

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

20 CASE STUDIES

Covering the period March to June 2020



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Table of contents

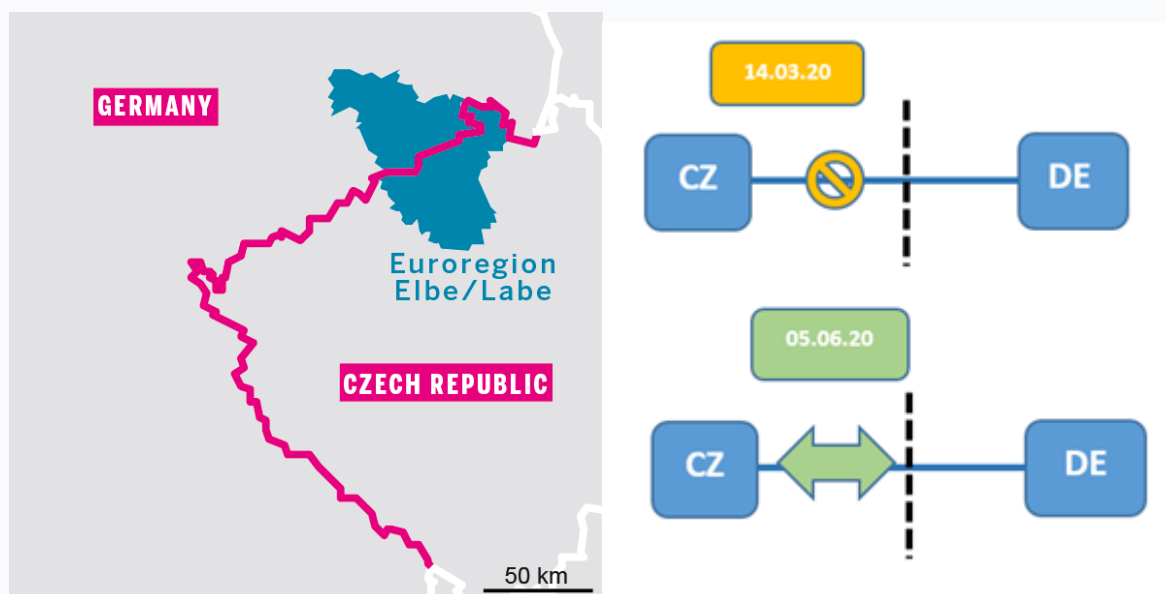
■ COVID-19 BORDER RESTRICTIONS LEGEND:	5
1. Euroregion Elbe Labe (Czechia - Germany).....	6
2. Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig (Denmark-Germany).....	9
3. Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa (CZ-PL-DE)	12
4. GrenzInfoPunkt EUREGIO (The Netherlands-Germany).....	14
5. Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober (Poland-Germany)	16
6. Euroregion Scheldemond (Belgium – The Netherlands).....	18
7. Euroregion Galicia Norte (Spain – Portugal).....	21
8. Regio Insubrica (Italy-Switzerland)	23
9. Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra Euroregion (Spain-France border).....	26
10. Øresund Region (Sweden-Denmark border)	29
11. Gorizia-Nova Gorica (Italy-Slovenia).....	33
12. Ireland-Northern Ireland border	36
13. EUREGIO Tirol – Südtirol – Trentino (Austria-Italy).....	38
14. Hungary – Slovenia border region	41
15. Croatian – Hungarian border region.....	43
16. Austria – Hungary border region	45
17. Slovakian-Hungarian border region	47
18. Romania – Hungary border region.....	49
19. Romania – Bulgaria border region.....	51
20. Austria – Czech Republic border region	53

COVID-19 border restrictions legend:

March – June 2020

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
	Health 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. Euroregion Elbe Labe (Czechia - Germany)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The Czech government was the first one to close its borders. This closure initially affected everyone: no exceptions were made. **Only Czech people who had to enter their country were allowed in**, and they had to quarantine after having entered the country.

The German authorities pressured the Czech government to make exceptions for CB workers as the German health system is particularly dependent on CB workers coming from Czech Republic. Therefore, **exceptions for people carrying out relevant jobs were introduced**. Border controls were first based on random samples of temperature checks at the border and carried out only by Czech police as Germany did not introduce border controls, which brought to the decision to only open 4 crossing points. CB workers had to drive long detours to cross the border, so more crossing points were opened later for CB workers only.


Public transport was completely suspended while the border was closed: busses and trains, and both local services and long distances ones. Goods and logistic continued to be transported across the border.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

At a later stage, Czechia also allowed business trips as good reasons to cross borders, on condition of testing negatively to corona virus, thus also allowing CB workers in non-relevant jobs to enter. Tests needed to be repeated every 30 days. **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. At the beginning of June, borders **reopened unexpectedly before the previously scheduled date** (June 15th).

There was an intense exchange between the Saxon and the Czech governments but there was little knowledge of the impact of the measures on border regions. Regional and local institutions were not consulted, nor were municipalities, and were not made part of the decisions.

<p>Impact on cross-border workers (Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)</p>	<p>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. 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 the school closed in Czech Republic were not eligible to receive the funds that the German employee would instead receive. There was a low representation of CB workers' interests in Czech Republic.</p>
<p>Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (healthcare, information to citizens, education...)</p>	<p>Ongoing CB services mainly involved tackling natural hazards: for example, German firemen helped putting fire off as a forest fire went off nearby the border in the Czech Republic.</p>
<p>Impact on economic activities (retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</p>	<p>Tourism and entertainment were heavily affected: no touristic activities across the border were possible for 3 months: this had a heavy impact on the local economies on both sides.</p>
<p>Impact on social and cultural activities (Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</p>	<p>Families/partners with no documents, but also friends: private relations were halted for the whole period of the border closure.</p>
<p>Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</p> <p>One of the <i>Samstage fuer Nachbarschaft</i> (Saturdays for Neighbourhood) spontaneous meetings at the CZ-DE border.</p> <p>Copyright: "Soboty pro sousedství"</p>	<p>While initially Czech Republic was very strict, all these measures were suddenly lifted in a very short period. This complete turnover brought to a loss of trust from the population.</p> <p>A spontaneous grass-root movement organised meetings along the border, where people got together at certain spots at the border bringing together people who were 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.</p> 

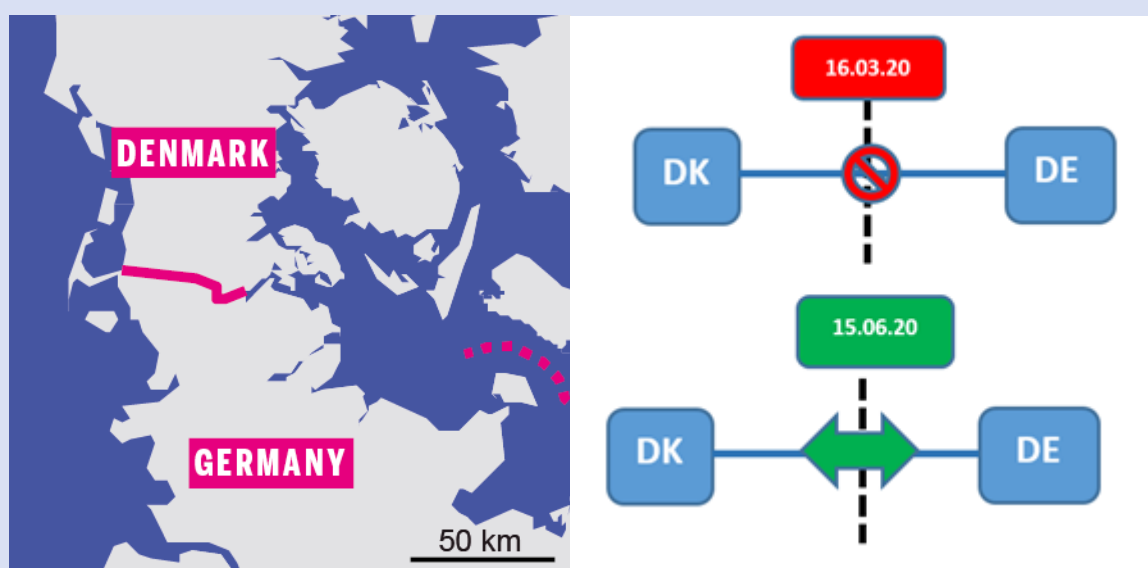
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis

Local actors supported these groups of people trying to maintain the cooperation spirit alive. The Euroregion Elbe/Labe also financially supported some meetings.

Cross-border cooperation between institutions was affected: meetings could be held online, but many projects had to be cancelled or postponed.

During the crisis, the Euroregion's main role was to provide advice: giving up-to-date information on the situation, which was continuously changing and needed to be made clear and accessible (e.g. through translation). However, the CB cooperation structures did not have real influence on political decision.

2. Region Sønderjylland–Schleswig (Denmark–Germany)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

Borders were closed on both sides. Out of 13 crossing points only 5 were kept open, and at the very beginning only 3. Controls have been already in place since 2016 so people were used to them. However, the requirement to present a justification and a certificate confirming that the reason for crossing the border was legitimate was entirely new.

Initially, only employees, deliverers/suppliers and crews of transport means were allowed to travel from Germany to Denmark. Exceptions were introduced for funerals, or family members with need for special care.

Controls led to **congestion** in several areas, with up to 90 minutes waiting time for the frontier workers and lack of parking possibilities.

As for Germany, travel restrictions were introduced with the exception for **"just causes"**: to work and to visit family members (which needed to be certificated and proven).

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

As measures were relaxed, it became possible to visit family members as well as citizens from the German neighbouring regions. Denmark is a centrally governed state, so the majority of the measures implemented had been decided upon at the national level. In Germany, the states (local level) had some degree of liberty when deciding on measures, and the general approach went well. There was no real coordination between Germany and Denmark.

Impact on cross-border workers

CB workers were allowed to cross the border all along.

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

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. The **cross-border fire fighter service kept operating**.

(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)	As schools and universities were all closed, there was no major consequence on the provision of services in the field of education linked to the border.
Impact on economic activities (retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)	The region was hit with massive economic losses as the crisis caused unemployment, and remote working, which also raised many questions regarding taxation . Supply kept flowing through the border, so it was possible to avoid negative consequences on the local economy. With regard to cross-border activities, the biggest impact hit cross-border trade and retail , which were completely and suddenly halted as people could not cross the border to shop. All in all, retail is the most affected sector, as this is heavily based on the cross-border interaction. Finally, the tourism sector as well as entertainment were affected by the closure of the border.
Impact on social and cultural activities (Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)	<p>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.</p> <p>As for the cross-border cooperation in the field of culture, almost all events were cancelled, the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of German-Danish cultural friendship had to be cancelled as only a minimum part could have been substituted by online events</p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p>(Peter Hansen, Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig)</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)	<p>Often media reported measures before these had been made legally binding, which created a lot of confusion and frustration among local inhabitants.</p> <p><i>"The many restrictions also caused tensions, especially in border regions, and there is now a strong need for normality and appeasement."</i></p> <p>(Peter Hansen, Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig)</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	In the field of information, the main activities for the Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig were to take care of up-to-date communication, as well as the management of the already planned activities (decide what events could take place, cancel those that were not possible, etc); they also advised CB workers on new issues on cross-border labour market: interpretation of the new rules, spreading the information via media, etc.; lobbying to find solutions to facilitate the situation in the border region. Finally, the Region signed letters to ask for the reopening of all crossing points in order to diminish congestion.

