



The revised Schengen Borders Code – an ex-post evaluation in times of border controls (ITEM-TEIN joint study)

ITEM Cross-Border Impact Assessment 2025



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ITEM *10 years
of expertise*
Cross-border



Maastricht University

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Abbreviations

ACP	Authorised crossing points
AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
BAZG	Swiss Federal Office for Customs and Border Security
BENEGO	<i>Belgisch-Nederlands GrensOverleg</i>
BGTC	Benelux Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
CAPB	<i>Communauté d’Agglomération du Pays Basque</i>
CESCI	Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
CESEDA	Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum
CFDT	<i>Confédération française démocratique du travail</i>
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
DLWI	German-Luxembourg Economic Initiative
DNHK	<i>Deutsch-Niederländische Handelskammer</i>
DNPAF	National Directorate of Border Police
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EMR	Euregio Meuse-Rhine
EOE	Eifel-Ostbelgien-Éislek
EOM	The Upper Moselle Valley Development Concept
ERDF	The European Regional Development Fund
ESS	Electric signalling system
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFGZ	<i>Gesellschaft für grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit</i>
GISGR	Geographical Information System of the Greater Region
HUF	Hungarian forint
IBA	The Labour Market Observatory
ITEM	Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility
LCGB	Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions
LWV	The local employers’ organisation of border province of Limburg
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
MTV	Mobile security monitoring checks
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany)
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
REKGR	Cross-border spatial development concept
RNLM	Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (<i>Koninklijke Marechaussee</i>)
RWS	<i>Rijkswaterstaat</i>
SBC	Schengen Borders Code
SEM	State Secretariat for Migration
TEIN	Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

TLN	Dutch Transport and Logistics sector
UECC	Union of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry for Transport
VAT	Value added tax
VNG	Association of Dutch municipalities (<i>Vereniging van Nederlandse gemeenten</i>)
WCP	The Working Community of the Pyrenees
WSAGR	Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region

1. Introduction

The core of the European Union is its internal market, built on the open borders and the free movement of people: the area of Schengen. In 2025, Schengen has existed for 40 years. “In an area where persons may move freely, the reintroduction of border control at internal borders should remain an exception. Border control should not be carried out or formalities imposed solely because such a border is crossed”, recalls recital 21 of the Schengen Borders Code.¹ Yet, rarely has the list of notified border controls been so long.² While a border-free Schengen zone is regarded as precondition to the future of the Single Market, scholars speak of the trends of re-bordering and re-nationalisation, where the management of borders has become normalised. Internal border controls can be seen as a threat to the Single Market and the future of European competitiveness. Indeed, in 2024, two prominent reports of Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi highlighted the importance of completing the European Single Market for Europe’s competitiveness. In his report, Letta emphasises that Schengen is one of the cornerstones: “We must prevent dysfunctions in the Schengen system to jeopardise the Single Market.”³

Many of the cross-border regions at the internal borders of the EU are today faced with the reintroduction of border controls. In these areas, the (negative) impacts of such controls may be especially visible due to the high degree of integration, intensive cross-border cooperation, and the daily movement of commuters across the border. On 24 May 2024, the Council of the European Union gave its final approval to the new Schengen Borders Code, with many amendments particularly interesting for cross-border regions. Next to amendments regarding external and internal border controls, interestingly, the Code explicitly talks about “cross-border” regions (different from the term border region). By 11 January 2025, the Member States with common internal borders are asked to determine the areas of their territory considered as cross-border regions, considering the strong social and economic ties between them, and notify the Commission. Member States are also required to assess the impact of border controls to these cross-border regions.

This year’s joint Cross-Border Impact Assessment by ITEM and the Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN) combines both ex-post and ex-ante analysis. It examines several border regions across Europe, including case studies of Benelux–Germany, Germany–France, Germany–Switzerland, France–Spain, Hungary–Austria, and Luxembourg–Germany. The key questions guiding this research are twofold. First, what are the current effects of the reintroduction of internal border controls on (cross-)border regions, including differences between highly integrated Euroregions and other border areas? This includes examining how controls affect cross-border commuting for work, study, and leisure; whether travel times and incentives to work across the border have changed; the impact on border-area businesses and daily services; and how cooperation, coordination, and trust between neighbouring authorities and institutions are influenced in practice. Second, what potential impacts might arise from the amended Schengen Borders Code, including the new requirement to carry out cross-border impact assessments? The study is particularly relevant as a bottom-up academic exercise at a time when, for the first time, Member States

¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

² See the list of notifications: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en

³ Enrico Letta, ‘Much more than a market’ April 2024, p. 96. Accessed via: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/enrico-lettas-report-future-single-market-2024-04-10_en

themselves are legally required to assess the likely effects of internal border controls on cross-border regions. It is also notable that the term “cross-border region” now appears for the first time in EU legislation. A core objective of the research is to explore whether and how Member States are assessing these impacts, and whether this analysis is already reflected in the notifications submitted to the Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council. Our research is also meant to assist the Member States and provide first results in the framework of a proper ex-ante assessment.

1.1 Research themes, definitions and demarcation

This dossier will contribute to the ‘ex-post’ mapping of the cross-border effects of the amended Schengen Borders Code (EU Regulation 2024/1717, hereinafter: SBC) and internal border controls that have, based on the SBC, been reintroduced by the Member States.

As regards the geographical delimitation of the analysis, this dossier focuses on five case studies of European cross-border regions: Benelux-Germany, the German-French and German-Swiss Rhine bridges, the France-Spain-Andorra border, Hungary-Austria, and Luxembourg-Germany. The geographical demarcation is separately defined for each case study.

The dossier will begin by outlining the key elements of the SBC, including its recent amendments with a particular focus on those relevant to cross-border regions, such as the new requirement to conduct cross-border impact assessments. It will also provide an overview of requirements under which Member States may reintroduce temporary internal border controls. The second part of the dossier includes the case studies from European cross-border regions. The case studies follow the same ITEM Cross-Border Impact Assessment methodology based on the three research themes covered in this dossier: European integration, Sustainable Development/Socio-Economic Development, and Euregional Cohesion. Each case study also sets out its research methodology, however in general, they rely on desk research (e.g., policy papers, academic publications, newspaper articles, traffic statistics) combined with surveys and interviews carried out with cross-border cooperation structures, political and economic stakeholders, businesses and citizens.

Under the theme of European Integration, this dossier evaluates how current border control practices influence free movement and the functioning of the single market. This includes assessing how internal border controls are applied in light of legal requirements such as the proportionality test, and what the practical outcomes of border controls are, such as the number of checks. Furthermore, under this theme it will be evaluated how Member States define cross-border regions under the SBC and how they apply the ‘cross-border impact assessment’ when evaluating the effects of internal border controls on cross-border regions.

Related to the assessment of Sustainable/Socioeconomic Development, the dossier examines the broader impacts of border controls and cross-border obstacles on citizens and businesses. This includes analysing if and how the internal border controls have changed the incentives to work across the border, how commuting patterns for students, employees, and leisure travellers are affected, and how border-area businesses experience economic disadvantages or reduced access to goods and services.

Finally, under the theme of Euregional Cohesion, the case studies of this dossier analyse the degree of cooperation and coordination in the selected cross-border regions. This includes an examination of if and

how border control activities are coordinated, and whether the border controls affect the institutional trust between neighbouring countries. The analysis also considers how these border control practices relate to broader objectives of territorial cohesion and good cross-border governance, including potential concerns brought forward by the cooperating parties.

Table 1: Research themes, principles, benchmarks, and indicators for assessing the cross-border effects of the Revised Schengen Borders Code

Theme	Principles	Benchmarks	Indicator
European Integration	- Schengen Borders Code calls for an open Schengen Area - EU Law: freedom of mobility (TFEU 1992, Article 21(1)) - EU Law: lack of internal borders (TFEU 1992, Article 67(2)) (if applicable) Multilateral/bilateral treaties - Non-discrimination (European Charter of Fundamental Rights (1950) and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949))	- Open borders facilitate free movement - Mobility in a cross-border region versus a non-border region - Mobility when unilateral or bilateral controls - The control mechanism at border controls	- Legal analysis: proportionality test (focus on cross-border territories requirement) - How do Member States define 'cross-border regions'? (transposition of SBC rules) - How are the multilateral rules (if applicable) relevant in this respect? - How is mobility different/equal in the Euroregion versus non-bordering regions? - What are the non-discriminatory practices at border controls? - What are the results of border controls? How many people get stopped, and sent back?
Sustainable Development/Socio-Economic Development	- Cross-border 360 degree labour market & economy - Cross-border goods and services, market and economy - Tourism - Education - Trade - Internal market & functioning of Schengen	- Visions & strategies as formulated by and in Euroregions - Visions & strategies of border provinces/regions - Economic situation of the area - GDP - Economic disadvantages due to the border - Access to goods and services	- How have the incentives to work across the border been impacted? - How does border control impact different categories of commuting: students, employees, leisure? - Has cross-border commuting been delayed by controls in practice? (traffic jams etc) - How are border-area based businesses impacted? (e.g. border

			supermarkets and cross-border shopping?)
Euregional Cohesion	• Territorial cohesion (TFEU) • Objectives formulated in Euroregional strategies • Good cross-border governance & cooperation	• Cohesion Policy of the EU ○ ERDF Funds • Perception of the EU • Improved or worsened cooperation quality • International police cooperation	• What are the concerns at Euroregions? • Are border control activities coordinated? • What is the impact on double cities/enclaves? • Coordination or cooperation within Euroregions or other multilateral cooperations? • How is institutional trust affected between countries? Are there differences between different neighbouring countries (who does/does not control its borders)?

2. The Revised Schengen Borders Code

At the heart of the European Union lies the internal market — an area defined as one without internal borders.⁴ The Treaties of the European Union lay down the free movement rights of EU citizens as a cornerstone of this market.⁵ Derogations from this principle are allowed only in exceptional circumstances, strictly for safeguarding internal security and always in line with the principle of proportionality.⁶ EU Regulation 2016/399, commonly known as the Schengen Borders Code (the SBC), specifies these circumstances in which border controls may be temporarily reintroduced. In addition, the Regulation lays down the rules for border control of persons crossing the external borders.⁷ This chapter will focus specifically on the rules regarding internal border controls. When applying this Regulation, Member States must fully comply with relevant Union law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (‘the Charter’), relevant international law such as the Geneva Convention⁸, and fundamental rights, in particular the principle of *non-refoulement*.⁹

The SBC was most recently amended in 2024 by Regulation (EU) 2024/1717. This revision introduced significant changes. Regarding external border controls, Member States may now limit the number of border crossing points or reduce their opening hours and may apply enhanced border surveillance with the aim to combat the instrumentalization of migration. A new transfer procedure will also allow Member States to return third-country nationals apprehended near the border and staying illegally to the Member State from which they directly arrived.¹⁰

Many changes are particularly interesting regarding internal border controls. The revised SBC restructured and clarified the measures that may be taken to reintroduce or prolong border controls, clearly distinguishing between measures for unforeseeable and foreseeable threats. The revision also placed greater emphasis on the types of threats that may constitute a “serious threat to public policy or internal security,” explicitly including large-scale unauthorised movements of third-country nationals, public health emergencies, and terrorism. Furthermore, the revised regulation specifies the maximum duration for which internal border controls may be maintained. For example, in the case of threats that require immediate action, controls can now be introduced for a maximum of one month — an extension from the previous limit of 10 days.¹¹ The revision also introduced additional measures that can be initiated not only by Member States but also at the EU level, on the basis of an opinion from the European Commission and a recommendation by the Council. These measures aim to provide a coordinated EU response to joint threats, such as public health crises: drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, when the EU was limited to issuing only non-binding recommendations on travel restrictions to Member States. One of the additions is a new coordination mechanism for large-scale public health emergencies, enabling the Council

⁴ Art. 26(2) TFEU.

⁵ Arts. 21, 67(2) TFEU.

⁶ Art. 5(4) TEU.

⁷ Art. 1 Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

⁸ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on 28 July 1951

⁹ Art. 4 Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

¹⁰ See Title II Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

¹¹ Before the revision, this was laid down in Art. 28(1) of the SBC.

to rapidly adopt binding rules establishing internal border controls.¹² Another important addition is the Schengen safeguard mechanism, designed to ensure a common and coordinated response at internal borders in situations where a threat affects most Member States. This mechanism allows the Council to authorise the reintroduction of internal border checks in response to such shared threats.¹³

Several updates are particularly relevant for cross-border regions. The procedural safeguards for reintroducing internal border controls have been strengthened, requiring Member States to assess both the appropriateness of the measures and their likely impact on the free movement of persons, including the specific effects on cross-border regions¹⁴ and measures that mitigate these effects. This introduces a specific cross-border impact assessment within the proportionality test for reintroducing internal border controls. The regulation also promotes the use of alternative measures, such as intensified and more operational police checks within border areas, to reduce the need for full border controls.¹⁵ In addition, transparency and oversight obligations have been reinforced. Member States are now required to submit detailed notifications, including proportionality assessments, and to periodically report on the effectiveness and impact of the controls, with particular attention to cross-border regions.¹⁶ The European Commission must also publish an annual *State of Schengen* report summarising the use of internal border controls and their assessments across the EU.¹⁷ Finally, Article 42b obliges Member States to designate and report areas of territory considered as cross-border regions, explicitly recognising the importance of safeguarding socio-economic integration in these areas when making decisions related to border controls. It is the first time that the notion of a “cross-border region” is part of a legal document in the framework of EU legislation.

Rules on temporary reintroduction of internal border controls

As noted above, the underlying principle of the SBC Regulation is that internal borders may be crossed at any point without a border check on persons, irrespective of their nationality, being carried out. However, the Regulation lays down requirements under which introducing measures at internal borders are exceptionally allowed. Notably, the Regulation distinguishes with three types of measures:

- *A border control*, meaning activity carried out at a border, in response exclusively to an intention to cross or the act of crossing that border, regardless of any other consideration, consisting of border checks and border surveillance;¹⁸
- *A border check*, meaning checks carried out at border crossing points, to ensure that persons, including their means of transport and the objects in their possession, may be authorised to enter the territory of the Member States or authorised to leave it;¹⁹

¹² Art. 28 Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

¹³ *Ibid*, Art. 29.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Art. 26(1)(b)(ii).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Art. 26(3).

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Art. 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Art. 33(6).

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Art. 2(10).

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Art. 2(11).

- *Surveillance and monitoring*: measures without border control as their objective, such as carrying out non-systematic security checks, enforcing obligation to hold and carry identification documents, obligation for TCNs to report their presence on the territory.

Regarding the latter, insofar as the exercise of such measures does not have an effect equivalent to border checks, police and other public authorities may carry out monitoring and use surveillance technologies for the purpose of addressing threats to public security or public policy. These measures are not considered border checks when:

- They do not have border control as their objective;
- They are based on general police information – or, where the aim is to contain the spread of an infectious disease, on public health information – and on the experience of the competent authorities regarding possible threats to public security or public policy. Such measures may in particular aim to combat cross-border crime, reduce illegal immigration, or contain the spread of infectious diseases;
- They are designed and implemented in a manner clearly distinct from systematic checks on persons at the external borders.²⁰

Regarding measures at internal borders other than monitoring and surveillance, the SBC lays down rules governing their implementation. A distinction is made between measures imposed at the initiative of the Member States, as a reaction to a serious threat, whether unforeseeable or foreseeable, or in response to major exceptional situations. In addition, the SBC provides two specific mechanisms by which such measures may be initiated on the proposal of the European Commission and with the advice of the Council, namely in response to public health emergencies and other exceptional situations.

First, Member States may reintroduce **temporary internal border controls** in exceptional situations, where there is a serious threat to public policy or internal security. Such threat may, in particular, be considered to arise from:

- terrorist incidents or threats posed by serious organised crime, or;
- large-scale public health emergencies, or;
- sudden large-scale unauthorized movements of third-country nationals, putting a substantial strain on the overall resources and capacities of well-prepared competent authorities and is likely to put risk to overall functioning of an area without an internal border control, or;
- large scale or high profile international events.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (hereinafter, CJEU) has affirmed that internal border controls must be based on new threats and cannot be indefinitely prolonged on the same grounds, and that derogations from free movement must be interpreted strictly.²¹ In all cases, such border controls must be a measure of last resort. The scope and duration of the temporary reintroduction of border control shall not exceed what is strictly necessary to respond to the serious threat identified.²² Article 26 further elaborates this proportionality test. The test includes evaluation of the appropriateness of the measure,

²⁰ *Ibid*, Art. 23.

²¹ Case C-368/20 *NW v Landespolizeidirektion Steiermark*, ECLI:EU:C:2022:55.

²² Art. 25 Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

having regard to the nature of the serious threat identified and in particular, whether the reintroduction of border control at internal borders is likely to adequately remedy the threat to public policy or internal security and whether the objectives pursued by such reintroduction could be attained by alternative measures, such as those of monitoring (described above), or other forms of police cooperation.²³ Regarding the impact of the measure, it should be evaluated against the free movement of persons and the functioning of the cross-border regions, taking into account the strong social and economic ties between them.²⁴

When Member States introduce or prolong temporary internal border controls, they must notify the EU institutions, as well as other Member States. A notification may be submitted jointly by two or more Member States. The notification of the border controls need to include information such as the reasons for the reintroduction or prolongation, including all relevant data detailing the events that constitute a serious threat to its public policy or internal security; the names of the authorised crossing-points; the date and duration of the planned reintroduction or prolongation; the assessment of the necessity and proportionality; and where appropriate, the measures to be taken by other Member States.²⁵

A further distinction is made between threats that are immediate and unforeseeable and those that are foreseeable. This distinction determines, among other aspects, how long border controls may be maintained. When border controls are introduced in response to an **unforeseeable** and immediate serious threat to public policy or internal security, the Member State must notify the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, and the other Member States in accordance with the notification procedure.²⁶ Such border controls may remain in place for no longer than one month. If the serious threat persists beyond this period, the Member State may prolong the border control for a maximum total duration of three months.²⁷

When the serious threat is **foreseeable**, the Member State must similarly notify the other Member States and the EU institutions no later than four weeks before the planned reintroduction of border controls, or as soon as possible. Border controls may then be reintroduced for a period of up to six months. If the threat persists, the border control may be renewed for additional periods of six months, subject to notification of the prolongation in accordance with Article 27. In any case, the total duration may not exceed two years.²⁸

Only in the case of a **major exceptional situation** involving a persistent serious threat that exceeds the two-year period may a Member State notify its intention to prolong border controls for an additional period of up to six months, taking account an opinion issued by the Commission. This notification must include a risk assessment that:

- Substantiates the continued threat to public policy or internal security,
- Demonstrates that alternative measures to address the threat have been deemed or found ineffective at the time of notification,

²³ *Ibid*, Art. 26(1).

²⁴ *Ibid*, Art. 26(1)(b)(iii).

²⁵ *Ibid*, Art. 27.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Art. 27(1).

²⁷ *Ibid*, Art. 25a(1)-(3).

²⁸ *Ibid*, Art. 25a(4)-(5).

- Presents the mitigating measures to accompany the internal border control, and
- Outlines, where appropriate, the means, actions, conditions, and timeline considered for lifting the internal border control.²⁹

Within three months of receiving this notification, the Commission must issue a new opinion on the necessity and proportionality of prolonging border controls at the internal borders. Following the notification, the Commission may, on its own initiative, or at the request of a directly affected Member State, initiate a consultation process.³⁰ The additional six-month prolongation beyond the initial two-year maximum may itself be followed by one final prolongation of another six months, subject to a renewed risk assessment and a Commission recommendation on the compatibility of such a prolongation with the Treaties. In total, this means that, in the event of foreseeable threats combined with major exceptional situations, the maximum duration of temporary internal border controls may reach three years.³¹

The Directive also foresees **two specific mechanisms**, that in contrary to the initiation of the Member State, are initiated by the EU, although the Member States may also request the Commission to submit a proposal. One is where the European Commission establishes that there is **large-scale public health emergency** puts at risk the overall functioning of the area without internal border control, it may make a proposal to the Council to adopt an implementing decision authorising the reintroduction of border control by the Member States. The border controls can be reintroduced for 6 months and may be renewed, upon proposal from the Commission, for further periods of up to 6 months as long as the large-scale public health emergency persists.³²

The other specific procedure concerns **exceptional circumstances**, where it is again initiated by a proposal of the European Commission and results in a Council recommendation to introduce border controls in the Member States. This applies where the overall functioning of the area without internal border control is put at risk as a result of persistent serious deficiencies relating to external border control, insofar as those circumstances constitute a serious threat to public policy or internal security within the area without internal border control or within parts thereof, or as a last resort and as a measure to protect the common interests within the area without internal border control. The border control may be introduced for a period of six months. That period may be prolonged no more than three times, each time for a further period of up to six months, if the exceptional circumstances persist. In both specific procedures, the Member States must notify the EU institutions and the other Member States about the implementation before the reintroduction of border controls.³³

²⁹ *Ibid*, Art. 25a(6).

³⁰ *Ibid*, Article 27a(1).

³¹ *Ibid*, Art. 25a.

³² *Ibid*, Art. 28.

³³ *Ibid*, Arts. 29-30.

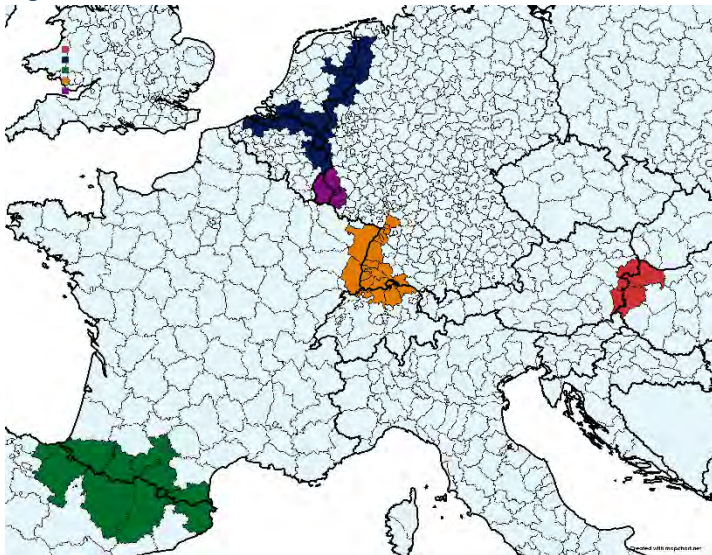
Table 2: Measures to control internal borders pursuant to SBC

Measure	Initiated by	Requirements (simplified)	
Monitoring at internal borders Art. 23	Member States	Permissible when not considered as border check or border control, i.e. when: 1. they do not have border control as an objective, and 2. they are based on general police information OR here the aim is to contain the spread of an infectious disease, possible threats to public security or public policy and aim, in particular to combat cross-border crime, reduce illegal immigration, or contain spread of an infectious diseases, and 3. are devised and executed in a manner that is clearly distinct from systematic checks.	
Temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders Arts. 25-25a	Member States	1. Measure of last resort; shall not exceed what is strictly necessary and proportional to respond to the identified threat (proportionality test): a. Legitimate objective: suitable measure to reach that objective b. Necessity: no less restrictive measure can achieve the same objective c. Balancing of rights vs interference	
		2. A serious threat to public policy or internal security: - Terrorist incidents or threats, or - Large-scale public health emergencies, or - Exceptional situation of large-scale unauthorised movement of TCNs, or - Large scale or profile international events.	
		3. Unforeseeable or foreseeable threat	3a. Unforeseeable: - Notification - Control up to one month - Renewable to maximum total of three months
Public health emergency Art. 28	Proposal by EC	• Large-scale public health emergency which puts at risk the overall functioning of the area without internal border control • 6 months, extendable by another 6 months as long as the large-scale public health emergency persist	
Exceptional circumstances Art. 29	Proposal by EC	• Risks for the overall functioning of the area without internal border controls • 6 months, extendable by 6 months up to 2 years total if the exceptional circumstances persist	

3. Case studies: Impacts of internal border controls across European cross-border regions

In the following the case studies will be elaborated more into depth. These are:

Figure 1: Selected case studies



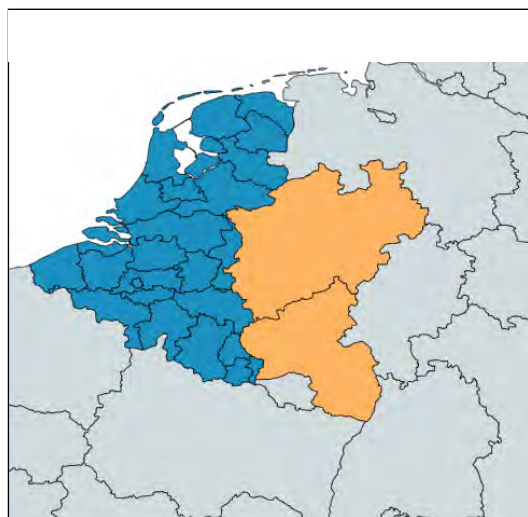
- Case study: Benelux-Germany, with a focus on the Dutch-Belgian-German border regions
- Case study: German-French and German-Swiss Rhine bridges
- Case study: France-Spain-Andorra border
- Case study: The Hungarian-Austrian border area
- Case study: Luxembourg-Germany

As will be shown the case studies show different types, methods and periods of border controls, unilaterally as well as bilaterally.

3.1 Case study: Benelux-Germany

Pim Mertens, Martin Unfried, Susanne Sivonen (ITEM)

Figure 2: Geographical delimitation Benelux+DE³⁴



This case study focuses on the region of the Benelux Union (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, illustrated with blue) as well as the bordering state of Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia (see Figure 2: Geographical delimitation Benelux+DE). Geographically, there is a small overlap with the case study on the Great Region: Germany-Luxembourg (see Chapter 3.5). Therefore, this case study will refrain from duplications in this regard.

The cross-border region is characterised with high level of cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation. It includes several Euregions and other cross-border regional structures that are considered particularly

³⁴ Created with mapchart.net.

active and of quality³⁵, such as the EUREGIO Gronau (DE-NL), Ems Dollart Region (DE-NL), Euregio Meuse-Rhine (BE-NL-DE), Euregion Rhein-Waal (DE-NL), Euregio Rhine-Meuse-North (DE-NL), the Greater Region (DE-LUX-BE-FR) and Euregio Scheldemond (BE-NL). Furthermore, there are several other cross-border regional structures (such as BENEGO, Eurode, BGTC Baarle) as well as cross-border information points and public employment services. It can, therefore, be seen as a relatively highly integrated cross-border region. As already noted in the previous Cross-Border Impact Assessment on BRIGDEforEU³⁶, the area is also characterised by a relatively high level of cross-border mobility. In terms of cross-border work, it ranks among the highest in the EU, with two so-called macro-regions of cross-border work (the Meuse-Rhine region and the Greater Region).

In the following we will assess the consequences and practices of internal border controls in this area. We base our findings on document, literature and policy analysis, semi structured interviews with municipalities and euregions and an analysis of media contributions. Regarding the media analysis, we collected online contributions from Dutch, German, Belgian – regional and national – and European/international media and journals. This resulted in a list of about 60 contributions, providing insights in the public opinion and anecdotal evidence on the experiences and impact of border controls.

3.1.1 Evaluation of the theme of European Integration

Currently, the Netherlands and Germany are formally controlling their land borders with all their neighbours. Yet, also Belgium has introduced some sort of controlling mechanism, that formally is not classified as border control: *binnenkomstcontrole* (entry controls). The following table shows the practices by the countries applicable to the case study area.³⁷

Table 3: Overview of internal border controls or checks in the case study area

Country	SBC legal ground	Method	Mobile / fixed	Capacity controls
Belgium	Entry controls under Article 23 SBC	Identity checks at transport hubs (such as Brussels-South), at major approach roads, on international bus traffic and intra-Schengen flights from countries with high migrant arrivals (such as Greece and Italy).	Mobile	Equal
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	Border controls under Articles 25 and 25a SBC	Controls are not systematic, but information- and risk-driven. Controls may take place at border crossings, international trains and specific flights. Checks take place within existing capacity, with no widespread static border checks.	Mobile	Equal

³⁵ Durà, A., Camonita, C., Berzi, M., & Noferini, A. (2018). Euroregions, excellence and innovation across EU borders. A catalogue of good practices. Retrieved from https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/llibres/2018/189399/RECOT_CRII_Catalogue.pdf; Noferini, A., Berzi, M., Camonita, F., & Durà, A. (2019). Cross-border cooperation in the EU: Euroregions amid multilevel governance and re-territorialization. *European Planning Studies*, 28(1), 35–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1623973>

³⁶ Sivonen, S., Unfried, M., Mertens, P., Kauber, C., Böhm, H., Kurowska-Pysz, J., Havlicek, O., Ocskay, G., Fekete, K., Gyelnik, T., & François, M. (2024). *Proposal for an EU Regulation 'Facilitating cross-border solutions' – Cross-Border effects across European cross-border regions: ITEM-TEIN joint study*. ITEM.

³⁷ See more on the national practices here: Mertens, P. & Unfried, M. (2025). ITEM Brief: 40 years of Schengen in times of border controls. <https://crossborderitem.eu/en/item-brief-40-years-of-schengen-in-times-of-border-controls/>

Germany	Border controls under Articles 25 and 25a SBC	From September 2024, controls will apply on international trains, buses, trams and motorways. From May 2025, border controls have been intensified. This involves the installation of fixed checkpoints at border crossings, with speed and traffic regulation measures. All vehicles can be checked, including trains, buses and trams. Fixed checkpoints are not set up at all border crossings. In addition, Germany carries out mobile border checks in the border area within 30 kilometres of the border.	Fixed + mobile	Intensified
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As part of the revised SBC, all Member States have to define their cross-border regions, as elaborated in the previous section. The complete list was made public in August 2025.³⁸ Also the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany have done so.

Table 4: National list of ‘cross-border region’, applicable to case study area

Country	Border	Definition of cross-border region
Belgium	Belgium-Germany border	Province of Liège Province of Limburg Province of Luxembourg
	Belgium-Luxembourg border	Province of Luxembourg Province of Liège
	Belgium-Netherlands border	Province of West Flanders Province of East Flanders Province of Antwerp Province of Limburg Province of Liège
Germany	Germany-Belgium border	Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm Euskirchen Städteregion Aachen
	Germany-Luxembourg border	Merzig-Wadern Trier-Saarburg Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm
	Germany-Netherlands border	Städteregion Aachen Heinsberg Viersen Kleve Borken Grafschaft Bentheim Emsland Leer Emden
Luxembourg	All borders	Luxembourg (entire territory)

³⁸ Official Journal of the European Union, C/2025/4643, 18.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4643/oj>

The Netherlands	Netherlands-Belgium border	Limburg Noord-Brabant Zeeland
	Netherlands-Germany border	Groningen Drenthe Overijssel Gelderland Limburg

The list of cross-border regions is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it shows that none of the Member States have actually defined a real cross-border territory, but rather a national border region. From interviews, we learned that effectively, for example in the case of the Netherlands, no coordination was sought with neighbouring states nor with border regions when defining the cross-border region. Secondly, the definitions have different geographical scopes. Where the German region is defined at the scale of NUTS 3, at the level of *Kreise* or *kreisfreie Städte*, the Belgian and Dutch regions are defined at NUTS 2 level, with the provinces. Finally, Luxembourg is entirely defined as cross-border region. In terms of NUTS-classification, Luxembourg also does not apply different levels.

As described earlier under the SBC legislation, when reintroducing border controls, Member States have to make a proportionality assessment including the effects on the movement of persons and the functioning of cross-border regions. Within the case study area, the Netherlands has made its notification publicly, Germany did not. In the following we delve deeper in the notification and border control system of the Netherlands.

Internal border controls in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has no history of internal border controls, but more an history of abolishing them. In fact, together with Belgium and Luxembourg, the Netherlands was the first one to abolish border controls in the framework of the Benelux Union. This was laid down in 1960 in the Benelux Agreement on “the transfer of identity checks to the external borders of the Benelux area”.³⁹ This Benelux Agreement was the foundation of the Schengen Treaty in 1985, by the Benelux, France and Germany. Thus, one could argue that the Netherlands is one of the founding states of the thought of Schengen.

Over the forty years of Schengen, the Netherlands has not reintroduced internal border controls, even not – quite exceptionally – during the COVID crisis. Even more, also from a German point of view, the border between the Netherlands and Germany (NRW and Niedersachsen) was kept open during the pandemic. Thus, the current reintroduction of border controls should be seen as an important turn in Dutch history regarding internal borders policy.

³⁹ Overeenkomst tussen het Koninkrijk België, het Groothertogdom Luxemburg en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, inzake de verlegging van de personencontrole naar de buitengrenzen van het Beneluxgebied, https://www.benelux.int/files/7913/9230/2794/19600411_BUITENGRENZEN_NL.pdf

Table 5: Notifications to the European Commission on reintroduction of border control at internal borders in the Netherlands

Basis and duration	Reasons	Impact on the free movement of persons and impact on the functioning of cross border regions
Date of notification: 10 November 2025⁴⁰ Duration: 09/12/2025 - 08/06/2026 Basis: Prolongation of border controls due to foreseeable event (Art. 25a(4)-(5))	Continuous serious threat to public policy caused by high levels of asylum applications, irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and secondary movements, leading to an overburdening of the migration system and the asylum system, particularly, the reception capacity; land borders with Belgium and Germany, and the intra-Schengen air borders.	As stated above, the RNLM has been instructed to conduct border checks in such a way as to minimise the impact on cross-border traffic, for example by refraining from measures that could disrupt traffic flows. In addition, the Dutch authorities attach great importance to remaining in close contact with the Belgian and German authorities to prevent internal border checks from having a significant impact on the movement of persons and goods. Furthermore, the Netherlands is committed to ensuring that the economic, social and infrastructural impact on border regions and their residents is minimised to the greatest possible extent. Since the reintroduction of internal border controls, the impact on traffic flows and cross-border regions has been closely monitored, including through continuous contact with local authorities, other ministries and neighbouring Member States. To date, there have been no indications that the Dutch border controls have had any significant negative impact. Monitoring of the effects of internal border controls on the region and on traffic flows will continue.
Date of notification: 25 April 2025⁴¹ Duration: 09/06/2025 - 08/12/2025 Basis: Prolongation of border controls due to foreseeable event (Art. 25a(4)-(5))	Serious threat to public policy caused by high levels of asylum applications, irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and secondary movements, leading to an overburdening of the migration system in general and the asylum system in particular, as well as pressure on public services, including housing, health care and education; land and air borders with Belgium and Germany.	As stated above, the RNLM has been instructed to conduct border checks in such a way as to minimise the impact on cross-border traffic, for example by refraining from measures that could disrupt traffic flows. In addition, the Dutch authorities attach great importance to remaining in close contact with the Belgian and German authorities to prevent internal border checks from having a significant impact on the movement of persons and goods. Furthermore, the Netherlands is committed to ensuring that the economic, social and infrastructural impact on border regions and their residents is minimised to the greatest possible extent. Since the reintroduction of internal border controls, the impact on traffic flows and crossborder regions has been closely monitored, including through continuous contact with local authorities, other ministries and neighbouring Member States. To date, there have been no indications that the Dutch border controls have had any significant negative impact. Monitoring of the effects of

⁴⁰ Letter to Parliament on extension of internal border controls November 2025, 12.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁴¹ Letter from the government: Extension of internal border controls, 25.4.2025, accessed via: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2025Z08478&did=2025D19333

		internal border controls on the region and on traffic flows will continue.
Date of notification: 11 November 2024 ⁴² Duration: 09/12/2024 – 08/06/2025 Basis: Foreseeable threat (Arts. 25a(4)-(5) SBC)	High level of irregular migration, migrant smuggling, and substantial secondary migration flows. High and cumulative pressure on the migration system, in particular for asylum reception. Increase of criminal incidents at reception centres; land and air borders with Belgium and Germany.	As stated above, the RNLM will be instructed to conduct border checks in such a way as to minimise the impact on cross-border traffic, for example by refraining from measures that could disrupt traffic flows. In addition, the Dutch authorities attach great importance to remaining in close contact with the Belgian and German authorities in order to prevent internal border checks from having a significant impact on the movement of persons and goods. Furthermore, the Netherlands is committed to ensuring that the economic, social and infrastructural impact on border regions and their residents is minimised to the greatest possible extent.

