of cross-border regions could be improved in case further crises emerge.

The sanitary crisis has challenged all collective organizations (public authorities, markets, civil societies). In particular, it has been a shock for cross-border governance, which insufficiencies it has revealed. It has also highlighted our many socio-economic or human interdependencies, not only at the global or European level, but also at the local cross-border level. In the same time, it appears as an opportunity to accelerate necessary changes, particularly in CB context. Following recommendations are based on the lessons we can learn from the COVID 19 crisis, in case of resurgence of the pandemics, but they also apply to the management of other sorts of crises, and more generally to the management of borders and cross-border regions, beyond the crisis. Most of these proposals were already on the table before the crisis. Far from invalidating them, the crisis has made them even more necessary.

These regions are at the heart of the European project. The recommendations we will present now focus on them, even if they may concern all regions. National borders are specific, but iconic of all administrative borders, which require functional approaches vs exclusively institutional routines. Implementing them would allow a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient development for themselves, and for the whole Europe.

The section will successively address actions to be taken in favour of border regions:

- **at the level of these border regions (I);**
- **within the framework of a bottom up, multi-level governance (II);**
- **at the EU level (management of crises; cohesion policy and particularly Interreg) (III).**

In each case, actions will be based on lessons learnt during the crisis, allowing to draw some principles for new border policies.

B. Main lessons learnt from the Covid19 crisis:



C. Related recommended actions to be taken in favour of border regions:

I. At the level of these border regions

- Give EGTCs or equivalent structures a more prominent role in some specific functional fields
- Develop Cross border public services (CPS) and maintain them in case of crises.
- Settle joint cross-border Emergency plans, and delegate their preparation to EGTCs
- Develop centers to provide information to CB workers, consumers, businesses
- Develop observatories delivering sound and harmonised CB data
- Encourage the use of people-to-people projects funds
- Supervise cross-border territories via permanent CB councils

II. Within the framework of a bottom-up, multi-level governance

- Reinforce cross-border cooperation through multi-level governance frameworks
- Systematize cross-border observation
- Adapt Member states' legislation and coordinate across each border, in order to ease persons' border crossings

III. At the EU level

- Increase EU competence on health policy, as regards emergency situations.
 - Establish a European regulation on cross-border emergency plans
 - As a 1st step, prepare a handbook on "how to close borders smartly"
 - Launch a prospective research programme on CB integration, based on the Covid debrief, exploring different scenarios for the governance of CB regions
 - Provide national authorities with a CB impact assessment procedure
 - Establish a framework for CB public services, guaranteeing the delivery of CPS in the case of crises
 - Reinforce the multilevel dialogue between CB structures, relevant national and European institutions, in the framework of the ECBM regulation
 - Give specific attention to CB regions for the recovery, and for the 2021/2027 programming
- **INTERREG specific actions:**
- Use Interreg in the coordination of risk management
 - Use Interreg to ensure that CB regions are fully considered as actors of the economic recovery.
 - Use Interreg to favor integrated territorial approaches, through Objective "A Europe closer to citizens" (PO 5)
 - Use Interreg to support actions aimed at strengthening cross-border governance, through Objective "Better cooperation governance" (ISO1)

D. What can be done at the local level of border regions

1. 1st lesson learnt from the crisis: Start from local CB communities and their needs

The crisis' major impact on cross-border communities have proven the necessity to consider persons and the CB territories where they live, in a functional and integrated manner

The sanitary crisis has hit persons in every region in Europe and the world, not only borderers. But the proximity of the border undoubtedly added to the disruption⁵⁸. Concrete situations on EU internal borders have been diverse, but if one tries to capture some common features of all the negative experiences lived by inhabitants of border areas, one can describe different dimensions in which persons have been impacted, emphasizing existing CB interdependences and integration:

- As economic agents: CB workers, consumers going shopping, dwellers of secondary homes - All these activities are respectable, even if they occur across borders, and contribute to individual and common welfare, but were suddenly restricted. These restrictions were not only more severe than for people who did not live in border regions, but also persons crossing the border were stigmatized as illegitimate.
- As users of public services, which exist also in the cross-border context. Citizens, as users and tax payers, have legitimacy to claim cross border public services (for instance: in the health sector) if they offer more efficient solutions, even in crisis situations; but these CB services were severely hit, more than non-CB public services.
- As informed persons: people wanted to understand what happened to them, so as to act appropriately, individually and collectively; but that was no longer possible, due to the difficulty in getting data and the lack of common understanding, reinforced by the cross-border context.
- As persons engaged in relations, within couples, families (including children, handicapped or elderly people) or communities, which were sometimes suddenly separated by the closed border.
- As persons with cultural, religious or moral visions, who tried to act in a responsible way according to their values, but were challenged by the physical border and the misrepresentations it conveyed. Cross-border integration is not only based on economic, legal or functional opportunities, but also on common visions and commitment, that are developed through cross border cooperation, and that were suddenly damaged.
- And finally, as citizens of nation states (which suddenly were the only decision makers with the crisis), hit by uncoordinated decisions taken by these states, despite the fact that they are also European citizens- and sometimes bi-national citizens.

Geography was a driver of the sanitary crisis: the impact on regions was dramatically diverse, depending on a combination of factors such as an economy more or less open to globalization; a more or less deconcentrated urban pattern

⁵⁸ This has been described in Chapter 2 « Analysis of the impacts of the border-related measures on cross-border territories ».

connecting hubs and peripheral areas; modalities of regional cohesion (intergenerational cohabitation, family structures,...). The combination of factors, generally considered as assets (urban density, social cohesion, ...) proved to be catastrophic in some regions. The territorial patterns and dynamics to be considered, so as to understand and to act, are regional, sometimes cross-border.

Of course all persons in Europe and the world were hit by the crisis, in each of these different dimensions. But persons in border regions suffered a double penalty, due to the lack of cross border coordination. They should be put at the centre of action, for both human and efficiency reasons, so as to break the institutions' bureaucratic logics, which have shown their limits.

Experts agree that the only way to do it consists in horizontal, territorial, integrated approaches, instead of the usual vertical, sectoral, silo approaches. Public policies have to consider persons; taking into account their daily lives (eg. CB journeys with several goals (travel to work, bringing kids to school, shopping, visiting family); within their living areas (with the different perimeters corresponding to these goals), even when they trespass administrative borders. In other terms, adopt a functional approach.

2. 2nd lesson learnt from the crisis: Consider cross-border living areas instead of borderlines

Borders should be understood, not only as lines (separating national sovereignties) but also as territories (cross-border areas where people live)

Throughout the media coverage of the crisis, we have been submitted to a bias. Media generally referred to the closure of borders as a necessary measure per se; but global, international mobility is not the same phenomenon as CB mobility. In Europe, with its single market, free movement and common citizenship, one cannot compare the closure of a border with a neighbouring country and for example with China.

The crisis has confirmed 2 symmetric dead-ends: hyper-globalisation- we should be less dependent on remote countries for our security- and self-sufficient national or local territories- to look for solutions exclusively within closed territories would prove counterproductive. When designing post Covid public policies, the question we have to answer is: which interdependencies should be preserved, which modes of governance should support functional territories, according to which logics of variable geometry?

What should prevail is the notion of borders as "living areas", where persons' day to day life may be either disrupted by closed borders, or facilitated by cooperation; as active interfaces mediating between national systems, rather than lines separating national sovereignties. The Territorial Agenda 2030, approved by the Ministers in charge of territorial cohesion during their informal meeting on 1 December 2020, under the chair of the German Presidency of the Council of the EU, addresses the need to consider functional regions, and integration beyond borders.

3. 3rd lesson learnt from the crisis: Build common evidence and mutual trust

Immaterial aspects, such as distrust, or lack of understanding of the situation and of the measures taken in the CB areas, were a major cause of disruption

Everywhere in the world, a major aspect of the sanitary crisis was the difficulty to simply understand what was happening: the nature of the threat; how to react individually and collectively; the public policies implemented. Everywhere, the mobility of persons was restricted; border closure was one of the mobilized tools, and was an additional factor of complexity.

First, it is important to underline that, behind what could appear at first sight as a simple fact, the closure of a border (as communicated in the media), hides a complex reality. From 2015 on, border controls were re-established on several borders within the Schengen area, and the Covid crisis was only a new episode, after crises linked with migrations or terrorism. Some border crossings were plainly closed; many others were subject only to reinforced controls, of various intensities (from systematic to random), variable over time, etc...

Another factor is the inherent « double » nature of the border. Each border regime between 2 countries results from their respective procedures regarding entries. For a cross-border worker who had to cross the border back and forth, during his or her daily roundtrip, these procedures complicated the situation. All the more that cross-border mobility, like mobility in general, was often more complex than a simple trip from home to work and back. While managing a border, the perimeter of phenomena to consider should incorporate not only the control of the border itself, but also public policies concerning the daily life of border regions inhabitants, whose life was substantially disturbed by the lack of coordination.