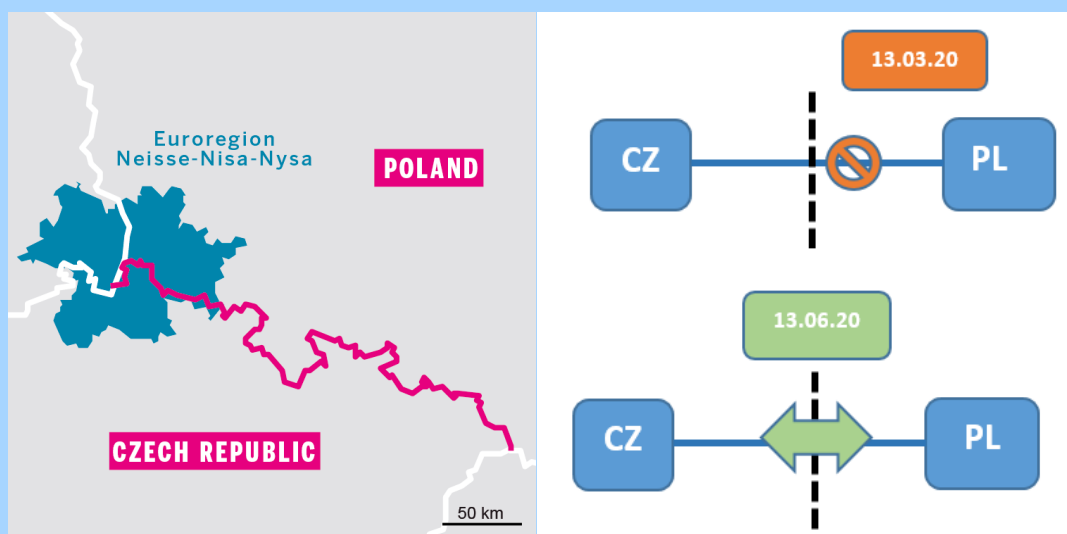
"We have experienced a "learning phase": the administration and management of the border controls was something new to us, as people were so free from the concept of border controls: the papers, the documents and the decision making process of allowances: how is it with spouses? And what about partners? 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."

(Peter Hansen, Region Sønderjylland–Schleswig)

Border controls for people entering Germany.
Copyright : Region
Sønderjylland – Schleswig



3. Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa (CZ-PL-DE)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

Poland and Czechia decided unilaterally to close their borders and, as a consequence, Germany also reintroduced border controls with its neighbours. However, foreigners with residence or work permit were allowed to cross borders.

Nonetheless, there were too many restrictions which **made the border crossing and the professional activities nearly impossible** (compulsory stay of Czech commuters in the neighbouring country for a period of 21 days followed by an obligatory 2 weeks quarantine at home; Polish workers had to be tested negative on a daily basis to cross borders).

Only a few border crossing points remained open, so traffic congestion started becoming a problem. Most of the international and cross-border transportation services were interrupted. The tri-national railway connecting Czechia, Poland and Germany remained operational but travellers weren't allowed to get off the train outside their own country.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

National coordination was just residual and not very significant. Borders started reopening at the beginning of June, when international and CB transportation services started being restored. However, during the summer there were not as many passengers as before the pandemic as a lot of people did not feel comfortable travelling abroad even if the location just a few kilometres away from home. Nonetheless, **new services** were implemented in the summer: E.g. a **"joint week-end" bus line** was launched in the Nysa Euroregion for people to visit more than 5 different cultural and historical places.

Impact on cross-border workers

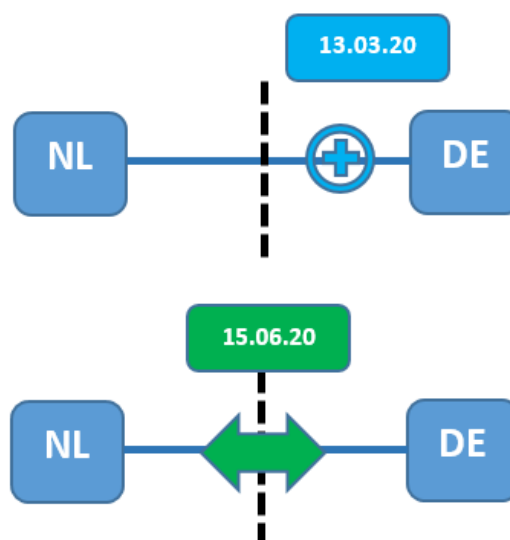
CB workers were the most affected by borders restrictions. Polish citizens working in Czechia suffered the most from this crisis, as the majority of them were employed in non-qualified professions that could not be carried out during the crisis. The other categories of CB workers were generally able to work from home.

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

The opposite of cooperation took place in the field of healthcare and emergency. A Czech hospital located at the border with Germany drastically **reduced the cooperation with its neighbour during**

	the pandemic. Their argument was that similar crisis might happen again in the future, therefore, the hospital should be ready to face them autonomously, without relying on the help of external actors.
Impact on economic activities	Borders closures had a big impact on the economic habits of many citizens as the access to certain goods sold at a more convenient price in the neighbouring countries was suddenly forbidden. Tourism was very affected as well as the event industry, as most of the initiatives planned during the summer were cancelled.
Impact on social and cultural activities	There was an “emotional” impact on civil society: citizens who got used to living in constant contact with their neighbours felt their absence deeply. Several demonstrations of reciprocal sympathy were organised.
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures	<p>CB workers were frustrated by the restrictions and held some protests (e.g. protest in Český Těšín/Cieszyn (PL-CZ). In Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa, the representatives of civil society started to organize solidarity events (e.g. “Border beer meeting”). Banners expressing solidarity and empathy towards the neighbours were hung on the bridge dividing the city of Cieszyn and songs in both languages were sung on both sides of the river. Despite those protests, the great majority of Polish and Czech citizens supported borders closure. According to a national poll administered in Czechia, 75% of the Czech population was in favour of the measures undertaken.</p> <p><i>“[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.”</i></p> <p>Pr. Hynek Böhm, Technical University of Liberec (CZ)</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	Euroregions carried advocacy activities towards national authorities to support the rights of CB workers and other people affected by those borders’ restrictions. The Federation of the Polish Euroregions played a major role as it managed to obtain a partial lightening of those restrictions for CB workers: the compulsory quarantine was lifted and negative tests were requested every 2 weeks for CB workers starting from April. Polish and Czech authorities did not take the guidelines of the European Commission into consideration as they were mostly nationally-oriented but CB structures used them to develop lobbying strategies locally but also aimed at national authorities.

4. GrenzInfoPunkt EUREGIO (The Netherlands-Germany)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

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

The border has never been closed in the sense of physically closing the border, impermeably, here. Different border measures were taken by North Rhine Westphalia (NRW), the Netherlands and Belgium. There have been changes on the timetable of public transport during the crisis as less people made use of trains and buses; moreover, an emergency plan was set up. Due to restrictions to individual mobility, a general decrease of movement could be noticed while the strictest rules were implemented.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

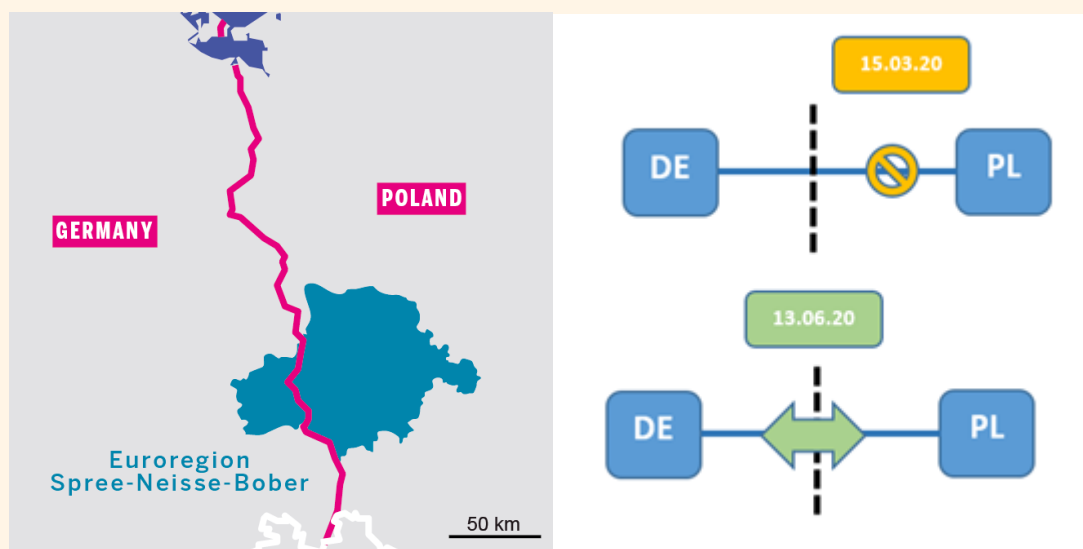
Border crossings were not closed. However, commuters had to expect increased controls by the German and Dutch authorities as the Netherlands was temporarily considered a coronavirus risk area. The measures only applied to the border between NRW and The Netherlands initially, and Lower Saxony followed only later on. During the summer, decisions were mainly taken locally, at the regional level, while before they were rather met as directives at the national level.

Impact on cross-border workers

Among CB workers, employees and self-employed were the most heavily affected by those measures.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)	<p>Education systems and childcare were affected on both sides, especially since different policies were applied. This created uncertainty for persons having to deal with both systems.</p>
Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	<p>Entrepreneurs from one country who depend very much on customers from the other country were affected more than those entrepreneurs whose customers are in the same country. As for the touristic sector– which of course heavily shrank everywhere – the territory for touristic activities was reduced to a 180 degree instead of a 360 degrees region.</p> <div data-bbox="729 555 1182 1153" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><i>Good neighbours keep their distance !” billboard at the DE-NL border.</i> Copyright : EUREGIO</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities (<i>Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	<p>Mobility linked to personal reasons was also affected. For example couples living on both sides of the border could not get together because in one country the measures in place imposed a self-isolation period.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures	<p>The efforts not to close the borders completely and the resulting different situations put the citizens in a situation where they were in greater need for precise information. As soon as financial problems and emergencies arose in their personal situation, there was less acceptance for these measures. People did not demonstrate or protest but they were more solutions-oriented.</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>A Cross-Border Task Force Corona was established to discuss and possibly solve problems that arose during the pandemic. These task forces included, at the regional level, regional authorities like German districts and Dutch safety regions. They opened a way to communicate directly with the ministries, proving the strong co-operation between the border regions and the network of <i>Grenz Info Punkte</i>.</p>

5. Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober (Poland-Germany)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

Border crossing between Guben (DE) and Gubin (PL)
Copyright : Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober e.V.