On 11 November 2024, the Netherlands notified the European Commission of its decision to reinstate internal border controls for a period of six months at the land borders with Belgium and Germany, on the basis of a foreseeable threat under Article 25 SBC. The threat was said to arise from increased pressure related to irregular migration and migrant smuggling within the EU, and the strain this places on the migration system, particularly on reception capacity and available housing. The border controls are aimed to be carried out on an information- and risk-based manner, to avoid systematic checks and to specifically minimise disruption to the economy and cross-border commuting in the border regions. For this purpose, no specific border-crossing points were designated. The notification indeed notes that cross-border regions and the livestock sector requested attention to preventing negative impacts on the economy and on traffic flows to neighbouring countries. Border regions were reportedly informed by a letter. In their notification, the Netherlands also referred to internal border controls in place in several other Member States, including Germany.⁴³ It has been indeed questioned if one of the underlying reasons for reintroducing border controls is because neighbouring states are doing so, suggesting a spillover effects of the border controls among Member States. This is especially the case, as the German border controls were seen as inspiration by the then ruling party.⁴⁴

Before the reintroduction of internal border controls under Article 25 SBC, since 2022, the Netherlands has already conducted other checks in the border regions with Belgium and Germany that do not constitute border controls but are instead checks pursuant to Article 23 SBC. These so-called mobile security monitoring checks (MTV-checks), carried out by the *Koninklijke Marechaussee* (Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, RNLM), take place on a random basis and/or on the basis of information and intelligence. They are performed on roads, trains, and at airports for certain flights arriving from within the Schengen area. With regard to the MTV checks, the added value of reinstating internal border controls under Article

⁴² Notification of reintroduction of border control at internal borders of the Netherlands, 12.11.2024, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2024/11/12/tk-notificatie-herinvoering-binnengrenstoezicht>

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ For example, Geert Wilders has explicitly stated that he wants to follow the German example. <https://www.nporadio1.nl/fragmenten/dit-is-de-dag/9cfc3e15-1b9a-4d9d-8282-646f80497a92/2024-09-11-wilders-wil-net-als-duitsland-paspoortcontroles-weer-invoeren-wat-betekent-dit-voor-schengen> Or see the PVV document 'The limit has been reached' (De grens is bereikt). <https://www.pvv.nl/nieuws/geert-wilders/11398-persconferentie-pvv-geert-wilders-asiel.html>

25 SBC was seen in the fact that it gives the RNLM greater flexibility in carrying out checks than is possible under the current MTV system.⁴⁵ The Netherlands is currently exploring possible legal amendments (of the Aliens Decree, *Vreemdelingenbesluit 2000*) to make MTV checks more flexible as part of the asylum crisis package, potentially as an alternative or as a view forward when the maximum of two years of allowed border controls are met. Concretely, this includes increasing the current maximum numbers of checks per modality (aircraft, trains, buses, ships, cars, and trucks).⁴⁶

Regarding the proportionality test, and specifically the impact on the free movement of persons and on the functioning of cross-border regions, the Netherlands justifies that temporary internal border controls will be kept to the minimum strictly necessary for preventing irregular migration and safeguarding the security of the Schengen area. Measures will be taken to minimise the impact on cross-border traffic, “for example by refraining as far as possible from measures that could disrupt traffic flows.” In addition, the Dutch authorities attach great importance to staying in close contact with the Belgian and German authorities to prevent internal border checks from having a significant impact on the movement of persons and goods. Furthermore, the Netherlands is committed to ensuring that the economic, social, and infrastructural impact on border regions and their residents is minimised as far as possible.⁴⁷ However, concrete measures and how these impacts will be evaluated remain absent from the notification.

So far, the internal border controls have been extended twice for periods of six months, based on the same continuing threats related to irregular migration, most recently on 10 November 2025 until 8 June 2026. Regarding the impact on cross-border regions, the reintroduction notifications state: “Since the reintroduction of internal border controls, the impact on traffic flows and cross-border regions has been closely monitored, including through continuous contact with local authorities, other ministries and neighbouring Member States. To date, there have been no indications that the Dutch border controls have had any significant negative impact. Monitoring of the effects of internal border controls on the region and on traffic flows will continue.”⁴⁸

In the results of the first three months of controls (9 December 2024 – 9 March 2025), a comparison was made with the MTV-checks carried out under Article 23 one year earlier. The results show that approximately the same number of persons were checked under the internal border controls as under MTV-checks. What is also notable is that the number of arrests for criminal offences during internal border controls is lower than under MTV-checks. The comparison also shows that more foreigners were refused entry to the Netherlands than were transferred to Belgium and Germany during the MTV checks.⁴⁹ A research carried out by the Netherlands Court of Audit (*Algemene Rekenkamer*) in June 2025 concluded that the initial results indicate that the controls are not achieving government goals any faster than the MTV-checks. Even more, it concluded that although the findings of the report ‘do not doubt’ the

⁴⁵ The differences are discussed in: Mertens, P. & Unfried, M. (2025). ITEM Brief: 40 years of Schengen in times of border controls. <https://crossborderitem.eu/en/item-brief-40-years-of-schengen-in-times-of-border-controls/>

⁴⁶ Letter to Parliament on extension of internal border controls November 2025, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁴⁷ Notification of reintroduction of border control at internal borders of the Netherlands, 12.11.2024, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2024/11/12/tk-notificatie-herinvoering-binnengrenstoezicht>

⁴⁸ Letter to Parliament on extension of internal border controls November 2025, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁴⁹ Letter to Parliament about the results of internal border controls, 21.3.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brieven/2025/03/21/tk-resultaten-binnengrenscontroles>

conclusion of the Minister of Asylum and Migration, that the reintroduction of internal border controls would not have significant effect on other tasks of the RNLM, they note that RNLM has increasingly being struggling with staff shortages, although the RNLM did not indicate how far the internal border controls have contributed to these capacity shortages. Regarding the costs of carrying out these controls, it is noted that the total expenditure on the RNLM amounted to €720 million in 2024, however the RNLM cannot indicate how much of this is spent on internal border controls.⁵⁰

Table 6: Results internal border controls 9 December 2024 – 9 March 2025⁵¹

Results of internal border controls under Art. 25 SBC, 9 December 2024 – 9 March 2025		Results of MTV controls (Art. 23 SBC) 9 December 2023 – 9 March 2024
Number of controlled persons	41.750 of whom were 29.150 EU citizens	38.600 of whom were 25.940 EU citizens
Number of controlled vehicles (cars, buses, trucks, trains)	9.900	7.710
Number of foreign nationals denied entry	250	150
Number of arrested persons (migration-related crimes, such as document fraud and human trafficking, traffic offenses, and drug-related crimes)	90	260

Upon the evaluation of the second prolongation of the border controls, it was noted that the number of irregular crossings at the EU external borders has decreased by 21% in the first eight months of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. In the Netherlands, asylum applications also decreased with a 38% drop compared to 2024. A decline was also visible in the number of refusals of entry and arrests at the border.⁵² Regarding the results of nine months of border controls (from 9 December 2024 to 8 September 2025), the results also show that refusals of entry declined after the first three months, even though the RNLM carried out roughly the same number of checks. Also, the number of persons arrested was lower compared to the first three months. Although no clear reasons for the decline could be concluded, it was assumed that this could be explained by the decrease in irregular external border crossings and by the fact that other EU Member States have also introduced internal border controls.⁵³

As an alternative to prolongation, the Decision note on the letter to Parliament (*Beslisnota*) suggests that intensified MTV checks may offer a more effective tool than internal border controls. Under both the current legal framework (with intensified MTV-checks) and the planned legal framework (after

⁵⁰ Algemene Rekenkamer, 'Focus op grenscontroles' 3.6.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rekenkamer.nl/documenten/2025/06/03/focus-op-grenscontroles>

⁵¹ Letter to Parliament about the results of internal border controls, 21.3.2025, accessed via:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/brieven/2025/03/21/tk-resultaten-binnengrenscontroles>

⁵² Letter to Parliament on extension of internal border controls November 2025, 10.11.2025,

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁵³ Progress report on internal border controls, 10.11.2025, accessed via:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2025/11/10/tk-bijlage-2-voortgangsrapportage-binnengrenscontroles>

amendments to the Aliens Decree), the same total number of checks could be carried out in practice as is currently done through internal border controls. These arguments could therefore support switching from internal border controls to (intensified) MTV checks. This was also suggested in light of criticism from the European Commission and Dutch parliamentarians regarding internal border controls and their negative effects on the free movement of persons and goods.⁵⁴ It was also noted that internal border controls do not directly reduce asylum inflow, as internal border checks provide no legal basis to refuse asylum applications. Yet, the Minister of Asylum and Migration Van Weel decided in November 2025 to prolong the border controls with a second period until 8 June 2026. The justification for prolonging the border controls emphasises that despite the decline in irregular migration pressure at the external borders and the decrease in asylum inflow, pressure on the Dutch reception system remains high. Reference was also made to the other half of the parliamentarians who support further intensification of border controls, partly due to the results seen in Germany.⁵⁵ Furthermore, an increase in capacities for border controls by the RNLN is budgeted for 2026.⁵⁶ The funding for RNLN for border controls will be increased from €45 million in 2025 to €151 million structurally as of 2029.⁵⁷

It was once again stated that so far there are no indications that the Dutch border controls have had a significant negative effect on the border regions. The Decision Note even states that, based on signals including from local authorities, there is little direct nuisance caused by Dutch internal border controls.⁵⁸ Instead, the Progress Report (*Voortgangsrapportage*) notes that nuisance in border regions is in turn caused by the manner in which Germany conducts its internal border controls, leading to traffic jams and, on some roads, diversion traffic. Still, during the administrative consultations of 29 September 2025, several local authorities noted that internal border controls do have (negative) impacts on international cohesion and create a “psychological border” in the sense of increased awareness of national borders.⁵⁹

Table 7: Results of border controls in the Netherlands at the internal land borders with Belgium and Germany 9 December 2024 - 8 September 2025⁶⁰

Results of border controls in the Netherlands at the internal land borders with Belgium and Germany 9 December 2024 - 8 September 2025	
Total duration of border checks carried out	At least 7.830 hours
Total number of military police (<i>marechaussees</i>) deployed	Approximately 5.350
Number of persons checked	123.320 of whom 85.650 were EU citizens

⁵⁴ Decision note on the letter to Parliament regarding the extension of internal border controls in November 2025, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/beleidsnotas/2025/11/10/tk-beslisnota-bij-kamerbrief-over-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁵⁵ Letter to Parliament on extension of internal border controls November 2025, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁵⁶ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2025Z15656&did=2025D36282>

⁵⁷ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2025Z19693&did=2025D46222>

⁵⁸ Decision note on the letter to Parliament regarding the extension of internal border controls in November 2025, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/beleidsnotas/2025/11/10/tk-beslisnota-bij-kamerbrief-over-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁵⁹ Progress report on internal border controls, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2025/11/10/tk-bijlage-2-voortgangsrapportage-binnengrenscontroles>

⁶⁰ Progress report on internal border controls, 10.11.2025, accessed via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2025/11/10/tk-bijlage-2-voortgangsrapportage-binnengrenscontroles>

Number of vehicles checked (cars, buses, trucks, trains)	29.420
Number of foreign nationals refused entry to the Netherlands	470
Applications for international protection	80
Number of persons detained	230
Number of foreign nationals transferred from Germany to the Netherlands	690
Number of foreign nationals transferred from the Netherlands to Germany	490
Number of foreign nationals transferred from Belgium to the Netherlands	120
Number of foreign nationals transferred from the Netherlands to Belgium	60

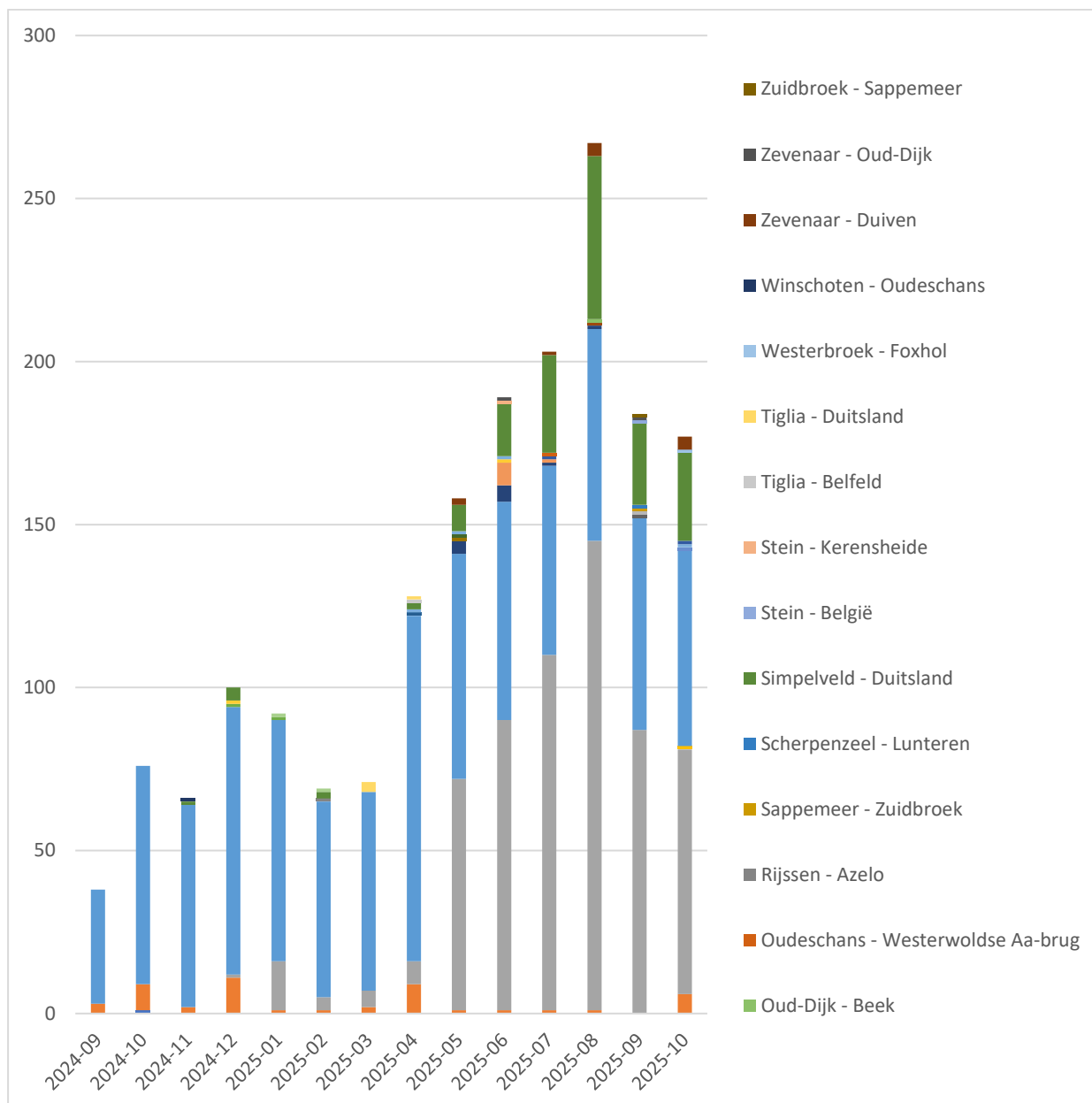
Internal border controls by Germany

In general, the impact experienced in terms of delays by border regions due to the Dutch border controls is limited. As the Dutch method is to act risk-based and flexible, without permanent controls at certain border sections and without significant increases in capacities and funding for border controls, the result in border regions is more or less equal to the period before December 2024. The actual delays and side-effects experienced in border regions by border controls stems from Germany, this is applicable to all regions of the Benelux neighbouring Germany. The Luxembourg-German border is addressed specifically in Section 3.5, the German-Swiss and German-French border is addressed in Section 3.2. As of 16 September 2024, Germany is controlling its border with the Benelux-countries (Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg). As of 16 March 2025, the notification has changed to a border control with all neighbouring countries. Finally, from 6 May 2025 border controls have been intensified by the (new) German government. This resulted in a mixed method, with flexible, information-based border controls on all modes of transport and fixed points of border controls. This impacted border regions, as also the case studies in the next Sections will show.

Looking at the traffic jam data, published by the Dutch *Rijkswaterstaat* (RWS)⁶¹, the effects of German border controls become visible. The data allows to filter on causes, including a category 'border controls'. When filtering the traffic jams for 'border controls', the following graph can be produced for the period of September 2024 (formal start of German border controls with the Netherlands) to October 2025.

⁶¹ <https://downloads.rijkswaterstaatdata.nl/filedata/>, for the actual monitor see: <https://www.rwsverkeersinfo.nl/>

Figure 3: Traffic jams in the Netherlands due to border controls, period Sept '24 – Oct '25



The data shows the total count of border controls, shown per border crossing. In the entire period of a bit more than a year, 1.818 traffic jams were registered in the Netherlands due to (German) border controls – good for 252.910.940 minutes (4.215.182 hours) of traffic jam. Hotspots were the month August 2025 and the border sections of De Lutte (NL)-Germany (that is near Enschede and Bad Bentheim), Beek (NL)-Germany (that is near Arnhem/Zevenaar and Emmerik) and Simpelveld (NL)-Germany (that is near Heerlen and Aachen). Especially the border section of Beek has been intensified since May 2025, resulting in many delays.

Figure 4: Major border sections for German border controls at the Dutch-German border⁶²



Unfortunately, we are lacking comparable data on traffic jams in Belgium and Luxembourg, but in general we can conclude that delays and traffic jams are very much related to the locations of German fixed border posts.

Overall picture unauthorised entries and the specific numbers for NRW

By the end of September 2025, around 47,600 unauthorized entries into Germany had been recorded by the *Bundespolizei* for the year 2025. The *Bundespolizei* assumes that the numbers for the entire year will be lower compared to previous years. The reasons given are lower immigration levels and increased controls by the federal police. Controls have been in place at the border with Austria since September 2015, at the borders with Poland, Czechia, and Switzerland since October 2023, and at the remaining borders with France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark since September 2024.⁶³

⁶² Source: ANWB (2025). Vakantie of niet: Duitse grenscontroles gaan door. <https://www.anwb.nl/vakantie/nieuws/2024/september/controle-bij-landsgrenzen-in-duitsland>

⁶³ The numbers are presented by Statista based on data from the Bundespolizei. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/353771/umfrage/verstoesse-im-bereich-schleusungskriminalitaet-in-deutschland/#:~:text=Im%20Jahr%202025%20wurden%20bis,die%20registrierten%20Fallzahlen%20asch%20wieder.> Source Bundespolizei: https://bundespolizei.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Aktuelles/20250801_Pressemitteilung_uE_VWBGK_ab_8_Mai_fin.al.pdf.

Table 8: Unauthorized entries (Source: Bundespolizei 2025)

Monat	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Januar	2.727	4.440	7.588	6.906	5.394
Februar	3.014	3.843	5.367	5.998	4.669
März	3.912	4.682	6.672	7.090	4.585
April	3.906	4.504	7.718	7.566	5.079
Mai	2.916	5.036	8.532	7.124	5.801
Juni	4.074	6.669	9.461	7.717	5.657
Juli	4.067	6.941	10.714	7.151	5.154
August	4.277	8.846	14.701	7.819	
September	6.101	12.709	21.375	6.921	
Oktober	10.270	13.167	20.073	6.889	
November	7.543	12.538	7.851	6.153	
Dezember	4.830	8.611	7.497	6.238	
Gesamt	57.637	91.986	127.549	83.572	36.339

The numbers for the border of Belgium and the Netherlands with NRW

Normally, the number given by the *Bundespolizei* are in relation to all German borders. For this research, we also got numbers from the directorate Sankt Augustin of the *Bundespolizei* that is located in NRW.⁶⁴ The directorate Sankt Augustin of the *Bundespolizei* has the task to control along the approximately 400-kilometre-long German-Dutch border and the almost 100-kilometre-long German-Belgian border. The following findings were made by the deployed officers for this geographical area between September 16, 2024 and September 30, 2025 (inclusive):

North Rhine-Westphalia border with the Netherlands:

- **2,522 unauthorized entries,**
 - 1,221 people were turned back or deported directly at the border or in connection with the illegal border crossing,
 - 79 people were subject to a re-entry ban for Germany and were therefore prevented from entering,
- + 111 human smugglers were temporarily arrested,
- + 511 outstanding arrest warrants were executed, and
- + 95 people from the left-wing, right-wing, and foreign extremist or Islamist spectrum were identified.

North Rhine-Westphalia border with Belgium:

- **3,146 unauthorized entries,**
 - 1,382 people were turned back or deported directly at the border or in connection with the illegal border crossing,
 - 73 people were subject to a re-entry ban for Germany and were therefore prevented from entering,
- + 107 human smugglers were temporarily arrested,
- + 219 outstanding arrest warrants were executed, and

⁶⁴ The numbers are not published by directly sent to ITEM by the Bundespolizei Direktion Sankt Augustin.

- + 32 people from the left-wing, right-wing, and foreign extremist or Islamist spectrum were identified.

3.1.2 Evaluation of the theme of Euregional Cohesion

Cooperation

Regarding cooperation with the neighbouring countries Belgium and Germany, in the first notification the Netherlands noted to continue its cooperation with regard to cross-border policing and other matters, including the coordination of border checks and the transfer of persons who are apprehended.⁶⁵ In the first prolongation, it was noted that the Netherlands and Belgium are in contact with regard to the enhancement of cooperation on checks at the internal borders, especially with regard to improving the transfer process for migrants who are apprehended at the internal borders. Also, the Netherlands and Germany are exploring possibilities to improve their cross-border cooperation.⁶⁶ The same text was repeated in the most recent prolongation.⁶⁷ In addition, the parliamentary letter notes that a cooperation protocol between Belgium and the Netherlands on Benelux-transfers entered into force on 15 September.⁶⁸ While agreements are made between the neighbouring states, there are some indications that in practice it is not fully applied. For instance, the mayor of Montferland, Fellingier, complained about the German border police sending foreigners back to her village. According to the local newspaper *De Gelderlander*, only 116 of the 274 people who were not entitled to stay in Germany in the past three months, were handed over to the Dutch police. The other 158 were found to have been put out on the street on the other side of the border.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, there is no further official information to verify or quantify these operations.

As the controls are bilateral in the case of the Netherlands and Germany, the question arises whether these are coordinated. This is the case, according to interviews with stakeholders. The area also benefits from specific regulations and agreements, such as the Benelux Police-Treaty. This Treaty stimulates coordination and cooperation between enforcement institutions and joint activities. Furthermore, within the cross-border regions different euregional structures exist such as NeBeDeAgPol in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. This resulted even in a few joint cross-border inspections in the framework of euregional cooperations.⁷⁰

The Benelux Union is already mentioned and also found to be relevant in the case of border controls. Indeed, the Schengen Treaty was preceded by a Benelux Agreement between the Netherlands, Belgium

⁶⁵ Notification of reintroduction of border control at internal borders 11 November 2024, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2024/11/12/tk-bijlage-2-notificatie-herinvoering-binnengrenstoezicht>.

⁶⁶ Notification of a temporary reintroduction or prolongation of border control at internal borders 25 April 2025, https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2025Z08478&did=2025D19333

⁶⁷ Notification of a temporary reintroduction or prolongation of border control at internal borders 10 November 2025, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>.

⁶⁸ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2025/11/10/tk-verlenging-binnengrenscontroles>

⁶⁹ Volkskrant (2025). Verlenging omstreden controles, grensgemeenten zien geen effect en hebben vooral last van maatregel. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/verlenging-omstreden-controles-grensgemeenten-zien-geen-effect-en-hebben-vooral-last-van-maatregel~b239bca2/>

⁷⁰ See: <https://www.politie.nl/nieuws/2025/maart/21/cross-over-veiligheidscontrole-in-euregio-maas-rijn.html> & <https://www.politie.be/5998/nl/nieuws/internationale-samenwerking-grootschalige-politie-en-douaneoperatie-in-het-duits-nederlands>

and Luxembourg, concluded in 1960. In fact, this legislation is still in place and functioning. The Agreement on the transfer of identity check to the external borders of the Benelux area⁷¹ is the processor to the Schengen Treaty and still in place. It regulates the establishment of a Benelux region, without internal border controls. Article 12 of the Benelux Agreement allows to reintroduce (partial) internal border controls for a limited period of time, based on public order or national safety. A Working Group should monitor and implement this option, that is further regulated by Benelux Decision of 1971.⁷² This Decision has a concrete procedure that has to be followed, when reintroducing border controls within the Benelux territory: the reintroducing Member State should notify the Working Group and the Secretariat-General of the Benelux Union, followed by an emergency meeting of an ad-hoc Committee for passenger traffic. The ad-hoc committee should report to the Working Group about the border controls, after which the Working Group should inform the national Ministers. Moreover, the ad-hoc committee is tasked with the investigation of the impacts related to the border controls and any mitigation measures. Thus, formally, at the moment of the reintroduction of the internal border controls by the Netherlands, an entire procedure had to be started by the Netherlands in the framework of the Benelux. However, this was not the case. The Working Group nor an ad-hoc committee was called together, and in the Benelux groups working on Schengen, the internal border controls were never mentioned nor discussed.⁷³ This was also the case during the COVID-19 period, where even after information provision by the Secretariat-General, the Member States ignored the legal provisions of the Benelux Agreement. Concluding, the cross-border coordination and cooperation in the Benelux framework is there on paper, but limited in practice.

Regarding the Dutch border controls, the coordination between the RNLM and (border) municipalities is also perceived positively. Since the reintroduction of internal border controls by the Netherlands, a periodic meeting was scheduled between the Minister of Asylum and Migration and the border municipalities. There was a chaotic and messy start, as the Dutch municipalities were informed about the planned border controls relatively late: end of November 2024, while the border controls would start as of December 2024. The gap of information resulted in many letters of border municipalities and the association of Dutch municipalities (VNG; *Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten*), sharing their concerns. While there is still no real coordination between the VNG or municipalities and the Ministry regarding the future of border controls, the information exchange has been improved and works well between the Ministry, municipalities and so-called *Rijksheren* for cross-border cooperation (appointed Commissioners of the King). This cooperation, however, comes at a certain price. It is the VNG, who coordinates the periodic meetings between the Ministry, municipalities and *Rijksheren*. As a result, there is no time left for VNG to undertake other activities under the umbrella of cross-border cooperation. The allocated time for cross-border cooperation at VNG is almost entirely spent in supporting the central-decentral coordination on internal border controls.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Overeenkomst tussen het Koninkrijk België, het Groothertogdom Luxemburg en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden, inzake de verlegging van de personencontrole naar de buitengrenzen van het Beneluxgebied. https://www.benelux.int/files/7913/9230/2794/19600411_BUITENGRENZEN_NL.pdf

⁷² Beschikking van de ministeriële werkgroep voor het personenverkeer van de Benelux Economische Unie van 30 juni 1971 betreffende de tijdelijke wederinstelling van de personencontrole aan de binnengrenzen, M/P (71) 1.

⁷³ Interview with an expert of Secretariat-General of the Benelux Union, 10.10.2025.

⁷⁴ Interview VNG, 4.11.2025.

Frustration

However, as the data on traffic jams have shown, there is an asymmetric effect: it is not the Dutch, but German border control impacting Dutch border regions. Here, there seems to be no automatic coordination between the German *Bundespolizei* and the Dutch/Belgian border municipalities or, vice versa, the Dutch RNLN with German border municipalities. In an interview, it was also indicated that for instance the VNG did not have contact with German or Belgian stakeholders, such as colleagues at the municipal associations across the border.⁷⁵ Frustrations and disturbances, resulting from border controls across the border, were mainly communicated through the national channel. For instance, the frustrations on the German border controls by Dutch municipalities were put forward at the periodic meetings between the local administration and mayors and the Minister of Asylum and Migration.

Indeed, the media analysis showed that disturbances and frustration did occur in border regions, especially in the Dutch border regions with Germany where fixed border controls were in place. Dutch villages and cities as of Bad Nieuweschan⁷⁶, Beek⁷⁷, Montferland⁷⁸, Bochholtz⁷⁹, Kerkrade and Vaals⁸⁰ were reported in media contributions with issues related to the German border controls. Greatly, the traffic jams resulted in an increase in traffic in neighbouring towns and villages, close to the controlled motorways. Due to the traffic jams, both passenger cars and freight traffic reroute (using a navigation or not) to more quiet and small border crossings. As a result, traffic controllers had to be arranged or even police officers to watch over the traffic in the neighbourhoods.

The case of the village Beek, where traffic jams are often and significant, can be seen as extreme. The municipality of Montferland, to which the village belongs, even announced in June 2025 to close two border crossings during certain periods of time.⁸¹ Also one-direction ways were put in place. In August 2025, the council of aldermen of Montferland have announced to introduce two so-called agricultural sluices (*landbouwsluizen*) at the two main roads from Beek to Germany.⁸² These sluices make it impossible for passenger cars to cross the road. Currently, it is in the middle of the objection procedure. In general, additional efforts and investments were made in Beek to monitor the traffic situation, including monthly figures, in the form of traffic controllers, enforcement and information boards. The case of Beek is exemplary when it comes to the effects of static border controls on border municipalities. Again, it is not

⁷⁵ Interview VNG, 4.11.2025.

⁷⁶ See for instance: DVHN (2025). Bad Nieuweschan in actie tegen sluipverkeer bij de grens. Gemeente Oldambt zet verkeersregelaars in. <https://dvh.nl/groningen/Bad-Nieuweschan-in-actie-tegen-sluipverkeer-bij-de-grens-46231633.html>

⁷⁷ See for instance: AD (2025). De maat is vol in grensdorp: bewoners eisen actie na maanden ellende en verkeerschaos. https://www.ad.nl/montferland/de-maat-is-vol-in-grensdorp-bewoners-eisen-actie-na-maanden-ellende-en-verkeerschaos~a590eac1/?slug_rd=1

⁷⁸ See for instance: De Gelderlander (2025). Montferland is het sluipverkeer beu en gaat de landsgrens per direct 'afsluiten'. <https://www.gelderlander.nl/montferland/montferland-is-het-sluipverkeer-beu-en-gaat-de-landsgrens-per-direct-afsluiten~aca2412c/>

⁷⁹ See for instance: De Limburger (2025). Klachtenregen over controles leidt tot aanpassing grensovergang bij Bochholtz: 'Er moeten altijd twee rijstroken beschikbaar blijven'. <https://www.limburger.nl/regio/simpelveld/bochholtz/klachtenregen-over-controles-leidt-tot-aanpassing-grensovergang-bij-bochholtz-er-moeten-altijd-twee-rijstroken-beschikbaar-blijven/88505005.html>

⁸⁰ See for instance: De Limburger (2025). Sluiproutes via Kerkrade en zelfs Vaals om grenscontroles op A76 te omzeilen: 'Rijden in een slakkengang om te zien wat we doen'. <https://www.limburger.nl/regio/simpelveld/bochholtz/sluiproutes-via-kerkrade-en-zelfs-vaals-om-grenscontroles-op-a76-te-omzeilen-rijden-in-een-slakkengang-om-te-zien-wat-we-doen/71862294.html>

⁸¹ De Gelderlander (2025). Complete chaos door grenscontroles, gemeente gooit landsgrens dicht: 'Het is extreem'. <https://www.gelderlander.nl/montferland/complete-chaos-door-grenscontroles-gemeente-gooit-landsgrens-dicht-het-is-extreem~ab9b64565/>

⁸² Montferland (n.d.). Verkeersmaatregelen bij grensovergang Beek. <https://www.montferland.info/verkeersmaatregelen-bij-grensovergang-beek>

the Dutch border controls affecting the Dutch border village, but the German one. This results in additional challenges for border municipalities. The alderman of Montferland indicated to have good contacts with the German neighbours of Emmerich and invited a German Member of European Parliament to Beek, but no reactions or answers were received by the German government in Berlin nor the *Bundestag*. “[...]but Berlin does not see this nuisance as their responsibility. That is quite disappointing.”, concludes Montferlands councillor Balduk.⁸³

The little success in minimising the negative impact of border controls in border regions is not applicable to all cases. In an interview, it was noted that the good personal contacts and relations in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine for example resulted that contacts with the German police were easily made and any problems or nuisance could be discussed in an open manner.⁸⁴ In an interview with a public transport company on the Dutch side, it was stated that there were different experiences between the Northern German-Dutch border and in the South in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. In some cases, there were problems with the bus schedules in the north of the Netherlands and Germany, whereas in Limburg talks with the Bundespolizei led to a system of accidental checks of train passengers that does not lead to heavy delays.⁸⁵

Institutional trust and perception

Also, there are no signs that border controls have influenced the daily life in so-called double cities, such as Baarle, Coevorden/Emlichheim and Herzogenrath/Kerkrade. Also, the institutional trust within Euregional settings between regions of the Netherlands, Belgium and/or Germany is unaffected and proceeds as usual. In general, the interviews with euregions indicated that they are against the reintroduction of border controls, pointing out to the long-lasting efforts to abolish all kinds of borders instead of reintroducing them and the general fear of nationalisation and rebordering. In many cases, administrations warn that border controls do not benefit social cohesion in the border region and might invoke that ‘the border comes back in people’s minds’. Euregional experts also frequently referred to the Corona crisis when for the first time the narrative of the “closed border” as policy instrument to fight a certain problem emerged. In this respect, the Corona crisis is seen as an important element for the acceptance of ‘rebordering’.

Yet, there might even be a level of support for border controls by the inhabitants of these double cities and border municipalities. This has a lot to do with their political background and voting behaviour. In fact, a selection of citizens of Kerkrade (located at the border) interviewed by the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf*, indicated to be in favour of the border controls.⁸⁶ This may be confirmed by the results of the latest parliamentary elections in the Netherlands. In all municipalities of the Dutch province of Limburg (located between Belgium and Germany), the political party PVV received most votes.⁸⁷ In the party programme of PVV border closures and controls, similar or even stricter than Germany, were clearly

⁸³ AD (2025). De maat is vol in grensdorp: bewoners eisen actie na maanden ellende en verkeerschaos. https://www.ad.nl/montferland/de-maat-is-vol-in-grensdorp-bewoners-eisen-actie-na-maanden-ellende-en-verkeerschaos~a590eac1/?slug_rd=1

⁸⁴ Interview EMR, 27.10.2025.

⁸⁵ Interview with a Dutch Public Transport company, September 2025.

⁸⁶ De Telegraaf (2025). Inwoners Kerkrade blij met grenscontroles: ‘Houdt criminelen tegen.’ <https://www.telegraaf.nl/video/inwoners-kerkrade-blij-met-grenscontroles-houdt-criminelen-tegen/64352601.html>

⁸⁷ NOS (n.d.) <https://app.nos.nl/nieuws/tk2025/>

advocated.⁸⁸ Even in border regions, there is thus a certain understanding for the control of national borders. In this sense, the narrative of border controls as measure against migration or threats is seen as very powerful. However, while there might be support for border controls, inhabitants generally do not want to be confronted with them as symbolic policies. Here, we see a distinction between the inhabitants of border regions confronted with border controls in person and those who are not. The latter are generally more supportive, as they are not affected by them until date.