Moreover, controls were often not appropriate (based on bureaucratic criteria such as nationality, and not of a sanitary nature); not proportionate; with no consideration of the territorial reality of persons' lives; based on the subjectivity of civil servants implementing them. The last point may in a way seem logic: civil servants adapted rules to particular situations; but on the other hand it generated a feeling that the measures taken were arbitrary, or at least not understandable. For citizens, this was all the more difficult to understand as border users within the Schengen area are supposed -as European citizens- to live in an area of free movement.

The border closure was all the more severe as its impacts was not only material, but also immaterial, psychological. Rebordering provoked a resurgence of distrust across the border; aggressiveness against « strangers »; or even the temptation of scapegoating borderers. Borders were ambivalent: they provided a feeling of unity and protection – widely imagined; but they may have had a violent impact on persons living on two sides of the border, and on representations – the return of “us and the others”. Even if borders have generally not being fully closed, the unpredictable and apparently irrational management of borders during the crisis delivered negative signals, and provoked distrust, cumulative and negative anticipations, engendered huge costs with bad consequences on the economic and social life.

4. 4th lesson learnt from the crisis: EGTCs can show the way ahead

Local CBC governance structures – exemplified by EGTCs, particularly those acting at the level of CB living areas, proved their relevance during the crisis, and showed the way ahead

During the crisis, at first, solutions were found on the ground by persons, not by organizations. The success of operations like the transfer of patients depended on the commitment of elected officials, civil servants, diplomats, etc. But this was facilitated by the pre-existence of cooperation frameworks or habitus, which persons managed to remobilize. J. Monnet should be quoted: « Nothing is possible without men, but nothing lasts without institutions ».

Where CB institutions did not exist, the difficulties generally proved to be critical. Where they existed, their productivity was not always immediate, but some results were noticeable. Local CBC actors, close to the citizens, such as the Eurodistricts of the French-German border were among the first to act. Other structures, like larger Euroregions, whose scope of action is wider and which presented a more complex, multi-level organisation, reacted later on, which did not invalidate their capacity to handle matters less related to everyday life.

In the light of these lessons, cross border living areas should be acknowledged, and appropriate public policies favouring CB integration should be developed for persons living in border regions. This should be supported by a consolidated CB governance. In concrete terms, the challenge is to develop competences in the two meanings of the word: legal capacity of action, and technical capacity of action. Such structures should benefit from transfers of “appropriate competences, dedicated resources and accelerated procedures” (under the terms of the Aachen Treaty between France and Germany) to overcome the obstacles to the implementation of their cross-border projects, leaving open the adequate combination of institutional (hard) and functional (soft) approaches, depending on national contexts.

⇒ Action: Give EGTCs or equivalent structures a more prominent role, to support or coordinate CB actions in the different functional fields of CB integration (in ordinary situations as well as in crises)

➤ **Support to Cross border public services**

Cross border public services lead generally to a win-win situation for inhabitants and local actors of border regions. Border regions’ citizens, users of public services, tax payers in the countries where they live and work, are legitimate to ask for coherence of public policies across the border. The development, working and use of all sorts of cross-border public services (CPS), in the field of mobility, health, education, vocational training, job placement, etc..., should be encouraged, provided that they offer efficient, win-win situations for the benefit of users and public authorities. Moreover, public services are not only a matter for optimization of public action or market, but also of citizen participation, care, commitment of persons. CPS should be maintained also when crises occur.

⇒ Action: **Cross border public services (CPS)** for persons and businesses should be developed in all relevant fields – and maintained in case of crises. In the field of health, access to healthcare on the other side of the border, patients transfer, cooperation in the healthcare sector, border crossing conditions for healthcare professionals should be encouraged. In all policy fields relative to CB services, plans should be prepared to manage resurgence of sanitary crisis, future crises, recovery, in the perspective of a permanent co-development. These plans should be coordinated within a territorial, integrated approach (including work, economy, mobility, energy, environment, spatial planning, taxation ...).

The COVID crisis has put health issues on top of the agenda, and in border regions, cross-border cooperation was part of the solution for patients, in addition to rebuilding trust. As no plan pre-existed to the crisis, solutions generally had to be improvised. In the future, CB joint plans should be built for health emergencies (and more generally for risk management); EGTCs and CB structures should be empowered to manage them.