Poland was the first to decide to close its borders with a very short notice, which engendered traffic congestion. Germany closed its border shortly after, without establishing border controls but imposed self-isolation at home in case of border crossing. On the Polish side, there were temperature checks to filter the access, carried out by the Polish border police, and a complete **14 days of mandatory quarantine for those who crossed border, including CB workers**. CB public transports were completely interrupted.



CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

Impact on cross-border workers

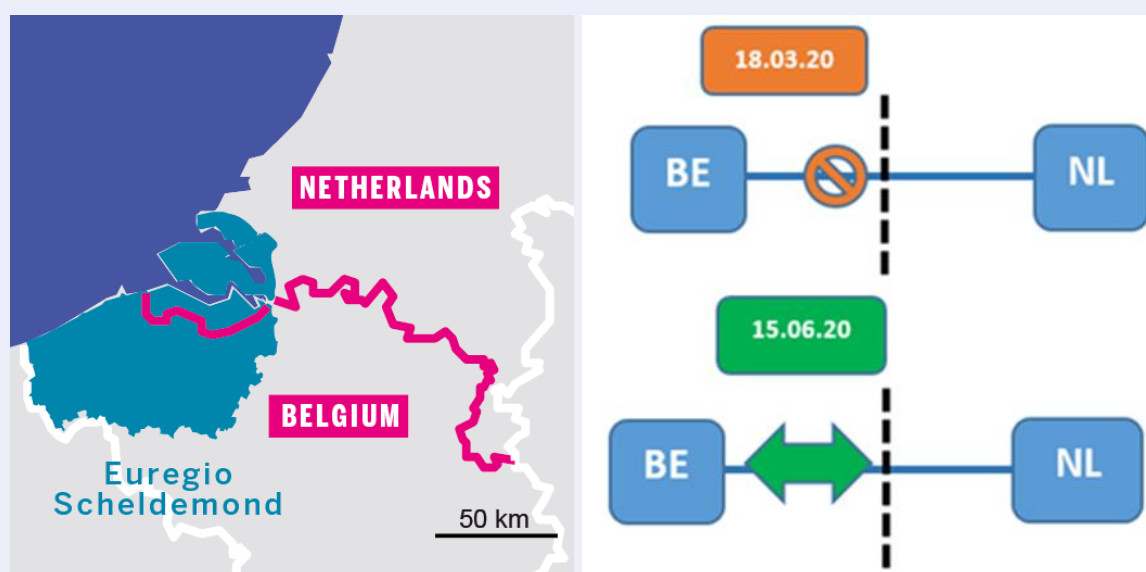
(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

As borders reopened gradually to CB workers (**except for medical staff**), there were still border controls CB work certificate had to be provided. Medical staff was finally allowed to cross border without difficulties only after May 16th.

CB workers (more than 3000) were strongly affected as they could not commute at all. The government of Brandenburg issued a decree addressing CB workers, which were offered 60 EUROS per day, plus 20 EUROS per day for relatives if they decided to stay in Germany.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) <i>(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)</i>	<p>All CB services were interrupted. Students were also affected as there are many schools hosting Polish students in Germany. Brandenburg offered accommodation to these students.</p>
Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	<p>Economic activities were certainly more affected in this region than in non-border areas. The Polish side of the Spree-Neiße-Bober Euroregion is a rather rural area, so the interdependencies between the two sides of the border are very high.</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	<p>This crisis affected everyone: in a twin city like Guben-Gubin, where 1 000 inhabitants out of 17 000 on the German side are Polish, many private relations have been affected, as well as regular activities as Germans could not cross the border.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	<p>Citizens did not quite understand the border closure as the region was not heavily affected by the pandemic. There had been no death due to Covid-19 in the Euroregion, therefore, people were sceptical about those measures and organized protests all along the German-Polish border. People also valued more the freedom they normally have.</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>The Euroregion tried to be reactive by appealing to the Polish Prime Minister and President to reopen the border. The Euroregion also gave many press releases to raise awareness and launched an online photo campaign to revive contact with Polish colleagues under the motto "Stronger together".</p>
 <p>The "Stronger together" campaign Copyright: Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober e.V..</p>	 <p>Copyright: Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober e.V..</p> <p><i>"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."</i> Carsten Jacob, Euroregion Spree-Neiße-Bober</p>

6. Euroregion Scheldemond (Belgium – The Netherlands)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

Between the two countries, only Belgium closed its border and there were only a few CB points left open for CB workers in the area. The Belgian police checked people going in and out of Belgium. Border-checks were only based on justification: a certificate from the employer was requested for employees or self-made justification. **By having a reasonable justification to cross the border, all border patrols would let people through:** rules were strict, but police/border patrols applied them with flexibility and allowed people to cross the border with the minimum required justification. There was no congestion in the Euroregion Scheldemond. There were still possibilities to cross the border by train, if one had viable reasons to cross the border. As for existing cross-border bus lines, buses stopped right at the border.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

The first measures were very unclear and confusing because the needs of border regions were not taken into account, and communication was not clear enough.

At a later stage, there was a teasing of measures and a possibility for social contact at the beginning of June as crossing borders was allowed for family visits and grocery shopping. Informally, the borders were opened again.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

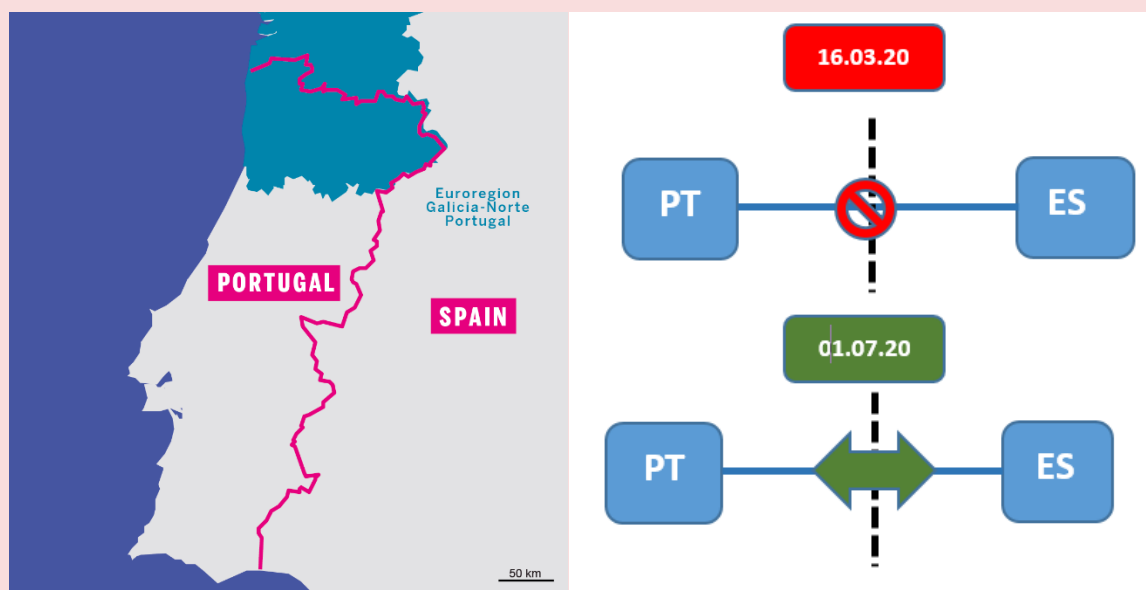
Cross border workers could cross the border with a permit stamped by their employers and essential workers or keyworkers even **got a pass to skip the queue at the border control (nurses, workers of the sea-port and other relevant industries)**: they could download an auto-certificate, a **sticker**, which could be put on the car's window. Other exceptions were made for non-professional caretakers or an emergency doctor's visit.

There were agreements on exemptions on the consequences for **teleworking, taxes and social security** between Belgium and the Netherlands **except for independent CB workers**. Cross border

	'free-lancers' or one-man-business service providers were hit very hard by the crisis.
Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (healthcare, information to citizens, education...)	Schools and childcare were closed, so that the supervisors and teachers were on social benefits. For keyworkers, childcare was always possible on both sides of the border, as is the case for a commuter that sends his/her child to a childcare in the country of work. A couple of patients were transferred to Belgian hospitals due to the proximity of these Belgian hospitals to the Dutch border area in regards to the closest Dutch specialist hospital.
Impact on economic activities (retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)	There was an enormous impact on shops on the Dutch side of the border, many of them highly dependent on Belgian customers. Even though they were allowed to stay open in the NL, due to border controls there were no customers (the Dutch side is far less populated than the Belgian one in this CB area).
	 <p>Border crossing in Hulst (NL) - Copyright of Hulst Municipality</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities (Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)	Socially speaking it was hard for cross border families and friends, who could not see their family and friends. <i>"This should never happen again."</i> Stuey Hamelink, Euroregion Scheldemond
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)	The closing of the border was somehow welcomed in the beginning by the Belgians, because the Dutch still followed the idea of 'herd-immunity' and Belgians were rather scared of the Dutch. There was a harsh treatment and intolerance against the "other". Trust between neighbours was hit hard. Then, the Dutch left this approach and therefore, these shutdowns became a disaster for people living a CB life. The unclear communication on CB measures was frustrating for the people. A petition requesting the easing of restrictions was signed over 15 000 times. <i>"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."</i>

	<p><i>Trust between the people on the one hand and the social security system and administrative procedures on the other hand, was hit hard. The comments in the paper 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."</i></p> <p>Stuey Hamelink, Euroregion Scheldemond</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>Organisations like the Euregios, Border information points, governors and CB governance structures took action. This CB network 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. However, CB cooperation was not in the scope of the central governments nor crisis centres, thus there was not a lot of room for CB structures' input.</p>

7. Euroregion Galicia Norte (Spain – Portugal)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The decision to close borders was taken by both the Spanish and the Portuguese governments. There were suddenly only eight crossing points left between Spain and Portugal and people who were allowed to cross the border had to drive long detours. The several Eurocities were completely cut off and CB public transport became completely inexistent, apart from a few buses from the Porto airport.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

Regional authorities asked both governments to open up more crossing points, at least in the most populated or busy Eurocities and CB areas. The post-lockdown phase was also quite disorganised: there was not any kind of coordination between the two countries.

Impact on cross-border workers

On the Galicia-Norte Portugal border, there are more than 12,000 CB workers. With only 2 out of 27 crossing points open in our territory, CB workers had to drive very long detours, and suffered added delays due to queues at police controls.