Normalisation as a threat

Many experts of Euregions and other cross-border initiatives emphasise that certain effects of border controls are not evident from one day to another. They refer to the danger of 'normalisation'. Meaning, it took a while until the idea of Schengen and the end of border controls was seen as 'normal' within a Euregional cross-border territory. Surprisingly, many experts experience that the come-back of border controls has been accepted as "normal" within a rather short time. The danger is not so much seen by recent effects, but the mid- and long-term perspective of cross-border cohesion: „Unsere Kinder lernen jetzt wieder, was Grenzen sind“⁸⁹ (to be translated to: our children learn again what borders are). The present border controls could lead to a sort of "normalisation" and a slippery slope towards renationalisation and the weakening of Euregional cohesion.

3.1.3 Evaluation of the theme of Sustainable Development/Socio-Economic Development

When the internal border controls were reintroduced, many stakeholders immediately warned for economic consequences. In border regions, there is a long desire to work towards a 360-degree economy, where businesses, workers and innovation can cross the border easily and cooperation is developed. In a letter, 46 Dutch municipalities have expressed in November 2024 their concerns about the Dutch reintroduction of border controls and the effects for cross-border workers, entrepreneurs and inhabitants.⁹⁰ Indeed, among others, about 45 thousand workers in the Netherlands lived in Germany in 2023.⁹¹ Also sector associations VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland, representing the voice of employers, expressed their fears for economic losses and costs associated to the border controls.⁹² The Dutch Transport and Logistics sector (TLN) even predicted a loss of €75 million per month due to direct costs associated with every delay.⁹³ Reacting to the German border controls, the Deutsch-Niederländische Handelskammer (DNHK) was also not informed about the intended border controls and reflected that every day about 100.000 trucks pass the German-Dutch border and the German-Dutch trade volume

⁸⁸ See more in the ITEM Reflection on the Dutch election programmes: <https://crossborderitem.eu/publicaties/item-reflectie-tweede-kamerverkiezingen-29-oktober-2025-vanuit-grensoverschrijdend-perspectief/>

⁸⁹ Tagespiegel (2024). „Unsere Kinder lernen jetzt wieder, was Grenzen sind“ : Endet der europäische Traum an seinem Geburtsort? <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/unsere-kinder-lernen-jetzt-wieder-was-grenzen-sind-endet-der-europaische-traum-an-seinem-geburtsort-12425777.html>

⁹⁰ <https://vng.nl/sites/default/files/2024-11/reactie-grensgemeenten-op-aangekondigde-grenscontroles.pdf>

⁹¹ CBS (2025). In 2023 iets meer grenspendelaars vanuit Duitsland en België. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2025/19/in-2023-iets-meer-grenspendelaars-vanuit-duitsland-en-belgie>

⁹² <https://www.bnr.nl/nieuws/economie/10560989/vno-ncw-en-mkb-nederland-vrezen-hogere-kosten-door-grenscontroles>

⁹³ <https://www.tln.nl/actueel/nederland-krijgt-grenscontroles-vanaf-9-december-grote-zorgen-voor-transportsector>

accounted 215 billion euros in 2023.⁹⁴ The DNHK calculated €60 million additional costs per month for business due to border controls.

Some time later, the economic effects between the Netherlands and Germany are less than expected. When asked, both TLN and DNHK assess the impact of the border controls as limited and manageable.⁹⁵ Also, the local employers' organisation of border province of Limburg, LWV, did not receive indications significant effects by their members.⁹⁶ However, in general, for the transport sector, every hour of delay results in additional costs of 75 euros. Incidentally, delays of an hour are noted to TLN, but more often it is limited to 20 to 30 minutes.⁹⁷ Indeed, also anecdotal stories confirm delays of at least 15 minutes between the Netherlands and Germany. This may be the result of the traffic jams before the border, or the need to reroute via other border crossings to avoid the traffic jam. Companies, involved in euregional transport between the Netherlands and Germany and often crossing the border multiple times a day, do complain about some financial consequences.⁹⁸ The transport company Bolk, active in northern cross-border region between the Netherlands and Germany, estimated about 150.000 euros per year of additional costs related to the border controls.⁹⁹

Thus, it is hard to exactly indicate and measure the costs of border controls. Although, there is no central collection or quantification of the economic costs, the financial consequences are there in practice. It is important to take note that these most importantly stem from the German border controls and not the Dutch ones. In media contributions, as well as in talks with stakeholders, these two controls are often interchanged with each other. When media contributions cover the Dutch border controls, the quoted economic effects are often those of the German border controls. As earlier mentioned, the costs of the Dutch border controls, in terms of staff and capacities, total to yearly investments of €45 million in 2025 and increasing every year to €151 million structurally as of 2029.¹⁰⁰ In Germany, the staff and exploitation costs associated to border control are estimated at 80,5 million euros for the period of medio September 2024 to end of June 2025.¹⁰¹ In a press statement, a spokesman of the German Policy Union (*Deutsche Polizeigewerkschaft*), pointed out that these figures are probably too low. A large item for the Federal Police is 'overtime pay'. From mid-September 2024 to the end of June 2025, only additional mission-

⁹⁴ Accountant.nl (2024). Handelsnetwerk vreest economische schade door Duitse grenscontroles. <https://www.accountant.nl/nieuws/2024/9/handelsnetwerk-vreest-economische-schade-door-duitse-grenscontroles/>

⁹⁵ TLN (2025). Beperkte impact grenscontroles, maar TLN vraagt om evaluatie. <https://www.tln.nl/actueel/beperkte-impact-grenscontroles-maar-tln-vraagt-om-evaluatie>; BNR (2025). Economische gevolgen Fabers grenscontroles 'beperkt' en 'beheersbaar'. <https://www.bnr.nl/nieuws/economie/10575075/economische-gevolgen-fabers-grenscontroles-beperkt-en-beheersbaar>

⁹⁶ As indicated to ITEM in an e-mail exchange.

⁹⁷ TLN (2025). Beperkte impact grenscontroles, maar TLN vraagt om evaluatie. <https://www.tln.nl/actueel/beperkte-impact-grenscontroles-maar-tln-vraagt-om-evaluatie>

⁹⁸ Tubantia (2024). Dit merken transportbedrijven in Twente van verscherpte grenscontroles: 'Heeft ook financiële gevolgen'. <https://www.tubantia.nl/losser/dit-merken-transportbedrijven-in-twente-van-verscherpte-grenscontroles-heeft-ook-financiele-gevolgen~a57d09ed/>

⁹⁹ AD (2025). Zo beleeft Ben (66), die meermaals per dag de grens passeert, de Duitse controles: 'Soms begint de ellende hier al'. <https://www.ad.nl/hengelo/zo-beleeft-ben-66-die-meermaals-per-dag-de-grens-passeert-de-duitse-controles-soms-begint-de-ellende-hier-al~a6c09367/>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2025Z19693&did=2025D46222>

¹⁰¹ Tagesspiegel (2025). Einsatz gegen Migranten : Grenzkontrollen der Bundespolizei kosten mehr als 80 Millionen Euro. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/einsatz-gegen-migranten-grenzkontrollen-der-bundespolizei-kosten-mehr-als-80-millionen-euro-14174768.html>

related costs amounted to €37.9 million.¹⁰² Yet, these exploitation costs are not limited to the German side, but also on the Dutch side of the border additional costs are incurred. The Dutch road authority *Rijkswaterstaat* (RWS) indicated to have invested more than 8 million euros last year (September 2024–September 2025) in additional traffic measures due to the traffic jams at the Dutch-German border crossings.¹⁰³ The costs are shared by the Dutch government and the German Bundespolizei. Also on local level, additional costs are made. The Dutch municipality of Montferland indicated that the traffic-related measures have costed 60.000 euros until now.

As earlier mentioned, the traffic jams result in shortcuts through alternative border crossings. This indeed indicate on additional nuisance and pollution. The village of Beek is an extreme example, but also other border cities mention noise pollution, congestion and increase in emissions, as also trucks cross the villages. However, there is no structural and centralised monitoring of these effects. There is also no collection of data on border controls in public transport and the effects thereof. From the interviews we learnt border controls happen along the services that cross the Dutch-Belgian-German border. In the case of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, it was mentioned in an interview that close cooperation with the enforcement agencies did result in an option where the German Bundespolizei perform border controls on a running regional train, so that additional delays could be prevented or minimised.¹⁰⁴

Finally, also in the tourism sector, warnings and concerns were formulated about the state of internal border controls in Europe and the increasing normalisation thereof.¹⁰⁵ There are so far no specific studies on the effects of tourism in the Benelux-German border regions. But in practice, research recently showed that in some cases these border controls or control measures do not have significant effects on tourism. One recent research focussed on the Electronic Travel Authorisation of the United Kingdom, to be able to cross the border to the UK. Data did not show significant deviations after the introduction of this system.¹⁰⁶

Experiences and perceptions of internal border controls in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine: Results from a PREMIUM student-project

As part of a PREMIUM-project, students from Maastricht University carried out a study on the impact of internal border controls in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. For this purpose, in Spring 2025 a survey was sent out to employees and students at Maastricht University. Interviews were also carried out with passengers in the three-country train (*drielandentrein*) running between Aachen-Maastricht-Liege, as well as at the international bus station in Maastricht. For more elaborate findings, we refer the reader to the full report.¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that the sample size is relatively small (93 complete survey responses), so

¹⁰² Deutsche Polizeigewerkschaft (15. August 2025): Kosten für Grenzkontrollen, „Überstunden werden grundsätzlich durch Freizeitausgleich abgegolten“, press release, <https://www.dpolg.de>.

¹⁰³ AD (2025). Duitse grenscontroles kosten Nederland 8 miljoen euro, weggebruiker heeft al 730 kilometer fileleed achter de rug. <https://www.ad.nl/buitenland/duitse-grenscontroles-kosten-nederland-8-miljoen-euro-weggebruiker-heeft-al-730-kilometer-fileleed-achter-de-rug~a921f437/>

¹⁰⁴ Interview with a Dutch Public Transport company, September 2025.

¹⁰⁵ ANVR (2024). ANVR luidt noodklok tegen Europese reisbeperkingen. <https://www.anvr.nl/reisnieuws/ANVR-luidt-noodklok-tegen-Europese-reisbeperkingen>

¹⁰⁶ Breda University of Applied Sciences (2025). Verplichte reisvergunning voor VK leidt niet tot minder toerisme. <https://www.buas.nl/nieuws/verplichte-reisvergunning-voor-vk-leidt-niet-tot-minder-toerisme>

¹⁰⁷ Federio Albaina, Sara; Meftah, Mohamed; Schade, Melissa; Suchit-Hudson, Sarah, “Ex-post analysis of the reintroduction of internal border controls – cross-border effects on the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (PREMIUM-Study)”, 21.6.2025, accessed via:

the findings should be viewed as case-study insights from the early phase of the reintroduced internal border controls in the Netherlands.

In the survey, most respondents (71%) were aware of the reintroduced border controls between the Netherlands and its neighbouring countries. However, only 40% of respondents reported having experienced border controls while crossing national borders within the study area. Among these, most controls were encountered either in Germany (50%) or in the Netherlands (31%). The most frequently mentioned locations for border checks were on the road to Aachen, and at the Belgian-Dutch railway border, particularly at the Eijsden station, which is the first Dutch stop coming from the direction of Liège (Belgium) on the Limburg Arriva train line. Despite the border controls, the majority of respondents indicated that border controls have not affected their daily lives: around 90% reported no noticeable disruption. Only a very small minority, about 1%, had experienced a substantial impact. Still, many respondents reported that the controls delayed their journeys and extended travel times. Several noted an increase in the frequency of controls over time, suggesting a growing visibility and normalization of checks. Others commented on the selective nature of controls, raising concerns about potential profiling or inconsistency in enforcement. Some respondents noted they were surprised that border controls were taking place at all, highlighting how unexpected such controls can feel in border regions used to open borders. When asked about their emotional reactions to being stopped, most respondents said they were “okay with it,” indicating a general understanding of the checks. At the same time, a significant share reported feelings of annoyance and anxiety, suggesting that even when accepted, the experience is still unpleasant or stressful. Other frequently mentioned emotions included discomfort and a sense of being treated unfairly. Indeed, a small but notable group (6%) expressed concern over the reintroduction of border controls, which they viewed as a threat to the integrity and stability of Schengen and, by extension, the broader European project. Several respondents emphasized that Schengen and freedom of movement is what “makes the EU what it is,” underlining its foundational role in shaping a borderless Europe.¹⁰⁸

Overall, the survey findings indicate that the impact of internal border controls on current cross-border mobility for work and study is limited, though the measures have influenced some respondents’ willingness to engage in cross-border shopping and leisure. Among respondents who cross the border for work-related reasons (23% of the sample), 76% indicated that the reintroduction of controls has not impacted their professional activities. However, when asked whether border controls have influenced their aspirations to take on cross-border employment opportunities in the future, all respondents answered affirmatively, suggesting an anticipatory effect that could hinder regional labour mobility over time. For those who cross the border for educational purposes (16% of the sample), all of them stated that the new controls have not affected their studies. Furthermore, no respondents reported reconsidering their decision to pursue education across national borders due to these changes. In terms of cross-border activities such as shopping (45% of the sample), tourism, and leisure (62% of the sample), 98% of respondents stated that border controls have not directly impacted their ability to engage in these activities. When asked about their willingness or motivation to undertake such trips, responses were more divided. 37.5% reported that their desire to cross the border for shopping or leisure may have been negatively affected, while 25% remained uncertain, and another 37.5% reported no impact. This reveals

<https://crossborderitem.eu/en/publications/ex-post-analysis-of-the-reintroduction-of-internal-border-controls-cross-border-effects-on-the-euregio-meuse-rhine-premium-study/>

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

that while actual behaviour remains relatively unchanged, perceptions and intentions may be shifting. Other services include activities such as cross-border petrol purchases (27% of the sample), often driven by price differences or convenience. Among respondents engaging in this type of mobility, all respondents stated that neither access to services nor the motivation to use them has been affected by border controls.¹⁰⁹

In the interviews carried out during the field trip in train and international bus station (see Table 9: Extracts from the PREMIUM-report of interviewees' experiences of border controls in the three-country train and at the international bus station in MaastrichtTable 9), the interviewees experiences of border controls varied. Eight individuals could recall clear experiences of being checked, three confirmed identity checks, and five reported no checks. While a minority viewed the checks as contributing to safety, many felt that they offered little tangible benefit and instead represented a symbolic or politically motivated practice. Some noted that the checks do not significantly hinder the daily life and can accept the controls, as long as they remained limited to ID verification and did not become more invasive, such as searching luggage. For some, these experiences created doubts about the coherence of belonging to a supposedly border-free zone, and the conflicts with the rights on free movement in the EU. Also concerns about discriminatory practises were raised among the interviewed passengers, suggesting selective controls based on appearance. Also, discriminatory practices were noted to be more apparent in car checks than in buses or trains, where all passengers tend to be checked more uniformly. Non-EU travellers emphasised concerns of the potential consequences of controls in case they would forget their passport or work permit. Most interviewees described feeling annoyed, bothered or experiencing a loss of time due to border controls, though many also acknowledged understanding their purpose. For nearly all, daily routines and mobility were largely unaffected: nine reported no impact, two saw a possible minor effect, and only one (a bus driver) felt genuinely hindered. While a handful admitted feeling safer, many dismissed controls as "performative theatre" with no tangible security benefit.

Table 9: Extracts from the PREMIUM-report of interviewees' experiences of border controls in the three-country train and at the international bus station in Maastricht¹¹⁰

One commuter on the Drielandentrein line noted being checked multiple times, including as recently as the previous week (mid-May) and earlier in February. According to them, Dutch authorities usually board the train at Eijsden without any prior announcement and proceed to check IDs without offering explanations. They described the officers as "impolite" and expressed concern over the lack of communication regarding the reason for the checks. Her main worry focused on the potential consequences of forgetting her ID, particularly given the absence of prior notice. She also questioned the purpose of these checks, expressing doubt that they contribute to any concrete outcomes and suggesting they conflict with the principles of free movement within the EU.

A distinct perspective came from a non-EU national, originally from Cyprus, who lives in the Netherlands and frequently travels to Belgium for work. They reported having experienced controls when traveling from Belgium into the Netherlands and noted that these checks have become more frequent recently. However, they have never faced any issues during these interactions and stated that they appreciate

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the added feeling of safety that the presence of border authorities brings. A Belgian citizen who regularly commutes to the Netherlands by train has experienced ID checks while entering the Netherlands but mentioned that these have become less frequent over time and do not interfere with her daily life. They described the procedures as limited to identity verification and expressed no strong objections.

Among those traveling by car, one individual who frequently drives between Maastricht and Liège mentioned having been checked by Dutch police on two separate occasions. Another interviewee, a Dutch national who crosses into Belgium by car about once a month, had never experienced a border control personally but had heard of them. They remarked that such practices give them the impression that the Schengen Area is becoming increasingly discriminatory. Meanwhile, several others reported experiences with border controls on long-distance buses. Two individuals who travelled from the Netherlands to Germany by Flixbus stated that they had been subjected to police checks and noted a pattern of differential treatment. As white Europeans, they felt that the authorities were more lenient with them, implying a degree of discrimination in how the controls were applied. One frequent traveller between Maastricht and Germany via Flixbus stated that in his experience, the German police conduct checks almost in any of their trips. They did not perceive these checks as problematic.

Another individual, who uses buses such as Flixbus and Flibco to reach Brussels Zaventem or Charleroi airports, mentioned never having been checked on those routes but reported regular controls when heading to Germany. They accepted these checks as long as they remained limited to ID verification and did not become more invasive, such as searching luggage. While they understood that such measures might make others feel safer, they did not believe the controls significantly enhanced security or fulfilled any clear purpose. They also expressed concern that continuing or intensifying controls could jeopardize the principle of open borders within the EU. As a white man, he acknowledged that his personal experience was likely influenced by his appearance and that discriminatory practices were more apparent in car checks than in buses or trains, where all passengers tend to be checked more uniformly.

One Dutch interviewee, who regularly crosses into Germany, and occasionally into Belgium, by car, was aware of border controls and had been checked twice. They noted that checks tend to occur on major roads and described a pattern in which drivers of cars with Belgian license plates or with certain appearances are more likely to be stopped. Although border controls have not significantly impacted their daily life, they acknowledged that such checks can hinder freedom of movement and expressed concern about the reasons behind them, citing terrorism and irregular migration. While they said they feel safer due to the controls, they also felt the need for such measures negatively affected their sense of European belonging. In their view, Schengen is a valuable and ideal concept that should be protected, even if they understand the rationale behind some checks. The second interviewee, a German citizen who occasionally crosses into neighbouring countries by train, had their ID and visa checked for the first time the previous week. They were not personally bothered, as their legal status was secure, and perceived the controls as “normal,” motivated by the need for security. Though they were concerned about the broader societal reasons necessitating such checks, they did not feel personally impacted.

For them, freedom of movement was associated more with daily mobility than with the Schengen framework as such, and they justified the controls as necessary to address undocumented migration.

An international bus driver noted that “in Germany, we would be 100 % stopped, especially on a bus”, adding that spring and summer bring intensified checkpoint activity. The driver made an interesting statement pointing out the uneven behaviour and missing coordination in the methods and procedures applied by police from different countries. In particular, they underlined a difference between German and French police, with the latter lacking any sort of communication or politeness with the drivers as well as with the passengers, furthering controls to luggage.

3.1.4 Conclusions and recommendations from a Euregional perspective

The Benelux-Germany case study presents a region with a high level of cross-border mobility and cross-border cooperation. Currently, the Netherlands and Germany have reintroduced border controls, while Belgium opted for entry controls under Article 23 SBC. All controls are based on arguments related to migration and asylum. Compared to the COVID-19 period, it is surprising how easily the border controls between the Netherlands and Germany were reintroduced. Indeed, during COVID-19, the Dutch-German border was one of the few that remained open. The current trend of rebordering in the Dutch-German borderland is thus to be seen as an important turn in history. Especially for the Netherlands that we classified as a country with an history of abolishing borders and border controls instead of reintroducing them (just like Luxembourg).

When looking at the effects, it is first important to highlight that there is no one concept of a border control. In practice, the methods applied to the internal border controls range widely. Where the Dutch border controls are flexible and information-led, it is actually more equal to the Belgium approach than that of Germany with fixed border control posts. The case study showed that the inconvenience experienced in the border regions is especially, or entirely, due to the German border controls. The fixed border control posts at the German border with the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg result in traffic jams, delays and connected costs, short-cuts via smaller border villages and road, including the associated nuisance and disruption. However, where there are no fixed border control posts are in place, the effects appear to be less prominent. Even more, the effects appeared to be asymmetrical: it is the other side of the border that is experiencing the effects of the border controls on German ground. This may be problematic as in the national definitions of ‘cross-border regions’ it is limited to the national geographical demarcation of border region, thus excluding the perspective of the region just across the border. Formally as a consequence, in the framework of SBC, these regions and effects across the border do not have to be assessed. The asymmetrical effects result in additional costs, both in terms of economic costs as well as exploitation (traffic controllers etc.). Coordination and cooperation across the border seemed not to work adequately, resulting in tensions and frustrations. This is not per se the case on an euregional level, but more from the decentral to the central level (e.g. Berlin). Indeed, the cross-border cooperation in euregional settings appeared not to be impacted significantly but even did contribute to better functioning border controls in some cases.

The results and conclusions of the case study allow for the formulation of some recommendations. First, the national definitions of ‘cross-border regions’ appear to be too limited for a true cross-border impact assessment. Indeed, effects appear mainly on the other side of the border. Second, the term of ‘border

control' is wrongly an 'one-size-fits-all'. There should be a better monitoring and communication of the methods applied in the different regimes of internal border controls. In practice, the term resulted in great confusion and unease, while the Dutch method and effects were limited. Third, national monitoring and evaluation should go beyond data on border controls and persons halted but include a proper cross-border impact assessment. That means that also the economic effects should be monitored more broadly, both on the economy as well as operational costs, and figures should be made on traffic jams and delays. While in the Netherlands, *Rijkswaterstaat* published this data, this is not the case in Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. More importantly, the psychological and cohesion effects should be better investigated, as it can currently be regarded as a 'blind spot'. Finally, there should be a stricter monitoring of the proportionality of the border controls. It is striking that also in the Benelux-Germany case, the Member States do not openly discuss what criteria they use to qualify border controls as 'proportional'. In fact, this is also a problem for the research. What is the benchmark with respect to administrative costs, traffic jams or extra traffic related emissions in border villages? Not to mention that there is no benchmark for the psychological effects and the narrative with respect to a "Euregional cross-border identity". Whereas in the Dutch case, despite the notification the border controls are rather practical and considering the needs of border regions. The German approach is very strict and leaves less space for euregional concerns. The main effects that occur on the other side of the border (i.e. traffic jams) seem to be not an element of the German proportionality assessment. It also gives the impression that the precise effects do not matter that much. The German government has repeatedly announced that border controls should be in place until the European Migration and Asylum Pact is in place and well-functioning and the external borders are secured.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ See for instance the formulation on the homepage of the Christian Democrats (CDU, main partner in the current coalition): "We link border controls with rejections. Anyone entering Germany from an EU member state or the Schengen Area and wishing to apply for asylum is not at risk. They will be turned back. This will remain in effect until the EU's external borders are secured." See: HYPERLINK "<https://www.cdu.de/themen/migration/>"<https://www.cdu.de/themen/migration/>.

3.2 Case study: German-French and German-Swiss Rhine bridges

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3.2.1 Introduction to the cross-border region

Definition of the geographical research area

Although the controls affect all border areas, their impact is more visible at the bridges over the Rhine. Between Saarland (Germany) and Moselle (France) and between Rhineland-Palatinate and Alsace, the border runs along a large number of roads and public transport routes, so that mobility flows are less affected. For this reason, the case study focuses on the Rhine bridges between Alsace, north-western Switzerland and Baden-Württemberg. Geographically, the situation directly along the course of the Rhine from Lake Constance to the Upper Rhine is examined.

Figure 5: The Rhine as the border between Germany, Switzerland and France. Source: Natural Earth, own representation by Euro-Institut using the open-source application Graticule.



Source : Natural Earth. Réalisé avec Graticule.

Regional cooperation takes place within administrative boundaries and has been institutionalised for decades in the Greater Region, the transnational Upper Rhine metropolitan region and the High Rhine Commission. The Committee for Cross-Border Cooperation, founded in 2019, acts as a mediator between regional and international cooperation.

Figure 6: Extract from the MOT - Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière map showing the border regions (August 2025)



In accordance with the Schengen Borders Code, Member States shall provide the European Commission with a definition of border regions¹¹². The definitions provided by Germany and France refer to border regions, but not cross-border regions. France has chosen the **departments neighbouring the border**. In our case, we are interested in the Alsace region, which shares the Rhine border with the state of Baden-Württemberg. Swiss Topo defines the 15 cantons that share a national border as a border region but Switzerland has not officially given this definition to the EU-commission¹¹³. In this chapter, we will focus on the cantons of Basel-Land, Basel-Stadt, Aargau, Zurich, Schaffhausen and Thurgau, which form the Upper Rhine region and the Lake Constance-High Rhine region together with the neighbouring foreign regions. Germany also includes the districts (*Kreise*) close to the border, which automatically excludes urban districts not directly on the border, such as Karlsruhe, Rastatt and Freiburg, even though they have close ties with neighbouring countries.

Overview of border control locations and time periods

Regarding the timeframe, we are interested in the **long-term controls that have been notified and extended for six months since the new EU Commission Border Code came into force**: from September 2024 from France to Germany, from November 2024 to France, and from June 2024 from Switzerland to Germany (continuation of the measures decided in October 2023).

¹¹² List of border regions in accordance with Article 42b of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) C/2025/4643, 18 August 2025

¹¹³ Switzerland has more time than EU-member states to implement the new Schengen Borders Code.

In France and Germany, border controls at railway stations and in the 20-30 km border zone have been in place for some time, and are partly carried out in cooperation between police forces. In Germany, they were introduced at rail and road crossings and on public transport from Switzerland in October 2023 and from France in September 2024.

The situation at the Swiss border differs from that at the French border because Switzerland only joined the Schengen area in December 2008 and is not a member of the single market. This means that Swiss customs authorities continue to check and register imported goods (and thus their owners). Such controls do not need to be declared to the European Commission.

The French police carry out more discreet controls. On a few days, they are stationed at bridges (e.g. Europabrücke Stra), otherwise they patrol the 30 km zone, which might be possible without art 25 of Schengen Borders Code, using article 23.

From 8 May 2025, following the new government coming into power in Germany, additional federal police forces and new directives have been introduced at all borders. The presence of police officers on bridges, in regional and long-distance trains and in stations has seemed to increase. This changed noticeably again from July 2025 at the German-Swiss border, where they are rarely or only irregularly visible. At the French-German Rhine border, the German police control several road bridges every day, especially between Strasbourg and Kehl and next to Basel.

Method

This impact assessment addresses the three key issues of Euregional cohesion, European integration and sustainable socio-economic development using common qualitative and quantitative indicators that are also used in the other case studies. The sources for the case study are newspaper articles, traffic statistics, interviews with cross-border political and economic stakeholders, short interviews with retailers and passers-by, an online survey¹¹⁴ of the population of the Rhine region and the authors' own experiences. Even though the sample size is not representative of the population, participation in the online survey was much higher than in other Euro-Institut surveys on cross-border issues conducted in previous summers. The interviews and the survey reflect individual opinions of May-July 2025 that are not entirely representative, but they do reveal important trends and perspectives. The analysis often distinguishes between the German-Swiss border and the German-French border on the Rhine. Two examples in Rheinfelden (CH/DE) and Kehl-Strasbourg (DE/FR) are also illustrating local characteristics.

3.2.2 Evaluation of the theme of Euregional Cohesion

This section examines whether the reintroduction of border controls has had an impact on social cohesion and institutional cooperation.

¹¹⁴ Published on (social) networks from 10 July 2025 to 13 August 2025, 290 responses (48 % are crossing the border several times a week).

[A neutral impact on police cooperation](#)

Cross-border police cooperation is already well established along the Rhine¹¹⁵. According to the parties involved, border controls have not affected this cooperation. There were also frequent exchanges between Paris and Berlin on the impact of border controls on cross-border commuters. The French border police, the German border police, the Swiss Federal Office for Customs and Border Security (BAZG) and the Franco-German Joint Centre for Police and Customs Cooperation were informed in good time about the respective operational service regulations. The existing bilateral police patrols have continued their work.

Perceptions changed from May 2025 onwards because many federal police officers from other German regions were deployed at border posts. The French population was accustomed to bi- and trinational police patrols and was suddenly confronted with German police officers who did not speak French. No change was noticeable at the German-Swiss border from 8 May onwards. However, in individual cases, the procedures for the coordinated transfer of refused persons were not followed by the German police and strongly criticised in France and Switzerland.

[No loss of institutional trust](#)

In the highly institutionalised border regions of the Upper Rhine and High Rhine, border controls are not a recurring topic in political committees that would slow down work on other projects. Even though the countries have not chosen the same forms of border control and crime prevention, this has no impact on the quality of cross-border relations at regional and local level. All planned events are taking place, although in May 2025 participants from France arrived late for appointments and seminars.

The numerous political statements and discussions on the form of border controls are coordinated at the bi- or trinational level and do not directly question the relevance of border controls, but call for a more proportionate implementation¹¹⁶.

At the very closely connected German-French border, where a generation has never experienced police and customs checks at the border, stationary checks at the border are causing more resentment than at the German-Swiss border. For instance, on 14 May 2025, the mayors of Kehl (Germany) and Strasbourg (France) sent a letter to the new German Chancellor: “We urge you to scale back the tightening of controls at the Kehl border crossing to a level that does not interfere with everyday life in the Franco-German region, which has grown together over more than three decades.” In fact, the impact at this location was much more noticeable in the following months than at other Rhine bridges.

[Example 1: Everyday life in Kehl-Strasbourg on the German-French border¹¹⁷](#)

Since May 2025, Kehl and Strasbourg have been more severely affected than other areas by the impact of tighter border controls on roads, trams and trains. Everyday life in the twin city is characterised by cross-border mobility:

- 4,000 cross-border commuters in Kehl
- 150 schoolchildren cross the border every day

¹¹⁵ German-Swiss police agreement of 27 April 1999, Mondorf Agreement of 9 October 1997 on cooperation between police and customs authorities in the German-French border areas.

¹¹⁶ Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau, Eurodistrict Basel, Eurodistrict PAMINA, Committee for Cross-Border Cooperation, Upper Rhine Council, joint letter from German and French MPs, Regio Basiliensis, Swiss Minister of Justice.

¹¹⁷ See more details to examples 1 and 2 (for ex. Economy) in the next chapters

- 3,000 French people live in Kehl, 5,000 Germans live in Strasbourg
- 50% of customers in Kehl are from France¹¹⁸

In Kehl/Strasbourg, 45% of the 143 respondents to our online survey stated that they had changed their daily habits due to border controls. The free comments as well as informal discussions clearly show that frequent and intensive controls affect the entire social fabric and that residents are reorganising their daily lives to avoid inconveniences caused by delays and waiting times. The changes reported are varied: fewer or no more invitations to people who have to cross the border, restriction or abandonment of certain leisure activities, increased use of bicycles, getting off at a different stop to avoid a checkpoint, less frequent or complete abandonment of shopping across the border. Time constraints also play a major role: several people said they had to leave earlier by car or take an earlier train in order to get to work, an appointment or their train on time.

For many, the main problem is not the control procedure itself, but the waiting time and the uncertainty associated with it. As one resident of Kehl/Strasbourg put it: *‘Travelling has become more stressful because you don't know how long it will take to cross the border.’*

The increased police presence in Kehl also had an **impact on people who did not wish to cross the border**. For example, business and leisure travellers missed connections and, in the worst cases, missed the last train in the evening. Patients at the Rhena am Rhein clinic in Strasbourg and residents of the Port du Rhin neighbourhood near the border were caught in traffic jams. For transport operators in both countries¹¹⁹, the brief delays at stops also had an impact on the rest of the domestic network and the overall organisation of transport services.

[Example 2: The twin town of Rheinfelden on the German-Swiss border](#)

Border controls by the German Federal Police and Swiss customs mainly take place at the A98 motorway crossing. However, this has been the case for some time¹²⁰, even before 2024, traffic jams form during rush hour because the nearest crossings are a little further away. Controls on buses and at the pedestrian bridge are not enforced.

In Rheinfelden (CH/DE), only 31% of the 50 respondents to our online survey stated that they had changed their daily habits due to border controls.

Similar to Kehl-Strasbourg, comments in the online survey indicate that cross-border commuters suffer from evening traffic to Germany and may switch to bicycles. More often than in Kehl, respondents express understanding for border controls and a desire for more intensive checks and police presence.

The number of German cross-border commuters – cross-border commuters with Swiss passports who live in Germany are not included in the figures – actually rose slightly in the second quarter of 2025. There have been no noticeable changes in shopping tourism either; even the reduction in the value limit for goods from 300 Swiss francs per person to 150 Swiss francs, introduced at the beginning of 2025, seems

¹¹⁸ Information from the letter from the two mayors of Kehl (Germany) and Strasbourg (France) to the new German Chancellor, 14 May 2025.

¹¹⁹ CTS Strasbourg, SNCF, SWEG (Baden-Württemberg), Basel Transport Authority

¹²⁰ Swiss customs: since always; German Federal Police: since September 2023

to have had no impact. However, shopping tourism in Rheinfelden is less significant than in Laufenburg or Weil am Rhein, for example.

A social divide in the perception of the border area

Letters from readers, 25 newspaper articles, street surveys in Kehl and an online survey of the border population across the research area show a clear division in perceptions regarding the reintroduction of border controls.

For part of the population, this measure is seen as positive or at least not problematic. This goes hand in hand with the rise in nationalist thinking, which is reflected in the election results. In contrast, another section of the population and the political representative, which are strongly attached to the European idea and the freedom of travel guaranteed by Schengen, feels deeply disappointed. For these people, the reintroduction of controls represents a step backwards in terms of the achievements of European integration in cross-border regions.

Acceptance and perceived effectiveness are strongly influenced by local conditions and previous experiences with border controls, as well as by political opinions.

3.2.3 Evaluation of the European Integration theme

The balancing act between internal security and freedom of movement in Europe

Table 10: Notified temporary internal border controls. Euro-Institut's own representation based on the official websites of the governments and information provided by DG HOME EU¹²¹, the Federal Police (DE), the Ministry of the Interior (FR) and the Federal Customs and Border Guard Office (CH), and one field observations.

	Germany – Internal border controls with France and Switzerland	Switzerland – Internal border controls	France – Internal border controls
Period of border controls	16/10/2023 – 15/03/2025¹²² to Switzerland, Poland, Czechia 07/06/2024 – 19/07/2024 everywhere 20/07/2024 – 30/09/2024 to France 16/09/2024 – 15/03/2025 to France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark 16/03/2025 – 15/09/2025: all countries 16/09/2025- 15/03/2026: all countries	No notification to the EU Commission, inspection due to customs	01/05/2023 – 31/10/2023 01/11/2023 – 30/04/2024 01/05/2024 – 31/10/2024 01/11/2025 – 30/04/2025 01/05/2025 – 31/10/2025: all countries

¹²¹ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en

¹²² Composed of several notifications: 25/10/2023, 26/10/2023 -14/11/2023, 15/11/2023 -04/12/2023, 05/12/2023 -15/12/2023, 16/12/2023 - 15/03/2024, 16/03/2024 - 15/06/2024, 16/06/2024 –15/12/2024, 16/12/2024 –15/03/2025

Article of the Schengen Code and justification	Art. 25: Olympic Games; UEFA Euro Art. 25: Security risks related to irregular migration and smuggling, increased levels of irregular entries, exacerbating already tense accommodation situation for refugees, strain on the asylum reception system		Art. 25: Olympic Games, rugby World Cup Art. 25: persistent jihadist threats, a rise in antisemitic attacks, irregular migration and smuggling, cross-border delinquency
Type of checks at the Rhine bridges	Adapted to the situation, flexible in terms of time and location (at border crossings or 30 km from the border), in uniform and plain clothes, around the clock Reinforcements to France since summer 2024, additional resources and more frequent stationary checks in Baden-Württemberg since May 2025	Customs inspection of goods Railway stations Cross-border trains also abroad Cooperation with Germany and France	Random and targeted checks within 20 km of the border (not directly subjected to art. 25 Schengen code) or in bilateral strips No stationary checks in Alsace

All EU citizens and persons with residence permits may continue to move freely at all border crossings, thus maintaining freedom of movement. During the period of open borders, the population in the German-French border region had become accustomed to not carrying travel documents, identity cards or residence permits. At the discretion of the federal police, minors were punished for not carrying their ID or for allegedly having an expired ID. In France, ID cards are valid for 15 years, even if the card states a validity of 10 years, and it takes several months to renew an ID card.