⇒ Action: **Joint Cross-Border Emergency Plans** could be settled and constantly updated. Strategies (facilitation of border crossing for ambulances, CB management of patients, management of frontier working in all its aspects, better knowledge of the regulation in both countries, etc) should be prepared. They should determine the rules related to communication, web platform, information in both languages. Communication should be factual, but also take into account the prevention of negative attitudes. EGTCs and equivalent cross-border structures should be charged of **preparing and updating these plans**. They could act as a **mediators** between domestic institutions across the border, and with regional and central governments, in order to increase the understanding of CB specificities. A **mandatory consultation** role should be given to them: they should be informed a day before the measures are adopted by national governments, in order to be able to **inform the inhabitants, local and regional administrations**, to explain why the measure were taken, and, most importantly, they should **alert national authorities on the impact** that these measures might have on these territories.

➤ **Support to CB Markets**

Many border regions' inhabitants find practical solutions across the border (eg. work, access to services, shopping, care for elder people, tourism, secondary homes,...). This contributes as well to their own well-being and to general interest, as a concrete realization of the single market. The same can be said of businesses (retail, services, SMEs,...), which can find resources and markets on the other side of the border. During crisis situations implying border controls, persons and businesses should not be restrained, or even blamed for their mobility, through bureaucratic bullying, but respected and supported by public authorities looking for a cross border and European common good. This would also contribute to the legitimacy of domestic and European policies.

⇒ Action: Develop **information centers such as Infobest** (DE/FR border) to provide information to CB workers, consumers, businesses, etc...

➤ **Support to CB Information**

Citizens have the right to understand measures taken by public authorities also in the cross-border context, which should involve them, in a climate of mutual trust, rather than infantilize them, leaving them subject to rumors. CB structures (EGTCs etc...) have often played a major role to inform CB populations during the crisis, and should be given a more important role in the future. More broadly, the crisis should be an opportunity to generate a better collective understanding of CB territories with their complex, multi-level interactions, through the development of cross border observation.

⇒ Action: Information should be developed and communicated to citizens and businesses, not only on economic issues (market) but also about the situation and prospects of the CB territory, generally and in crisis situations. This requires to have access to **observatories, delivering sound, comparable, CB data**, allowing to build common understanding.

➤ **Support to CB Culture and civil society.**

The analysis on impacts wouldn't be complete without mentioning positive reactions. Trauma of the sanitary crisis and borders closing, provoked non cooperative words or acts between States, as well on borders as on the EU level, but also an outburst of solidarity. Many citizens, politicians or civil servants realized the deadlock of non –cooperation. « Never again » said Mrs de Montchalin, the French Minister of European Affairs, during a meeting of the Cross-border cooperation committee created by the Aachen Treaty between France and Germany. Again, Jean Monnet can be quoted: *"Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises."*

People's ethics or visions, trust between persons and with authorities, solidarity, are all resources for the common good, to be preferred to bureaucratic control, and to be considered also in cross-border contexts, such as can be seen in the Irish example ⁵⁹. In case of crises, and also for the recovery, CB regions' resilience also depends on the existence of a responsible cross border civil society, that should be supported by people-to-people projects in the field of culture and civil society.

⇒ Action: So as to develop trust, solidarity, common vision between inhabitants of the CB territory, for now and the long term, social and cultural activities should be developed, e.g. through **people-to-people projects**, by using the new INTERREG "Better cooperation governance" objective (ISO1).

➤ **Support to CB citizenship**

The crisis has sometimes damaged the emerging citizens' feeling to belong to a CB community. So as to develop a democracy in CB contexts, resilient to crises, citizens living in CB areas should be more systematically involved through civil fora in the governance of these areas. This evolution can be a first step towards a more formal democratisation of cross border bodies such as EGTCs, like cross-border election of their representatives.

⇒ Action: Cross-border territories should be supervised via **democratic procedures** (such as permanent CB councils, led by representatives elected

⁵⁹ See Annex: case study Ireland-Northern Ireland.

through a CB process), **involving citizens** of the 2 sides of the border; and acknowledged by regional and national authorities. Borders should be managed in an explicit, multilevel way, involving local authorities, EGTCs and equivalent structures.

E. Consolidate CB Governance in a multi-level framework

1. 5th lesson learnt from the crisis: Encourage bottom-up and multi-level approaches

States have been true to their role to take coercive measures, but national measures have not taken sufficient account of peoples' real life in CB regions. This argues in favour of a bottom up, multi-level governance of these regions, starting from persons, in the context of crisis, and at any time.