Impact on economic activities

(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)

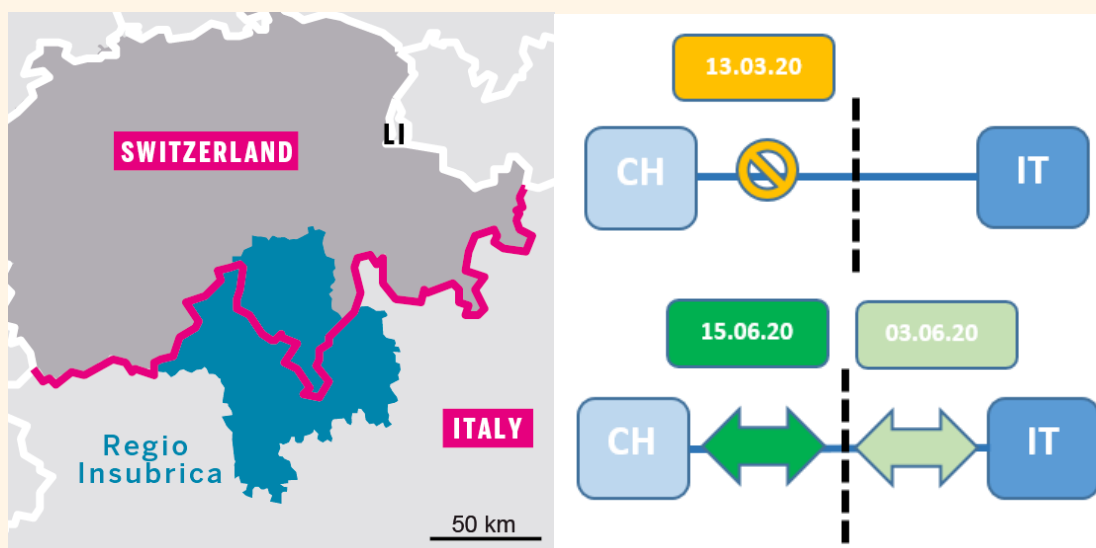
Many businesses depend on CB customers such as hotels, tourism, restaurants etc. E.g. up to 60% of the North Portuguese restaurant industry depends on Galician citizens according to a survey carried out by the Confederation of Businessmen of Northern Portugal. Therefore, the border closure had a very negative impact on the local economy.

Impact on social and cultural activities (Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)

Border shutdown had a negative impact on CB residents' personal lives as families living on both sides of the border were divided.

<p>Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</p>	<p>There was a lack of mutual trust as Portugal, and especially the Portuguese media, took into consideration national figures regarding COVID-19. Therefore, Spanish figures appeared as alarming while Galicia was actually in a better situation than the Spanish average or the average of Northern Portugal.</p>
<p>Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis</p>	<p>The EGTC of the Galicia-Northern Portugal Euroregion was mandated by the Xunta de Galicia and CCDR-N (North Portugal Regional government) to work on a possible plan to revitalize CB cooperation. The Euroregion elaborated it, taking into consideration the suggestions of other EGTCs and Eurocities on the Galician-Portuguese border, since all were aligned. This document was also a request made to the Spanish and Portuguese governments for the Common Strategy for Cross-border Development and the basis of the contribution of both regional Governments to the Spain Portugal Summit. It was also delivered to the European Commission.</p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p>Xosé Lago, Euroregion Galicia Norte</p>
<p>The old bridge Tui-Valença, the oldest one across the Spanish-Portuguese border) closed with fences during the pandemic. The picture was taken in Valença, on the Portuguese side.</p> <p>Copyright: Lusa Agency</p>	

8. Regio Insubrica (Italy-Switzerland)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The Ticino canton is the only one located South of the Alps. Due to the proximity with the Lombardia Region -the first to be hit extremely hard by the pandemic- Ticino had a few weeks of 'advance' from the rest of the country (CH) in terms of spread of the virus. In the first period, Ticino took some very strict and pioneer measures, while the rest of Switzerland seemed to less seize 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**. Unlike Austria, **no health checks were ever performed at the border between IT and CH**. Before the end of March, only 5 border points were left 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.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

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 citizens was then possible again, **except for border shopping**. Usually, shopping in Italy is in fact very common as prices are lower.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

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, which 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

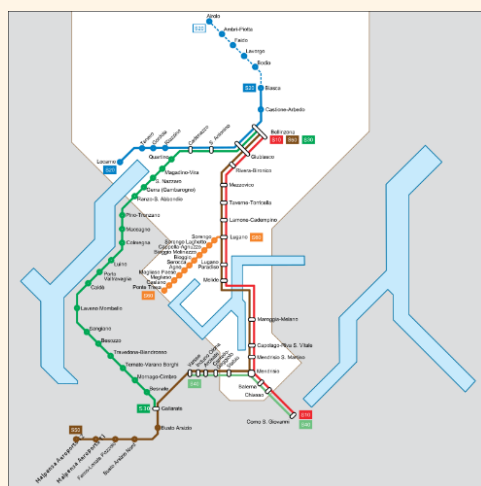
CH. Thanks to several internal measures (e.g. teleworking) taken by Ticino to limit the spread of the virus, the number of Italians crossing the border during the crisis was reduced to around 9 000.

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.

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. Remote working has a **very critical potential impact on CB relations** and represents a risk of reduced tax receipts for Switzerland and a **source of political conflict**.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)
(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT:



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 rate** 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.

Ticino-Lombardia cross-border railway network.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

HEALTHCARE: 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. Hospitals in Ticino booked **hotel rooms** to many of the 4 000 **key CB workers in the healthcare sector**.

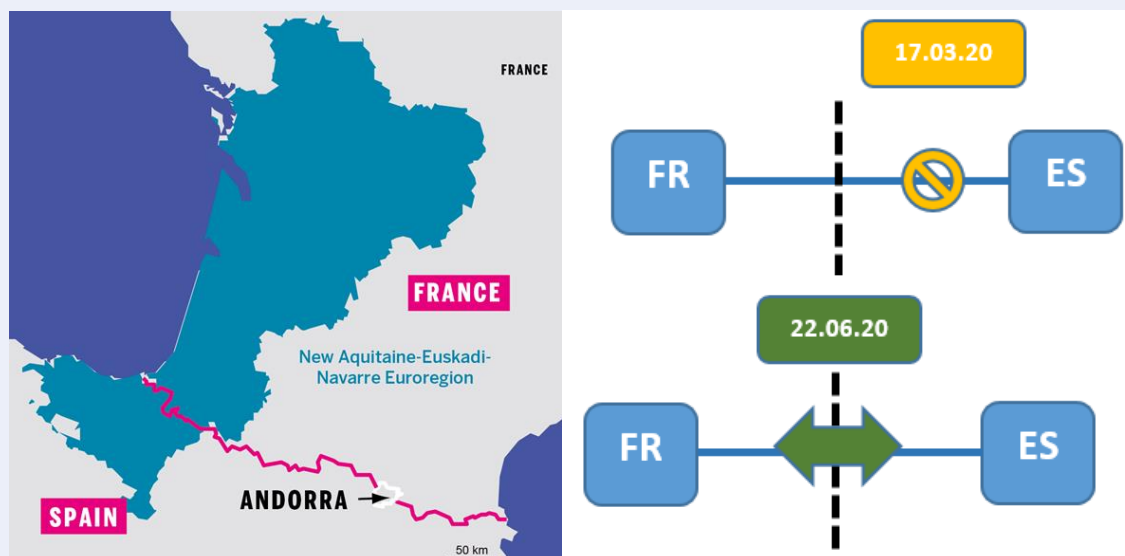
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures
(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)

The CB region, one of Europe's most intertwined in terms of labour market, has 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 all the border controls** in place until a clear sign of improvement of the disease situation in Italy.

	<p>Despite these acts, the diplomatic channels have 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 the prevention of discriminatory acts.</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>Regio Insubrica regularly received calls, mostly from local elected representatives, for border reopening or regarding critical situations experienced by CB workers.</p> <p>The main output for the Regio Insubrica, which is a 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...).</p> <p>Without the Regio Insubrica, who had 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 really 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 on the decisions to be taken in case of a second wave.</p>

9. Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra Euroregion (Spain-France border)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The French Prefecture closed almost all border crossings: only 4 of them were still open in the NAEN Euroregion. This engendered **large congestion along these 4 crossings**. At open crossings there were **double controls** from Spanish and French authorities. Only CB workers and freight were allowed in.

CB public transport: Stops on the other side of the border were cancelled. However, **since the reopening everything restarted**: train, public bus, private buses.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

Post-lockdown plans never mentioned border regions nor CB inhabitants.

Political initiatives: 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 specificities in the post-lockdown plans. 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 held meetings where the Presidents of Navarra and Euskadi were able to raise awareness around the issue of cross-border areas at National level.

Generally speaking, a complete lack of coordination in the post-lockdown measures was perceived locally.

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

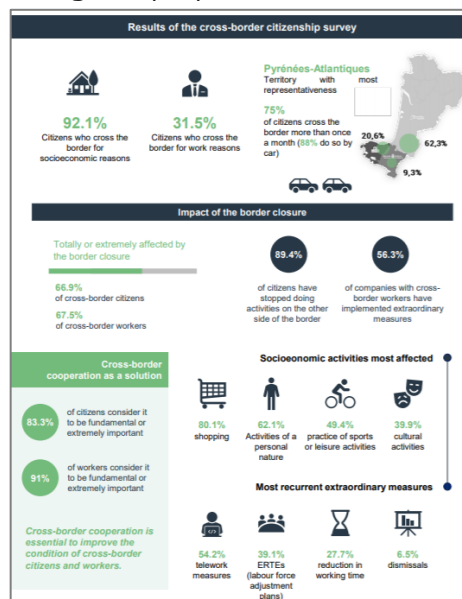
All along the crisis border measures were national, the regional authorities did not have any possibility to take their own decisions. **Since the lifting**

	<p>of lockdown measures, the main border crossings experienced large traffic jams.</p> <p>During the summer, Spain's epidemic indicators worsened again, which implied a risk of a new border closure between the two countries. Since the reopening of the border on June 21st, thousands of French citizens started rushing at the 'ventas' (border shops), generating large queues in front of tobacco shops.</p>
<p>Impact on cross-border workers (Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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 job agency did 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 ended up not perceiving any benefit.</p>
<p>Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (healthcare, information to citizens, education...)</p>	<p>Healthcare: The Spanish side of the border was not very affected by the disease, so patient transfer was not necessary. However, the existing research clusters working in health continued exchanging information and preparing new innovative projects (masks, tests...).</p> <p>Education: 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. Student may be searching for destinations closer to their homes.</p>
<p>Impact on economic activities (retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</p>	<p>Spanish Border shops, also known as "<i>ventas</i>", 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 reopening, life has restarted almost as before.</p>
<p>Impact on social and cultural activities</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</p>	<p>Enquiry carried out by the Euroregion NAEN (more than 2200 respondents):</p> <p>70% of the CB citizen who participated 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 in fact very intertwined in the area. The sense of belonging</p>

to a common territory is really strong and people did not understand why the border was closed in the same functional area.