Migrants residing in France and Switzerland whose application procedures were still ongoing had become accustomed to shopping in cheaper stores in Germany due to financial hardship or the multicultural atmosphere. This became riskier after the reintroduction of controls in Germany, depending on the location of the controls.

[Recognising the close social and economic ties between border regions](#)

According to the interior ministries and police forces of the three countries, connections and mobility in cross-border regions are being taken into account. **Lessons have indeed been learned from the traumatic experiences of border closures during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.**

As a result, the French random border checks in Alsace at the 15 authorised border crossing points are largely invisible to the general public in their everyday lives. At many Rhine crossings, too, traffic is never or hardly ever slowed down by German border controls, or only at weekends. At the most controlled crossing points like Kehl and Neuenburg, measures (e.g. timetables) have been included in service regulations to minimise the impact on cross-border commuters. **Cross-border commuters to France and Switzerland complain that they have a longer journey time back to Germany in the late afternoon.** No increase in working from home among cross-border commuters could be observed.

Impact on cross-border mobility

At most Rhine crossings, border controls have had no impact on everyday life because they have not caused delays or because traffic jams at the border, for example in the Basel conurbation, are a permanent feature. **The repetition and media coverage of traffic jams at certain border points such as Kehl-Strasbourg leads to fear or at least hesitation to cross the border.** After a few weeks, the population has adapted and tends to allow more time, check traffic reports in advance and change their mode of transport. However, some groups of people are restricted in their freedom of movement because they cannot adapt their habits: health impairments (of relatives), drop-off and pick-up times for childcare, fixed working hours, fixed appointments, travel time, missing offer of public transportation, lack of purchasing power.

On average, 22% of respondents travel less frequently than before the controls were introduced. The average hides significant differences depending on the area (35% of respondents in Kehl-Strasbourg vs. 12.2% in Rheinfelden travel less frequently) and the intensity of controls.

According to comments, refraining from crossing the border affects shopping, leisure activities and essential private visits.

A feeling of discrimination

The survey results show that 92% of respondents generally do not perceive discriminatory behaviour at border controls. However, a more detailed analysis of the responses, which only took into account people who cross the border between Strasbourg and Kehl, shows that more than 45% of respondents (out of a total of 137) reported having experienced discriminatory or unequal treatment. This is not surprising, as a large number of EU citizens in Basel, Kehl and Strasbourg have a migrant background (in some cases going back several generations) or come from French overseas territories.

It should be noted, however, that according to the responses, these perceptions are less pronounced when checks are carried out on trains. In these cases, the checks are often perceived as more systematic and applied to all passengers, which may help to reduce the feeling of differential treatment.

Results of border controls

The Federal Police recorded findings at the land borders with Switzerland and France within the jurisdiction of the Stuttgart Federal Police Headquarters (*Bundespolicieidirektion*), which covers the entire federated state of Baden-Württemberg:

Figure 4: Results of border controls in Baden-Württemberg. Source: Federal Police Headquarters, Stuttgart. <https://www.presseportal.de/blaulicht/pm/74709/6113179>

In the period from 16 September 2024 to 31 August 2025	Of which, in the period from 8 May 2025 to 31 August 2025
• 13,852 unauthorised entries - Swiss land border: 7,337 - French land border: 6,515 • 12,200 people were refused entry or sent back at the border or in connection with illegal border crossing - Refoulements: 11,863 - Swiss land border: 7,298	• 4,016 unauthorised entries - Swiss land border: 2,194 - French land border: 2,722 • 4,663 persons were refused entry or sent back immediately at the border or in connection with illegal border crossing

- French land border: 4,565 - Removals: 337 - Swiss land border: 59 - French land border: 278 • 185 suspected smugglers were provisionally arrested, 89 from Switzerland and 96 from France.	Refoulements: 4,539, including 200 persons pursuant to Section 18(2)(1) of the Asylum Act - Swiss land border: 2,419 - French land border: 2,120 Removal: 124 - Swiss land border: 18 - French land border: 106 • 92 suspected smugglers were provisionally arrested, 33 from Switzerland and 59 from France
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Upon request and for comparison purposes, the French Ministry of the Interior provided us with figures for the same periods. However, comparing the effectiveness of measures is risky, as the number of undetected unauthorised entries is unknown. Furthermore, France is prohibited from sending back migrants to neighbouring countries without transfer over under bilateral readmission agreements.

Table 11: Results of border controls at the French-German border in alsacian districts Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin.
Source: Ministère de l'intérieur (France)

In the period from 16 September 2024 to 31 August 2025	Of which, in the period from 8 May 2025 to 31 August 2025
• 899 unauthorised entries from Germany to France¹²³ - Bas-Rhin: 556 (52 simplified readmissions) - Haut-Rhin: 19 (7 simplified readmissions)	• 238 unauthorised entries from Germany to France - Bas-Rhin: 126 (16 simplified readmissions) - Haut-Rhin: 4

The Swiss authorities do not collect data on border crossings. Instead, the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security collects data on foreign trade. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) collects data on migration, including illegal entry.

3.2.4 Evaluation of the theme of Sustainable/Socio-Economic Development

This section examines whether border controls have an impact on mobility, the environment and the economy. Local case studies show that there are negative and positive effects on socio-economic sustainable development at the local level, while at other locations the impact is neutral.

¹²³ In French ESI = étranger en situation irrégulière, third-country national who has crossed the border illegally and is travelling/staying illegally in France.

Impact on mobility and the environment

Adaptation strategies for everyday mobility

People who were confronted with border controls or the likelihood of border controls experienced an impact on their mobility behaviour:

Figure 7: Original English representation based on the 117 comments to the question ‘Have you changed your border crossing habits due to the controls?’ in the online survey 13/07-13/08/2025



The analysis of the data shows different trends depending on the border crossing examined. **The Europe bridge, which connects Strasbourg with Kehl, recorded an average 16% decline in traffic volume in the last week of June 2025 compared to the same period in 2024** (~2000-4000 vehicles / day). **A similar decline, in the order of 11%, was observed in May 2025.** This crossing is one of the busiest border crossings in Alsace. These border controls, which have been carried out daily and over long periods since May 2025, are causing significant delays, **with waiting times estimated at 10 to 45 minutes when crossing the border into Germany.**

The refurbishment works on the Europe bridge in summer 2023 and the tram replacement service from the end of July 2025¹²⁴ were also causing similar delays. It cannot be ruled out that other factors, such as road works in the east of Strasbourg or the ban on trucks on the Route du Rhin in Strasbourg, will also contribute to the decline in mobility.

In 2025, traffic flows on the other Rhine bridges will show different trends. The decline in traffic on the Europe bridge in June 2025 will not be offset by other bridges¹²⁵. **Overall, the fluctuations observed are more likely to be attributed to local or structural dynamics** (e.g. road works on certain axes, seasonality of traffic flows, intensification of freight traffic, relative attractiveness of crossings or national differences in lorry tolls) than to a direct effect of the control measures.

Controls on public transport at the German-Swiss border vary greatly in intensity. While German and Swiss forces have been carrying out controls at the German-Swiss railway station in Konstanz for a long time, the German federal police have had a clearly visible presence at the railway stations in Schaffhausen and Singen since autumn 2024, with reinforcements in place since May 2025. However, the intensity of these

¹²⁴ Traffic flow figures were recorded before the tram closure in order to avoid mixing causal effects.

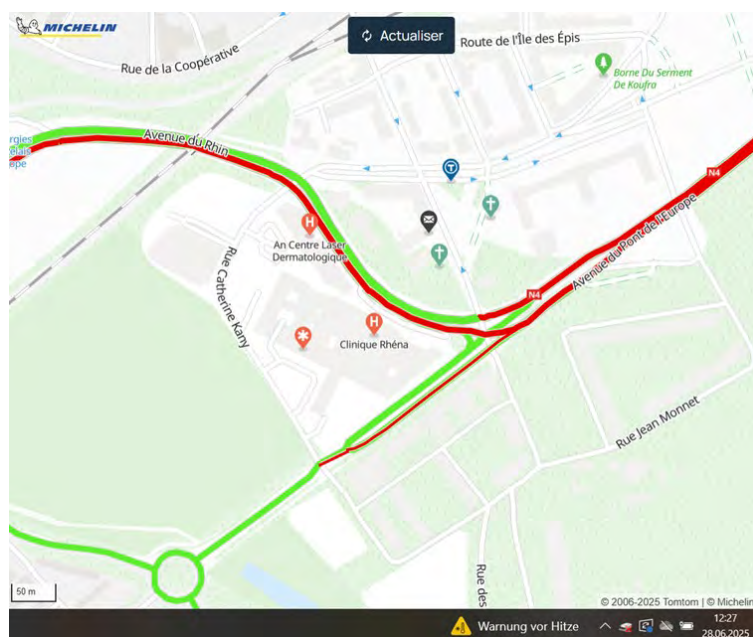
¹²⁵ Calculations based on traffic statistics from the Eurometropole Strasbourg and the Collectivité européenne d'Alsace.

controls has strongly decreased over the summer of 2025. On regional trains running between Germany and the canton of Schaffhausen, announcements are made to alert passengers to Swiss customs and German federal police checks. However, these random checks are more often carried out on the trains operated by German DB Regio than on those by Swiss Turbo AG. Sometimes, the Swiss customs conduct checks on tram S9 between Zürich and Schaffhausen, which crosses German enclaves. Conversely, systematic controls are carried out by the German police on Basel tram 8, however, leading to delays and annoyed passengers. On the Kehl-Strasbourg tram, too, transport operators had to adapt to the 5- to 15-minute controls carried out by the German federal police at stops near the border, which had an impact on the rest of the transport network. Since September 2024, systematic controls have been carried out on the Strasbourg-Kehl-Offenburg train, resulting in permanent delays of 5 to 10 minutes or missed connections. In Switzerland, the general delays of the Deutsche Bahn, which are independent of customs checks, are the issue.

Reciprocal influences on CO2 emissions and air pollution

The delays occurring on the Kehl-Strasbourg tram line do not seem to be significantly deterring passengers from using it. Over the entire period from the beginning of the year to July, comparisons between 2024 and 2025 show no significant change in passenger numbers. However, at the end of June 2025, there is a 10% increase compared to the same period in 2024. The survey shows that people in twin cities had three alternatives: bicycle, tram or not travelling at all. **Border controls thus have an indirect positive impact on the border region in terms of reducing CO2 emissions.**

Figure 8: Traffic jam on Saturday noon at Strasbourg nearby the Europe brige. Source: Via Michelin 28.06.2025



In contrast, the impact on air quality is rather negative, especially above the Rhine and in Strasbourg, because many cars are stuck in traffic jams on the banks of the Rhine in Strasbourg with their engines running. Such situations were not constant, but were perceived as a burden by the local population.

Impact on the economy

On the Rhine in general, border controls have had no impact on the economy. The chambers of commerce and employment agencies have received no complaints whatsoever from employers. Companies seem to be adapting and view the controls as a reasonable temporary situation. German-French employment agencies and the tourism industry, even in Kehl, have not noticed any impact from the border controls.

There has been no change in shopping tourism at the Swiss border. On the contrary, the retail trade in Switzerland would like to see the exemption limit lowered further. Only in Bad Säckingen there appears to be fewer customers from Switzerland, but this has been the case since the coronavirus pandemic began. The frequent changes to customs regulations and the different forms of German border controls are causing a certain amount of uncertainty among businesses.

The perspective is different in the retail sector in Kehl. There, the increased border controls on vehicles from France since May 2025 have been associated with a **noticeable decline in French customers**. This customer group represents half of the local economy, especially for shops, restaurants and service providers in the immediate vicinity of the Europe bridge and in shopping centres. The available data confirms this trend. Since May 2025, visitor frequency in the pedestrian zone of Kehl city centre, measured via connections to public Wi-Fi networks, has fallen significantly. At the counting point near the city pharmacy, the mark of 15,000 daily passers-by was no longer reached¹²⁶.

The City Center Kehl, a shopping centre frequented by French customers looking to take advantage of offers that are often more attractive than those in France, has seen **an estimated 30% drop in visitor numbers compared to the previous period**. This decline, which is concentrated in the months of May and June 2025, has been confirmed by several retailers and restaurants, who also report a decline in their turnover. **Some businesses in Kehl also stated that they had reduced the frequency of their orders from suppliers**, indicating a continuing weakness in demand. Due to the fragmentation of shops in Strasbourg, we can only speculate about the indirect positive impact on the French economy through consumption shifts, but cannot prove it. Other factors such as loss of purchasing power and inflation also play a role in the decline in consumption in Kehl, for example in the catering sector. We have also been told that French customers would shop in German cities other than Kehl to avoid the controls.

However, not all economic sectors are equally affected. Tobacco shops near Kehl train station seem to be less affected, as the price difference for cigarettes between Germany and France remains attractive to French customers despite the controls.

3.2.5 Conclusions and recommendations from a Euregional perspective

The labour market and the economy are not severely affected, goods continue to flow, trains and trams are running, and pedestrian and cycle bridges are rarely checked. The situation is completely different from that in 2020 during the coronavirus crisis, when train lines were cancelled, pedestrian bridges were closed, and groups of people were excluded from mobility. But the temporary reintroduction of border controls has been realised in time and place on several manners, so that we cannot give general conclusions. Those who need to cross the border frequently continue to do so at most Rhine bridges, adapting after a few weeks. This requires additional effort.

Cross-border commuters to Germany usually arrive in the morning before the German control operations begin. The cross-border commuters to Switzerland and France need a longer journey back to Germany when they return home in the late afternoon. But in cross-border regions on the Rhine, there are many

¹²⁶ Source: Press release from the Town of Kehl, 13 June 2025:
<https://www.kehl.de/site/Kehl/node/1784044?QUERYSTRING=kontrolle>

other reasons than work to cross the border and it does not seem to be considered enough by the national states.

The reintroduction of checks by the German federal police has therefore had a greater impact at the French border than at the Swiss border. Indeed, Swiss customs never suspended its controls, and the local population is used to waiting at the border, declaring their goods and claiming back VAT. There has also been a police presence at many major events in Basel in recent years. From the end of coronavirus pandemic until August 2024, there have been only random and short checks at the German-French border, which were not visible to the population and were not permanent. The significant differences in prices and wages also mean that cross-border commuters to Switzerland and shopping tourists from Switzerland continue to cross the border despite border controls. This is less true on the French-German border.

Moreover, the impact of border controls on everyday life depends heavily on their intensity and duration. If they are like between Kehl and Strasburg stationary or on high traffic roads unpredictable, they deeply change habits, reduce cross-border contacts and shopping and cause stress due to uncertainty about waiting times – with consequences that go beyond mere mobility and affect social and family life as well as the consumption. If they are randomly and rarely, they don't have measurable impact on the everyday life in border regions.

The positive aspects are the good communication between the police departments of the three countries and the continuation of existing joint security activities. The exchange within the cross-border institutions and the flow of information have always remained constructive.

Did the coronavirus crisis teach the national states more about the lack of coordination than about the reality of life and cohesion in border areas? Why has acceptance for internal security controls that are as proportionate as possible for internal security and the containment of illegal migration increased among the population and in politics since then?

Getting accustomed to the police presence on the German-French Rhine bridges, similar to the long-standing customs presence on the Swiss border, strongly contradicts the political vision of integrated living spaces. On 16 September 2025, controls at the German borders were extended by six months without much resistance. Thus, a state of emergency is slowly becoming a permanent state of affairs, contradicting the objectives of the Schengen Code. The warning of Association of European Border Regions in her resolution on October 2024 was not heard:

the AEBR “Emphasizes that border controls should not become an inflationary measure, and that repeated implementation of these controls by different major member states set a dangerous precedent, potentially leading other countries to follow.”

Would the impact on the labour market and economic strategies, as well as individual habits, change if border controls were permanent rather than temporary? How can European laboratories continue to grow together if mobility is permanently slowed down by potential border controls and everyday mobility in one's own region resembles a trip abroad?

3.3 Case study: France-Spain-Andorra border

Jean Peyrony, Jean Rubiò, Shannon Delhay (MOT)

3.3.1 Introduction

Since 2015, various countries, including France, have reconducted controls at their internal borders, citing the terrorist threat, the fight against irregular immigration, illegal trafficking, and the health crisis. These measures, which are regularly reconducted, constitute derogation from the principle of free movement enshrined in the Schengen Borders Code. However, their intensification at certain borders has caused tensions in cross-border areas, where daily life depends on the continuous flow of people and goods. The Schengen Borders Code, revised in 2024, now emphasizes the importance of adapting these controls in a proportionate manner and considering their impact on cross-border regions.

ITEM, in cooperation with the TEIN-network, has coordinated an analysis on several European borders to assess the concrete effects of border controls on the cohesion, integration, and socio-economic development of cross-border territories in the context of the revised Schengen Borders Code. The MOT participated in this analysis by focusing on the impacts on the France-Spain-Andorra border.

This report, produced between July and November 2025, consists of two main parts:

- A cross-analysis of the responses obtained from the survey conducted among stakeholders on the France-Spain-Andorra border in July 2025
- A contribution from the French Ministry of the Interior to the analysis of cross-border traffic between France and Spain

as well as concluding remarks.

3.3.2 Cross-analysis of the survey conducted by the MOT among stakeholders on the France-Spain-Andorra border

In July 2025, the MOT sent a questionnaire to its partner local authorities and cross-border structures located on the French-Spanish-Andorran border (see appendix). Based on the nine responses received, the MOT carried out a cross-analysis of the results, which are presented in this report.

It should be noted that this analysis is based on subjective feedback, which may vary from one respondent to another. The perceptions reported in this report may be influenced by the context in which the experience took place. In particular, even though the questionnaire focused on the situation in 2025, some respondents used data dating back to 2020-2021 (reintroduction of border controls to combat the COVID-19 pandemic). There is therefore an obvious gap with the situation in 2025, as reported by the French national authorities (see Contribution from the Ministry of the Interior). However, this partially subjective perception should not be dismissed, as it reflects a reality: borders and their management are not only the subject of public policies that must be technically optimized between various objectives (e.g., between fluidity and security). They also bring into play representations of the living environment of people residing at the border, characterized by multiple identities (regional, national, cross-border, European) and lasting experiences impacted by border management, which must be considered.

1 - What is the impact of border controls on the daily lives of residents of the cross-border region/cross-border living area?

- **Strong convergences:** almost all respondents report slowdowns, additional waiting times, and less fluid travel (residents, workers, tourists). Several responses also highlight a feeling of insecurity, deprivation of freedom of movement, and a symbolic dimension (undermining the spirit of Schengen).
- **Available figures:** study "Socio-economic impact of the border closure," Euroregion NAEN (2021)¹²⁷ cited in the document: 92.1% travel regularly for socio-economic reasons; 89.4% have stopped certain cross-border activities (shopping 80.1%; family visits 62.4%; leisure activities 46.4%). These figures reflect a significant quantitative impact at the time of the health crisis, but are no longer relevant in the context of 2025.
- **Territorial specificities (see map no. 1):** according to respondents, certain routes and border crossing points (Biriadou AP-8/A 63 toll booth, Le Boulou AP-7/A 6 toll booth) are subject to regular checks and long queues; other passes (Somport, Bielsa, certain passes in Cerdanya) are little or not at all affected—the impact therefore varies greatly depending on the route.
- **Human dimension:** reports of serious incidents (deaths of migrants crossing the Bidassoa River), which fuel outrage and citizen mobilization at certain borders.

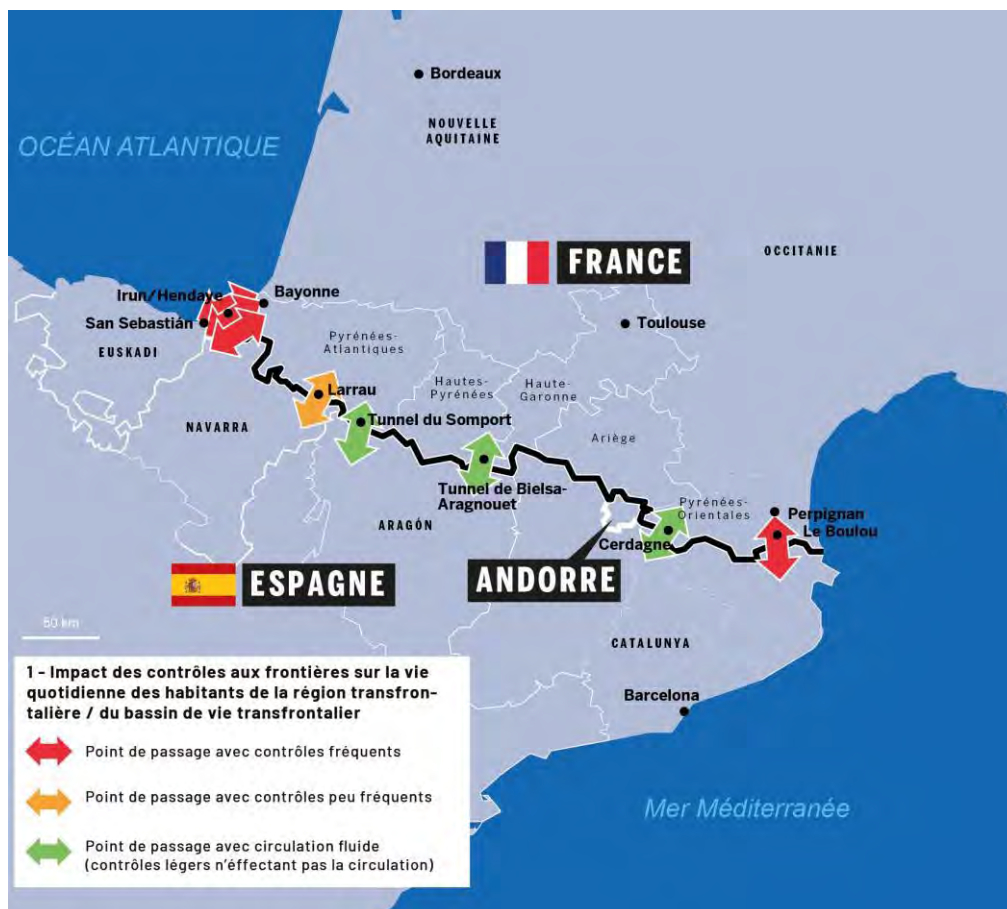
Illustrative quotes:

"Border controls significantly disrupt the daily lives of residents in the cross-border region. They result in additional waiting times, legal uncertainty for people working or studying on the other side of the border, and a feeling of mistrust towards the authorities. Binational families, cross-border workers, and users of health or education services are particularly affected." - **Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.**

"The border crossing points located in Aragon and Béarn (Somport) on the one hand and the Hautes-Pyrénées on the other are not really affected by border controls" - **WCP.**

¹²⁷ https://www.euroregion-naen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Informe-cierre-frontera_FR.pdf

Figure 9: Impact of border controls on the main crossing points mentioned (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, the controls significantly disrupt daily life, both in practical and quantitative terms (detours of several kilometers) and in qualitative terms (delays, loss of access to goods and services, feeling of weakening of Schengen). The effect is uneven: marked on major roads and coastal tolls; less so on certain mountain passes or secondary routes. No data is available for 2025, but the figures for 2021 show a significant impact on behavior during the health crisis.

2- How do border controls affect the work of cross-border cooperation structures (EGTCs, Euroregions, etc.)?

- **Convergences:** one-third of respondents report a weakening of project implementation, slowdowns due to longer travel times, and increased complexity in terms of physical meetings. One response highlights the EGTCs' feeling of a certain lack of institutional recognition, which presents the structures as crisis mediators rather than project drivers.
- **Territorial specificities (see map no. 2):** some structures (EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra, Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC, Pyrenees–Mediterranean Euroregion) report disruptions due to traffic restrictions; other structures (The Working Community of the Pyrenees

(WCP) with the Somport and Bielsa passes, Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC on the Cerdanya pass) are little or not at all affected – so the impact varies greatly depending on the territory.

- **Illustrative quotes:**

"Mainly on travel times when traveling by bus or car, mainly on major roads. No or few checks on secondary roads. On trains, checks are carried out on trains, with no impact on travel times" - **Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean.**

"The work of the WCP teams is not affected, as the Somport and Bielsa crossings, which are most used by the WCP teams, are only minimally affected by border controls" - **WCP.**

Figure 10: Impact of border controls on the cross-border cooperation structures mentioned (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, the controls are causing moderate disruption to the work of cross-border cooperation structures, both in practical terms (projects slowed down or even delayed, physical meetings becoming more complicated) and in symbolic terms (feeling of a lack of consultation on the part of the State). The effect is uneven: significant for structures dependent on major routes; less so for structures using certain mountain passes or secondary routes.

3 - How is institutional trust between neighbouring countries/local authorities affected?

- **Strong convergence:** almost all respondents report a feeling of lack of transparency and consultation regarding the measures taken by the State. Several responses also highlight a feeling of inequality, mistrust, and a symbolic dimension (obstacle to cross-border cooperation, lack of solidarity between the State and local authorities).
- **Territorial specificities (see map no. 3):** : according to respondents, certain territories and crossings (border passes, Larrau crossing, Pyrenean passes) are subject to regular checks and long queues, which particularly affects the confidence of respondents who depend on them; other passes (certain passes in Cerdanya) are little or not at all affected—so the impact varies depending on the territory.
- **Institutional dimension:** respondents report a perceived lack of communication and cooperation on the part of the administration despite repeated requests, which complicates institutional dialogue and leads to a loss of confidence.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"The local authorities from the south of the border have repeatedly tried to reach French authorities (prefecture, sub-prefecture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.) regarding the closure of border crossings or controls at crossings, in order to demand their opening or request clarification/information on this subject"
- Basque Government.

"Institutional trust between neighbouring countries/communities is in no way affected by border controls. Cross-border cooperation is not disrupted by customs and police controls" - Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC.

Figure 11: Impact of border controls on institutional trust between neighbouring countries/communities (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, the reintroduction of controls has a significant impact on institutional trust, both in practical terms (lack of consultation, feeling of mistrust) and in symbolic terms (lack of solidarity, obstacle to cooperation). The effect is uneven – marked for some structures dependent on border crossings and passes subject to controls; less so for other structures whose routes are not affected.

4 - What are the effects on citizens' perceptions of the "open border" and "cohesion" in the cross-border territory?

- **Strong convergence:** almost all respondents report a feeling of mistrust and isolation among citizens, as well as a weakening of their support for the cross-border project. Several responses highlight citizens' loss of confidence in the sustainability and strength of cross-border ties and a symbolic dimension (contradiction of the Schengen spirit, decline of the European project).
- **Territorial specificities (see map no. 4):** some territories are more affected by the consequences of controls; others (Larrau crossing, Cerdanya) are little or not at all affected (smooth passage or border closed most of the year) — so the impact varies depending on the territory.
- **Sometimes positive perception:** some responses highlight a positive perception of the controls in the fight against drug trafficking between the two States.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"The local population and elected officials are calling for controls to combat drug trafficking between the two States. These controls are viewed positively and do not affect the daily lives of citizens and healthcare professionals" - Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC.

"Citizens feel that the European project is taking a step backward in their daily lives. The return of controls fuels a sense of growing isolation and national withdrawal, which undermines the perception of an integrated and coherent cross-border area" - Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.

Figure 12: Impact of border controls on citizens' perception of "open borders" and "cohesion" in the cross-border territory (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, controls have a significant impact on citizens' perceptions, both qualitatively (feelings of mistrust, loss of support for the cross-border project) and symbolically (contradiction of the Schengen spirit). The effect is uneven – marked for most respondents; less so for certain structures that perceive controls positively as a means of combating drug trafficking and whose border crossings (Cerdanya, Larrau) are not affected by the controls.

5- ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES (GENERAL) - Quantitative: Have you observed a decrease in cross-border economic activities (shopping, tourism, etc.) since the reintroduction of border controls? If possible, please provide data.

- **Convergences:** one-third of respondents report a decrease in customer traffic across the border. Several responses highlight a significant reduction in turnover for businesses that depend on customers from across the border.
- **Figures** (the 2021 data reflect the impact of the health crisis and are therefore of little relevance to this study, which focuses on the context of 2025):

Table 12: Impact on economic activities

Document title or source	Figures
Study: "Socioeconomic impact of border closure," Euroregion NAEN (2021)¹²⁸	<i>80.1% of people stopped shopping across the border and 62.4% stopped traveling for personal reasons (second homes, family visits). In certain commercial areas that are heavily dependent on customers from across the border, such as Dantxarinea (Urdax, Navarra), Behobia (Gipuzkoa) and Ibardin (Vera de Bidassoa, Navarra), where 97-99% of customers come from the neighbouring country, business has virtually ground to a halt. It is estimated that the prolonged closure of the border has caused a 2-5% reduction in annual turnover.</i>
Study of the evolution of exports and imports (2019)¹²⁹	<i>Top 3 exports from Occitania to Spain in 2022: 1. Aeronautical and space construction products:</i> <i>€2.1 billion 2. Agricultural products, food products: €1.1 billion 3. Miscellaneous chemical products: €226 million Occitania exports 87% of France's aerospace construction products to Spain. Occitania accounts for 12% of French exports to Spain. Since 2019, imports from Occitania</i> <i>to Spain have been on an upward trend.</i> <i>Top 3 imports from Occitania to Spain in 2022: 1. Agricultural and food products: €2.1 billion 2. Automotive products and equipment: €656 million 3. Aeronautical and aerospace products: €267 million. In 2024, Spain ranks fourth in terms of exports from Occitania and second in terms of imports. The data available to the Directorate for Industry, Innovation, Research, and Higher Education is aggregate data on imports and exports from the countries most represented in economic exchanges.</i>
Figures provided by the Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC, cited in the survey	<i>Since 2015, stays by French patients have increased by 64%, consultations by French patients have increased by 168%, visits to the emergency room by French patients have increased by 64%, imaging procedures for French patients have increased by 116%, hemodialysis sessions for French patients have increased by 1,264%, and partial hospitalizations for French patients have increased by 72%. The Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC now sources its supplies from two French purchasing centres RESAH and UGAP) without border controls posing a problem.</i>

¹²⁸ https://www.euroregion-naen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Informe-cierre-frontera_FR.pdf

¹²⁹ View France's foreign trade statistics | Portal of the Directorate General of Customs and Indirect Taxes

- **Structural specificities:** some territories and structures are experiencing a decline in economic activity (EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra, Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC , Occitania Region); others (municipality of Larrau, Cerdanya Hospital EGTC – HC) are not affected by controls or are experiencing economic growth because of the service offered — so the impact varies depending on the structure.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"The controls discourage spontaneous trips for shopping or services. Although the data varies depending on the period, some border areas have seen a decrease of up to 15–20% in the turnover of businesses linked to cross-border customers" - **Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.**

"Apart from tourist traffic, there is very little economic activity before or after border controls. Timber transport has not decreased" - **Municipality of Larrau.**

Figure 13: Impact of border controls on cross-border economic activities (shopping, tourism, etc.) (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, controls have a relatively significant impact on economic activity, both in terms of direct effects (reduction in travel) and indirect effects (decline in turnover). The effect is uneven, with most respondents reporting a significant impact, while some structures or territories (not Cerdanya, Larrau crossing) are unaffected. The figures shared date from 2021 and are not representative of the context in 2025.

6- LABOR MARKET

For the purposes of the study, it should be noted that cross-border worker flows are lower on this border than on others. According to INSEE, in 2021, approximately 465,000 people resided in France and worked in one of the neighbouring countries (Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Andorra), but Spain, Italy, and Andorra represent a very small share of this total (approximately 5,000 workers, or 1%).

6.1 - Quantitative: Have you observed a decrease in cross-border travel? (Number of cross-border workers, students, etc.) If possible, please provide data.

- **Strong convergence:** almost all respondents report a stabilization in cross-border travel. Some responses highlight the advent of teleworking, which is an independent source of reduced travel; others report slowdowns that may eventually affect the working conditions of cross-border workers.
- **Notable divergence:** one respondent (Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC) reports disruption to cross-border worker flows and a decline in student mobility. Some responses highlight absences, schedule changes, and even contract terminations due to delays caused by controls.
- **Territorial specificities:** some structures (Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC) report difficulties due to the consequences of the controls; others (the municipality of Larrau, Pas in Cerdanya, the Basque Government, the Occitania Region, CAPB, EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra) are little or not at all affected (smooth passage or border closed for most of the year) — so the impact varies depending on the territory.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"The flow of cross-border workers has been disrupted, particularly during periods of increased controls. Delays and uncertainty have led to absences, changes in working hours and, in some cases, the termination of contracts. There has also been a decline in student mobility between institutions on either side of the border" - Pirineos - Pyrénées EGTC.

"At the CAPB level, workers living on the other side of the border are not reducing their commutes for these reasons. The introduction of teleworking has significantly reduced travel." - CAPB.

6.2 - Qualitative: Are labor market experts and education professionals raising concerns about border controls?

- **Convergences:** some respondents report significant difficulties in accessing cross-border training, repeated delays, and loss of productivity. Some responses highlight the need for greater

cooperation between public authorities and recognition of the category of cross-border workers to ensure them greater freedom of movement.

- **Illustrative quotes:**

"Labor market and training stakeholders report difficulties in accessing cross-border training, repeated delays, and loss of productivity due to queues at border controls. Many cross-border workers felt that, given the scale of existing flows, it is necessary to strengthen their recognition as a cross-border category in order to guarantee them greater freedom of movement and fewer administrative restrictions. Employees emphasize the need for greater cooperation between the public authorities of the three territories to provide common solutions. Among the obstacles identified are:

- *Mobility problems (border traffic jams, daily delays),*
- *Difficulties in accessing aid for employees and businesses, as well as the complexity of tax and professional procedures, due to a lack of uniformity between governments and the absence of a clear response to situations"* - **EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra.**

"Yes, professionals in the sector express concern about the obstacles that these controls represent for the mobility of workers and students. They highlight inconsistencies in the application of rules and call for better coordination between national and local authorities to ensure continuity of access to employment and education in the cross-border area" - **Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.**

Figure 14: Impact of border controls on cross-border travel (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, controls are causing difficulties in terms of worker and student mobility, prompting calls from labor market experts and education professionals for greater cooperation between national and local authorities and recognition of cross-border status in order to lift administrative restrictions. In some cases, the introduction of teleworking has helped to compensate for border delays, although some people are still subject to controls and may see their employment contracts terminated. The effect varies from region to region, as some are little or not at all affected by the controls.