COVID requires limitation of everyone's mobility. This also concerns citizens living in border areas. But **they should be impacted just as other citizens, not less, not more.** Prohibiting crossing a border would only make sense when/if similar restrictions are imposed to similar movements of people that do not cross a border. In other words, **measures should be equitable and proportionate**, which has clearly not been the case.

Experts agree that in the context of such pandemics, to close borders is a way to curb human mobility and the progress of virus dissemination, but not to stop it, because of massive interdependencies and exchanges across borders. It is even contrary to the necessary cooperation. The closure of national borders is not only ineffective to contain the virus propagation, but it hampers an appropriate crisis management. To stop legal border crossing also prompts illegal ones, and hinders sanitary controls.

When the first lockdown occurred, people living in border areas have deeply suffered from the sudden, not coordinated border closure. Measures have been taken by each State, with no horizontal coordination either at local or national level. **The crisis has demonstrated that borders remain a state object**, managed by rule of law institutions (police, customs). Vertical approaches have prevailed on both sides of borders: most actors primarily turned to "their" central authorities, and only then took the neighbouring territory into consideration. Such lack of multi-level CB coordination has subsisted for a brief or longer period, depending on more or less adequate CB reactions.

Most citizens have experimented mobility limitations within their own country. But the border context was generally not taken into account. This has led to absurd situations, impacting persons in their ordinary cross-border life: on the BE/FR border, people were no longer allowed to cross the street in front of their home; on the DE/FR border, domestic workers living on the other side of the border were not allowed to work in their own country and obliged to stay home⁶⁰ ...Such situations wouldn't have occurred in non-border contexts, and appear to be unfair

⁶⁰ See Chapter 2

and discriminatory, contradicting principles such as free movement and European citizenship.

Uncoordinated national frameworks proved to be a major cause of disruption in border areas. It does not mean that national states, or their civil servants, should be stigmatised. Local or regional is not always the solution. The Covid-19 crisis has shown that states are indeed decisive to manage such contexts, and they will remain so during the return to a post-pandemic life and during the solving of future crises. However this is only possible if they can act together, on every border, as part of regional systems like the EU. An appropriate governance should thus combine vertical and horizontal coordination.

The creation of innovative multi-level governance devices, such as **Benelux or Nordic Council**, is an appropriate response. The **Treaty of Aachen** on DE/FR border not only acknowledged the role of Eurodistricts, but also created a multi-level cross-border cooperation committee. It can provide some inspiration for the development of cross-border and European integration, all the more that the difference between the two countries is huge: it shows that cross-border cooperation can progress, in spite of very different territorial and policy frameworks across borders. It could be the forefront of a generalisation of such devices, that the European Commission has proposed with the cross-border mechanism (ECBM) (see in part III).

2. 6th lesson learnt from the crisis: National level matters

CB economic and functional interdependencies have to be acknowledged and managed also at national level

By stopping flows across borders, the crisis proved to be systemic, and revealed interdependencies between national and not only local systems, which can be economic (supply of goods, frontier work or seasonal employment) or functional. Luxembourg and Geneva were a clear example, as they depend on French cross border workers, not only for their economy in general, but also for their health system. When borders threatened to close, X. Bettel, Luxembourg PM said: « To close borders is to kill my country » (« *Fermer les frontières, c'est tuer mon pays* »). France and Luxembourg agreed to leave their common border opened, solving the issue. Moreover, CB workers were allowed to tele-work more than which was allowed by regulations, without facing double taxation by the Grand Duchy (where income tax is withheld) and France. The increase of teleworking, beyond the crisis, may be a sustainable solution, in the interest of workers and firms, avoiding congestion and time loss in transports. Nonetheless this would reinforce the attractiveness of Luxembourg's territory; even more workers may prefer to telework for a firm based in Luxembourg, with higher wages and less taxes, reinforcing the already unbalanced situation.

Urban regions crossing borders, such as the metropolitan regions around Luxembourg, Basel or Geneva, obey a logic of cross-border complementarity. As already underlined by Karl-Heinz Lambertz, former president of the European Committee of the Regions, in his report to the Council of Europe's Congress of local and regional authorities, within cross border regions with a high level of CB interdependency, to build cross-border cohesion requires a cross-border co-development, with an integrated territorial strategy, and cross

border funding of necessary infrastructure and public services. This requires policies also involving the national level, as the Swiss case and its “policy of agglomeration” show.