Also, at the end of the same survey 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.

Citizens also signed an **online letter targeting the French Prefecture** asking for the reopening of the border.



Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis

For the first time, in June, the Euroregion NAEN was invited to give a presentation on 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 CB 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 now mentions the need to "strengthen the role cross-border structures".

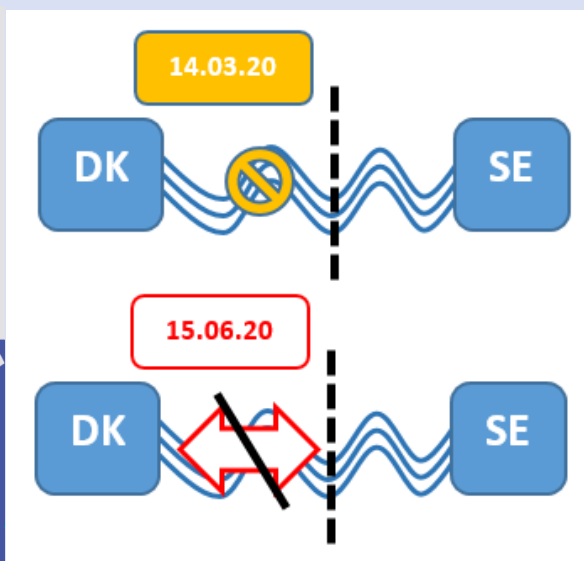
It has to mentioned that CB issues aroused interest of these commission, for which this topic seemed quite new. In fact, the Euroregion stresses a real lack of understanding of the Spanish Central government of the peculiarities of border regions.



Report based on the survey "Economic and social impact of closing borders"¹

¹ <https://www.e-docpro.fr/api/shared/document/ca848de4-cdac-11ea-ad18-15631c0902b9/Informe%20cierre%20frontera%20EN.pdf>

10. Øresund Region (Sweden-Denmark border)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The Danish border was not entirely closed: cross-border workers were always allowed as long as they could provide 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 during the whole time.**

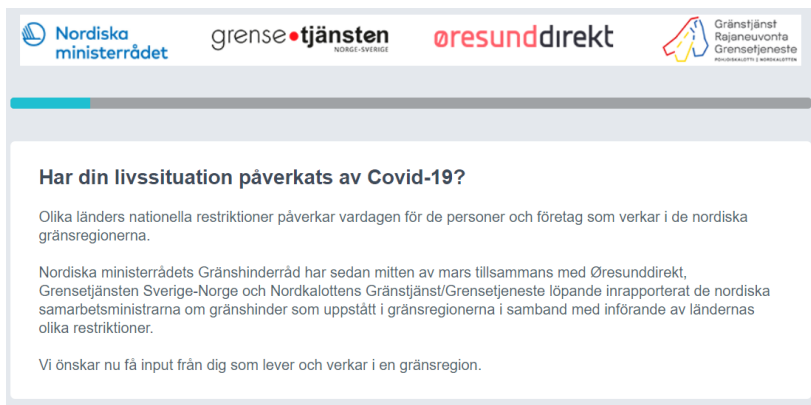


Danish border control at the Øresund Bridge in Pepparholm, June 18th
© News Øresund - Johan Wessman

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and

During the summer, Denmark was **monitoring the surrounding regions' data** in order to identify possibilities to open the country to their inhabitants. Since borders reopened, 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**

<p>the de-containment phase (<i>Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls</i>)</p>	<p>required visitors to provide a booking of at least 6-nights, to be shown when crossing the border.</p>
<p>Impact on cross-border workers (<i>Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...</i>)</p>	<p>When CB 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 social security in Sweden at the same time. Potentially, 18 000 commuters could have been concerned. This would also have 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.</p> <p>The Swedish and Danish authorities put together an expert group which finally, after a few weeks of negotiations, opted for a "force majeure" exception to keep the legal framework as it was before during the COVID crisis, as if people were still commuting to the other country.</p> <p>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 has been an issue as, in this agreement, exceptions (remote working from another country than the usual one) were 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 individuals and on 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 way 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.</p>
<p>Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (<i>healthcare, information to citizens, education...</i>)</p>	<p>CB public transport: When Denmark initiated border controls, 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 created a lot of confusion among 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</p>

	<p>tickets via an app on their phone, as before it was not necessary to pre-book.</p> <p>Information: The OresundDirekt desk had to physically close to the public. Nonetheless, the centre was very active collecting information, answering questions by phone and email, and interpreting national information.</p> <p>Education: 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.</p> <p><i>"This and the 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."</i> <i>Sandra Forssén, Head of Office Øresunddirekt Sweden</i></p>
Impact on economic activities (retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)	<p>Around 10 000 people from Denmark own a cottage in Sweden. CB tourism increased a lot during the 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.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures	<p>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. 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. Some media even spoke of the "Death of the Öresund region".</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>In the Nordic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers played an important role: by setting up a survey² (see picture below) in partnership with Border Information Points (Øresunddirekt, Grensetjänsten Sverige-Norge and Nordkalottens Gränstjänst / Grensetjeneste): a total of 1669 responses to this questionnaire were collected over the period March-June. The results show that commuters expected much more precise information and clarifications from the national level.</p> 

² <https://surveys.analyzer.com/survey/linkindex?pid=s8cucf2c&langId=se>

The **Øresunddirekt** center 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 a very structured **multi-level interaction**. Making the politicians aware of the facts and coming up with **recommendations to solve obstacles** were somehow the major tasks of the structure during the pandemic.

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 usual. Starting from mid-March, they worked intensively producing articles on how the measure would affect commuters, producing FAQ and also interpreting national information as soon they received it from the Ministries.

The combination of the Nordic Council and the local border information points really helped: this network allowed local structures to have a way in to the Ministries. **Most CB obstacles are not just Danish or Swedish and needed to be solved on a macro-regional level**. That is why the 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 the networks" can be considered as a real chance. Most importantly, this particular period stressed the importance of the added value of structures with a fully "cross-border point view" and not just the national one.

Danish police border control in Elsinore at the ferry terminal of the shipping company Forsea on Saturday, June 27th.

© News Øresund - Johan Wessman



11. Gorizia-Nova Gorica (Italy-Slovenia)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

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 alarmed and **closed the secondary crossing point overnight, 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. 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.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

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 from people from other countries**, which meant that controls were still active on the main international borders. During the summer, some workers from Eastern countries working in Italy started **taking secondary border crossings to avoid the mandatory border checks** which they were supposed to be submitted.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)	CB public transport: All CB bus lines in the twin-city were suspended. As well as all the train connecting Udine and Ljubljana.
Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	Local economies of the two cities of the EGTC GO are extremely intertwined: several people from Italy go shopping, eating at restaurants or playing at Nova Gorica's Casino. The impact was severe, since especially Nova Gorica's economy 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 .
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	The two cities, which are currently presenting a joint bid to become European Capital of Culture 2025 made use of this crisis to turn it into 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 networks. Symbolically, the two mayors also organised a face-to-face meeting by installing two tables right next to the new fence. People have followed all these activities with enthusiasm.
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	<p>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 on a border which has a strong historic past of divisions and conflict.</p> <p>Luckily, local mayors have played a very positive role: since the very beginning, the Italian Mayor of Gorizia kept 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.</p> <p>This period has also meant a renewed interest towards the "other": The 30th of 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 participants: a success that exceeded all expectations.</p> <p><i>"If, on one side, the border shutdown was a traumatic event, on the other it awakened people's consciousness on the freedom acquired and on the absurdity of "re-bordering" the two cities."</i> Ivan Curzolo, EGTC GO Director</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	The EGTC GO mainly acted as a facilitator during the whole crisis. The two Mayors were in close contact and know each other very well so there was no need for the EGTC GO to organise the dialogue between the two local authorities. Instead, the EGTC did a back-office work, producing content and analysing the main obstacles and the impact of 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.

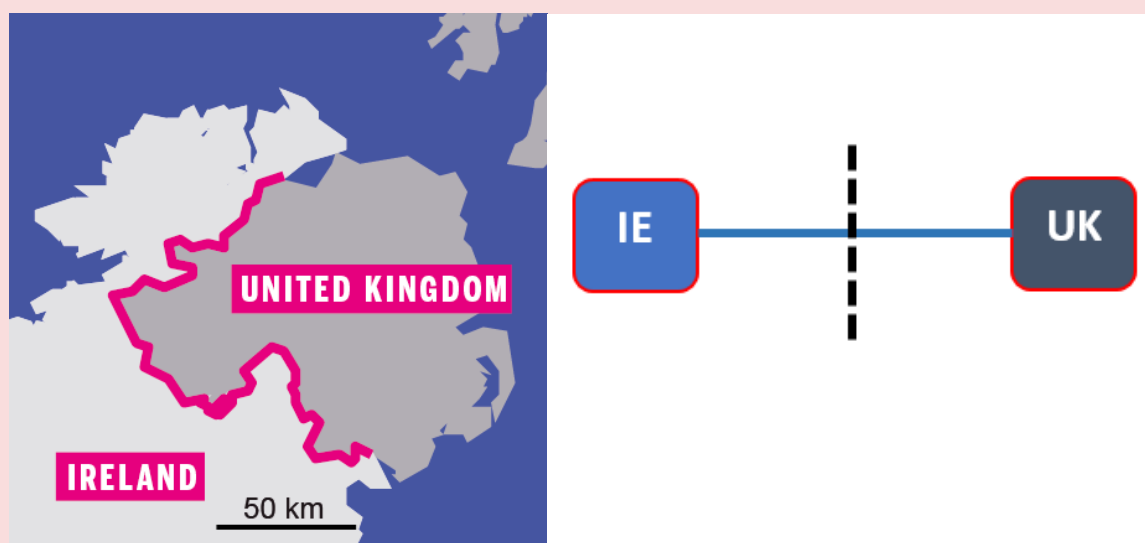
The EGTC GO also had an important role in **keeping alive cross-border social cohesion among citizens** during the crisis: they organised online Italian and Slovenian lessons and online “coffee debates”. They also worked on the communication strand by financing the production of films and short videos.

Cross-border fence meeting of the Mayors of Gorizia and Nova Gorica on May 21st 2020

Copyright: 'GO 2025 Nova Gorica - Gorizia' Facebook page



12. Ireland-Northern Ireland border



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

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 "triple E" principle: 'Educate, Explain and Encourage.'"

Anthony Soares, Centre for Cross Border Studies

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.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

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 a 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.