7- TRAFFIC / TRANSPORT

Cross-border public transport between France, Spain, and Andorra varies depending on the region. In the Pyrénées- Orientales and Catalonia, the Perpignan–Figueres high-speed line (which now runs to Barcelona¹³⁰), via the Perthus tunnel, has directly linked the French and Spanish networks since 2010¹³¹. At the same time, five subsidized regional bus routes connect Céret, Arles-sur-Tech, and Prats-de-Mollo to Spanish towns such as Figueres and Puigcerdà¹³². In the Basque Country, the Hendaye–San Sebastián ("Topo") rail link offers several low-cost daily journeys¹³³, and regular buses connect Bayonne and Hendaye to San Sebastián. However, several longer rail links, such as Barcelona–Toulouse and Pau–Canfranc, have been reduced or suspended. The Principality of Andorra, meanwhile, is landlocked in the Pyrenees with no rail network or airport and is therefore mainly accessible by road. Within the Principality, a public bus network connects the country's seven parishes¹³⁴, while other bus lines connect Andorra to France¹³⁵ and Spain¹³⁶.

7.1 – Quantitative: Have you noticed an increase in waiting/travel times due to controls on cross-border roads and public transport? If possible, provide data

- **Strong convergence:** some respondents report slowdowns, including public transport on main routes, causing queues of between 10- and 45-minutes during rush hour and holidays. Some responses highlight the importance of immigration controls on all public transport crossing the border.
- **Notable divergence:** several respondents report a stabilization of waiting and travel times.
- **Regional specificities:** some areas (the AP-8 and A6 motorways, Croix des Bouquets to Urrugne on bus line 4) are more affected by the controls; others (Behobia bridge, Santiago bridge, Larrau crossing, Pas in Cerdanya, departments 66 and 06) are little or not at all affected, so the impact varies depending on the area.

¹³⁰ [Perpignan to Barcelona train tickets from €10.68 | Rail Europe](#)

¹³¹ [Perpignan to Figueras line — Wikipedia](#)

¹³² <https://www.20minutes.fr/economie/3279799-20220428-transport-cars-cinq-lignes-euro-entre-pyrenees-orientales-espagne>
⁶ <https://www.rome2rio.com/Train/Hendaye-Station/Irun>

¹³³ [Transport: Renfe's cross-border connections in France derail - lindependant.fr](#)

¹³⁴ <https://bus.ad/>

¹³⁵ <https://www.omio.fr/bus/andorre-la-vieille/toulouse-yxrqh>

¹³⁶ [Buses between Barcelona and Andorra and destinations | andorabybus.com](#)

- **Illustrative quotes:**

"We hardly see any border controls anymore. Occasionally, there is a roadblock at Croix des Bouquets, causing slowdowns and delays on line 4. Road traffic has not changed significantly, and passenger traffic remains stable at other sites such as the Behobia bridge or the Santiago bridge (borders)" - CAPB.

"On the AP-8, checks can cause traffic jams of several kilometers, reaching up to 10 km, and diverting hundreds of vehicles to urban centres near the border" - EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra.

7.2 Qualitative: Have you noticed any changes in road traffic on certain routes? Has there been a decrease in the use of public transport?

- **Convergences:** almost all respondents report a stabilization of road traffic and normal use of public transport. Some responses point out that despite the limited public transport options across the border; certain busy lines have not been affected by the increased checks and have not seen a decline in usage.
- **Notable differences:** some respondents report a shift in traffic to unsuitable secondary roads and a move away from public transport due to fears of delays. They highlight wear and tear on local infrastructure and an increase in local nuisances.
- **Territorial specificities:** same as 7.1
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"There has been a shift in traffic to secondary routes, particularly in rural areas, which has exacerbated local pollution. Public transport remains limited (few cross-border bus routes; only the "Topo" train connecting San Sebastian to Hendaye crosses the border). Its use has not decreased" - EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra.

"There are few bus routes that cross the border (four in total as part of an INTERREG POCTEFA pilot project). They remain limited in terms of ridership. The only routes that are the most popular and have not declined even with increased controls are those operated by private bus companies (mainly Blablabus and Flixbus). As for trains, only five trains a day in each direction cross the border, and given the prohibitive fares, no cross-border commuters use them, or only very occasionally" - Pyrenees–Mediterranean Euroregion.

Figure 15: Impact of border controls on cross-border mobility (waiting times, road routes, use of public transport, etc.) (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, controls have a significant impact on waiting times and journey times for most forms of transport crossing the border. At the same time, controls affect road traffic and the use of public transport – while some respondents report no change in routes, others point to a shift in traffic to secondary roads and a decline in the use of public transport. The effect varies from one area to another, as some are little or not at all affected by the controls.

8 - TOURISM

8.1 - Quantitative: Have you observed a decline in local tourism in the cross-border region? If possible, please provide data.

- **Notable differences:** while some respondents report a decline in tourism in small border towns, others have not noticed such a decline since the pandemic, pointing instead to a massive influx of people during the tourist seasons.
- **Figures:**

Table 13: Impact on tourism

Document title or source	Figures
Orange Business - FluxVision Tourism ¹³⁷	<i>"Spanish tourists are the leading foreign visitors to Occitania in 2022, with 9.4 million tourist overnight stays (+36% compared to 2021). Occitania is the second most popular French region (after Paris Ile-de-France) among Spaniards. In 2023, for the first time since the health crisis, visitor numbers from this customer base will exceed their 2019 level (+12%). Focus on the Hautes-Pyrénées department (Orange Business - FluxVision Tourisme) Days: Taken into account (day trippers, repeat day trippers, usually present, usually present in transit, tourists, tourists in transit and in transit) Since January 1, 2025: +2.12% / 2024 2024: +9.41% / 2023 2023: +22.93%</i> <i>/2022 Overnight stays: Taken into account (tourists, overnight transit) Since January 1, 2025:</i> <i>+6.96% / 2024 2024: +7.42% / 2023 2023: +31.27% /2022.</i>

- **Illustrative quotes:**

"Yes, a decline in tourist numbers has been reported, particularly in small border towns. Occasional visitors are reluctant to cross the border, which is affecting short-term activities (accommodation, restaurants, leisure)." - Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.

"The massive influx of patients during the tourist seasons does not seem to indicate a decline in local tourism." - Cerdanya Hospital (EGTC - HC).

8.2 - Qualitative: What is the opinion of tourism professionals on the potential impact of permanent border controls on tourism in the cross-border region?

- **Strong convergence:** almost all respondents report a negative opinion among tourism professionals, with controls posing a threat to the attractiveness of the region.
- **Comments:** Some responses highlight the risk of damaging the region's image as a fluid, integrated, and welcoming area, which could lead to a loss of customers. Other responses mention an outcry from retailers, and even a demand from professionals to preserve free movement within the Schengen area.

¹³⁷ <https://pro.eureka-attractivite.fr/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Flux-vision-2023.pdf>

- **Illustrative quotes:**

"Industry professionals believe that a long-term closure would lead to a drop in overnight stays, an imbalance in tourism offerings, and a loss of appeal for the region as an integrated and fluid cross-border destination" - **EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra.**

"Tourism professionals consider that maintaining controls is a threat to the attractiveness of the territory. They fear that the region will lose its image as a fluid and welcoming space. Some are calling for guarantees to preserve free movement within the Schengen area" - **Pirineos – Pyrénées EGTC.**

Figure 16: Impact of border controls on cross-border tourism (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, the controls have had a moderate impact on tourism, which does not appear to have declined during the tourist season, except in certain small border towns. The 2025 figures confirm a certain stability in tourism despite the controls. However, the controls are significantly disrupting the opinion of tourism professionals, who are concerned about the attractiveness of the cross-border area and the resulting loss of customers.

9 - ENVIRONMENT

9.1 - Quantitative: Have you observed an increase in car travel and traffic-related pollution in rural areas and at border crossings in cities? If possible, please provide data.

- **Strong convergence:** almost all respondents report a lack of public transport alternatives, which increases car use and therefore pollution, particularly in urban border areas and valleys. Some responses point out that this lack of public transport provision persists regardless of controls (reduction in rail links, unaffordable prices, decline in public transport use, etc.).
- **Notable differences:** some respondents do not observe such an increase, as car use has always been very high in this cross-border region.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"The number of car journeys in our border region has always been very high (around 96% of journeys are made by private car). This is due to the lack of cross-border transport options" - Basque Government.

"The lack of public transport alternatives (with the exception of the Hendaye–Irun train) means that the population relies almost exclusively on cars. This leads to an increase in traffic-related emissions, particularly in urban border areas" - EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra.

9.2 – Qualitative: Do you anticipate/observe an increase in traffic in rural areas and on local roads due to people seeking to avoid border controls?

- **Notable differences:** some respondents report an increase in traffic in rural areas, as users seek alternative routes to bypass checkpoints. Some responses highlight increased pressure on these secondary roads, which are then degraded. Other respondents, on the contrary, note a stabilization of traffic, as there are no secondary routes.
- **Regional specificities:** some organizations (Pirineos-Pyrénées EGTC, Pyrenees–Mediterranean Euroregion) report difficulties due to the consequences of the controls; others (Cerdanya Hospital EGTC-HC) are little or not at all affected, meaning that the impact varies depending on the region.
- **Illustrative quotes:**

"Yes, many residents and users are looking for alternative routes to bypass the checkpoints. This is putting increased pressure on secondary and municipal roads, with consequences in terms of safety, noise, and damage to local roads" - Pirineos-Pyrénées EGTC.

"No, because there is no plan B on our border. There are a few side roads in Cerdanya, but the road is too impassable and therefore has no real impact on traffic. Furthermore, the choice between the motorway or the national road remains difficult because both are congested at the border crossing, especially in one direction for the motorway (entering France). On the national road, it's the opposite: it's congested in the France-Spain direction, mainly on weekends when people go shopping in Le Perthus. It should be noted that there are very few or no customs or police checks on the Spanish side." Pyrenees–Mediterranean Euroregion.

Figure 17: Impact of border controls on the cross-border environment (Source: MOT)



In short

According to respondents, controls cause relatively significant disruption to traffic in rural areas – while some use alternative routes to avoid controls, others have no choice but to use the road that is likely to be subject to controls. On the other hand, controls have little effect on the choice of transportation modes for people living in this cross-border region, as public transportation has always been limited, regardless of the controls in place. Thus, the effect varies from one area to another, with some areas being little or not at all affected by the controls.

Summary of the survey:

To conclude, it is worth briefly analyzing all the results obtained for each theme concerning the consequences of controls on the France-Spain-Andorra border.

With regard to daily life, the study reveals varying degrees of disruption depending on the area, including slowdowns, a perceived loss of fluidity, a significant impact on cross-border travel and activities, and a blow to the spirit of Schengen. Cross-border cooperation structures, for their part, report that their projects have slowed down, that they are encountering difficulties in organizing physical meetings, and that they generally feel a lack of institutional recognition and a lack of consultation on the part of the central administration. Trust between local authorities is maintained, although there is a growing mistrust

of the State due to decisions perceived as unilateral and opaque. On the other hand, according to respondents, citizens seem to feel a certain isolation, which has the symbolic effect of weakening territorial cohesion and confidence in European integration. Regarding the economy, the study notes, with varying degrees of consistency depending on the area, a decline in customer numbers and turnover in highly dependent border areas, as well as a stable flow of cross-border workers despite deteriorating mobility conditions. The study highlights the perception of difficulties in terms of mobility, causing delays on major routes and a shift to secondary roads. It should be noted that cross-border workers are adapting thanks to the advent of teleworking and that public transport provision is generally insufficient. The study notes a decline in tourism in small towns but a certain stability or even an overall increase in other areas, although professionals fear a loss of attractiveness if controls become permanent. Finally, about the environment, the study reveals increased car use in certain areas and, as a result, pressure on certain secondary roads.

While the responses collected revealed a general feeling of difficulties in daily life and cross-border activities, it should be noted that some perceptions are largely based on the respondents' experiences, particularly those marked by the strict border closures during the 2020-2021 health crisis. These responses do not necessarily reflect the current situation. These findings should be qualified by considering the perspective of the Ministry of the Interior, which takes a different view and emphasizes that the disruptions observed have been largely resolved.

3.3.3 Contribution from the Ministry of the Interior

 MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR <i>Liberté Égalité Fraternité</i>	CONTRIBUTION TO THE ANALYSIS OF CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC BETWEEN FRANCE AND SPAIN CONDUCTED BY THE MOT	Directorate-General for Foreigners in France Immigration Directorate
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DIMM/SDLII/BCT-vfu

10/17/2025

Practical implementation of border controls 2024-2025

The overall result of the study shows very negative criticism of internal border controls, which the Ministry of the Interior does not agree with, particularly for the past year. While traffic disruptions may have occurred during the Covid crisis and following the closure of ACPs between November 2020 and June 2024, the situation has now returned to normal. A clearer distinction should be made between the disruption to the traffic resulting from controls, which in our opinion has been virtually non-existent since 2024, and other causes and biases due to political demands and exaggerated amplifications of inconveniences. It should also be specified for which period the respondents gave their opinions.

General reminder from the Ministry on the framework for border controls:

On the basis of Articles 25 and 27 of the Schengen Borders Code (SBC), France reintroduced security and migration controls at all its internal borders until October 31, 2025, and on October 6, 2025, notified an extension until April 30, 2026. The reintroduction must be notified to the European institutions, justifying the threats to public order and security facing France, the necessity and proportionality of the controls to respond to these threats, and detailing the consequences for traffic flow and the lives of border residents. The reasons for reintroducing controls are currently related to terrorist risks, cross-border crime, and the situation in the English Channel and North Sea, which is fueled by the large number of people attempting to cross the Channel illegally and by migrant smuggling networks.

The reintroduction of internal border controls must be accompanied by a list of “authorized crossing points” (ACPs), which are the only places where national borders may be crossed. This list is drawn up independently by each Member State.

Border controls consist, on the one hand of checks on persons at ACPs to ensure that they comply with national rules, as set out in the Code on the Entry and Stay of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum (CESEDA), for entering the national territory. On the other hand, controls consist of surveillance activities, mainly to detect irregular border crossings, i.e., outside the ACPs. While checks on individuals may legally be permanent and systematic, the French authorities carry out targeted or random checks and take care not to disproportionately impede the flow of traffic (see below).

On several occasions, France has notified the closure of ACPs in response to the COVID crisis, as well as in an attempt to counter terrorist plots by individuals infiltrating irregular secondary flows.

Question 1: What criteria were used to prioritize the locations and times of checks at French borders? Who makes the decisions and who implements them?

Border guards (border police and customs, under the directives of the departmental prefectures) carry out internal border controls on the basis of a constantly updated security and migration risk analysis, conducted at the local level and also based on information provided by central and intelligence services. Controls are carried out at ACPs according to an organization specific to local services. Controls further inland (within 20 km of the border) are also carried out and are possible independently of the reintroduction of border controls with the support of other forces (national gendarmerie, national police).

At the national level, operational orders may be decided by the National Directorate of Border Police (DNPAF) and transmitted to prefects, depending on the scale and resurgence of irregular flows.

Specifically concerning the French-Spanish border: along with the French-Italian border, the French-Spanish border is a major gateway for irregular migration flows into our territory. In 2024, more than 10,000 third-country nationals in an irregular situation were apprehended at the French-Spanish border. From January to mid-October 2025, approximately 8,500 irregular foreigners were apprehended. At the external borders, in 2024, nearly 64,000 migrants arrived irregularly on the Iberian Peninsula and the Spanish islands, out of a total of more than 240,000 irregular crossings of the Schengen area’s borders.

The French-Spanish border, like the French-Italian border, is marked by mountainous terrain, which leads to a particular concentration of cross-border flows in the Hendaye and Le Boulou areas. Controls are therefore prioritized and more visible in these areas. For example, while the Pyrénées-Atlantiques

department has 19 ACPs, 52% of all interceptions take place at the six ACPs located in Hendaye. In total, the French-Spanish border has 37 ACPs, which is almost as many as the French-German border, and more than the French-Italian or French-Belgian borders (around 20 ACPs each). There are therefore enough crossing points, which correspond to all existing roads, bridges, and passes, to ensure that cross-border trade can continue uninterrupted. Although around ten ACPs were closed in November 2020 following terrorist attacks, they have all been gradually reopened. In October 2023, the four ACPs still closed in the Pyrénées-Orientales were reopened, and in June 2024, the four ACPs still closed in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques were also reopened.

Question 2: Have specific instructions been issued or measures put in place to minimize disruption to daily life and goods traffic in cross-border regions during border checks (as provided for in Article 26 of the Schengen Borders Code, revised in June 2024)?

As mentioned above, checks are carried out on a non-systematic basis, even when forces are permanently stationed at an authorized crossing point (ACP), and their intensity is adapted to the specific circumstances at each border. Most of the time, checks are carried out at random.

Depending on traffic conditions, checks are adapted to minimize inconvenience to travelers and limit traffic congestion at ACPs: for example, police forces may coordinate their checks with the authorities of the neighbouring State, with road infrastructure managers (by opening additional lanes at toll booths to ease traffic flow), or carry out rapid checks (timed checks, especially on public transport such as trains).

Checks are adapted to circumstances and risk analyses. For example four ACPs on the French-Spanish border are subject to permanent checks most of the time due to high risks (permanent checks mean that security forces and customs officers are present at all times, but checks are not systematic), four ACPs are subject to regular targeted and random checks, and nine ACPs are subject to irregular targeted and random checks. The remaining ACPs are subject to more sporadic checks, depending on the analysis.

In the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, according to feedback from operational services and prefectures, no ACPs experience major traffic jams directly related to checks carried out as part of the RCFI [*Temporary reintroduction of internal border controls*]. Only a few delays may occur, mainly at two motorway ACPs (particularly during holidays). In such cases, the French authorities may adapt the checks in coordination with the motorway operator.

Question 3: What are the official instructions and training given to law enforcement officers during border controls (respect for the principle of non-discrimination, languages of communication, carrying of weapons, methods of checking identity documents, etc.)? Are they unified at the national level?

Law enforcement officers and customs officials comply with the national laws and regulations in force and carry out their checks with due regard for individual rights and in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination. The relevant provisions are Articles 8 et seq. of the SBC, Articles L.812-2 and L.812-3 of the CESEDA, Article 78-2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and Article 67 quarter of the Customs Code.

Question 4: Are the current controls subject to bilateral coordination with the police authorities on the other side of the border? If so, could you specify the arrangements: regular meetings, exchanges of information, joint operations, other?

The internal security forces and customs authorities regularly exchange information with their Spanish counterparts. Police and customs cooperation centres (PCCCs) are the preferred structures for exchanging information in order to target criminals, help target flows, organize joint Franco-Spanish patrols, and facilitate the identification of illegal immigrants and the readmission of illegal immigrants. There are four PCCCs on the French-Spanish border: Hendaye, Canfranc, Melles – Pont du Roy, and Le Perthus.

Joint patrols are planned at the local level between the forces.

Question 5: Are the organizations in charge of public transportation and border municipalities informed about the implementation of the current controls?

Yes, the prefectures and law enforcement agencies are in regular contact with infrastructure managers and transport operators (SNCF, Vinci Autoroutes, Bidegi, etc.) in order to anticipate traffic difficulties and adapt control measures (opening additional lanes or adapting toll lanes, etc.).

Question 6: Data relating to controls. Could you indicate, if possible, by department:

- **The average number of controls carried out per month since September 2024:** this information cannot be provided.
- **The number of people arrested/fined, if possible, by main reason:** In detail, for the fight against illegal immigration, of the 8,500 arrests of foreigners in an irregular situation (ESI) between January and mid-October 2025, approximately 5,200 took place in the Pyrénées-Orientales, 3,200 in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, and less than 80 in the three other departments.
- **The number of deportations:** in 2024, of all the ESIs arrested, around 8,000 were sent back to Spain. From January to mid-October 2025, more than 5,000 ESIs were readmitted to Spain: more than 4,000 for the Pyrénées-Orientales, around 1,000 for the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, and 0 in the three other departments.
- **The cost of these checks or the number of police officers involved:** this information cannot be provided.
- **Are activity reports or statistical summaries available to the public or available on request?** Data relating to internal border controls are not made public, except for occasional press releases on specific action

3.3.4 Concluding remarks

The survey analysis shows that the reintroduction of border controls is perceived in several territories as a factor in the loss of fluidity, affecting daily life, cross-border economic activity, and confidence in cross-border cooperation, despite continuing forms of local collaboration.

The Ministry of the Interior offers a different interpretation, pointing out that the controls, which comply with the Schengen Borders Code and are based on risk analysis, meet security requirements, that the crossing points are now open and that disruptions are limited. The State's position therefore differs from the feelings of respondents, for whom this return to fluidity remains partial.

Closures and restrictions, particularly in 2020-2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, have in some cases impacted trust between States and border communities. This bond of trust, which took several decades to build, has been weakened by decisions that were sometimes perceived as unilateral and does not seem to have been fully restored to date. Every decision taken at the State level can affect the daily lives of people living in cross-border territories. Border management requires striking a balance between security objectives, which are the responsibility of States, and the difficulties that this can cause for residents of cross-border living areas. This is precisely the purpose of the provisions of the revised Schengen Borders Code concerning "cross-border regions."

The spirit of the revised Schengen Borders Code is to promote exchange between the services responsible for managing the sovereign border and the local border authorities, based on an objective assessment of:

- Open crossing points, the reality of controls, and their justification (so that their proportionality can be assessed)
- The objective (congestion, etc.) or subjective effects of these measures.

Cross-border crossing points, whether located in urban areas (where congestion is frequent) or in areas that are difficult to access (mountains, etc., where various hazards can limit mobility), may see the effects of controls combined with those of other causes. It is therefore even more important to ensure that controls are proportionate and do not contribute to further reducing cross-border mobility, otherwise they will exasperate the local population.

It is also important to emphasize that any cross-border region, even one with a low population density, is experienced by its inhabitants as a living area, and not just cross-border urban areas, where flows are greater. This explains the frustration and sense of unfairness felt by the inhabitants of mountain areas, who may be deprived of their "360°" life across the border by the closure of crossing points, in areas that may already be considered disadvantaged.

In general, the necessary dialogue between national authorities and border territories will be facilitated in the future by:

- A shared understanding of authorized crossing points, the fluidity of routes, and the reasons for the controls carried out
- Consultation between different levels (local actors and national authorities) and across borders.

3.4 Case study: The Hungarian-Austrian border area

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3.4.1 Introduction to the cross-border region

3.4.1.1 The history of border control on the Hungarian-Austrian border section since 1945

The geographical location of the Hungarian-Austrian border has only minimally changed since it was defined in the peace treaty signed in St. Germain-en-Laye on 10 September 1919. A few additions, clarifications, territorial exchanges and border modifications were made in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, the Venice Protocol and the Treaty of Paris. The border section was stabilised through the treaties that ended the Second World War, but its security was significantly determined by its location in the conflict zone of the bipolar world order. The Hungarian-Austrian border section, forming part of the Iron Curtain, became one of the key areas of confrontation between East and West, which was also manifested in the almost paranoid border control methods used there.

Following a multiyear period ending in 1948, the installation of minefields commenced along the border, and it was implemented in two stages and in three variants, subsequently serving as an "iron curtain" that sealed the two countries off from one another. Between 1948 and 1956, the land mines were supplemented with a tripwire (contact) mine barrier. In 1956, the mine barrier was removed, but following the events of 1956 and the resulting emigration, it was reinstalled. However, instead of the tripwire mines, which had been internationally banned in the meantime, only the pressure-activated mines were reinstalled, making a 4-6 metre-wide strip along the state border almost completely impenetrable. From 1959, in addition to the tripwire mines, a fence system was also built to prevent people from crossing the state border. The minefield was finally dismantled in 1965, and it was replaced by the Soviet-type SZ-100 electric signalling system (ESS) along the entire border, which "served" security until 1989. The ESS was a complex control system approximately 18 metres wide, which included a continuously maintained track, a manoeuvring route for patrols and vehicles, a developed long-distance communication system, the signalling system (the electrified fence strip) and a wildlife fence to prevent false alarms and damage. Unlike the minefield, the system was not installed directly on the border line, but much further inland, so that anyone who crossed the system could be apprehended on Hungarian territory before reaching the state border. The border control system was also designed accordingly. Continuous patrols were carried out on foot, with dogs and on horseback, monitoring the track day and night for any signs of crossing.

From the 1980s onwards, army helicopters also became an almost permanent feature of border control. The system operated on electrical impulses, signalled to the guard posts, from where the search, pursuit and closure process was initiated according to a well-rehearsed protocol. Maintaining this system required enormous capacity, energy and logistics, and the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure was very costly. In addition, false alarms and the detection of actual escape attempts often took not just a few hours, but up to several days. Each guard post was responsible for a 5-8 km long section of the border, and each alarm (which could even be caused by a wild animal) could result in the involvement of 40 border guards, or in extreme cases, up to 400.

The authorities of the time did not leave the guarding of the border section to chance: even approaching the installation was not easy, as local residents were subjected to daily inspections, and agricultural workers were permitted to enter the area at strictly defined times and in accordance with regulations.

An important component of the system was the border zone and border strip. The border zone extended to the administrative area of settlements along the state border on the Hungarian-Austrian (and Hungarian-Yugoslav) border until 1969. Its width varied, but was no more than 15 km. Entry and exit were subject to strict rules, and there were even sections in which entry and residence were prohibited, former residents were relocated, and the buildings were demolished. The border strip situated within the border zone, which could only be entered with special permission. From 1969, this was set at a depth of 2 km, whereas previously it had been 500 metres (and at that time there was also a 50-metre-wide restricted border zone, where only the Border Guard was allowed to enter). During the period of operation of the ESS, the border zone coincided with the area it enclosed.

In 1987, the leadership of the Border Guard at the time recognised that the complex, expensive and resource-wasteful system, which had been in operation for decades, could no longer be maintained (Border Guard vehicles travelled approximately one million kilometres per year to maintain the system). By this time, the ESS had become obsolete, with even the Soviet Union no longer manufacturing spare parts for it, and the raw materials (such as wire) were imported from the West, which had to be purchased with foreign currency. At that time, it was still predicted that it would be worthwhile to maintain the system until 1990, but the series of events in 1989 swept it away, and a new border guard system began to operate.

Even after 1989, border surveillance continued to focus on total control and on preventing border violations. Meanwhile, reform of the border control began, new border crossing points were opened in succession, the knowledge of the staff had to be continuously developed, and new technical and technological solutions were necessary. By 1998, the model of border control based on conscripted military personnel had been abolished and replaced by a professional, well-trained, multilingual staff (initially on a contract basis). Intensive technological development also began, primarily involving the procurement of equipment, training, and institutional and infrastructure development, funded by various European support funds (PHARE, Schengen Fund, etc.).

The bipolar security system of the Cold War, by its very nature, left its mark on border traffic control. Although the visa requirements for Austrian and Hungarian citizens were abolished on 1 January 1979, border traffic between the two countries expanded only slowly and with difficulty. Initially, only Hegyeshalom, then Sopron and later Szentgotthárd were involved in some form of international border opening.

19 August 1989 represents a milestone in the process of making an end to the bipolar world after the Cold War. During the so-called “pan-European picnic” organised near Sopron, eastern German citizens broke through the border fence and entered Austria with the assistance of Hungarian border guards. The event triggered protests in East Germany, leading to the German reunification, and marked the end of the Iron Curtain. Consequently, the Austrian-Hungarian border has a symbolic significance in the European integration process.

In the early 1990s, the former total border control was increasingly replaced by orderly and rapid checks, which were justified by the dynamically expanding tourism and the growing diversity of passengers’ nationalities (in 1991, 38.3 million passengers and 2.45 million vehicles crossed the border to Austria). However, speeding up checks on passengers leaving Hungary often encountered difficulties, as the Austrian authorities began to apply stricter (and thus more thorough and slower) selective and

differentiated checks due to the more lenient (but equally secure) selective and differentiated control system.

On 1 May 2004, Hungary became a member of the EU, which meant that customs controls were abolished on the Hungarian-Austrian border, and on 21 December 2007, the border section finally became an internal border of the Schengen area. This replaced the classic border control tasks (border surveillance and border traffic control) with a randomised, risk-based in-depth control system.

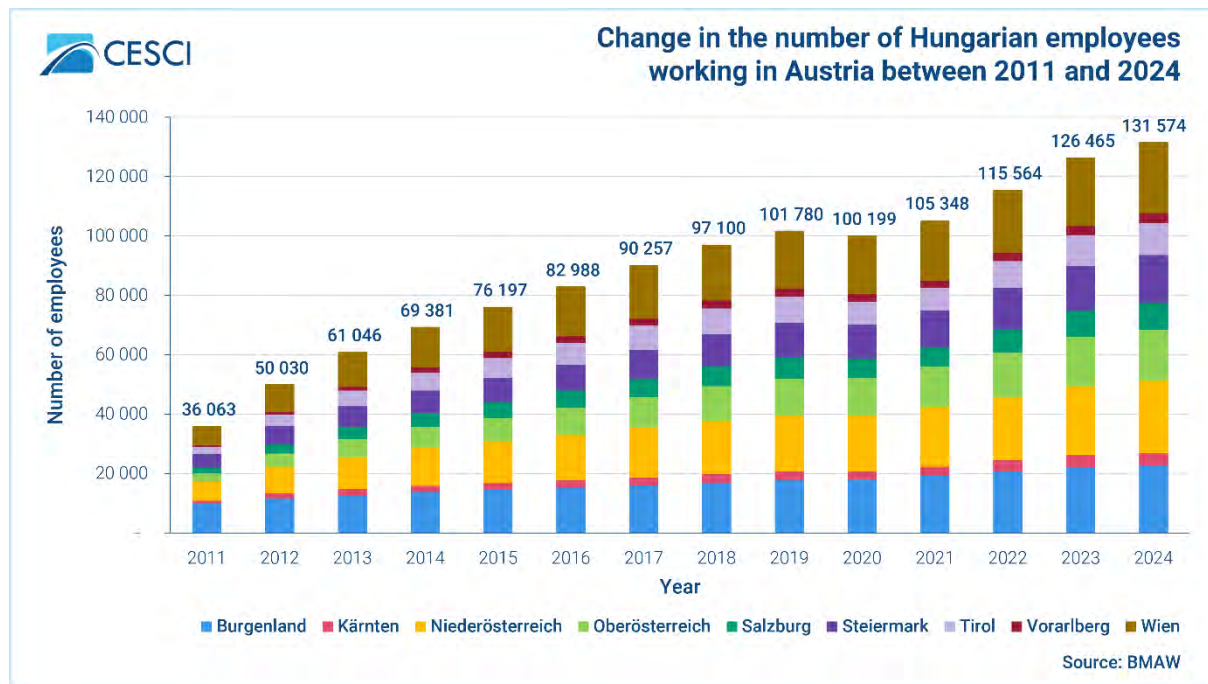
3.4.1.2 Aspects of cross-border integration

Cross-border labour mobility

In the second half of the 20th century, a section of the Iron Curtain dividing Europe ran along the Austrian-Hungarian border, separating the culturally and economically intertwined today's Austrian province of Burgenland and three counties in western Hungary (Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas, Zala). The strict border regime drastically reduced the number of border crossings into Austria. After the change of regime, there was a moderate increase, which became more dynamic with the onset of the 2000s (NÉMETH, Á. et al. 2023). Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004 and its entry into the Schengen area in 2007 gave further impetus to commuting and emigration to Austria. Although Austria delayed the opening of its labour market to the newly acceded Member States, it nevertheless applied derogations for occupations in short supply during the transitional period (HORVÁTH, V. 2023). Finally, Austria lifted the restrictions on 1 May 2011, which led to a massive increase in the number of Hungarians commuting to Austria for work (KŐRÖSI, I. 2012); their number rose from 20,000 to 100,000 in ten years (REIZER, B. 2021). The restrictions and layoffs caused by the coronavirus pandemic had a particularly severe impact on Hungarians commuting to Austria, but the previous upward trend continued in the period following the pandemic, and a new record was set in 2023 (HORVÁTH, V. 2023).

Cross-border commuting and migration for work are sustained by the economic differences between the two sides of the border. In 2023, Austria's GDP per capita (€51,800) was 2.5 times that of Hungary (€20,500) and 2.9 times that of the Western Transdanubian Region (€18,100). Directly along the border, the difference is somewhat smaller, but Burgenland (€36,500 per capita) is still twice as developed as the Western Transdanubian Region. The driving force of the border area is clearly Northern Burgenland, which is the only region in the border zone that exceeds the EU average in terms of development.

Figure 18: Hungarian workers in the provinces of Austria (2011–2024)



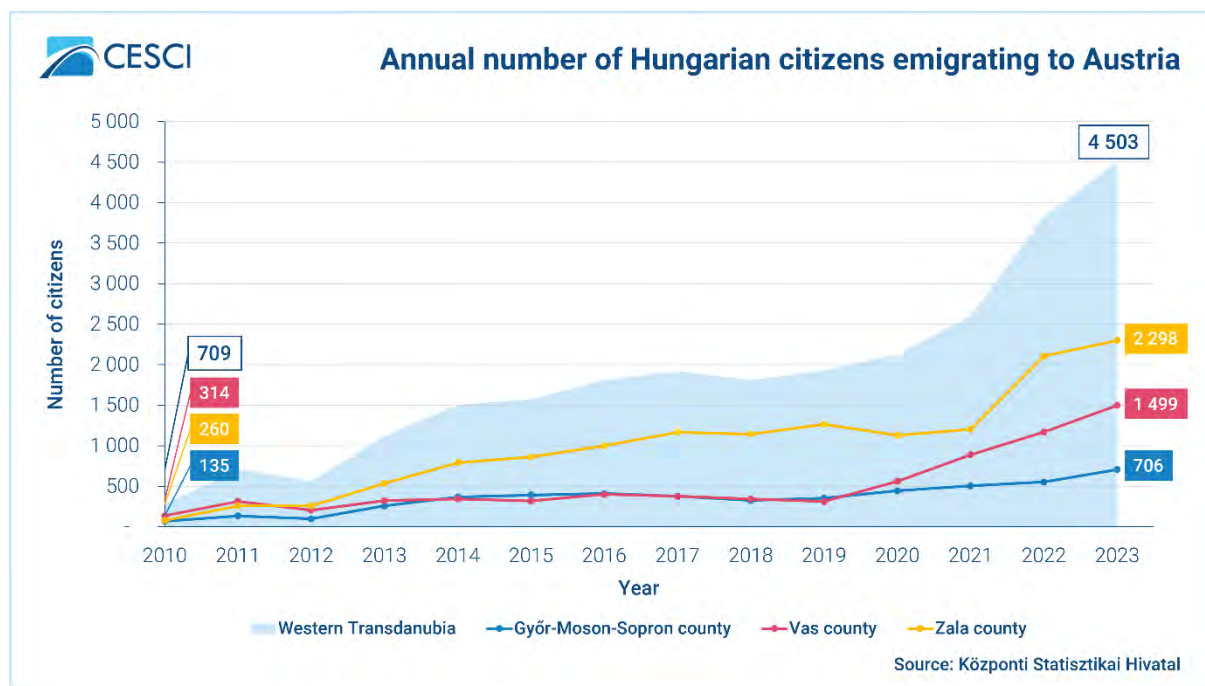
According to the Austrian labour market information system, a total of 131,574 Hungarian nationals were working in Austria in 2024. Their presence is most pronounced in Burgenland, where 18.8% of all employees are Hungarian (22,766 people). In terms of numbers, only Vienna and Lower Austria attracted more Hungarian workers: more than 24,000 people were registered in both provinces. The number of Hungarians working in Burgenland increased by 135% (more than 13,000 people) compared to 2011. Sectorally, in Burgenland, when the Austrian labour market was opened, the hospitality, manufacturing, construction, trade, vehicle repair, and agricultural sectors absorbed the most Hungarian workers. By 2024, except for agricultural work, these sectors remained the most attractive for Hungarians: more than 5,000 people are already employed in trade and vehicle repair, nearly 4,000 in hospitality, and around 3,600 and 2,700 in manufacturing and construction, respectively. Based on a comparison of the two reference years (2011 and 2024), the proportion of Hungarian workers in Burgenland increased most in trade and vehicle repair (+6.9 percentage points) and health and social care (+2.5 percentage points), while the share of agriculture (-6.1 percentage points) and construction (-3.8 percentage points) declined.