3. 7th lesson learnt from the crisis: Assume borders’ diversity and complexity

Various administrative, political, cultural border contexts should be taken into account, both in times of crises and in ordinary moments

All along the crisis, the main decisions concerning the sanitary crisis as well as border management, were taken within national frameworks, characterized by diverse political and administrative cultures, combining more or less individual responsibility, social or State control, public or familial solidarity, trust and civism. National specificities influenced decisions. However, on each border, two cultures generally meet, which can make coordination more difficult, but can also be an opportunity to learn other approaches. On other borders, a common cross border culture exists which was an asset. The Irish border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (UK) was never closed. Citizens, as everywhere else, have suffered from a lack of coordination between national administrations (different opening policies of shops, schools, measures in public transport etc...) but the authorities relied on personal responsibility. This has been possible because of the existence of a civil society of the « Island of Ireland ». **In border contexts, it is important to take account of these administrative, political, cultural dimensions, converging or not on the border, in times of crises like in normal times.**

In the light of these lessons, national states, even in federal contexts, are legitimate to play a major role in the management of border and CB policies, in time of crises and in ordinary times. **But, as the deficit of coordination between the local and national level has been critical**, a cross-border multi-level governance, involving national level, and overcoming differences between national systems, should be systematised.

⇒ Action: The monitoring of cross-border cooperation should be reinforced through **a multi-level governance framework**, which could jointly coordinate cross-border affairs at all levels: across each border, but also within each state (**horizontally**: inter-ministerial co-ordination; and **vertically**, coordination between national and territorial authorities); including CB governance structures such as EGTCs. Multilateral frameworks, such as Benelux, Nordic Council or Visegrad group, or bilateral frameworks, such as the DE FR Aachen treaty can provide models.

This governance pattern should allow the definition of a common strategy for choosing priority projects and monitor the situation and difficulties encountered in order to find solutions; coordinate the transposition of EU directives and regulations; contribute to the co-elaboration of common policies (coordinated implementation of cohesion policy and other EU policies; territorial and urban agendas). The Interreg programmes should support these activities. The ECBM regulation, with its European network of national or regional focal points, could provide an overall framework (see below).

A multi-level system of cross-border observation should be set up, linking local, national and European observatories at the service of CB data production and analysis. This project can draw on French and German initiatives⁶¹. **Sharing better common knowledge on cross-border dynamics can contribute, not only to better implement projects for the CB regions and their inhabitants, but also to share narratives, and to build a common one, which, beyond diverse institutional or functional evolutions, represents another crucial issue for European and cross-border integration.**

⇒ Action: Cross-border observation and scientific support to cross-border cooperation should be systematized, so as to dispose of a reliable and sustainable data monitoring on CB regions and flows.

Citizens belonging to one or more countries have rights attached to their citizenship, with consequences on their personal and family life, which should be maintained, also when they cross borders.

Persons and families in their concrete daily lives, including in their relational aspects, have been sometimes severely hurt during the Covid crisis, and should be better understood, acknowledged and respected, also in complex cases occurring on borders, such as frequent bi-nationality. This should lead to a different approach of State administration in the daily management of borders, and a role for the EU. Citizens should be acknowledged, not only as national citizens, but also as European, sometimes bi-national citizens, and also in cross border areas as cross-border citizens. This should be the case, as well in ordinary situations, and in crisis contexts (eg when border controls are reintroduced). In this context, measures should be equitable, proportionate. This is a necessary condition for the citizen's acceptance of border-related measures.

⇒ Action: Member states should adapt their domestic legislation and coordinate across each border, in order to ease border crossings in the case of crises leading to border controls, for persons having to cross it for family reasons, and in policy areas concerning birth, marriage, death, so as to simplify the lives of CB areas' inhabitants, e.g. when they use CB facilities such as a CB hospital. The EU should provide guidance in this regard (such as citizenship documents issued in a common EU standardized digital form, automatically recognized in all EU Member States).

F. What can be done at the EU level

1. 8th lesson learnt from the crisis: Harmonise border crisis management from the EU level

Border controls may be sometimes justified in cases of crises, but should be equitable, proportionate and relevant (eg based on health criteria). This should be monitored by the EU.