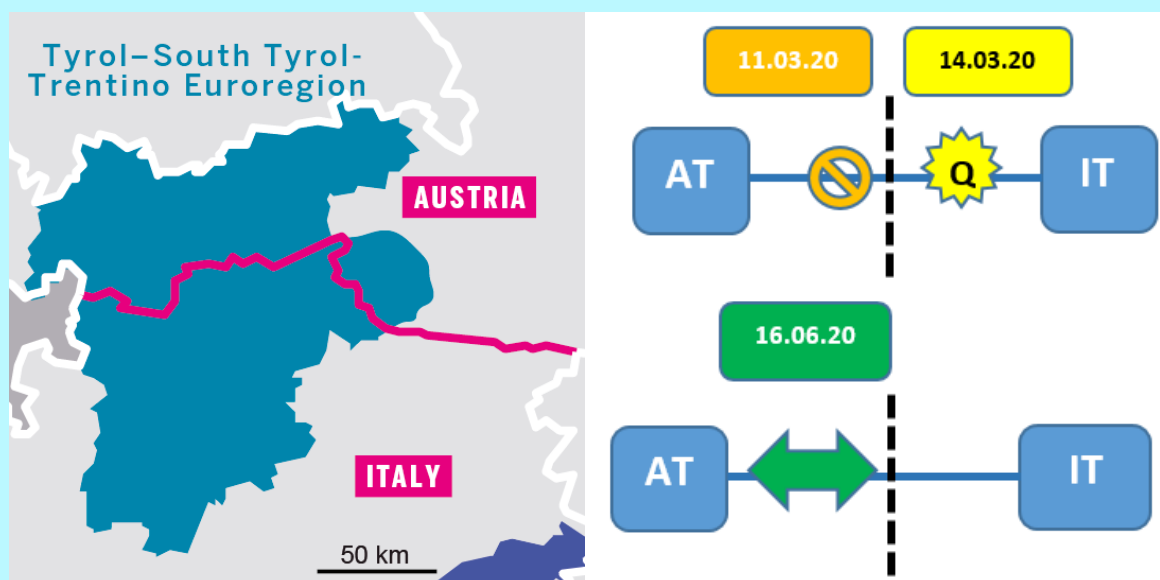
Another example is the *Memorandum of understanding* which was signed between the Ministers of health. This text was more about exchanging information and implied **very few practicalities**. However, practical problems linked to a lack of coordination still kept arising during the weeks which followed: 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.

Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>According to the interviewee at the Centre for Cross Border Studies (CCBS)³, at the Irish border, the crisis management was undertaken by a combination of stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU programmes (in particular the PEACE programme) were very important all along the crisis; - Also, 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 InterTradeIreland⁴, coordinating information on both side of the border for businesses and workers; - Finally, local authorities were very active as well, finding local solutions to border related obstacles.
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³ <http://crossborder.ie/>

⁴ 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/>

13. EUREGIO Tirol – Südtirol – Trentino (Austria-Italy)



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

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, other persons had to **self-isolate during 14 days** when arriving in the other country.

While freight was always allowed to cross the Alps, **passenger trains stopped several km before the border.**

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

Starting from the beginning of the pandemic in Northern Italy, the Euregio 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 had a "delay" on the Italian regions' one."

Mattias Fink, EUREGIO Tirol – Südtirol – Trentino

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

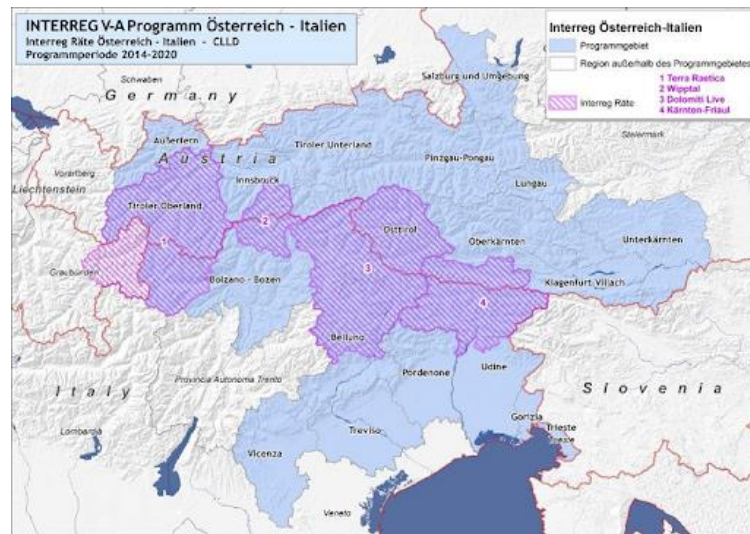
(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

Healthcare:

The **CB task force** made the **exchange of information possible on the necessary equipment standards to tackle the pandemic** in hospitals, as the situation in Austria had a "delay" on the Italian regions' one. Moreover, since the number of intensive care beds soon became almost complete on the Italian side, Tirol (AT) offered a **patient transfer to 8-10 Italian citizens.** However, this healthcare cooperation did not represent something new as it

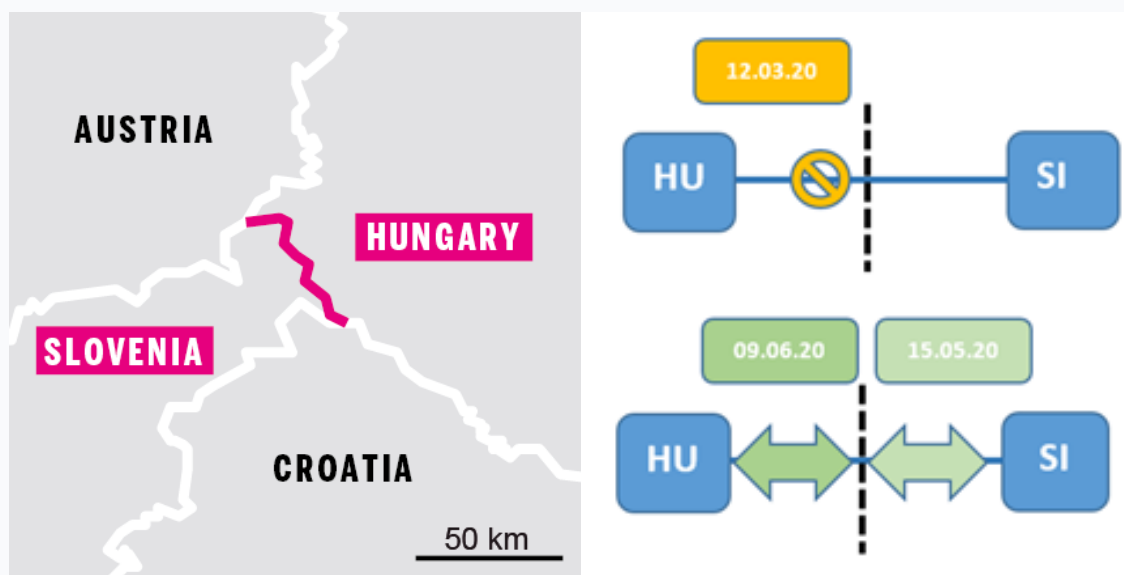
	<p>is based on the 50 years of cooperation and agreements between Südtirol and Tirol.</p> <p>Information: The EGTC struggled to collect all the official information which kept changing every week. Information in time of crisis will be a strategic element for the future Interreg programming period.</p> <p>Education: The University of Innsbruck hosts more than 4000 Italian students. After a few weeks, 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.</p>
<p>Impact on economic activities (<i>retail, shops, businesses, tourism...</i>)</p>	<p>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 requested to also be able to cross. Among the most affected groups we can count the transport companies offering journeys across the border.</p>
<p>Impact on social and cultural activities (<i>Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...</i>)</p>	<p>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...).</p>
<p>Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (<i>Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...</i>)</p>	<p>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. Südtirol 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.</p>
<p>Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Well-established healthcare agreements between the Austria and the 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 still allowed to cross the border for health reasons.</p> <p>The 18 municipalities composing the "Wipptal Interreg Council" (CLLD), the area between Vipiteno (IT) and Innsbruck (AT) launched a common initiative preparing a resolution addressed</p>

to the President of the two provinces, inciting them to **reopen the border as soon as possible**.



The Wipptal CLLD (N°2) within Interreg AT-IT

14. Hungary – Slovenia border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The border between Hungary and Slovenia was closed at midnight on the 12th of March. First it was reopened on the 2nd of April, but with restrictions, and was closed again on the 16th of April. The control of body temperature was not common, border authorities rather controlled the papers certifying the reason for traveling (for example land use, employment or individual permissions granted such as caring for an elderly relative). As there is almost no public transport at the Hungarian-Slovenian border, that was not an issue.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

The decisions were made jointly on local and national level, but local decisions represent a smaller proportion (about 10%), local stakeholders could mostly express their opinions in connection with the opening of smaller border crossing points. The involved stakeholders were mostly the municipalities from both sides of the border. It was a very quick and good communication between the two sides.

Also, solidarity was present on governmental level as the Hungarian government sent equipment to the hospital of Murska Sobota (SI).

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

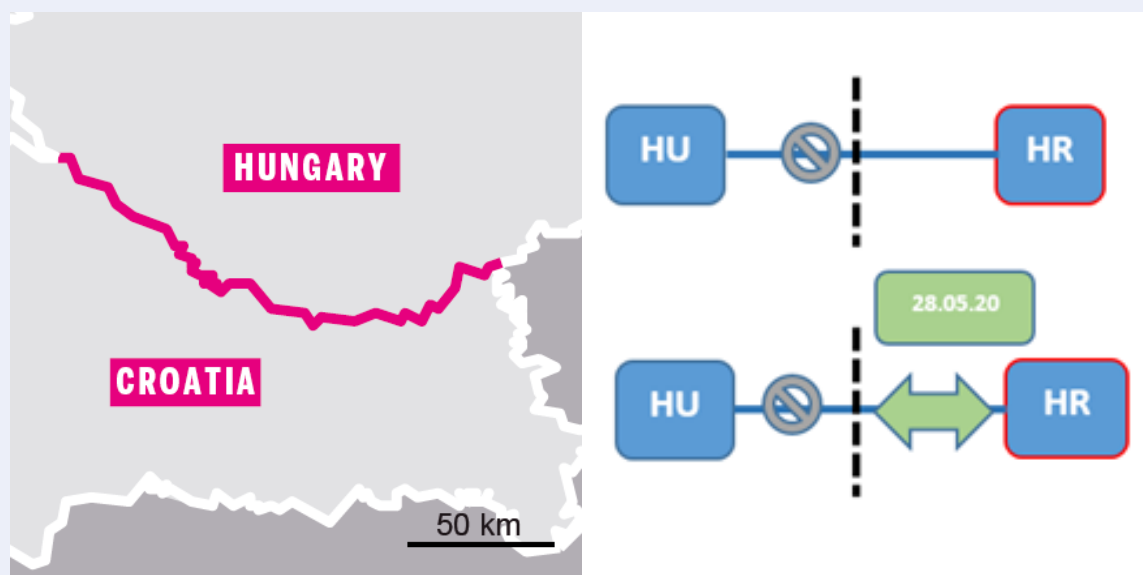
The movement of cross-border workers was problematic only at the very beginning. After a couple of days, they were finally allowed to cross the border. Unemployment resulting from the border closure was not reported. Remote working was introduced in many cases, albeit this solution was not possible everywhere (due to the type of work or the lack of proper infrastructure).