In the counties of Western Transdanubia, the number of people commuting abroad for work doubled between 2011 and 2022. Their presence among the total number of employed persons was the highest in Győr-Moson-Sopron County: in 2022, 13% of employed persons (122,581 persons) found work abroad. The same figure was 9% (31,353 people) in Vas County and 4% (5,519 people) in Zala County, exceeding the national average (3%).

Cross-border commuting poses significant challenges for the Hungarian border region. Between 2011 and 2024, labour shortages increased in all three counties of Western Transdanubia: the number of job vacancies tripled in Vas County and doubled in the other two counties. In 2024, there was a shortage of more than 3,200 workers in Győr-Moson-Sopron County, 2,000 in Vas County and 1,100 in Zala County, largely due to the pull effect of the Austrian labour market.

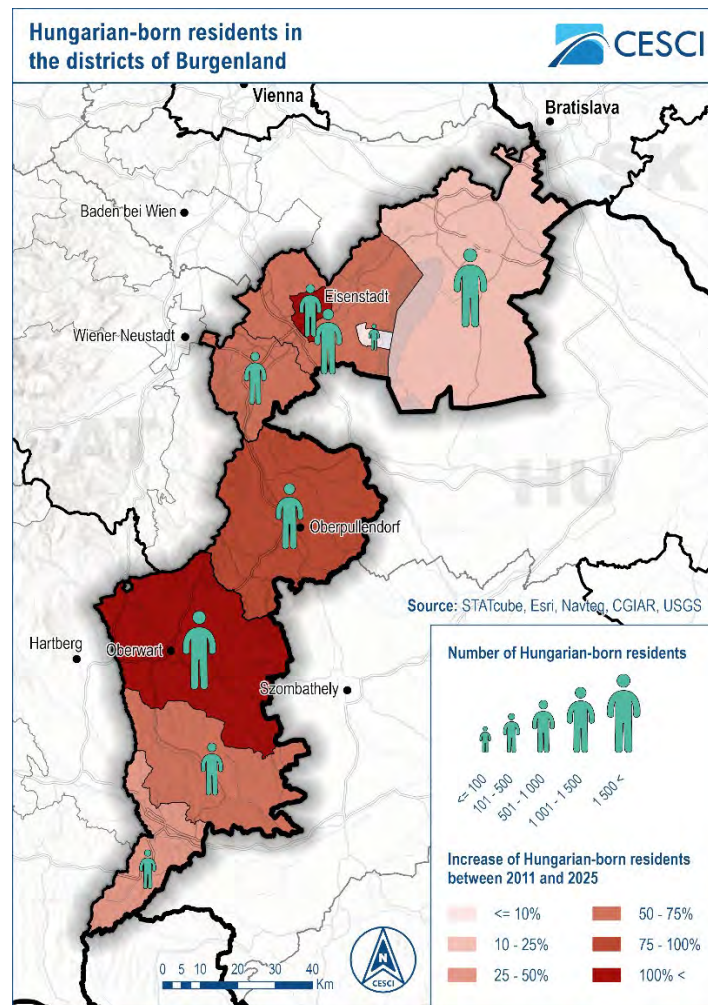
Previously, the average age of commuters was between 37 and 41, but since 2011, the age composition of the commuting population has been steadily ageing, and in 2020, the proportion of commuting workers over the age of 40 had already reached 60%. This trend is reinforced by the fact that for young people taking up employment in Austria, moving abroad is now a much more attractive alternative to commuting (HORVÁTH, V. 2023).

Figure 19: Number of Hungarian citizens moving to Austria per year (2010–2023)



Since 2011, migration to Austria has been increasing both nationally and in the Western Transdanubian Region. During the period under review (2011–2023), a quarter of Hungarians moving to Austria came from counties in this region. Following the COVID pandemic (due to the border-crossing difficulties experienced at the time), the process became even more pronounced: since 2020, the number of people moving from the western part of the country to Austria has exceeded 2,000 every year, and in 2023 it exceeded 4,500. Austria's pull factor is well illustrated by the fact that in 2023, 77% of those moving abroad from Western Transdanubia settled in Austria. At the beginning of 2025, a total of 8,561 residents born in Hungary lived in Burgenland, accounting for 8.7% of all Hungarian-born residents in Austria. Although the largest number of Hungarians live in Vienna, Lower and Upper Austria, and Styria, their proportion of the total population does not reach 1.5% anywhere except Burgenland (2.8%).

Figure 20: Number of Hungarian-born residents living in Burgenland (2025)



Based on citizenship, the number of Hungarian citizens living in Austria at the beginning of 2025 was 112,376, which is 14,000 more than the number of people born in Hungary (98,335). Except for Burgenland (where 8,498 Hungarian citizens lived), the number of Hungarian citizens in every province exceeds the number of people born in Hungary. (Hungary grants dual citizenship to people living across the border with Hungarian ancestry, e.g. Romania, Serbia, etc., many of whom also appear on the Austrian labour market.)

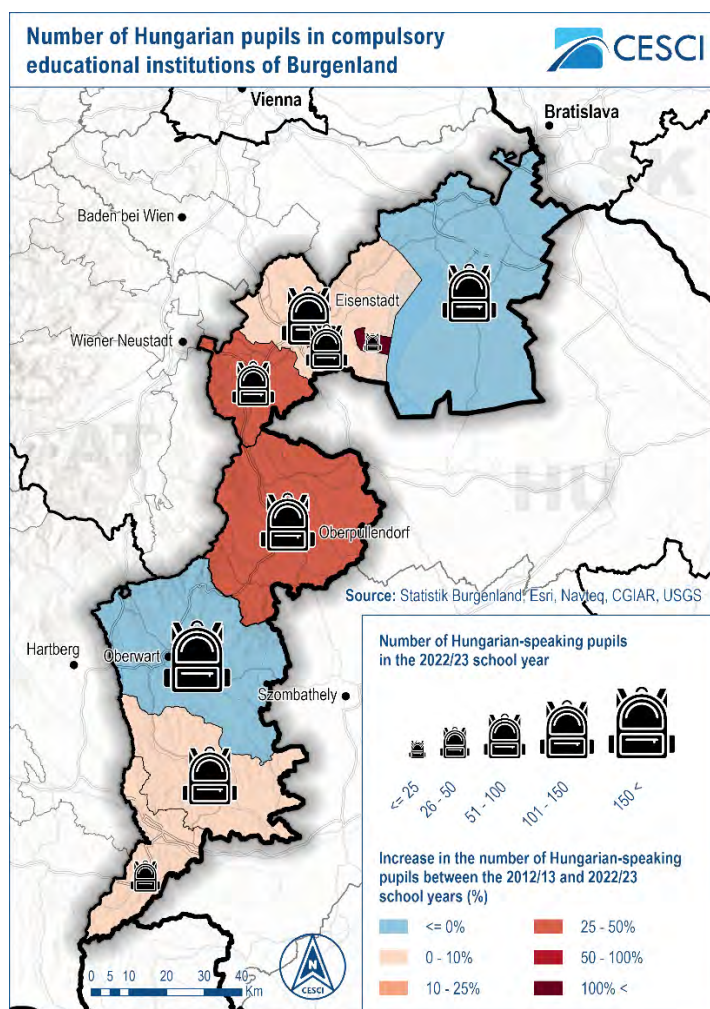
In addition to the migration of Hungarians to Austria, an increasing number of Austrian citizens are also finding opportunities on the Hungarian side of the border. The majority of Austrian citizens residing in Hungary (55%-68%) have settled in one of the counties of Western Transdanubia. In 2024, a total of 2,798 Austrian citizens were living there, representing a 57.8% increase compared to 2011. People over the age of 60 are overrepresented among them, accounting for between 45% and 52%.

Educational mobility

In addition to the commuting of the working-age population, an increasing number of Hungarian pupils are appearing in the Austrian school system. In the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 897 Hungarian-

speaking pupils were enrolled in compulsory educational institutions in Burgenland, which represents a 4.3% increase compared to the 2012-2013 school year. Hungarian-speaking pupils (more than 140 in each case) mainly attended educational institutions in the districts of Oberwart, Oberpullendorf, and Neusiedl am See.

Figure 21: Hungarian-speaking pupils in primary and secondary educational institutions in Burgenland (2022-2023 school year)

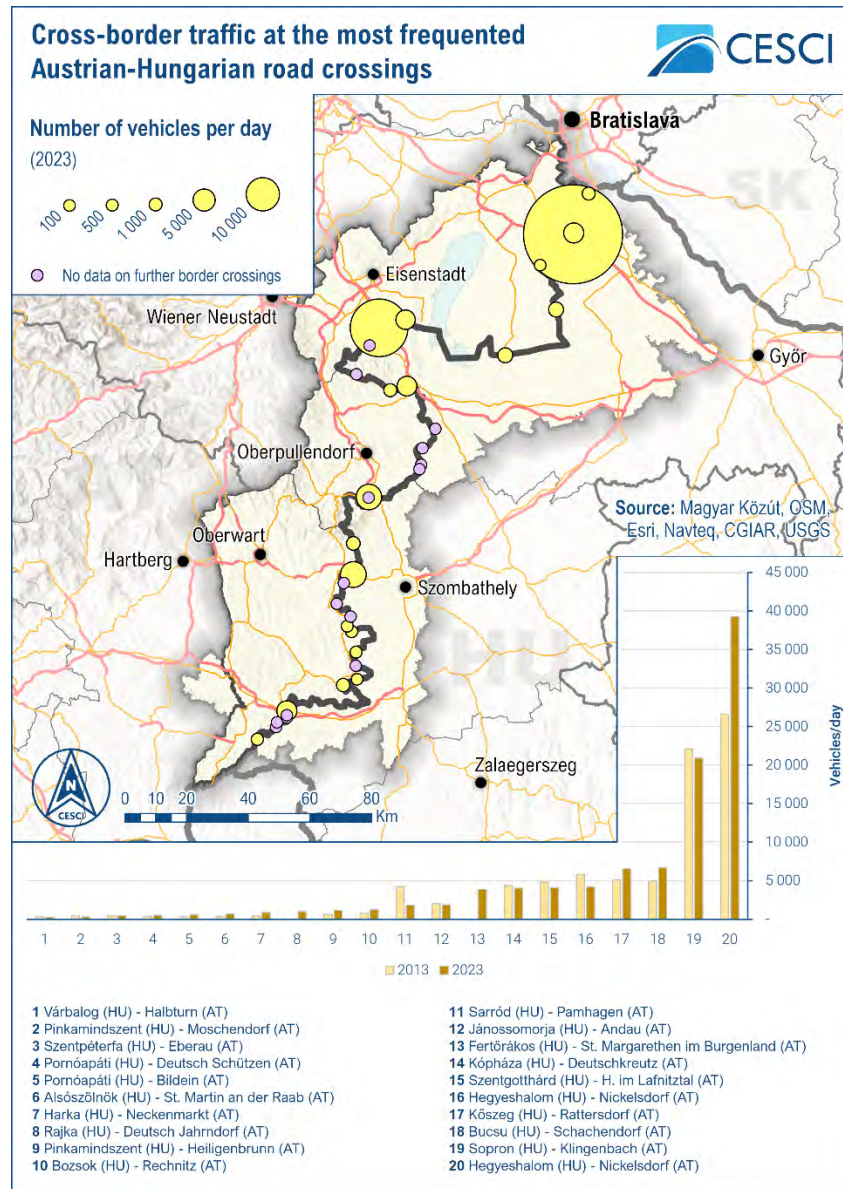


In order to obtain Austrian qualifications and German language skills, the number of Hungarian students enrolled in Austria is constantly growing, creating competition for schools and kindergartens in Western Transdanubia (LANGERNÉ BUCHWALD, J. – MUIITY, Gy. 2019). According to studies, due to the pull effect of Austrian educational institutions, up to 2,800 children may be missing from the Hungarian education system in a single school year (LANGERNÉ BUCHWALD, J. 2017). On the Hungarian side, primary school enrolment figures for the period 2011-2023 showed a clear decline (5-9%) in Vas and Zala counties, which is even more unfavourable than the national average. In Győr-Moson-Sopron County, however, the number of pupils increased until 2018 as a result of large-scale immigration from other regions of Hungary, and even in 2023 it was 6% higher than in the base year of 2011.

Transport

Cross-border commuters are mainly using private cars, with public transport only appealing to a small share of travellers.

Figure 22: Change in traffic at major road border crossings between 2013 and 2023 within the cross-border region as defined according to the amended Schengen Borders Code (SBC)



There are a few examples of cross-border bus services, with mostly long-distance services operating, while the railway infrastructure is limited to certain points along the border (PERCHINIG, B. et al. 2018). The road network has more than 70 border crossing points, but a significant number of these are owned by local authorities and are not suitable for handling large volumes of traffic (see Annex I).

A total of 21 border-crossing roads are continuously measured by traffic volumes. Based on the average annual data for the period 2013-2023, the highest traffic volumes are observed on the M1 motorway

connecting Hegyeshalom and Nickelsdorf (32,763 vehicles/day) and on the national road connecting Hegyeshalom and Nickelsdorf (20,000 vehicles/day) . Due to growing demand, crossings with increasing capacity have been built or are currently under construction. Examples include the main road No 84 near Sopron, the main road No 87 near Kőszeg and the M80 motorway near Szentgotthárd. The increase in traffic is particularly noticeable at the smallest border crossing points, where the infrastructure of the villages is not necessarily suitable for handling such frequent traffic: e.g. Harka – Neckenmarkt (+95%), Pornóapáti – Bildein (+93%), Pinkamindszent – Heiligenbrunn (+82%).

The railway connection between the two countries is provided by five railway lines, four of which are located in the northern part of the border section. Except for the Hegyeshalom–Nickelsdorf realm, the railway lines crossing the border are operated by GYSEV-Raaberbahn, a railway company founded in 1872 and operating in Austrian-Hungarian cooperation. On average working days, the highest traffic is provided by Hegyeshalom – Nickelsdorf (31 trains per day in one direction), Sopron – Baumgarten (25 trains) and Sopron – Loipersbach (23 trains). The latter two are considered special lines, as the Austrian Deutschkreutz is connected to the Austrian railway network via Hungary (Sopron). There is also passenger rail traffic between Szentgotthárd and Mengersdorf (18 trains) and between Fertőd and Pamhagen (6 trains) near Lake Fertő. Bus transport is mainly limited to long-distance services connecting Vienna and Graz with Budapest and Győr. There are only two known examples of local services crossing the border, connecting Szombathely with Oberwart and Eberau, with 1-2 services per day. The former crosses the border between Bucsú and Schachendorf, the latter between Pornóapáti and Bildein.

Real estate market conditions

The proximity of Austria is also noticeable in the housing market of Western Transdanubia, which is accompanied by rising real estate prices and the transformation of the structure of settlements, with the creation of new roads and neighbourhoods. However, the arrival of skilled labour in the region has changed the social composition of the settlements, resulting in the loss of their rural character (HORVÁTH, V. 2019). Due to the price-driving effect of Burgenland, the square metre prices of flats for sale in certain parts of the border region (e.g. in Sopron and the surrounding villages, as well as in Szombathely and Mosonmagyaróvár¹³⁸) are around HUF 700,000-800,000. Still, further away from the border and in the central part of the border region, prices are above the HUF 600,000 threshold (e.g. Kapuvár, Körmend, Kőszeg). In the southernmost part of the border area (e.g. Szentgotthárd), the price per square metre is only HUF 450,000. These prices are among the highest in the Western Transdanubian housing market and exceed the property values of cities such as Miskolc in eastern Hungary (the difference can be as much as twofold).

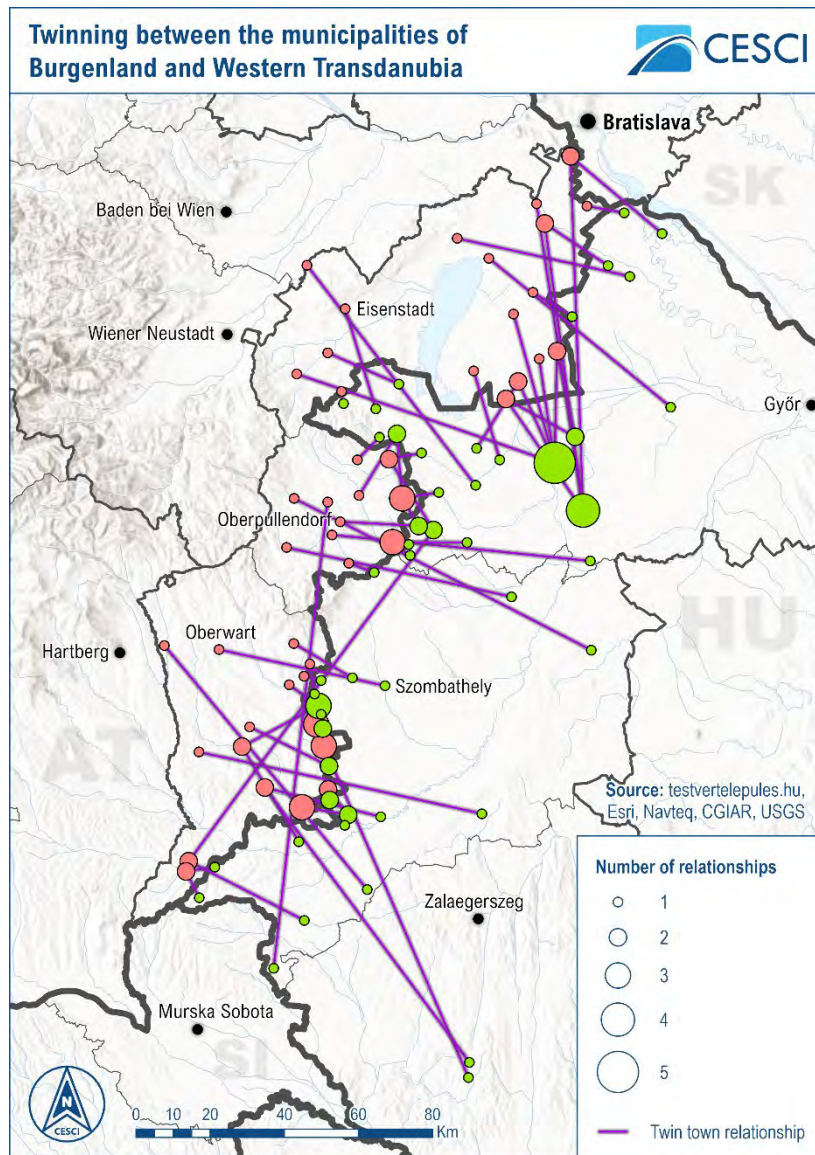
Examples of cross-border cooperation

The cultural intertwining of the border region is evidenced by cooperation initiatives that promote the preservation of natural and built heritage and help strengthen ties between residents. Good examples of this are the Fertő-Neusiedler Lake UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Írott-kő – Geschriebenstein

¹³⁸ In the latter case, the proximity of the Slovak capital has a greater impact on prices.

Nature Park. The development of inter-municipal linkages can be well illustrated by the twin town network. A total of 86 municipalities in Western Transdanubia maintain twinning relationships with Austrian partners. There are 108 such relationships in total, 63% of which involve municipalities in Burgenland. Kapuvár, Mihályi and Vaskeresztes have the most such partnerships.

Figure 23: Twinning agreements along the Hungarian-Austrian border



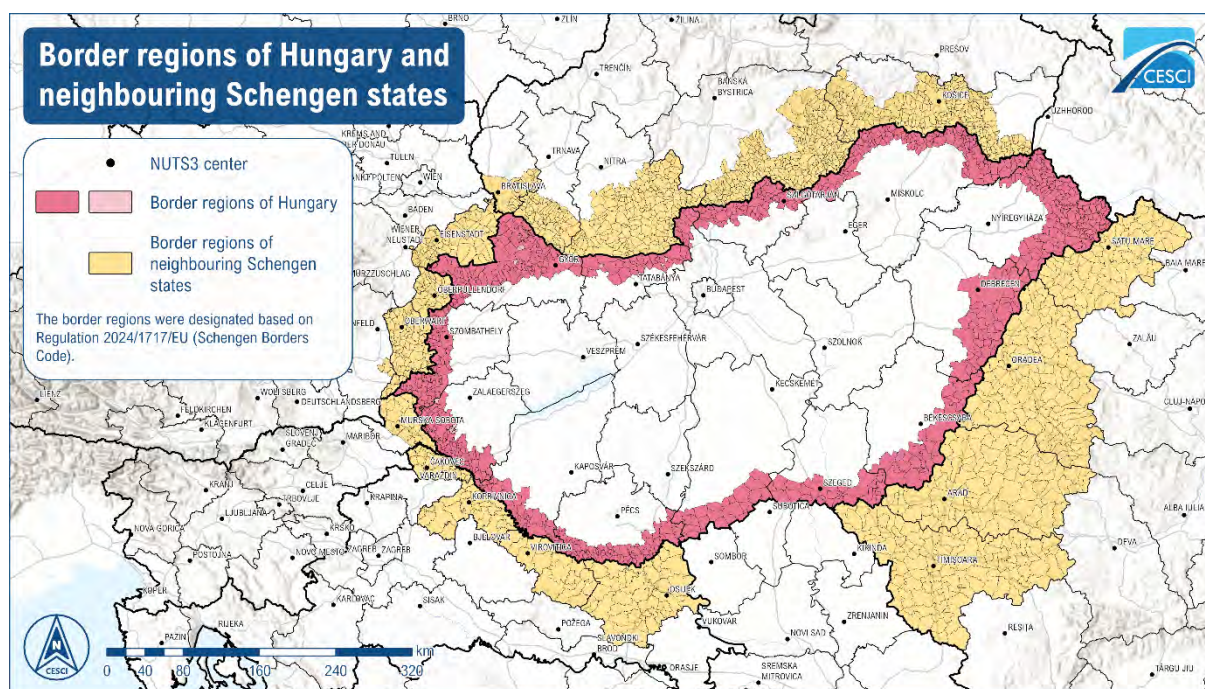
Cooperation in the field of healthcare is also evolving. The *HEAL NOW* project, implemented with Interreg support, provided an opportunity to draw up a joint strategic plan (regulating cross-border patient care), to establish cooperation between the hospitals in Sopron and Wiener Neustadt in the field of digital pathology, and to create the conditions for cross-border emergency care. The bilateral framework agreement enabling the latter came into force in September 2025.

3.4.2 Evaluation of the European Integration theme

Definition of the cross-border region in the Hungarian-Austrian context

The European Union's binding regulation on border control¹³⁹ stipulates that prior to the introduction of temporary restrictive measures at internal borders, the Member State concerned must assess the impact of the introduction of border control or partial border closure on border regions and their functioning. For any measure introduced, arrangements must also be made to mitigate the negative effects on the "close social and economic ties" between border regions. The regulation set a deadline of 11 January 2025 for Member States to determine, in cooperation with each other, which border regions will be subject to this exceptional treatment and to notify the Commission accordingly.

Figure 24: Cross-border regions around Hungary



In December 2024, Hungary, referring to its obligation under Article 42b of the above-mentioned EU regulation, published a list of 883 municipalities in Hungary that it had designated jointly with its neighbouring Schengen Member States in a legal act¹⁴⁰. On this basis, the border area includes the administrative territory of the 883 municipalities along the state border (these are on average 20 km from the state border), and the area of the border crossing points (including the opening of temporary border crossing points for the duration of their opening). In addition to the above, border areas can also be found at international airports, namely where passenger, goods and vehicle checks are carried out, in the transit area, and in the designated area between the doors of departing and arriving vehicles and passport and customs control. Similarly to the aircraft, border areas also exist for watercraft and rail vehicles, in both cases including the vehicle itself during the period of border control and the places (certain parts of ports,

¹³⁹ Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code).

¹⁴⁰ Government Decree 330/2007 (XII. 13.) on the rules governing entry into and stay in the border area and the border crossing point area for purposes other than crossing the border (amended on 31 December 2024). The act applies the term 'border region' ("határrégió").

designated platforms and tracks at railway stations) involved in the control. In these cases, it is not a requirement that the border area be located near the state border. The border area is a functionally defined place where national border control tasks are carried out, and therefore the area of jurisdiction of the organisations responsible for carrying out border control tasks can be linked to it.

The Austrian side has similarly designated the border region, which affects the settlements of eight districts and five additional local authorities along the Hungarian border (their territory still falls within the border region, but the entire district surrounding them does not) (see the delimitation in Figure 24).

[Legal framework for contemporary border control in Austria](#)

Since 2015, Austria has introduced temporary border controls on a total of 67 occasions, 25 of which were on the border with Hungary, on every border in 2011 for three days due to the World Economic Forum and in 2008 on land and air borders due to the European Football Championship. (See Annex II)

According to Art.3(2) of the Federal Law on the Conduct of Persons' Checks on the Occasion of Border Crossing (Border Control Act – GrekoG), the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders must be designated by a decree issued by the Federal Minister of the Interior. This regulation must specify the point or area, the operating hours, and the scope of use, in particular restrictions on the admissibility of border crossing to certain persons, groups of persons, modes of transport, or local areas such as tourist zones or hiking trails, as necessary.

The regulation takes into account the requirements of maintaining public peace, order and security, the economic and transport policy importance, the expected density of border traffic and the possibility of ensuring the required border control standard with the available human resources, the admissibility of border traffic under customs or aviation law, the interests of military national defence, relations with the neighbouring state and existing intergovernmental agreements (Art.3(5)).

Based on the Art.10(2) of the Border Control Act, the internal border may be crossed at any point. Exceptions may be applied if it appears necessary to maintain public peace, order, and security, the Federal Minister of the Interior is authorised, within the framework of intergovernmental agreements, to issue a decree according to which, for a specific period of time, certain sections of the internal border may only be crossed at defined border crossing points (Art.10(2)).

Table 14: The factors of contemporary limitations of cross-border movements

Responsible actor	Measure	Legal form	Scope	Reasons
Federal Minister of the Interior	temporary border control	decree	specify the point or area, the operating hours, and the scope of use, in particular restrictions on the admissibility of border crossing to certain persons, groups of persons, modes of transport, or local areas such as tourist zones or hiking trails, as necessary	public peace, order and security, the economic and transport policy importance, the expected density of border traffic and the possibility of ensuring the required border control standard with the available human resources, the admissibility of border traffic under customs or aviation law, the interests of military national defence, relations with the neighbouring state and existing intergovernmental agreements
	border crossing restrictions	decree within the framework of intergovernmental agreements	for a specific period of time, certain sections of the internal border may only be crossed at border crossing points	necessary to maintain public peace, order, and security
	suspending border traffic	decree	for the duration of the persistence of extraordinary circumstances, to suspend border traffic, in whole or in part, at certain border crossing points or border sections	in cases of imminent danger, in fulfilment of obligations arising from international and European solidarity and the neutrality pacts, or to maintain public peace, order, and security

The border control system in force at the Hungarian-Austrian border

One of the fundamental principles of the European Union is to ensure the free movement of persons, vehicles and goods within the Schengen area while maintaining security. The abolition of border controls at the internal Schengen borders entails a significant security deficit. To reduce and, where possible, minimise this deficit, it has become necessary to introduce special measures, known as balancing or compensatory measures.

Article 23 of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code) provides for checks within the territory of the Member States. The Schengen Borders Code does not use the term ‘in-depth checks’, but it does set out the conditions under which such checks may be carried out within the territory of a country apart from the border. The legislation does not specify what may be done and how, but takes a negative approach, setting out what is prohibited and how such prohibitions apply during such checks.

Particular attention must be paid to several aspects of the temporary reintroduction of border control if the aim is to guarantee the increased level of security that the reintroduction is intended to achieve. Due to its temporary nature, perhaps the greatest challenge is keeping border control capabilities up to date, which is essential for the performance of tasks (BALLA et al. 2020: 72). Another key factor is the provision

of technical and IT tools and systems that provide adequate support for the conduct of secure, objective controls. The biggest issue in restoring border traffic controls is always the location.

Of Hungary's neighbouring Schengen Member States, only Austria has concluded an agreement with Hungary that regulates the framework for the reintroduction of border controls at the intergovernmental level. The agreement designates 19 border crossing points from Hegyeshalom to Szentgotthárd and 36 border crossing points from Rajka to Alsószőlő as locations for the reintroduction of border controls.¹⁴¹

Within the framework of integrated border management, as the last step of the four-step entry control model (1. risk reduction in third countries, 2. cooperation with neighbouring countries, 3. border control at the external Schengen border, 4. *control within the area of free movement*) the Police, in cooperation with the relevant national authorities, organises checks and joint patrols. Under Hungarian law: *"In-depth checks: a compensatory police measure aimed at establishing the legality of the stay of foreigners in Hungary, typically based on risk analysis and carried out on a random basis, which is not intended for border control and which clearly differs from identity checks at external borders in terms of its preparation and implementation"*¹⁴².

The criterion for carrying out in-depth checks is that they can only be carried out outside the border area at the external Schengen border, as multi-stage and multi-line border control is carried out in the border area. *"In order to make in-depth checks more effective, Hungary has developed a complex screening and control system covering the entire country, thereby laying the foundations for the coordination of the interrelated tasks of the law enforcement, transport and labour authorities. The activities are coordinated by the IVK¹⁴³ under the leadership of the police. The operation of the system is regulated by joint instructions issued by the competent ministers on increasing the effectiveness and coordination of official action against illegal migration and other related illegal activities."*¹⁴⁴

The in-depth control system is directly linked to the operational border control situation at the external Schengen border, the main and alternative routes exploited by human traffickers. Within the framework of internal police cooperation, the criminal investigation branch provides intelligence to the pertinent law enforcement units, thus guaranteeing the possibility of immediate response.

In-depth checks ensure that persons who have entered Hungary illegally or who have entered legally and are staying there, or whose stay has become illegal, and who intend to travel on illegally are checked in the interior of the country and along the internal borders. Compensatory measures also include police cooperation between Member States, which involves joint checks at the internal Schengen borders to detect third-country nationals residing illegally.

¹⁴¹ Act LVII of 2024 on the promulgation of the Agreement between the Government of Hungary and the Austrian Federal Government on border crossing points and border crossing points on the common state border, as well as on cooperation in border traffic control in road and water transport. Source: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1400057.tv> (04.08.2025)

¹⁴² Decree 30/2011 (IX. 22.) BM on the service regulations of the police, Section 2, 9.
Source: <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100030.bm> (10 August 2025).

¹⁴³ IVK: Integrated Management Centre.

¹⁴⁴ Hungary's National Integrated Border Management Strategy 2022-2028 (with amendments adopted by Government Decree 1299/2024. (IX. 26.) on the amendment of Hungary's National Integrated Border Management Strategy), page 27.

Source: [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://cdn.kormany.hu/uploads/document/a/a7/a7a/a7aac3d5a319b21e95286ea9feff5bd961448286.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://cdn.kormany.hu/uploads/document/a/a7/a7a/a7aac3d5a319b21e95286ea9feff5bd961448286.pdf) (10 August 2025).

For example, on 13 February 2015, representatives of Hungary, Germany and Austria signed a cooperation agreement on the implementation of joint railway patrols on trains travelling from Hungary to Germany and at departure stations.

Table 15: Data on trains and persons checked under the Hungarian-Austrian-German agreement between 2015 and 2025¹⁴⁵

Date	Trains escorted	Other trains ¹⁴⁶	Persons checked			
			Hungarian	EU	Other	Total
2015.02.18.-2015.12.31.	1,515	141	2,479	2,611	8,214	13,304
2016	1,458	66	2,672	2,907	6,178	11,757
2017	2,457	114	4,822	4,828	10,532	20,182
2018	2,956	71	4,164	5,024	11,026	20,214
2019	2,760	53	4,358	4,470	9,388	18,216
2020	1,969	15	4,019	2,685	2,948	9,652
2021	2,702	14	6,732	3,755	3,718	14,205
2022	2,356	5	6,971	6,809	19,998	33,778
2023	2,956	86	7,754	4,513	14,250	26,517
2024	2,850	92	8,462	570	17,582	26,614
2025.01.01-2025.07.31	1,753	43	4,673	0	11,187	15,860
Total:	25,732	700	57,106	38,172	115,021	210,299

Table 16: Performance indicators for vehicles and persons checked under the Hungarian-Austrian-German agreement between 2015 and 2025¹⁴⁷

Date	Apprehensions	Arrest	Criminal charges	Report of administrative offence
2015.02.18.-2015.12.31.	2,946	2	6	96
2016	821	1	8	25
2017	261	7	6	7
2018	103	7	4	4
2019	114	3	4	1
2020	72	6	2	3
2021	260	6	4	1
2022	515	13	2	0
2023	259	18	7	7
2024	220	19	8	5
	90	14	3	0
Total	5,661	114	54	149

¹⁴⁵ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

¹⁴⁶ Trains inspected while stationary at railway stations.

¹⁴⁷ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

In addition to inspecting trains, priority and so-called "Fox operations" are being carried out in the Hungarian-Austrian border area. The priority operations have been ongoing since 1 September 2021 in the jurisdiction of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Police Headquarters in Hungary, in cooperation with the Austrian authorities, and continued until December 2023, with 12-16 operations per month near the Hungarian-Austrian border, on Hungarian territory, lasting 10-10 hours per operation. 22 Hungarian police officers (8 from the County Police Headquarters and 14 from the Standby Police) and 22 Austrian police officers took part in the operations, reinforced by two to four Slovak police patrols, who became part of the joint task on 1 June 2022.

The operations are typically planned and carried out in the main direction of illegal migration, in the administrative area of Győr-Moson-Sopron County, primarily in the Mosonmagyaróvár and Sopron districts. The reinforcement of human resources with technical reconnaissance equipment is of paramount importance, and the use of non-police vehicles also contributes to the unpredictability and effectiveness of interventions.

In line with the positive changes in the operational situation, the number of priority operations has been reduced since December 2023, with typically 4-5 checks per month (once a week), each lasting 8-8 hours, with the original number of personnel retained.

Table 17: Data on priority operations between 1 September 2021 and 31 December 2024¹⁴⁸

Executive organisational element	Key operation			
	Migrants	Human trafficker	Migrant	Human trafficker
Győr-Moson-Sopron County Police Headquarters	6,246	394	6,246	394
Vas County Police Headquarters	0	0		

Table 18: Data on priority operations between 1 January and 30 June 2025¹⁴⁹

Executive organisational element	Priority operation			
	Migrant	Human trafficker	Migrant	Human trafficker
Győr-Moson-Sopron County Police Headquarters	39	5	39	5
Vas County Police Headquarters	0	0		

Operation Fox is carried out as part of joint border patrols involving units of the Austrian Federal Police Directorate's Fox unit, which was set up specifically to combat illegal migration along the state border.

¹⁴⁸ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

¹⁴⁹ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

The joint operational groups are coordinated through the Hegyeshalom-Nickelsdorf Liaison Office. The police forces of the two countries carry out joint patrols based on a cooperation agreement concluded between the Hungarian National Police Headquarters and the Directorate-General for Public Security of the Federal Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Austria, signed by the Hungarian side on 12 April 2023.

Since December 2023, the number of joint Fox operations has decreased in the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Police Headquarters, typically taking place twice a week with 18-24 participants (of which 6-8 are Hungarian police officers). Overall, this means 8-10 checks per month. From September 2024, the Vas County Police Headquarters will typically participate in joint police operations once a week in its own area of jurisdiction, with an average of 24 people (of which 8 are Hungarian police officers).