During the crisis, people have lived a paradox; they often didn't have access to concrete information, or had difficulties to conform to **unclear or contradictory**

⁶¹ BBSR, MOT, 2019, "France Germany, cross border observation at the heart of Europe"

information concerning their own lives, particularly in cross border contexts, which provoked much anxiety. On the other hand, they have followed the progress of pandemics in real time via global media, have been informed of policies implemented as well in neighbouring countries and other places in the world, in a global and European benchmark. They now ask for accountability vis-à-vis public policies, which institutions are not in position to provide alone, as all actors are in a learning process. This has been particularly true in Europe, with very different national strategies, and attempts to coordinate them at the EU level. As often, Europe proved to be a community of problems, a first step towards a community of solutions.

During the crisis, the EU played its role, by providing coordination between states, within its mandate. It indeed took initiatives, such as the **"Guidelines concerning the exercise of the free movement of workers during COVID-19 outbreak"** issued by the European Commission on 30 March 2020, and the **"Guidelines on EU Emergency Assistance in Cross-Border Cooperation in Healthcare related to the COVID-19 crisis"** adopted on 3 April 2020.

Many border stakeholders regretted that the EU did not act more, especially during the very first phase. **But the European mandate is limited in the field of health.**

The lack of coordination between States during the crisis obviously opens the way to an EU intervention. EU institutions should be empowered in emergency times, especially when it comes to internal border measures. The challenge is now to imagine a European public health policy which might deal with crisis.

2. 9th lesson learnt from the crisis: Deepen the EU – States- CB Regions partnership

Beyond the issue of border control in case of crises, the crisis confirmed the validity of the EU multi-level governance of border regions, combining EU coordination, and EU policies in favour of CB cooperation, tailor-made to each cross-border region

The reactions to the Covid crisis confirmed that every border is particular. The crisis showed specific facts of non- coordination or even lack of cohesion for each border, and also outbursts of cohesion. This revealed various interdependencies, negative and positive trends, capacities to react, on each side of the border, and on CB territory.

The combination of an overall framework of European legislation and coordination, and tailor -made regional approaches, also prove to be adapted to CB cooperation, confirming the relevance of the EU intervention towards border regions, as defined by the Commission's Communication *"Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border regions"*, adopted on 20 September 2017 (EU border focal point; proposal of an ECBM...)

When it comes to funding programmes and financial incentives, Cohesion policy, with its shared management, is adapted, also for the CB context and Interreg.

In the light of these lessons, actions have to be taken by the EU in regards to border management, as well in the context of crises, and in the ordinary course.

On 11 November 2020, the Commission proposed a new Regulation on serious cross-border threats to health. It starts to build a European Health Union, aimed at protecting citizens with high quality care in a crisis, and equip the Union and its Member States to prevent and manage health emergencies. Recommendations will be developed for the adoption of plans at national levels, coupled with comprehensive and transparent frameworks for reporting and auditing.

⇒ Action: EU competence should be increased on health policy, particularly in regards to **emergency situations**. A zone oriented approach, considering regions, possibly CB, and not whole countries should be systematized (cf decision CH 11/9/20, adopting a special treatment of regions neighbouring CH). **Criteria, measures, thresholds (green, red zones), should be harmonized.**

⇒ Action: **A European regulation on cross-border emergency plans should establish** a single European document listing the different situations and purposes for movement across the borders to help CB citizens and the police corps during their border checks, and guarantee a minimum of CB cooperation and internal borders opening in the case of crisis.

The two previous proposals will take time. A first step may consist in the elaboration of softer measures.

⇒ Action: A **European handbook on “how to close the borders smartly”** should be developed, and include a set of recommendations to national governments on how to proceed while keeping in consideration all the variables affecting life across the boundaries (eg. legislation to apply for CB workers -social security and remote working, etc...)

Coordination and capitalization actions (beyond Interreg)

⇒ Action: A prospective research programme on CB integration, should explore different scenarios for the governance of CB regions. It should be based on a **comprehensive Covid debrief study**, establishing a benchmark of what happened on the different European borders, taking into account all consequences of the crisis: **human and economic, but also psychological, cultural, political**, so as to learn lessons, in regards to the need of trust building, citizen involvement.

⇒ Action: The impact that specific measures in all relevant policy fields have on particular regions should be better taken into account when formatting policies, as not all regions are affected in the same way by the implemented measures. The EU should provide national authorities with a **CB impact assessment procedure for border measures** that could be used to estimate the potential effects on people living in border regions.