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

The level and number of real cross-border public services are relatively low in this border section and thus the impact was not measurable.

<i>(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)</i>	
Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	The analysed area is famous for high tourism, which was severely impacted by the pandemic and the restrictions. The restaurants and accommodations struggled to financially survive the lockdown due to the missing tourists, several workers already lost their jobs (especially Hungarians who worked in Slovenia).
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	A relatively high level of social solidarity was visible, for example people sew masks on one side of the border and handed over to the other side. Culturally, the local, national media found itself in a difficult position as, due to the reduced mobility and other restrictions it was hard to conduct interviews, organise and report on events, create content. The organisation of family visits also had to be suspended, which was difficult for many.
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	Citizens have largely accepted the introduced measures, even though the situation was frustrating. However, it was visible that people got used to and were attached to open borders and the new situation brought back memories from 30 years ago. The sentimental value of open borders became more evident, people tend to appreciate the open border more now. Also, because of economic reasons, people rather request open borders, especially to boost touristic flows.
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	The pandemic and its aftermath proved that advocacy and local representation is needed. However, CB structures are still somewhat looking for their exact role in this context. The local EGTC considers that it should have wider and more practical authorisations, in order to be able to initiate more actions, especially in crisis management.

15. Croatian – Hungarian border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

After the pandemic started in Hungary, in the first two weeks there was a complete border closure on the Hungarian side. After a while, cross-border workers as well as those Croatian citizens who own vineyards in Hungary were allowed to cross the border so they could continue their work-related activities. Cross-border public transport was not stopped during this period.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

Decisions appeared to be exclusively taken at a national level. There was only a minimum cross-border coordination: even the several twin settlements relations became looser. The experience showed that, in a pandemic situation, the hierarchy is so strict that CB organisations – such as EGTCs – can only participate in the executive phase and in the prevention and not in the phase of designing or shaping the responses.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

Workers were allowed to cross the border shortly after the border closure. However, many people (especially from South Zala) worked in Croatian and Austrian tourism and hospitality businesses. Since these facilities closed immediately, many employees lost their jobs.

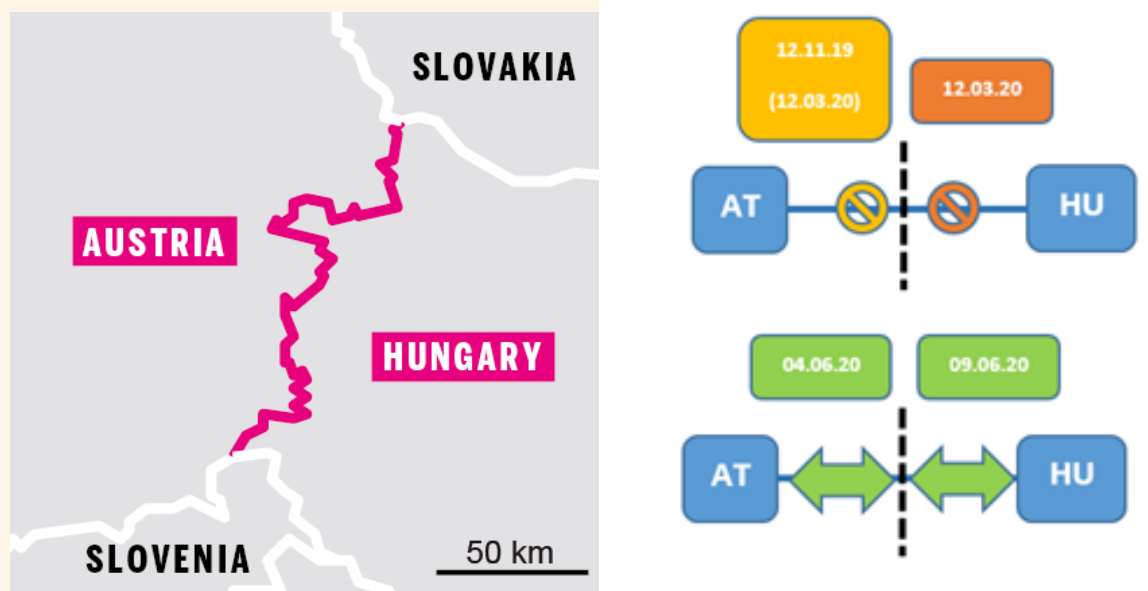
Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)

(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

The level and number of real cross-border public services are relatively low along this border section and thus the impact was not measurable.

Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	<p>It seems that the economy is struggling, many shops were closed during this time and several did not open again after the restrictions were removed. The economy is also further burdened by the larger number of unemployed people who were made redundant due to the collapse of the Croatian and Austrian tourism sector.</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	<p>Virtually everything stopped: organised events, meetings, conferences, shows and concerts were cancelled or postponed, and family gatherings were also either not held or held in open air with fewer guests. Weddings and funerals were organised in smaller circles. People probably suffered from this aspect in the highest measure.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	<p>People accepted and respected the rules, a high level of discipline was observable. They minimized social contacts, postponed organised events and used masks. Fear or lack of mutual trust was not perceivable, but rather a greater appreciation was palpable for the existence of open borders. Discriminatory acts were not reported, everyone was treated similarly and according to the same rules.</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>It would be important to find a role for EGTCs as clearly the pandemic does not stop at the border. The assumed role could be along the lines of maintaining contact, transferring information on prevention, sharing equipment etc. However, during this phase of the pandemic the EGTC in the region struggled to actively take part in the solution of the pandemic and the restrictions made because of it.</p>

16. Austria – Hungary border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The same COVID-19 measures were introduced at the same time in the Austrian-Hungarian border section as in the case of every Hungarian border section: thus, the borders were closed in mid-March. Starting from this date, only cross-border workers were allowed to commute. During this period the type of controls were mostly administrative, the authorization of travellers was checked (citizenship, employment certificate), but in some cases also body temperature controls were performed.

Borders were reopened again for the summer.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

The CB coordination and dialogue were also strongly shaped by the GYSEV, the Hungarian-Austrian railway company which continued its service throughout the pandemic. Even though the decisions were made on a national level (separately in Hungary, Austria and Slovakia where the company also operates), the company managed to channel their ways and experiences in the process which then was reflected upon in the introduced measures (for example they conducted a corridor traffic between two Austrian cities but passing through Hungary, which was a situation that had to be regulated separately).

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

Workers could travel during the pandemic (also by train), so a large wave of unemployment was not recorded. Of course, new rules for the staff of GYSEV train company had to be set up, so that they could be allowed to cross the border with the train. In this case, the suggestions of the company were accepted and implemented on the national level. Remote working was an option for some, but considering that in the Hungarian-Austrian border section about 50.000 people are commuting across the border to work, it was a priority to keep them employed, as the social security system would have seriously suffered.

Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) (<i>healthcare, information to citizens, education...</i>)	<p>The impact on the social services would have been heavier if cross-border workers would not have been allowed to commute. A large number of doctors and nurses from Hungary work in Austria and thus the Austrian healthcare system would have undoubtedly struggled if these workers were not be able to go to work.</p>
Impact on economic activities (<i>retail, shops, businesses, tourism...</i>)	<p>Everything that is connected to people moving around came to a sudden halt. Primarily, the tourism industry was affected, the usage of accommodation services practically dropped to 0% and even after the quarantine only got back to around 40%. The utilisation of cross-border train services also only got back to 70%. Border shops, businesses, retail companies also felt the impact.</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities (<i>Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...</i>)	<p>Everything was forbidden so those who made a living from cultural events (actors, musicians, caterers etc.) are put to a very precarious situation, including during the summer, when the restrictions were less strict.</p> <p>When it comes to family and personal relationships, the approach of persons is much more resilient, they returned to their usual habits as soon as it was allowed.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (<i>Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...</i>)	<p>Citizens accepted and understood the situation: travellers on trains and employees wore masks and followed the new guidelines. The fact that the CB workers had the possibility to move around was judged as risky by many because they could infect the others, but luckily no local outbreak happened (mainly because the level of infection was low on both sides of the border).</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>The example of GYSEV Hungarian-Austrian train company shows that it is not only the classic CB structures such as EGTCs and Euroregions that are able to shape the economic and social decisions of a cross-border region, but large companies can also have an advantageous impact on cross-border cooperation.</p>



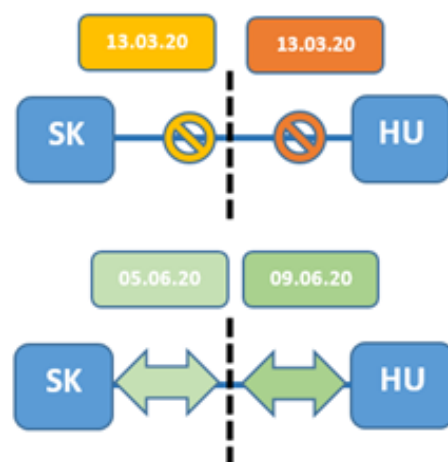
The cross-border railway network at the AT-HU border.
Source : Wikipedia



The reopening of international rail connections in July 2020

Source: MÁV-START, as appeared on : <https://www.mavcsoport.hu/mav-csoport/restart-jul-iustol-szamos-nemzetkozi-vonat-ujraindul>

17. Slovakian-Hungarian border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The shutdown of the Slovakian-Hungarian border represented a serious problem for many Slovak citizens who had moved to Hungary without officially registering while commuting to work to Slovakia. The problem had to do with the fact that, for them, the exception was not valid. This authorisation was granted only when they completed their registration as a citizen living in Hungary, which took some time.

Body temperature control was not systematic, while justification for crossing the border was requested.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

On the Slovakian-Hungarian border section some decisions were taken locally, often before they were announced nationally. Since in Slovakia the institutions closed one week before, in Hungary the decision to close everything was announced, in several settlements on this border section such as Rajka.

Apart from this example, decisions were made in a hierarchical way: at the local level the decisions were only executed. However, continuous dialogue between the municipalities on both sides was maintained.

Impact on cross-border workers

Cross-border workers were granted free movement after a couple of days. During this time, those who could, worked remotely, the others stayed on the Slovak side in hotels or at relatives'.