Table 19: Fox operation indicators between 1 September 2021 and 31 December 2024¹⁵⁰

Executive organisational element	Fox operation			
	Migrants	Human trafficker	Migrant	Human trafficker
Győr-Moson-Sopron VMRFK	1,545	113	1,545	113
Iron VMRFK	0	0		

Table 20: Fox operations indicators between 1 January and 30 June 2025¹⁵¹

Executive organisational element	Fox operation			
	Migrant	Human trafficker	Migrant	Human trafficker
Győr-Moson-Sopron VMRFK	51	6	67	8
Vas VMRFK	16	2		

Evaluation of the current border regime in the light of the amended Schengen Borders Code

In compliance with the revised Schengen Borders Code, the Commission has adopted templates for the notifications and reports to be submitted by Member States when reintroducing internal border control (EC 2025b: 19). Two notifications are currently (September 2025) in force, which are submitted by Austria to the European Commission regarding the reintroduction of temporary internal border controls.

Table 21: Recent notifications submitted by Austria to the European Commission

Country	Duration	Reasons/Scope
Austria	16/04/2025 – 15/10/2025	Threats associated with irregular migration, such as via the Balkan routes (including expected migratory pressure), as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and basic services, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and the security situation in the

¹⁵⁰ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

¹⁵¹ Based on data provided by the Border Police Department of the National Police Headquarters (14 August 2025).

		Middle East aggravated by terrorist groups; land borders with Slovakia and Czechia.
Austria	12/05/2025 – 11/11/2025	Threats associated with the continued high levels of irregular migration and migrant smuggling across Austria's southern borders, as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and basic services, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the security situation in the Middle East, intensifying the threat posed by Islamist extremism and terrorism; land borders with Hungary and Slovenia.

Source: EC, 2025a

On the basis of the Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/315 establishing a template for the notification of the temporary reintroduction and prolongation of internal border controls, the paper focuses on the ongoing reintroduction of temporary internal border controls between Austria and Hungary between 12/05/2025 and 11/11/2025, as well as the justifications provided by Austria for these measures.

Date and legal basis of the notification

The prolongation of internal border controls includes the borders with Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia for land transport. Internal borders may be crossed only at the mentioned border crossing points in the attached list of authorised border crossing points between 12 May 2025 and 11 November 2025.

Austria invoked Art.25a(4)(5) of SBC as the legal basis for the prolongation of border control, referring to the fact that the prolongation of temporary border controls was due to a foreseeable event.

Table 22: Terms and conditions for border control at a foreseeable event according to SBC

Cases requiring action due to foreseeable events	Art. 25a(4)-(5)	The Member State may reintroduce border control for a period of up to 6 months.	The Member State may prolong the border control for renewable periods of up to 6 months. + the Member State concerned shall carry out and include a risk assessment in every subsequent notification prolonging the control which provides even more detail to show that the reintroduction remains a temporary measure of last resort. Art.26(1)-(2) The maximum duration shall not exceed 2 years.	The Member State shall notify the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the other Member States at the latest 4 weeks before the planned reintroduction of border control.
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According to the general rule, where the prolongation of border control is due to a foreseeable event, the Member State shall submit the notification at the latest 4 weeks before the planned reintroduction of border control.

Austria submitted the notification of the foreseeable event less than four weeks before the planned reintroduction or extension of internal border controls.

In this regard, Austria refers to the dynamic situation and the fact that the assessment was carried out after a continuous review of the threats and risks based on the latest information. The measures are thus based on the latest information and assessments to ensure an effective and appropriate response.

Evaluation

Although Austria's border control measures comply with Art 25a(4)-(6) of the SBC, the authors argue that the procedure is questionable given that the prolongation was notified less than four weeks before the reintroduction of border control measures.

This is particularly because the notification refers to a foreseeable event, and the introduction of border controls is not new, but rather a prolongation of a process that has been in place for six months (12/11/2024-11/05/2025).

Serious threat to public policy or internal security

According to Art.25 of the SBC, a serious threat to public policy or internal security may be considered to arise from:

- a) terrorist incidents or threats, and threats posed by serious organised crime;
- b) large-scale public health emergencies;
- c) an exceptional situation characterised by sudden large-scale unauthorised movements of third-country nationals between the Member States, putting a substantial strain on the overall resources and capacities of well-prepared competent authorities and which is likely to put at risk the overall functioning of the area without internal border control, as evidenced by information analysis and all available data, including from relevant Union agencies;
- d) large-scale or high-profile international events. Art.25(1)

In its notification, Austria referred to the fifth option, 'Other', to identify phenomena of a serious threat to public policy or internal security.

Austria considers the main elements of a serious threat to public policy or internal security, which have existed for years: the consequences in the areas of irregular migration, asylum and basic services; the national migration situation; the migration situation in the Austrian pre-frontier area; and migrant smuggling. The notification argues that, irrespective of various measures and initiatives taken to strengthen the integrity and resilience of the Schengen area, security and migration challenges at the external borders have persisted for years. Austria is experiencing the reality of a “de facto” external border state, as only around 30% of all irregular arrivals in Austria had previously been registered in another Member State, while Austria systematically carries out Eurodac registrations.

The national migration situation leads to operational challenges, such as

- the persistently high level of asylum applications resulting from an entry due to family reunification,
- burden on the Austrian school system
- Germany’s failure to implement the CJEU ruling in Case C-143/22, as well as the resulting lack of coordination regarding entry refusals issued by German authorities to Austria.

Migration potential across the EU neighbourhood is high, in particular along the coastal route through Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, as well as through the Serbia-Hungary route. An increase is expected in 2025, showing that migration policy challenges persist.

Evaluation

The authors stipulate that the justification provided in the report clearly demonstrates that Austria refers to the global crises that have been spreading and constantly changing in recent years as the legal basis and justification for maintaining border controls.

The migration threats are complemented by other events, which highlight the intensification of the threat posed by Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the security situation in the Middle East exacerbated by terrorist groups, the Islamist extremism and terrorism in recent months, contributing to domestic uncertainty and triggering discussions on European and national migration policies. Besides, the Balkan migratory routes remain a fundamental risk factor for Austria, especially if the route is re-established in the future, which is likely to be the case. It is also expected that hybrid threats related to irregular migration will have an increased impact on the functioning of Austrian border management. Moreover, due to the push factors and the unstable political situation in the countries of origin and transit, increased migratory pressure can be expected.

However, the evaluation also reveals that the number of unauthorised entries at the affected sections of the border with Hungary and Slovenia is decreasing at the moment. Nevertheless, Austria maintains that measures need to be taken to ensure that this trend is not affected or further encouraged.

[Assessment of the necessity and proportionality based on the criteria laid down in Article 26\(1\) of Regulation \(EU\) 2016/399](#)

The appropriateness of the measures is justified as follows:

- In light of the conditions required by Art.3(2) of the EU Treaty 'appropriate measures concerning external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime within the area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers' are not currently met, internal border controls constitute an appropriate and compensatory measure for the existing deficits. Besides, the legal acts of the Pact on Asylum and Migration will only be applied from June/July 2026.
- Internal border controls are not carried out in a systematic or comprehensive, but in a targeted and risk-based manner depending on the situation. They are based on a "spot check" approach and are therefore not comparable to controls at the external borders. Complementary police measures can limit internal border controls to the minimum necessary level.
- Border surveillance, including checks between border crossing points, would also not be possible to the extent necessary without the reintroduction of internal border controls. In view of the current vulnerability and threat situations, internal border controls are thus ultimately an appropriate measure, while less intrusive measures would not be equally effective.

Proportionality includes the measures taken to minimise the impacts of the border checks on cross-border mobility, cooperation and integration. The notification briefly refers to these aspects:

- the authorities "are encouraged" (sic!) to minimise the impacts of checks on cross-border traffic;
- based on previous good practices during former check periods, police cooperation with the two eastern neighbours can guarantee the free flow of goods and persons;
- the existing economic and social links have to be taken into account when implementing the control mechanisms.

Evaluation

The justification of appropriateness is well aligned with the explanation of the necessary measures. At the same time, the reference to the cross-border region is rather superficial, without mentioning particular incentives and measures. It is not clear what the term “to minimise the impacts” means, how the authorities tackle cross-border commuters, how long waiting times are acceptable, etc.

Assessment of the rules related to prolongation

Austrian authorities consider that

- global security developments and their impact on Europe and Austria remain highly relevant (Russia’s ongoing war against Ukraine, the precarious security situation in the Middle East, and the insecure situation in Lebanon and Gaza);
- threat posed by terrorist networks and groups remains high, as these networks are broadly based in Austria (extremist actors from the Western Balkans);
- current developments in Afghanistan, Türkiye, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as unpredictable developments in Syria, smugglers will continue to try to exploit these circumstances.

The identified threat situation thus remains unchanged and shows a continuous and dynamic development. The overall situation is not expected to improve significantly in the near future. On the contrary, based on current developments, it must be assumed that the existing threats continue to be present and that a rapid change in the situation is unlikely.

Evaluation

The authors found the assessment of the prolongation of border controls for six months to be appropriate in terms of necessity and proportionality. However, they emphasise that there is a risk that constantly changing and diversified threats and crises will result in a de facto permanent state of emergency, which could be used as an argument to justify the necessity and proportionality of the measures. Security measures have been prolonged between Austria and Hungary since 2015. As a result, there is a concern that the principles underpinning the Schengen system will be undermined and subordinated to the border control practices of Member States.

3.4.3 Evaluation of Euregional Cohesion and Socio-Economic Development

The following chapter presents the analysis of border control measures from the perspective of Euro-regional cohesion, based on the interviews and a focus group interview carried out in 2025 as part of the ITEM/TEIN Cross-border Impact Assessment. The primary aim of this component of the study was to capture the experiences of those actors most directly affected by changes in the Schengen regime and

the reintroduction of border controls at the Austrian-Hungarian border. By documenting their perspectives, the analysis seeks to provide an understanding of how security measures translate into everyday realities in cross-border regions.

A total of eleven interviews were conducted with stakeholders representing a wide range of affiliations, reflecting the diverse sectors impacted by border regimes. The sample included employers, commuters, a recruitment agency, tourism professionals, a transport provider, and a local government representative. Besides, we organised a focus group for local mayors representing border municipalities. Seven Hungarian mayors / vice-mayors and the vice-chair of the relevant county council (NUTS III) were present at the event and shared their experiences on border crossing phenomena. This composition of the target group allowed the research team to capture both individual and institutional perspectives, ranging from the personal experiences of daily commuters to the broader institutional concerns of municipalities and businesses.

The interviews were carried out online via Google Meet and phone, ensuring accessibility for participants on both sides of the border. Each conversation lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the scope of the interviewee's experience and willingness to elaborate. To enable the participants to prepare adequately, a structured set of questions was provided in advance, while the interviews themselves were conducted in a semi-structured format. This combination allowed for both comparability across responses and the flexibility to capture unexpected insights.

Given the cross-border context, the interviews were conducted in the participants' native languages – German and Hungarian – to enable them to describe their experiences as precisely as possible. Notes were taken during the conversations, and the material was subsequently processed for analysis after the interviewee validated them.

The focus group interview was organised in one of the border municipalities, and it lasted 2 hours. The participants were invited to share their opinion on (i) border control measures set by the Austrian authorities in 2015 and the phenomena related to illegal migration; (ii) the impacts of border checks on cross-border (labour) mobility and cooperation; (iii) the spatial limitation of the cross-border region. Each subchapter presents the findings in a structured manner, drawing directly on the testimonies of the interviewees. The emphasis is placed on faithfully representing their perspectives, rather than on abstract generalisation, to foreground the lived experiences of borderland residents and institutions.

In line with the research's ethical commitments, interviewees are not identified by name in this report. Instead, their affiliation is indicated (e.g., "employer," "commuter," "tourism professional"), ensuring anonymity while preserving the relevance of their institutional or social position.

[The impact of border controls on the mobility of workers in border areas](#)

The interviews clearly illustrate the multiple and sometimes long-lasting effects that border controls have had on labour mobility in cross-border regions. While the intensity and forms of disruption varied across different periods – as depicted above from the migration crisis to the Covid pandemic and the most recent reintroductions of controls – the testimonies share several common themes: delays, unpredictability, rerouting, stress, and loss of trust in the reliability of open borders.

The most emphatic outcome from the interviews is that the reintroduced checks intersect with a functional cross-border labour market between Western Hungary and Eastern Austria. Interviewees consistently distinguish relatively frictionless years before 2015/19 from the complications during COVID-19 and the episodic frictions that persist today. In essential care, checks combined with health measures generated documentation burdens and scheduling risk, even though services continued.

“Between 2007-2015 and 2015-2019, there were no restrictions due to border checks. However, during COVID, there were significant complications [...] and we had to ensure every commuter had the proper attestations.” (Austrian employer)

Consequently, the most acute time losses were associated with the pandemic: late arrivals, extended waits and, in some cases, ad-hoc accommodation near workplaces to ensure continuity of care and operations. These mitigation measures were quickly changing, adapting to the continuously modified cross-border protocols.

“During COVID, there were far more delays ... in some cases staff even spent the night with us.” (Austrian employer)

“During COVID, crossing the border was difficult. During the total lockdown, everything stopped, and afterwards, you could only cross the border with a Covid certificate or test. Actually, it wasn't the travel time that was the problem, but obtaining the certificates in time, which also incurred additional costs.” (Recruiter)

Communication in practice seems to rely on employers, local media and worker networks more than on centralised channels, except at the height of the pandemic. This path-dependency suggests the value of formalising localised, real-time information flows that can be activated when checks intensify.

“We received official information through our employer [...] our HR department sent the current information in condensed form.” (Commuter)

Partly as a consequence of the COVID measures, the number of Hungarian citizens migrating to Austria has doubled (see Figure 19): they opt for a more secure solution if the border is closed. Other workers rent a flat in Austria to avoid queuing and being late for their jobs.

The present regime is perceived as heterogeneous. Some recruiters, mayors and workers report no checks in recent years, while others recount episodic stops that require leaving earlier or selecting alternative routes. This heterogeneity maps onto time-of-day effects and crossing-point capacity.

“In recent years, I have not been checked at all; I do not know how often our workers are checked.” (Recruiter)

Modal choice shapes exposure to control-related delays. Rail commuters describe high reliability, with checks conducted on platforms or at stations rather than on board, while road users – particularly at minor crossings – face sporadic hold-ups that necessitate additional buffer time. Individual coping strategies include earlier departures and modal switching where possible.

“Train services were not particularly hindered by the changes ... people had to show documents, tests and vaccination certificates.” (Commuter)

Employers likewise emphasise cycling as a dependable fallback for last-mile reliability.

*“Our emergency solution is the bicycle, which for most of the year is a fully viable mode.”
(Employer)*

At most road border crossings, a speed limit is applied, which is supported by physical barriers like speed bumps, so-called ‘New Jersey type road safety barriers’ diverting the traffic, and, sometimes, speed cameras. The black uniformed policemen are present at the crossing, but in most cases, they don’t stop the vehicles, as one of the mayors put it:

“The border guard exits the booth at every fifth case, and it is even rarer that the traveller has to show the ID card or passport.” (Mayor)

Several accounts also highlight the limited intrusiveness of current practice for some users.

“I don’t think there is really control; I have never been stopped for random checks [...] border control is, one could say, lax.” (Commuter)

At the highway, which is the most frequented road by third-country nationals, the regime is different: vehicles are selected and randomly set aside. As a consequence, at that border crossing, longer (sometimes several hours long) waiting times and queues are generated. It causes problems, especially for those commuting there every day (they enter Austria between 4 and 8 a.m. and return between 3 and 8 p.m.). Long queues force the commuters to opt for alternative bypasses, increasing their travelling time and costs.

Apart from the highway crossing, reports of congestion concentrate at minor, single-lane crossings during episodic intensifications of checks, whereas major posts and rail nodes generally sustain throughput. Interviewees describe the Klagenfurt crossing as a high-capacity node, with control services redeployed to smaller posts during crises – an operational choice that can displace queuing to less resilient locations.

Consistently, stakeholders underline the structural limitation of one-lane posts under controls.

“At a small crossing with a single lane, they cannot do this.” (Recruiter)

Accordingly, the routing choices adapted too. Some commuters shifted to alternative crossing points or changed modes to mitigate perceived risk; others introduced additional buffer time to ensure their on-time arrival at the job place. Some workers report preferring minor posts in normal times, but reverting to high-capacity nodes or to rail when predictability matters.

Interviewees did not describe witnessing vehicles or passengers being turned back; instead, narratives centre on delays, documentation checks and queues.

Perceptions of proportionality vary. Some actors accept crisis-period checks as necessary, but others contest the marginal value of current practices relative to their cumulative time costs and their symbolic effect on an integrated border economy.

“I find these measures absolutely pointless ... and [commuters] keep Burgenland and this part of Lower Austria alive.” (Commuter)

Finally, the last-mile business impacts of unpredictability are modest but tangible. Small firms on the Austrian side report occasional customer-service frictions and express a preference for concise, real-time messaging channels to warn clients when staff are delayed by checks.

“Sometimes we are annoyed that we arrive late ... it would be good to have an information screen so in such cases we can message customers.” (Commuter)

The impact of border controls on tourism

The interviews with representatives of the tourism sector, as well as comments from commuters and local stakeholders, underline that border controls not only affected daily work-related mobility but also had some impact on tourism. In cross-border regions, tourism often depends on short-distance travel realised by day visitors, and event participants from the neighbouring country. The accounts show that border checks disrupted somewhat these flows, reduced spontaneity, and weakened the attractiveness of cross-border destinations.

Tourism stakeholders on the Hungarian side report no significant structural decline attributable to current controls. Visitor volumes appear stable, and cycling tourism – especially around Lake Fertő/Neusiedler See – has even strengthened. In this reading, reintroduced checks function more as episodic nuisances.

“Based on the figures of recent years we have not observed any decline ... what has strengthened is cycling tourism, especially around Lake Fertő.” (Tourism expert)

Professional relations and event cooperation remain intact. Municipal actors report routine collaboration with counterparts across the border, suggesting that the social infrastructure of cooperation in tourism has weathered the intermittent controls.

“Professional relations were not affected [...] there is good cooperation between the two countries and the two municipalities.” (Tourism expert)

Directional checks in the Kőszeg-Írottktő/Geschriebenstein area are characterised as manageable inconveniences rather than deterrents that would change trip choices. This qualitative assessment matches the absence of an observable downturn in local indicators cited by destination managers.

“On the Hungarian side traffic is not so tourism-related ... this does not affect volumes, it is just inconvenient.” (Tourism expert)

Measurement blind spots constrain precision. Local organisations do not routinely collect origin–destination or purpose-of-visit data that would allow isolation of a ‘border-control effect’, which limits the sensitivity of policy responses and marketing optimisation.

“There are no information or data on this [...] we do not ask where visitors come from or how long they plan to spend in Sopron.” (Tourism expert)

Transport supply aligns with this overall picture. During COVID-19, cross-border rail services were thinned; in the post-pandemic period they were restored and passenger volumes now exceed pre-COVID figures, supporting accessibility for tourism.

“During COVID we reduced services ... after COVID we gradually restored ... we now run almost the same number of services.” (Rail company)

Debates about prioritising commuters at checkpoints surface in the tourism domain because of potential reputational effects. Destination managers caution that visible prioritisation towards workers could be read as unwelcoming, undermining the open-border image valued by visitors.

“I do not think any level or form of prioritisation can work [...] it is important to let those in who come to see the city.” (Tourism expert)

The impact of border controls on cooperation

While border controls had clear effects on labour mobility and tourism, the interviews also revealed significant consequences for cross-border cooperation more broadly. Cooperation in border regions takes various forms, ranging from institutional partnerships between municipalities and cultural organisations to informal ties among residents. Everyday cross-border cooperation between municipalities and destination managers appears strong despite intermittent controls. Interview evidence indicates that routine professional ties, joint events and working-level contacts continued, reflecting institutionalised habits of cooperation in the euro-regional space.

“I have not experienced that. Professional relations were not affected ... there is good cooperation between the two countries and municipalities.” (Tourism expert)

At the same time, there are symptoms which indicate a gradual corruption of the previous level of cooperation. One of the first euroregions in the former communist bloc was established in the second half of the 1990s between Austria and Hungary, i.e. the West-Pannon Euroregion. The structure provided a stable framework for inter-institutional cooperation and reconciliation. The euroregion ceased its operation more than a decade ago, and the intensity of twinning has significantly dropped. Some interviewees reported a gradual increase in distrust and disinterest. Border closures played a non-negligible role in this process.

On the one hand, physical barriers to free movement during the COVID pandemic prevented the organisation of joint events and encounters. In this context, the example of Schattendorf (AT) has explanatory power for the future closures. In 2023, the local municipality decided to physically close the border crossing with Ágfalva (HU) to reduce the traffic within the village. The measure has increased the travelling time from the area to Vienna by 20 to 30 minutes, and interrupted interpersonal relations. Today, there is no longer communication between the mayors of the two neighbouring municipalities.

On the other hand, some mayors reported that the measures of the Austrian authorities are unpredictable and volatile. For instance, the traffic limitations are constantly changing along a certain cross-border road, and they are indicated through ad-hoc signs. Consequently, the travellers never know if they can cross the border, which harms mutual trust and cooperation as well.

Finally, the presence of border guards at the crossings has a negative message by itself: “You are not a welcome guest in our country”. This phenomenon reduces interest in cooperating, obviously.

Patterns in cross-border movement

When it comes to cross-border movement, it seems from the interviews that the reintroduction of checks did not fundamentally deter cross-border movements, but it did make people plan their trips more deliberately, with shopping and schooling patterns adapting rather than breaking:

“I think that in these periods people organised border crossing much more consciously, thinking everything through. But I believe people still crossed the border even when difficulties arose.” (Employer)

Especially that commuters link being stopped with a lingering unease, but do not see a collapse in appetite to work in Austria:

“Once you are checked at the border, uncertainty is always present... Workers just want to get to work and home as fast as possible. They are interested in taking jobs: I do not think it has decreased.” (Commuter)

In retail-related mobility, perceived price changes rather than the control regime itself reshaped who shops where:

“It did not really influence it. Austrians still go to Hungary to shop, but other changes (e.g. prices) mattered; if someone has no other business in Austria, they now cross less just to shop; rather, commuters shop over there after work before heading home.” (Employer)

Schooling and public-transport use appear sticky and resilient:

“The majority of students travelled to school by train, and COVID did not cause problems in rail services... I think such factors only held people back to a very small extent... Commuters don’t really have a choice; they adapt.” (Employer)

At the same time, some observe a post-COVID decline in inbound Austrian shopping to certain Hungarian towns and a gradual, longer-term reconfiguration of cross-border service use:

“Since COVID, this has practically minimised. The number of Austrians coming to Kőszeg has visibly decreased. On the Hungarian side, traffic is increasing, including to nurseries, kindergartens and schools. There is certainly a reconfiguration, shopping tourism is beginning to run out of steam, and the number going out to school has been increasing over the last 15–20 years.” (Employer)

In parallel, some commuters perceive a plateauing of new inflows from farther afield, driven as much by market saturation (especially in agriculture) and travel frictions as by checks per se.

“Interest among Hungarian workers has decreased to some extent. The market has become saturated, in certain jobs, almost only Hungarians or Slovaks work.” (Commuter)

Cross-border perceptions

Across sectors, interviewees largely depict stable or ambivalent attitudes rather than a sweeping shift in how Austrians and Hungarians view each other, with salient context effects during crisis periods. A recruiter observed that, amid the migration crisis, Austrian clients came to value neighbouring-country EU workers more positively than third-country hires, reframing proximity and shared EU status as assets.

“During the migration crisis, I experienced that my Austrian clients appreciated the worker who came from a neighbouring country more; the general opinion of EU-citizen guest workers became uniformly more positive.” (Recruiter)

Commuter narratives are mixed: some note instances of stereotyping and selective retail checks perceived to target Hungarians, coexisting with widespread everyday integration in border retail workforces, without a clear link to the border-control regime.

“Random checks at tills to filter thefts, concentrating on Hungarians. On the Hungarian side, there is no negative judgement, rather the lack of Austrians is noticeable.” (Commuter)

But at workplaces, there are also supportive and non-discriminatory experiences.

“I did not experience any negative perceptions. Our company gave us all support, there was no negative prejudice; my Austrian colleagues were rather supportive.” (Commuter)

Some interviewees pointed out a pragmatic reliance on Hungarian labour that tempers exclusionary talk:

“If Hungarians go home, hospitality collapses in two days. A double story: they worry we take their jobs, but at the same time they do not want to do these jobs.” (Commuter)

Municipal perspectives reinforce this functional interdependence, noting that authorities’ COVID-era restrictions were the main deterrent, while the Austrian border area depends on Hungarian workers, which incentivises smooth passage.

“The Austrian border area relies on Hungarian workers otherwise, shops cannot open and health services do not function.” (Civil servant)

Evaluation of the border regime

Across roles, the present Austrian checks are seen as light-touch but unevenly purposeful. Some actors report little direct contact with controls, raising questions about what the current setup actually delivers. Others experience the passive presence of police that nonetheless slows flows at certain times without a clear objective.

“I don’t know what this checking brings them... lately I don’t even see anyone being pulled over and checked; they are just passively present at the border.” (Commuter)

A transport-side view accepts targeted controls as legitimate and often non-disruptive when organised off-lane, even arguing for slightly firmer practice against smuggling.

“At present, they in no way hinder traffic. I think it is necessary, and I’d even say checks could be a bit stricter.” (Transport company)

By contrast, some commuters find the regime pointless and discriminatory, especially for daily workers who sustain local economies.

“I find them absolutely pointless... I don’t see much sense in hassling those who cross daily to work.” (Commuter)

Several mayors confirmed that the border checks have no effect: the smugglers have sophisticated methods to avoid the checkpoints (even through the green border), and they always know if there is a stricter control at a certain checkpoint. Accordingly, the Austrian and the Hungarian police cooperate in inland checks on the Hungarian side, which is much more efficient than the border checks. The presence of the policemen at the crossings is rather a symbolic measure to make the protective power of the state visible. The black uniform has a deterrent impact, but not only towards smugglers.

Awareness that long-running checks exceed earlier Schengen expectations is patchy and role-dependent. Some were unaware of the former time-limit logic, others say it is widely discussed locally that controls should not have persisted so long:

“I know, and in my environment, it is known – the Austrians also say – it should not have been maintained so long.” (Commuter)

Others capture a Central European scepticism about “temporary” measures:

“I think we know about it... when someone says a measure is temporary, it can last 10 or even 40 years.” (Commuter, alleging the officially “temporary presence of the Red Army” in Hungary during the communist era)

Views on allowing internal checks for up to three years are deeply split. Some stress state prerogatives and would tolerate firmer practice if needed:

“I think it is no bad thing to have such options; it is important that countries retain sovereignty.” (Transport company)

Others see little practical value if long-running checks have gone unpenalised anyway.

“I do not see the point if Austria can already maintain border restrictions for 10 years.” (Commuter)

“I find it problematic to have such a loophole... countries could use these measures for panic-mongering.” (Tourism expert)

A municipal macro-view adds that symbolic reassurance comes at a cost and that internal checks rarely meet a hard effectiveness test:

“The internal border is just a theatre... there is little point, yet it costs a lot for hauliers, we are talking millions of euros.” (Civil servant)

3.4.4 Conclusions and recommendations from a Euregional perspective

Conclusions regarding the current border regime at the Austrian-Hungarian border

The justification provided by Austria in the analysed notification submitted to the European Commission regarding the reintroduction of temporary internal border controls was in accordance with the Schengen rules. Moreover, it can be asserted that Austria's Federal Act on Identity Checks at the Border (Border Control Act – GrekoG) is consistent with the revised Schengen Borders Code.

However, an examination of the notification reveals several noteworthy conclusions that the authors of the study have drawn.

1. Before the 2015 migration crisis, the reintroduction of border controls in the Schengen area was not a common phenomenon, but rather an exceptional one. Following the migration crisis of 2015, despite a demonstrable decline in the wave of migration, the practice of reintroducing and maintaining border controls continued in the subsequent years and even became almost permanent. Despite the stipulations within the Schengen rules that border controls should be introduced only as an exceptional and last resort, the ever-expanding and constantly changing crises of recent years, in conjunction with the increasingly complex global threats and risks, have provided sufficient legal basis and justification for the maintenance of border controls. This phenomenon bears the potential to gradually erode the normative foundations of the Schengen system. In the case of the Austria-Hungary border, it established a distinctive pattern of governance, the perpetuation of uncertainty, and the strategic utilisation of temporary internal border controls as a key instrument of political governance.
2. The notification also demonstrates that Austria already possesses sufficient experience, practice, and equipment to reinstate or permanently extend existing "temporary" border controls at any time in the event of a crisis. In addition to so-called "traditional threats," events such as climate risks, cybersecurity, and disinformation are also being used to justify the reintroduction of temporary internal border controls. This course of action jeopardises the principle that internal border controls should only be introduced in exceptional circumstances, as a last resort. Moreover, there is currently no indication that the threats will diminish in the near future.
3. The analysis demonstrates that the reintroduction of such measures over the past decade has not been the result of simple administrative acts. "Rather, these measures are the product of multifaceted societal processes contextualized within specific political moments" (WILLE, 2025: 9). Despite the formal principle of free movement remains in place, in practice, it has undergone a process of erosion. The case of Austria clearly illustrates that the EU has imposed minimal effective restrictions on Member States' activities relating to reintroduction of the temporary internal border controls, while making significant efforts to maintain the normative basis of the Schengen system and to coordinate and monitor the temporary border controls. In addition, in his 2025 article on the Euractiv portal, Saenz de Tejada quotes Davide Colombi, a justice and home affairs researcher at CEPS, who highlights that „multiple bodies, including the EU’s top court, the Parliament, and the Court of Auditors, have questioned the necessity, proportionality, and the evidence behind the reintroduction of these border controls”, while EU countries “have consistently failed to provide evidence of how their introduction of border controls is a solution to the identified problem” (SAENZ DE TEJADA, 2025).

4. As the stakeholders living in the border area highlight, the measures introduced at the Austrian-Hungarian border have no salient impacts. As statistics show, the migration pressure at this border has been weakening since the COVID closures, and the smugglers prefer to avoid official border crossing points. This shortage is tackled through inland checks in both countries, within the cross-border region. However, the migratory pressure is much stronger today in Italy, in relation to which Austria did not introduce border controls.
5. The measures ensuring free cross-border flow of persons and goods within the cross-border region are not specified. The stakeholders assess this aspect differently, but the climate is surely not favourable for cooperation. Regardless of the clear orientation of the amended SBC concerning cross-border regions, the current regime does not contain measures but only superficial allusions protecting the free movement of cross-border citizens. Furthermore, through their legislation, the Member States have defined border regions instead of cross-border ones.

Recommendations

1. **EU-LEVEL POLICIES** – The most frequent argument to justify the reintroduction of border controls is the migratory pressure on the Member States. The current assessment does not target the migration policy of the European Union and its members. However, the recurring intergovernmental disputes concerning the measures taken, instead of mutual trust building, paralyses the joint project. The EU should decide whether it welcomes migrants and refugees or not, and adapt its policies accordingly. Otherwise, the border control mechanisms said “temporary” will become permanent, dismantling the European house.
2. **PREDICTABILITY** – If temporary border control is introduced along an internal border, the needs and interests of cross-border citizens should be given priority. Well-designed particular measures to take place in these cases should be summarised in pre-agreed resilience guides or contingency playbooks, the compilation of which presupposes the engagement of the affected citizens. Superficial measures may be prevented this way.
3. **COMMUNICATION** – Technology could facilitate cross-border mobility. If long waiting times develop at certain border crossings, an AI-based application could inform the commuters on the different alternative options (smart lanes), reducing the chance of traffic jams through distributing the traffic among border crossings.
4. **FUNCTIONALITY** – Both the delimitation of the **cross-border** regions and the identification of the emergency measures should be based on functional ties. The Schengen Member States mostly applied administrative factors to define the spatial expansion of the cross-border regions, neglecting the functional interdependencies. The Hungarian authorities applied a previous legal act defining the border area in a stripe covering the municipalities located within a distance of 20 km from the border, with derogations containing larger towns. As the participants of the focus group interview underlined, the current delimitation does not take into account the real geographic scope of cross-border flows. Many employees commute from a greater distance than 20 km, and the highways significantly distort travel time. The definition of the cross-border regions should be based on functional connections. Equally, in the case of temporary closures, the spatial realities should govern the interventions, reflecting the everyday practices of the cross-border citizens.

3.5 Case study: Luxembourg-Germany

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3.5.1 Introduction to the cross-border region

This case study focuses on the German-Luxembourgish borderland as depicted in Figure 25. In conformity with Article 39 of the Schengen Borders Code Luxembourg declared its whole territory as a cross-border region whereas Germany demarcated its cross-border regions according to the NUTS-3 category of German “Kreise” and “Kreisfreie Städte”. At the Luxembourgish border the three Kreise Merzig-Wadern (Saarland), Trier-Saarburg and Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm (Rhineland-Palatinate) located directly at the border were defined as cross-border regions. It is noteworthy that the city Trier, being surrounded by a Kreis, was excluded from the definition, although it is located in the vicinity of the border.¹⁵²

The current border line was decided by the two countries in 1984 in the ‘Deutsch-Luxemburgischer Vertrag’.¹⁵³ Running between Luxembourg's eastern and Germany's western frontier of the states Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, the border stretches along approximately 135 km. The three rivers, namely the Our, the Sauer/Sûre and the Moselle serve as key natural demarcation lines. The border rivers are so-called condominiums and are therefore jointly administered by both states. This means that the German border ends on the Luxembourg bank of the rivers and the Luxembourg border on the German bank.¹⁵⁴ Only seven kilometres of the border around Vianden (L) are adjacent land borders.¹⁵⁵ The border is demarcated in the south by the trilateral border between Luxembourg, Germany and France, namely the village of Schengen, birthplace of the Schengen Agreement.¹⁵⁶ In the north the border ends at a Tri-border area near the German village of Sevenig, the Luxembourgish village of Lieler, as well as the Belgian village of Ouren.

¹⁵² European Union (2025): Official Journal of the European Union C, C/2025/4643, 18 August 2025.

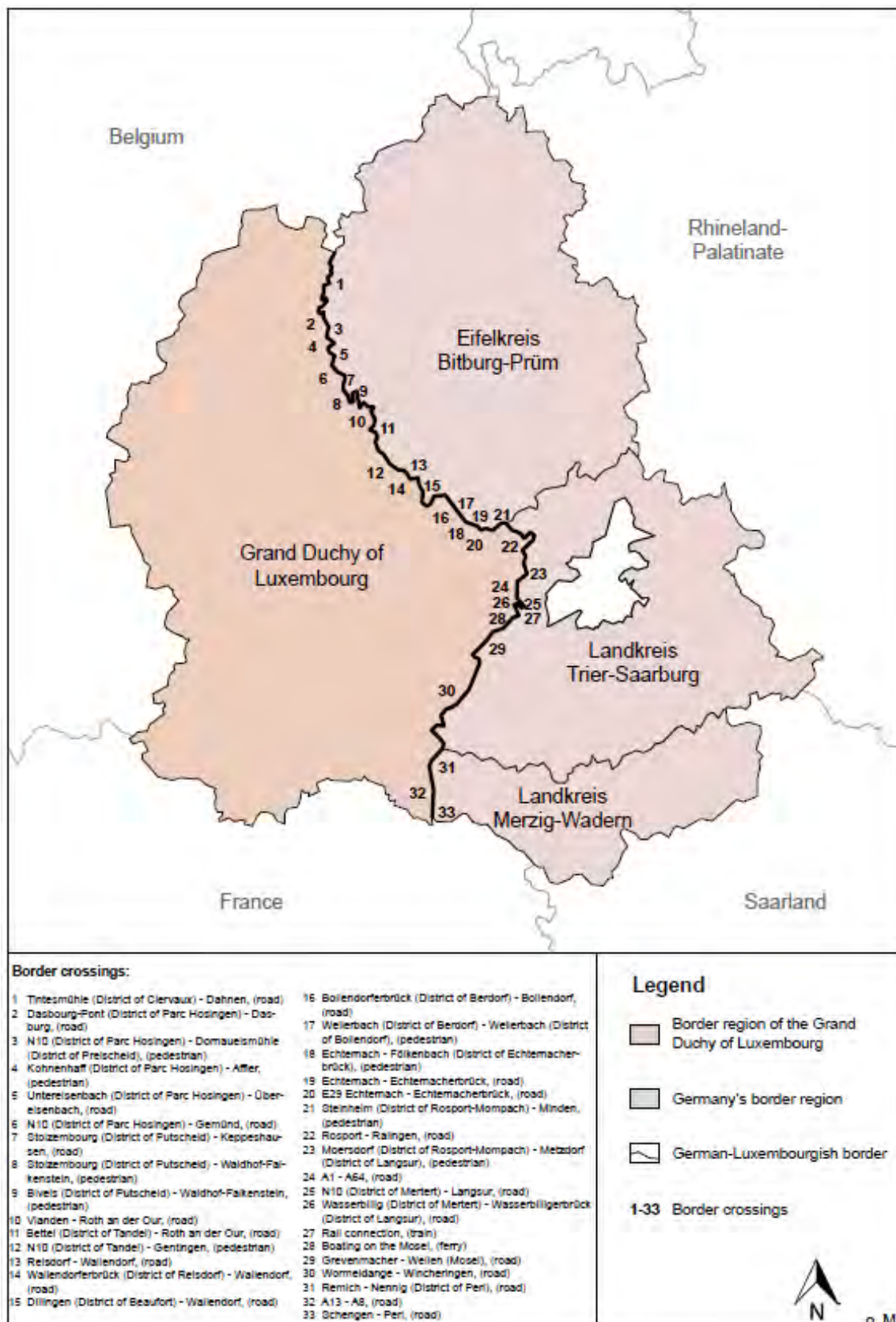
¹⁵³ GR-Atlas (n.d.): GA090 1984: Deutschland, Luxemburg.