⇒ Action: The EU should establish a framework for CB public services, guaranteeing the **delivery of CPS in the case of crisis.**

⇒ Action: Reinforce the multilevel dialogue between CB structures, relevant national and European institutions, in order to bring common solutions to the obstacles observed on the ground. A good practice to be inspired by would be multi-lateral frameworks such as Benelux, Nordic Council or Visegrad group, and bilateral frameworks such as the Aachen Treaty, gathering representatives from every territorial level. The ECBM regulation may provide an overall framework, with its network of national or regional border focal points, coordinated by the European border focal point.

Actions within EU funding policies: Think big for cross-border regions in the recovery plan, and in the 2021/2027 programming

At the end of 2020, the European Union has approved an ambitious recovery plan and its budget for 2021/2027. CB regions have been particularly affected by the crisis. To recover cross-border normality that existed before the crisis, one needs to ensure that no one is left behind, to strengthen the **confidence of citizens in each other**, so as to turn the crisis into an opportunity. **The reactions of the civil society were vital and will allow to boost the recovery of CBC in the future.** Administrations at all levels should capitalise on positive stories with deep emotional impact – such as expression of reciprocal sympathy and solidarity. CB regions deserve special attention as they were severely hurt, but also because of the potential they present. REACT-EU funding has been opened to Interreg CBC. Moreover, at a moment when all EU regions program investments for the 7 years to come, ambitious common CB investments would support a positive dynamic for CB and EU integration. This requires a greater degree of CB coordination at local and national level when planning strategies and projects, also within mainstream programmes, Interreg playing a catalyst role for specific CB projects and institutional cooperation.

⇒ Action: CB regions should receive specific attention for the recovery, and for the 2021/2027 programming

G. What can be done by future Interreg programmes

The EU should support programmes which promote integrated territorial approaches, cross-border governance, solving obstacles to integration, legal tools allowing to use the law locally of the neighbouring country in order to manage cross-border public services. This is already planned by the post-2020 regulations. In particular, future Interreg programmes will offer major opportunities, notably through the use of the 'territorial' Objective 5 "A Europe closer to citizens", and the Objective ISO1 "Better cooperation governance". The crisis has undeniably strengthened their relevance in this area.

⇒ Action: Interreg should play a role in the coordination in the field of risk management (especially with regard to pandemics, and more widely all risks). It should **develop the role of CB structures in crisis management** (healthcare cooperation, supply of emergency information...), and **finance emergency scenarios**, including their regular update.

- ⇒ Action: Interreg should play a role to ensure that CB regions are fully considered as actors of the economic recovery.
- ⇒ Action: Interreg should favor integrated territorial approaches to enhance the resilience of cross-border regions, particularly through the use of Objective "A Europe closer to citizens" (PO 5)
- ⇒ Action: Interreg should support actions aimed at strengthening cross-border governance, particularly through the use of Objective "Better governance" (ISO1)

V. CONCLUSION:

Border regions and their inhabitants have suffered a lot during the crisis. They were impacted more severely than others. This has significantly contributed to raise awareness, locally, but also at national and European level, on the need to develop more EU solidarity and integration within and for border regions.

To conclude, the negative impacts of the crisis, disproportionately more severe in border regions than in non –border regions, justify that that CB regions are identified by TFEU article 174 as deserving specific attention of public policies. The crisis has proved that the border is a handicap when it creates obstacles, but an asset when the border is open. Borders are places to imagine new policies, not only to face crises, but also ordinary situations.

Targeted actions are needed to prevent future crises; EU coordination is needed; multi-level governance is essential; contextualised and bottom up is a must.

These lessons do not only concern crises, but the permanent question of border management and cross border development. Border closures have been a counterfactual of CB cohesion. Interdependences revealed by the crisis require new CB policies: functional approach considering persons in their CB living areas; bottom- up multi-level governance involving CB regions, States and EU. The relevance of ETC's new devices, such as new policy objectives "Europe closer to citizens" (PO 5), "A better cooperation governance" (ISO 1), and the draft regulation "European cross border mechanism" (ECBM) is confirmed.

CB regions will be test cases, for the recovery and beyond. The present crisis means danger, but also opportunity for Europe, to overcome, learn and develop new policies in favour of persons and their living areas.

Taking into account the reality of CB interdependencies now invites us to give a political dimension to cross-border and European integration. The contributions of CB stakeholders, which will be collected through the process launched by the Committee of the Regions in November 2020, under the label of the European Cross-border Citizens Alliance, should be a major contribution to the **Conference on the Future of Europe**.

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