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

(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

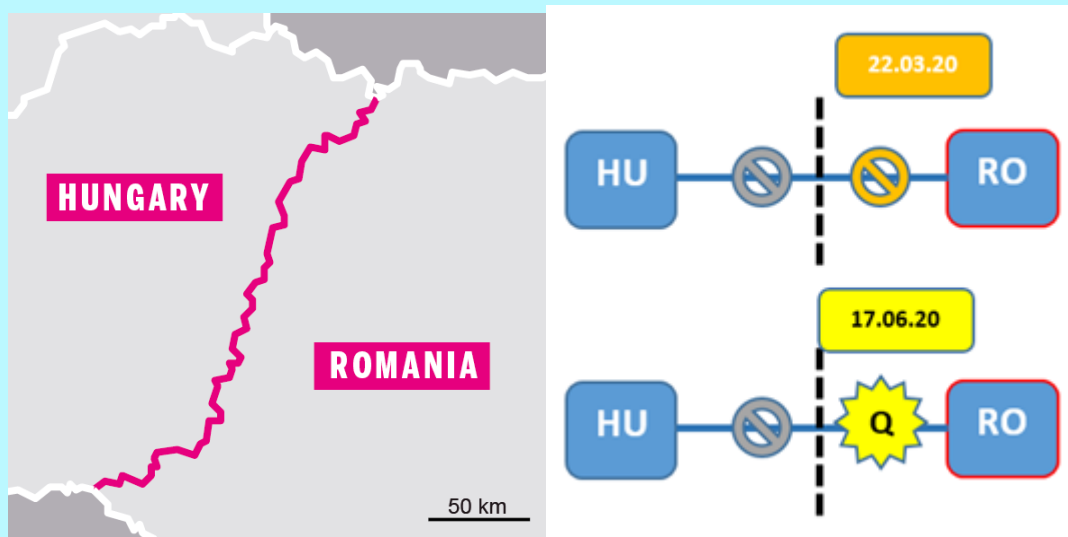
In the Hungarian side of the region there are children who attend kindergartens and schools on the Slovak side. Theoretically, after the closure of schools, children's supervision should have been provided on the Slovak side, which could have been problematic due to the border closure, but there was no big demand for it, therefore the service was not provided on the Hungarian side either.

Impact on economic activities

No serious economic impact has been reported along this border section.

<p>Impact on social and cultural activities (Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</p>	<p>All cultural events were postponed or cancelled. Everyone involved (either as provider or as client) suffered due to their loss.</p> <p>The social impact was also considerable as many families live on both sides of the border and they could not meet during this period.</p>
<p>Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures (Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</p>	<p>The people perceived the situation as a temporary problem which needed to be overcome and that everything would return to normalcy. Consequently, the perception on the border did not change either. Moreover, those Slovak citizens who moved to Hungary without registration still claim their wish to stay.</p> <p>In general, people accepted the decisions and introduced measures. There was only one counterexample where confusing information appeared, and therefore led people believe that commuters could not cross the border either, which caused a small outrage.</p>
	 <p>Official Facebook profile of the Police of the Slovak Republic (Retrieved: 2020. 05. 05.)</p>

18. Romania – Hungary border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

In March, the border was closed hermetically. Although there were some exceptions, the majority of people could not cross the border. The border was closed from the Hungarian side: Romania allowed people to enter. Body temperature was checked sporadically, mostly on the Romanian side. There was also a rule according to which people could cross the border for 24 hours within a 30 km radius without any justification. Even though the rules were the same for every border section, there were some designated border crossings for passenger and for freight traffic, which kept operating all along. CB buses and trains were suspended.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

For people living in the region it seemed that the decisions were made exclusively in Budapest and Bucharest, without coordination and without consulting local authorities. They had the impression that new rules were coming continuously, and they were unable to follow the most up-to-date status.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

Similar experiences as on the other Hungarian border sections, namely, that after a couple of days people could return to commute. The share of people losing their jobs was extremely low. However, the case of seasonal workers – characteristic for this region – was problematic as they did not fall into the 24-hour rule as they usually come for 3-4 months at once, so the regulations had to be expanded to include them as well.

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

The cross-border relations got reduced to only communication. For instance, in the Romanian Săcueni regular floods took place and usually volunteers and firefighters from Hungary offer their support. Due to the coronavirus, this year they were unable to go.

<i>(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)</i>	
Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	A decrease was experienced in tourism and the turnover of shops, cafes, bars and restaurants too. The service sector also suffered as people tended to hold back their spending.
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	Everything, including the events of ongoing Interreg projects were cancelled or postponed which is very problematic, even if they tried to carry on online, the results are not the same.
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	Nobody was really satisfied with the situation or how it was handled, but there were no organized demonstrations on the Hungarian side. On the Hungarian side, fear was more perceivable as in Romania the statistics were worse so the border was perceived as a protection. In Romania, it was the opposite, with people being more sceptical and thus angrier and more frustrated about the border closure.
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	The main role of CB structures could be the collection and dissemination of information. The existing EGTC in this region also conducted a survey on the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic among the mayors of the region.

19. Romania – Bulgaria border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

Mid-March, Bulgaria closed its borders, meaning that anybody who was going to Romania and back had to complete a mandatory 14 days quarantine. After a couple of days, Romania followed suit. Only in mid-June the state of emergency was stopped, and the border opened again. Dedicated border crossings were introduced to different types of traffic.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

Every decision was exclusively made at a national level and the local level was not involved at all. The decisions were made abruptly without a proper consultation procedure.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

The movement of cross-border workers was organised shortly after the introduction of the border closure. What was more important for this border section is the large number of employees working abroad, primarily in Western Europe. A huge amount of them decided to travel home at the beginning of the pandemic hoping for the situation to resolve quickly but then found themselves in a precarious situation the longer the pandemic lasted.

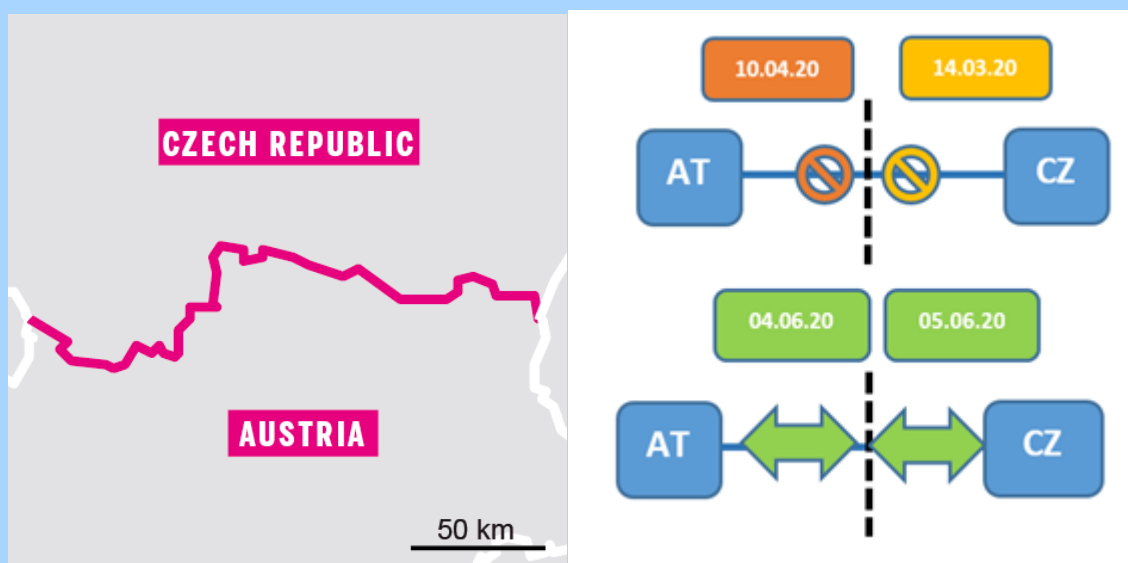
Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS)

(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)

The level and number of real cross-border public services are relatively low in this border section and thus the impact was not measurable.

Impact on economic activities <i>(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)</i>	<p>Tourism was hit particularly hard by the border closures, but other services also struggled to survive during the pandemic.</p>
Impact on social and cultural activities <i>(Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...)</i>	<p>On the Romanian side of the border very strict rules had been introduced. Even funerals, weddings and other important family events had to be postponed, cancelled or held in very small circle (at a period when only 5 people could attend a funeral in Romania). This seriously impacted the public moral. Moreover, all cultural events were cancelled.</p>
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures <i>(Frustration, discriminatory acts, lack of mutual trust, demonstrations, petitions...)</i>	<p>Back in March and April people were more likely to accept the regulations because they were afraid, but after that it was barely possible to convince them to follow the recommendations to stay at home and to avoid travelling during the summer holidays.</p> <p>The Bulgarian side, which also relies on Romania tourists ended up being really supportive of having Romanians coming to the seaside, especially since tourism was struggling.</p>
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	<p>As part of Interreg, CB structures could be encouraged to participate in cross-border projects dedicated to the joint purchase and sharing of medical equipment, as well as conducting research in healthcare topics.</p>

20. Austria – Czech Republic border region



Border controls and cross-border mobility

(Reduced crossings points, type of controls, congestion, CB public transport...)

The border was closed in mid-March, but freight traffic was kept operational. After borders were opened again, congestions were not common: traffic jumped back to previous, normal rates.

CB coordination and dialogue during the crisis and the de-containment phase

(Evolution in border controls and effects of the lifting of border controls)

Even though decisions were made on the national level, several stakeholders could take part in the decision-making process. For instance, **Austrian Emergency Medical Services** were in continuous dialogue with the Embassy in the Czech Republic, sharing information and organizing the continuation of cross-border emergency services.

Impact on cross-border workers

(Remote working and taxation, social security, unemployment...)

Remote working was introduced in a large extent, but there were also cases for employees to be sent to paid or unpaid holidays. The case of the commuting workers was handled as a priority and was solved through a bilateral agreement between Austria and the Czech Republic. Thus, soaring unemployment was not reported in the region.


Impact on the users of cross-border public services (CPS) *(healthcare, information to citizens, education...)*

On this border section, the ambulance vehicles could move around freely. Even though there were some administrative and communication difficulties during the early days of the pandemic, the service managed to keep operating during the whole period of the lockdown.

Impact on economic activities

(retail, shops, businesses, tourism...)

As everywhere, the tourism section of the economy was hit the hardest due to the restricted movement of people, but also shops and restaurants struggled to keep their business float-

	ing. The labour market struggled to quickly hire the newly unemployed people which burdened the social security system in both countries.
Impact on social and cultural activities (<i>Family life and personal relationships, cultural events...</i>)	The large-scale events requiring personal presence were cancelled or postponed everywhere, which jeopardized the livelihood of many performing artists. Also, the connections between the relatives not living in the same households were harder to maintain, while families also struggled with juggling working from home and home-schooling their children.
Citizen's acceptance of border-related measures	There was a group of people who reject the introduced measures and were angry, but the majority of people complied with the regulations.
Role of CB structures and agreements during the crisis	In the future, a potential role for CB structures could be to push for the acceptance of a treaty allowing for ambulance vehicles to cross the border to render this branch of the healthcare system more efficient.
Austrian Red Cross	 <p>© Notruf Niederösterreich</p>

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