¹⁵⁴ Floergie (2020): Die Deutsch-Luxemburgische Grenze [besserer Ton].

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Luxembourg for tourism (2025): Schengen.

Figure 25: German-Luxembourgish borderland with border crossings + Own depiction, based on Eurostat 2024, Lokale Verwaltungseinheiten - GISCO: Geographische Informationen und Karten - Eurostat*



The German-Luxembourgish borderland is a geographically diverse border region from the perspectives of human and physical geography. It is largely rural. Only the spaces around the major urban centres of Trier and Saarbrücken, as well as Luxembourg City, Esch-sur-Alzette and the Nordstad, are more densely populated.¹⁵⁷ As part of the polycentric cross-border metropolitan region 'Greater Region' together with France and Belgium, the German-Luxembourgish borderland is a very integrated functional space. A high number of commuters cross the borders every day to work or study in the neighbouring country, access services and goods, spend their free time and to live across borders. In addition to the 51,700 daily German commuters¹⁵⁸, approximately 12,700 Germans currently live in Luxembourg, including many dual nationals.¹⁵⁹ At the same time approximately 23,000 Luxembourgish nationals live in Germany.¹⁶⁰ Currently 4,930 of them live in Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland but continue to work in Luxembourg.¹⁶¹

Several cross-border governance structures exist between Luxembourg and Germany and on multiple layers (see

Figure 26). Germany and Luxembourg exchange bilaterally at national level based on current needs and on topics of national competence such as taxes. Currently, they have exchanged frequently about the German police controls at the Luxembourgish border. The regional cooperation within the Greater Region is highly institutionalised and experienced. It started during the common steel crisis, when in 1971 an intergovernmental commission with state representatives from Luxembourg, the German Länder Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate and France was established. It was converted into a Summit of the Executives in 1995 and has involved the competent Länder rather than German national bodies. The Summit comprises several thematic working groups - e.g. on transport, environment, spatial development, labour market and education - and is coordinated by a secretariat with the legal nature of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). Recently, cooperation within the working group aimed at coordinating spatial development across the borders led to the creation of a cross-border spatial development concept (REKGR), among other outcomes.

The Summit is further supported in its decisions by cross-border institutions such as the Economic and Social Committee of the Greater Region (WSAGR), the Labour Market Observatory (IBA), the Task-Force

¹⁵⁷ Ministerium des Innern und für Sport des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz (2008): Landesentwicklungsprogramm (LEP IV), 86; Ministerium für Inneres, Bauen und Sport des Saarlandes (2006): Landesentwicklungsplan, 1000; DATer (2023): PDAT, 86 ff.

¹⁵⁸ IGSS & IBA (2025): Grenzgänger nach Luxemburg.

¹⁵⁹ Auswärtiges Amt (2025): Luxemburg und Deutschland: Bilaterale Beziehungen.

¹⁶⁰ Statista (2024): Entwicklung der Migrationsbewegungen zwischen Deutschland und Luxemburg im Zeitraum 2016 bis 2023.

¹⁶¹ IGSS & BA & IBA (2025): Atypische Grenzgänger in der Großregion 2025.

‘Grenzgänger’ for Cross-border Workers, the University of the Greater Region (UniGR) and the Geographical Information System of the Greater Region (GISGR). Since 1995, local authorities from across the German-Luxembourgish cross-border region, including municipalities located further inland, have been cooperating within the EuRegio SaarLorLux+ framework. In the past ten years, new cooperation initiatives have emerged to address cross-border functional spaces along the German-Luxembourgish border: the Upper Moselle Valley Development Concept (EOM) which aims at enhancing cross-border regional spatial development in the Moselle river valley, the Müllerthal-Our-Südeifel cross-border functional area (MOSE) which encompasses one German and two Luxembourgish nature parcs and the cross-border region Eifel-Ostbelgien-Éislek (EOE) which also includes municipalities from the northern part of German-speaking Community (Ostbelgien) and aims to enhance the attractiveness of the region while promoting cross-border regional development. Cross-border cooperation in the borderland is facilitated financially by the Interreg A programme of the Greater Region, which is organised as an EGTC.¹⁶²

In this case study area, the borders are controlled by one side only. While Luxembourg does not control its borders, Germany reintroduced border controls at the Luxembourgish border in September 2024. The German Federal Police conducts checks at various locations between the Luxembourgish border and up to 30 kilometres inland into Germany.¹⁶³ Currently (i.e. in September 2025) there is only one permanent stationary border control between Germany and Luxembourg at the motorway A64 close to Trier. Further border crossings are controlled with random mobile checks. The selection of suitable checkpoints is said to be reviewed and adjusted regularly¹⁶⁴. The start of the current border controls was announced one week in advance by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior: They notified the European Commission on 9th September 2024 about their decision to control their borders to increase the internal security of Germany.¹⁶⁵ Originally, the controls were limited to six months but have been prolonged twice since then. In February 2025, border controls were extended at all of Germany’s external borders, following an assessment that deemed them generally effective and necessary to achieve the originally defined objectives. This was underpinned by statistical data such as the number of illegal entries, smugglers arrested, and rejections, as well as declining asylum applications.¹⁶⁶ In May 2025, following the formation of the new federal government, the existing border controls were intensified using more staff and the police was instructed to reject asylum seekers already at the border,¹⁶⁷ a procedure that is legally disputed¹⁶⁸. In September, Germany notified the European Commission about prolonged controls until March 2026. It was justified with the need to further combat illegal migration.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶² Interreg Großregion (n.d.): Finanzierung: Die funktionale Räume.

¹⁶³ Bundespolizei (2025): Kontrollen im Grenzraum.

¹⁶⁴ Interview Federal Police Germany, 29.07.2025.

¹⁶⁵ BMI (2024): Binnengrenzkontrollen an allen deutschen Landgrenzen angeordnet.

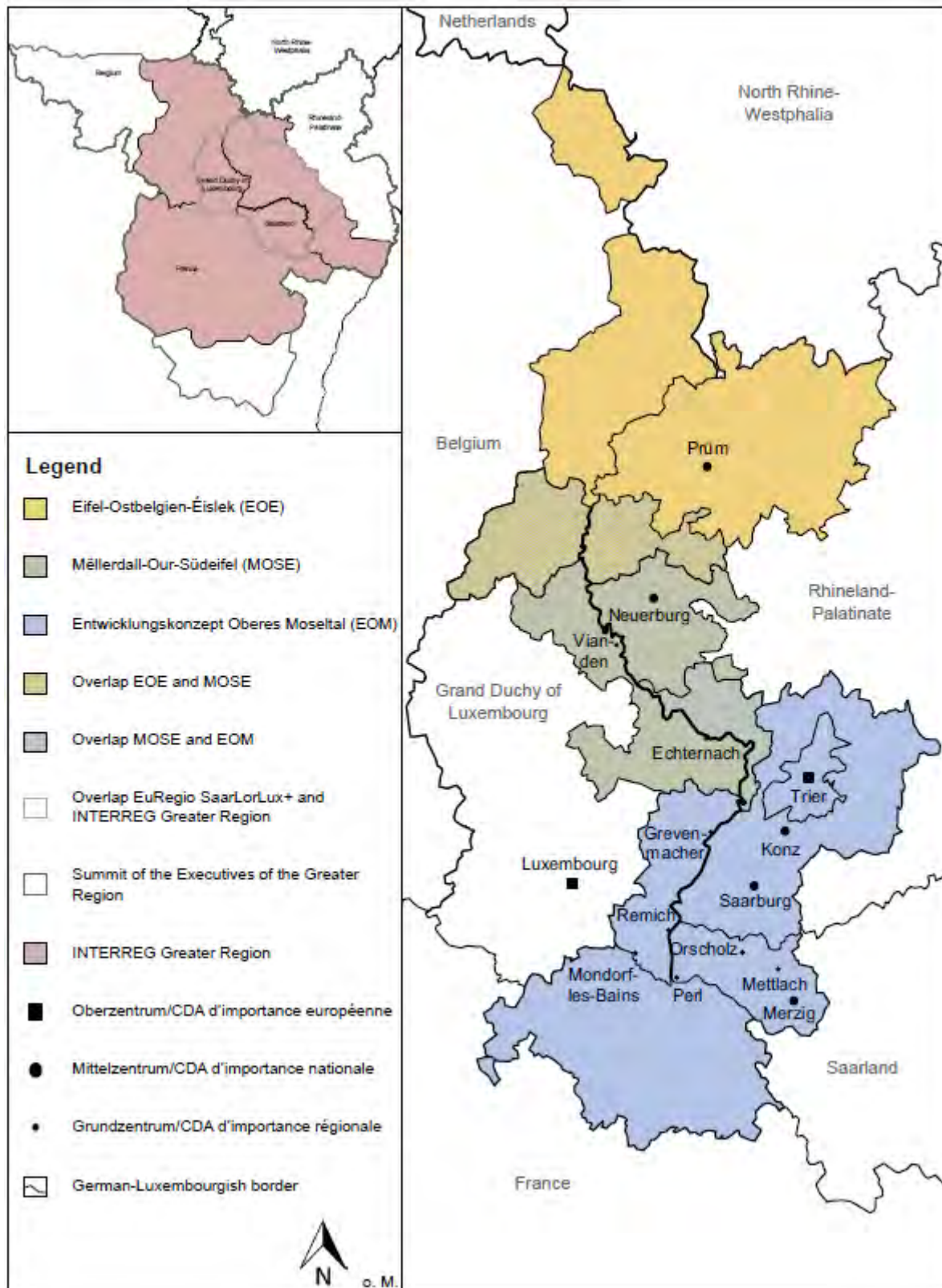
¹⁶⁶ BMI (2025): Pressemitteilung. Bundesministerin Faeser ordnet Verlängerung der Grenzkontrollen an allen deutschen Landgrenzen für weitere sechs Monate an.

¹⁶⁷ Interview Federal Police Germany, 29.07.2025.

¹⁶⁸ BPB (2024): Grenzkontrollen bei der Einreise nach Deutschland; Thym, Daniel (2024): Nun also doch? Zurückweisungen von Asylbewerbern aufgrund einer “Notlage”; Lehnert, Matthias & Nestler, Robert (2024): Der Mythos von der Notlage; ECCHR (n.d.): Kontrollen und Zurückweisungen an den deutschen Grenzen. Fragen und Antworten.

¹⁶⁹ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

Figure 26: Cross-border governance structures of the German-Luxembourgish borderland, own depiction based on Eurostat 2024, [Lokale Verwaltungseinheiten - GISCO: Geographische Informationen und Karten - Eurostat, GIS-GR 2025, https://www.sig-gr.eu/de/cartes-thematiques/amenagement-territoire/zones-fonctionnelles-transfrontalieres/2025.html](https://www.sig-gr.eu/de/cartes-thematiques/amenagement-territoire/zones-fonctionnelles-transfrontalieres/2025.html) and Euregio SaarLorLux+ 2025, <https://euregio.lu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/representants-AG-EuRegio.pdf>*



Regular border controls between Germany and Luxembourg ended in March 1995 when the Schengen Agreement entered into force. Since then, temporary border controls were reintroduced due to special events such as NATO Summits or European football championships.¹⁷⁰ The COVID 19 pandemic in March 2020 initiated a three-month-long period where certain border crossings were completely shut while others were controlled. Exceptions were made for cross-border commuters: only individuals with valid documentation and in good health were allowed to cross.¹⁷¹ From June to July 2024, controls were reinstated during the European Championships. The objective was to identify politically motivated extremists and violent football supporters.¹⁷²

3.5.2 Evaluation of the theme of Euregional Cohesion

German perspective

From a German perspective, the Federal Police coordinated their border controls closely with the neighbouring countries, particularly with their police and customs authorities¹⁷³. In the border regions of this case study the cooperation is based on a bilateral police agreement between Germany and Luxembourg that was signed in 1995. In 2003 they established a joint police cooperation centre in Luxembourg City where representatives of the police and customs authorities work together in an international team.¹⁷⁴ This cooperation also involves representatives from police and customs authorities from France and Belgium. Ten years later, both countries signed the so-called Treaty of Prüm and agreed to exchange police data and to participate in forms of joint operative cooperation.¹⁷⁵ The intensity of police cooperation has further increased further since August 2025, with additional joint patrols focusing on cross-border crime.¹⁷⁶

Besides police exchanges, bilateral meetings of national politicians were convened to identify and resolve key challenges. For instance, the ministers of the interior met to address traffic disruptions caused by stationary border controls on the motorway near Schengen and agreed to abolish the permanent control while allowing the German police to pre-identify vehicles for inspection on Luxembourgish territory.¹⁷⁷

There is also an exchange at the Länder level: Luxembourg and the German Länder Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate conduct bilateral government consultations within the framework of joint cabinet meetings¹⁷⁸ and further bilateral exchanges. In the latest consultations between Luxembourg and Rhineland-Palatinate, and in the 'Luxemburgplan' (2025) of Saarland, the parties agreed that border controls should be abolished as soon as possible.¹⁷⁹ Additional cross-border coordination mechanisms of other official

¹⁷⁰ tagesschau.de (2009): Grenzkontrollen wegen NATO-Gipfel.

¹⁷¹ Wehrmann, Rebecca (2025): Frust, Umwege und Sorgen: Als Corona die Grenzen schloss; Schacht, Kira (2019): Grenzkontrollen in EU-Ländern stellen Schengen infrage.

¹⁷² Heuser, Martin (2025): Verschärfte Grenzkontrollen - Keine Entlastung für Pendler und Reisende in Sicht.

¹⁷³ Interview Federal Police Germany, 29.07.2025.

¹⁷⁴ Police Grand-Ducale (2023): Direktion internationale Beziehungen.

¹⁷⁵ BMI (n.d.): Zusammenarbeit über Grenzen hinweg.

¹⁷⁶ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeoises, 08.09.2025.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Ministerium für auswärtige und europäische Angelegenheiten, Verteidigung, Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Außenhandel (2025): Bilaterale Beziehungen und regionale Zusammenarbeit.

¹⁷⁹ Landesregierung Rheinland-Pfalz (2025): Ministerpräsident Alexander Schweitzer: Rheinland-Pfalz und Luxemburg sind starke Partner im Herzen von Europa; Landesregierung Saarland (2025): Luxemburgplan.

bodies like municipalities were not detected in the study. There is no indication that Germany has trusted Luxembourg any less since the reintroduction of border controls. However, German internal trust seems to have suffered in some cases: inhabitants of a German border village lost trust in the German government because the concerns of cross-border municipalities were not adequately heard in the national decisions regarding border controls.¹⁸⁰ The management of the cross-border joint body EOM reported a damaged trust in the support from the regional government of Rhineland-Palatinate because the latter's political statement against the controls came very late.¹⁸¹

In August 2025, the Minister of the Interior (D) and the Chancellor (D) - both members of the Christian Democratic Party - stated that border controls would remain in place until the EU strengthens the protection of its external borders, as they deemed the measures necessary.¹⁸² Meanwhile, the social democratic governments of the German Länder Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate strongly criticized the border controls and are calling on the federal government to end them as they challenge the integrated cross-border economy.¹⁸³ There is a clear divide in the attitude towards border controls between voters and politicians of different political parties.¹⁸⁴

A nation-wide survey by YouGov Germany in July 2025 shows that 70% of German citizens support the border controls, while merely 21% reject them. However, compared to September 2024, when approval rates reached 80%, support has declined.¹⁸⁵ Our own survey from September 2025, polling 205 cross-border commuters from the German-Luxembourgish border region,¹⁸⁶ shows a different picture. A clear majority (47%) was against the controls, while only 27% were in favour and 26% were neutral. Arguments in favour of the controls dealt with a higher security and the prevention of the exploitation of the German social system by 'the uncontrolled entering of migrants'. Border controls would send 'a signal that crossing the border is not permitted to everyone and that borders serve to restore security'. The 'neutral' commuters often referred to the safety aspect as well but could not fully support the controls due to existing EU agreements and common values such as open borders, the European Internal Market, the EU Integrated Border Management and the observed inefficiency of the controls. Besides criticising border controls to be inefficient and costly, opponents assessed border controls to be discriminatory as they 'damage the European idea, the EU, social cohesion and international understanding'. People expressed a desire for safety in the cross-border region both in terms of controlling entry into the area and from the perspective of commuting residents, who may feel discriminated against by police when crossing the border.

In terms of cohesion, a high number of commuters referred to the Schengen agreement and 'open borders' and wish the controls to be lifted as soon as possible. The internal border controls are 'a step backwards' and reminded several of them of the 'customs border' before the Schengen Treaty came into

¹⁸⁰ Interview Echternacherbrück, 09.10.2025.

¹⁸¹ Interview EOM, 10.10.2025.

¹⁸² tagesschau.de (2025a): Fast 12.000 Zurückweisungen an deutschen Grenzen.

¹⁸³ Wientjes, Bernd (2025): Keine Kontrolle mehr an der Grenze zu Luxemburg: Hoffnung auch für Pendler in der Region?

¹⁸⁴ YouGov Deutschland GmbH (2025): Wie stehen Bürgerinnen und Bürger in Deutschland zu Grenzkontrollen und Freizügigkeit innerhalb der EU.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ The majority of the cross-border commuters consulted crossed the German-Luxembourgish border to work (82), shop (79) and/or spend their free time (74) in the neighbouring country. Only five persons mentioned that they crossed the border for education. Multiple answers were possible.

place. Others draw a comparison with the border closings during COVID, noting that political responses at the time appeared to offer more favourable procedures for cross-border commuters. Many commuters expressed a strong sense of European identity and, as a result, insisted on their right to freely cross the border, calling the controls ‘anti-European’. Border controls feel like being torn apart across borders ‘like being a child of divorce with two parents who are fighting, and neither of them wants you to be happy’. Some addressed their fear that the image of ‘Europe’ and the European idea would be damaged by the controls, so that people would ultimately drift further apart instead of cooperating more. Another person is unimpressed by the controls and states that, for him, this border would no longer exist except on the map.

French, German and Luxembourgish pupils of the Schengen-Lyzeum in Perl reported mixed feelings because of the controls that they experienced on their way to the school. They expressed fear of police officers equipped with machine guns when checking pupils crossing the border. While acknowledging that the controls are intended to enhance safety. They question the necessity of such heavy armament. The pupils would prefer to cross without controls and worry that the controls signal a step back to pre-Schengen conditions.¹⁸⁷ According to their teachers, border controls are frequently perceived as synonymous with closed borders, undermining cross-border cooperation, the European spirit and European Cohesion. Such measures may prompt a return to compartmentalised thinking defined by national borders and challenge core principles of this cross-border school. Overall, the number of Luxembourgish pupils has declined since the COVID-19 pandemic when several Luxembourgish citizens lost trust in Germany due to border closures at that time.¹⁸⁸

A representative of the village of Echternacherbrück expressed his wish for less populism and more mutual understanding and respect in his village. He argues that border controls merely appease anti-European voters that reject open borders for ideological reasons. However, the majority of residents in the village were pro-European and opposed symbolic border controls.¹⁸⁹ According to the manager of EOM years of effort had been invested in removing borders from people’s minds, yet these controls are perceived as contributing to their reemergence. During the COVID-19 border closures, unequal treatment was apparent: Germans were allowed to work and buy fuel in Luxembourg, while Luxembourgers were not allowed to do their grocery shopping in Germany. Decisions were made far away in Berlin without taking into account the needs of border regions. The manager of EOM fears that the controls pose a threat to the principle of free movement in the cross-border region, because many commuters have stated that they no longer wish to endure the travel stress associated with border controls.¹⁹⁰ Some cross-border commuters directly appealed to the governments of both countries, urging Luxembourg to take a stronger stance against German policies and calling on Germany to make sensible and fair political decisions that respect joint ‘German-Luxembourgish interests.

German border villages located in the German-Luxembourgish borderland with a high number of Luxembourgish inhabitants, assess the impact of the border controls in very different ways. The majority (i.e. the villages of Wellen, Langsur/Wasserbilligerbrück, Wallendorf, Roth an der Our, Körperich and Dasburg, Echternacherbrück) reported limited impacts on the daily lives of their inhabitants because of

¹⁸⁷ SR (2025a): Wie Grenzkontrollen das Miteinander in der Region verändern: Beispiel Schengen-Lyzeum Perl.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Interview Echternacherbrück, 09.10.2025.

¹⁹⁰ Interview EOM, 10.10.2025.

mostly little or no congestions due to the controls. Their inhabitants still cross the border for work or for doing their shopping.¹⁹¹ The manager of the MOSE region draws a comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic where the region suffered considerably more, mainly because certain border crossings were completely shut and traffic was channelled towards one single border crossing between Echternach and Echternacherbrück.¹⁹² Due to its high level of interconnection, including educational institutions and shared infrastructure as well as its location at the A8–A13 motorway junction, the border municipality of Perl has noted a significant impact of the border controls on the daily lives of its residents, many of which cross the border every day.¹⁹³ The local border crossing was used as a detour from the motorway, resulting in congestion,¹⁹⁴ and the controls were reported to disrupt the lives of the region's inhabitants, causing economic and social disadvantages. Several shops experienced a decline in customers, as people from the other side of the border feared long delays when crossing the border.¹⁹⁵ Due to the close cooperation and integration between Wellen (DE) and Grevenmacher (LU), the 'open border' was highly significant for both sides. However, the mayor of Wellen did not report impacts on daily life comparable to those observed in Perl.¹⁹⁶ Housing demand among Luxembourgish nationals was reported to have continued to grow in all but one village: in Echternacherbrück, the housing demand had slightly decreased. Luxembourgish nationals expressed reluctance to buy property in Germany, preferring to wait and see how the situation with the border controls evolved. Some feared that the borders could be permanently closed again.¹⁹⁷

At every meeting, members of the Summit of the Greater Region, emphasised how important freedom of movement within the Greater Region actually is.¹⁹⁸ In its latest joint declaration, the Summit advocates for the restoration of the principle of free movement without border controls within the EU as soon as this becomes possible. It also emphasises that the control measures should be proportionate in order to preserve cross-border everyday continuity in the Greater Region as much as possible, in accordance with the revised Schengen Borders Code.¹⁹⁹ The impact of border controls on the work of cross-border joint bodies such as the functional spaces of the German-Luxembourgish borderland differs. The bodies reported that their staff experienced challenges and delays in reaching the office due to the congestions.²⁰⁰ Inconveniences with regard to everyday journeys, events or operational project activities are expected. However, the will and trust of the involved parties to cooperate has not decreased.²⁰¹ The reintroduction of controls are not considered to be a fundamental threat to the spirit of strategic cooperation.²⁰² The manager of MOSE sees the border controls as a violation of the principle of free movement in the EU and considers cross-border regions as victims of their negative effects.²⁰³ Cooperation at the administrative level of the joint bodies has remained constructive and solution-oriented. Still, border controls may have a symbolic and practical negative impact on the feeling of a cross-border region.²⁰⁴ Border controls were

¹⁹¹ Interview Dasburg, 30.09.2025; Interview Langsur, 07.10.2025; Interview Roth an der Our, 25.09.2025; Interview Körperich, 29.09.2025; Interview Wellen, 11.09.2025; Interview Wallendorf, 09.09.2025; Interview Echternacherbrück, 09.10.2025

¹⁹² Interview MOSE, 10.10.2025.

¹⁹³ Gemeng Schengen (2024): Déclaration commune contre les contrôles aux frontières actuels.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*; Interview Perl, 01.10.2025.

¹⁹⁵ Interview Perl, 01.10.2025.

¹⁹⁶ Interview Wellen, 11.09.2025.

¹⁹⁷ Interview Echternacherbrück, 9.10.2025.

¹⁹⁸ Interview Summit of the Greater Region, 14.10.2025.

¹⁹⁹ Gipfel der Großregion (2024): Gemeinsame Erklärung des Gipfels der Großregion - 19. Gipfel der Großregion unter rheinland-pfälzischer Präsidentschaft, Mainz, den 13. Dezember 2024.

²⁰⁰ Interview EOM, 10.10.2025

²⁰¹ Interview EOE, 29.09.2025; Interview MOSE, 10.10.2025.

²⁰² Interview EOE, 29.09.2025.

²⁰³ Interview MOSE, 10.10.2025.

²⁰⁴ Interview EOE, 29.09.2025.

discussed frequently in meetings. The border controls made stakeholders perceive the border as a barrier again²⁰⁵ and created existential resentments.²⁰⁶ In order not to jeopardise public confidence in the European idea, border controls should remain temporary.²⁰⁷

Overall, the introduction of border controls by Germany led to an increased controversial communication between the two national governments and apparently a boost of police cooperation and coordination. The majority of the German mayors of border villages did not report strong impacts on the daily lives of their inhabitants due to the flexible border controls even though many Luxembourgish citizens and cross-border commuters live there. Beside visible impacts, opponents fear that border controls hinder cross-border cohesion, increase the separation and discrimination of neighbours and reduce cross-border cooperation. Although the borders are not closed, the police controls are considered to be a severe constraint to their openness in the minds of the border citizens. Also, experts point to negative intangible effects, such as the border being perceived as a dividing barrier again and neighbouring countries viewing the controls in part as isolationism. 'Border controls are slowing down progress in all economic and social areas and hindering cooperation between nations'.²⁰⁸ Also the resolution of the UECC criticizes that the controls interfered with the cross-border mobility of goods and people, leading to mistrust and resentment towards neighbouring countries, placing a strain on everyday family life, and hindering economic growth.²⁰⁹ This means the Euregional Cohesion risks to be reduced due to the border controls in the long run.

Luxembourgish perspective

From Luxembourg's perspective, the reintroduction and prolongation of border controls by Germany are interpreted rather differently. Experts from national, regional and local public institutions have reported that the border controls have disrupted the cohesion and governance structures of the Greater Region. For them, these structures are more than just of an administrative nature. They represent a complex web of multilevel cooperation, shared institutions, and cross-border functional integration. Their responses highlight to what extent the Greater Region operates through a mix of formal agreements and informal practices that facilitate joint planning, mobility, and socio-economic exchange across national borders. Since the beginning of the border controls, Luxembourg has maintained a pragmatic approach to cross-border cooperation. The operational coordination between police forces is a case in point. As documented, this cooperation is not framed as border control per se, but as a joint effort to combat crime in the border region.²¹⁰ Arrangements such as joint patrols and data exchange continue to function, with ministers and authorities from both countries maintaining a regular and constructive dialogue, and continuing to coordinate their actions within the framework of existing as well as updated bilateral agreements and multilateral structures - even as political tensions rise. One concrete example of these cooperative efforts was the easing of controls on the Saar motorway back in summer 2025, which

²⁰⁵ Interview EOM, 10.10.2025.

²⁰⁶ Interview MOSE, 10.10.2025.

²⁰⁷ Interview EOE, 29.09.2025.

²⁰⁸ Interview Handwerkskammer Trier, 9.11.2025.

²⁰⁹ UECC (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten Milliarden - und zerstören das Herz Europas, 2.

²¹⁰ Interview Police Grand-ducale, 05.09.2025; Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025

illustrates the Luxembourgish desire to facilitate traffic flow and reduce associated socio-economic repercussions while maintaining border security. Nevertheless, this reflects a form of value-driven pragmatism, where Luxembourg seeks to preserve functional cross-border cooperation with its German counterpart despite the latter imposing rather unilateral governance norms on the former.

However, the repeated extensions of German border controls (without prior consultation) have exposed the limits of this pragmatism. Luxembourg's diplomatic protest, including formal objections to the European Commission, signals discontent but stops short of escalation.²¹¹ The decision not to pursue legal action, despite calls from civil society and legal experts, underlines a preference for bilateral dialogue over judicial confrontation. This cautious stance may reflect Luxembourg's strategic calculation as a small state, but it also reveals the fragility of Euregional governance when faced with asymmetric power dynamics.

The media discourse in the Grand Duchy reveals a growing trust deficit among citizens, not only toward Germany's actions but also toward the EU and the Schengen border system itself. Media reports document widespread frustration over the lack of transparency, the unpredictability and effectiveness of controls, and the symbolic erosion of Schengen as a space of unity.²¹² This sentiment has been observed to be shared by citizens on both sides of the border. For them, the border controls are primarily seen as an obstacle to the fundamental principle of free movement of people, while failing to achieve one of their stated purposes, i.e. effective immigration control. In response, Luxembourg established a citizen contact point (grenzkontrollen@gouvernement.lu)²¹³, which received over 170 messages from affected individuals.²¹⁴ While this initiative signals an attempt to restore public trust and to collect valuable feedback from the citizens, its impact appears limited. Realistically, the contact point functions primarily as a 'listening device', not as a mechanism for policy change or institutional accountability. It reflects the government's awareness of public discontent but also its constrained capacity to act decisively. The measure's mitigated success lies in its symbolic value rather than its transformative potential. Luxembourg's political trajectory in this context has been non-linear. Rather, it has been marked by alternating phases of criticism, caution, cooperation, and ambivalence. The timeline reconstructed from media sources shows an initial wave of protest (September 2024), followed by legal uncertainty and public frustration (December–February), a turn toward cooperative gestures (April–May), and a period of mixed signals (June–August). This trajectory reflects both the complexity of the situation and the strategic dilemmas faced by a small state navigating between principle and pragmatism. On one hand, this non-linearity can be seen as a weakness, suggesting indecision or lack of strategic clarity. On the other hand, it may reflect Luxembourg's adaptive capacity: its ability to respond flexibly to shifting political conditions

²¹¹ Klein, Thomas (2024): Deutschland verlängert Grenzkontrollen - Luxemburg will Einspruch einlegen; Thill, Alexandra (2025): Organisationen fordern Gerichtsverfahren gegen Deutschlands Grenzkontrollen; Javel, Florian (2025a): Wie die Regierung vor den deutschen Grenzkontrollen klein beigt.

²¹² Wort.lu (2024): Neue Geduldsprobe? Deutschland ordnet wieder Grenzkontrollen an; Javel, Florian (2025b): Wie effektiv die deutschen Grenzkontrollen bisher wirklich waren; Saenz de Tejada, Miriam (2025): Im Schengen-Raum sind Grenzkontrollen die neue Normalität; Wort.lu (2025): Deutscher Innenminister: Wir halten Grenzkontrollen aufrecht.

²¹³ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025

²¹⁴ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025

while preserving core interests. The absence of a clear escalation path, such as legal proceedings, may be less about passivity and more about maintaining room for manoeuvre in a volatile regional context.

The tangible effects of border controls, i.e. commuting delays, reduced cross-border shopping, and logistical disruptions, are generally well documented (see the following sections in this chapter). The Schengen border has recently become a site of friction according to most experts, where the ideals of European freedom challenge the realities of national security and administrative asymmetry. This has in return profound implications for the Greater Region's regional identity, not only a political space but also a lived space, where hundreds of thousands of people cross borders daily for work, education, healthcare, and leisure. The current mobility restrictions threaten this identity, replacing it with uncertainty and fragmentation.

In this context the words of Léon Gloden, Luxemburgish minister for home affairs: 'We must avoid recreating borders in people's minds. Schengen must remain alive! [...] Unnecessary disruptions to cross-border traffic must be prevented, in the interests of the daily lives of the inhabitants of the Greater Region. We are not a border region, we are the Greater Region'²¹⁵ - underscore the symbolic dimension of border governance. His statement reflects an awareness that the persistence of mental borders can be as detrimental to regional cohesion as physical ones. However, while Gloden's appeal to preserve the "spirit of Schengen" resonates with the ideal of European integration, it simultaneously reveals the fragility of this ideal when confronted with the national imperatives of control. The challenge, therefore, lies not only in preventing material disruptions to cross-border mobility but also in maintaining the normative and affective foundations upon which the identity of the Greater Region rests.

The 'consented procedure' introduced in August 2025 on the 'Saar-Autobahn' (A13/A8), where vehicles are identified on Luxembourgish territory and controlled on the German side,²¹⁶ represents on one hand a significant improvement to the flow of mobility, road-safety and the beginning of the desired return to normality. On the other hand, it represents a pragmatic workaround, which also illustrates the shift from integration to managed separation. Luxembourg's pragmatism without clear assertiveness risks becoming accommodation as it seems to operate in a political setting where unilateralism is tolerated, legal safeguards are slow, and public trust is fading. The Grand Duchy, so it appears, has failed so far to develop and articulate a strategic vision that goes beyond managing disruptions. For that, Luxembourg first needs to reimagine its role in a region where cohesion can no longer be taken for granted.

3.5.3 Evaluation of the European Integration theme

German perspective

The start of the border controls was announced one week in advance by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior: they notified the European Commission on 9th September 2024. The internal border controls

²¹⁵ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025.

²¹⁶ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 08.09.2025.

were introduced to increase the internal security, e.g. against the backdrop of acute dangers posed by Islamist terrorism and serious cross-border crime, while the European external borders were not strongly protected yet.²¹⁷ Germany also pointed to its high overall burden in the area of irregular migration.²¹⁸ The controls within the 30 km zone are justified by the German state on the grounds that they ‘enable the detection of evasive manoeuvres by criminals operating across borders and maintain a high level of pressure on fugitives’. The aim is to combat terrorist threats and human trafficking, irregular migration, consistently enforce re-entry bans, and prevent traveling criminals from entering the country.²¹⁹ The German Minister of the Interior announced in August 2025 that the border controls would be stopped once the EU managed to increase the protection of its external borders.²²⁰ The argument focuses solely on Germany’s safety interests and fails to consider the potential effects on neighbouring EU countries. Whether these justifications by Germany comply with the updated Schengen Code is a matter of dispute within Germany. The Chancellor (D) and Minister of the Interior (D) are convinced that they are acting lawfully. However, several legal experts question the presence of a serious threat to internal security in Germany that cannot be averted by some alternative means.²²¹ Furthermore, the legality of Germany turning away refugees directly at the border is highly contested.²²² In addition, the maximum duration of border controls remains unclear.²²³

The new federal government decided to intensify the internal border controls in May 2025. The German police union warned that it would be impossible to maintain the controls over a longer period of time because policemen would have to work overtime.²²⁴ To keep up the borders controls, the Saarland Federal police unit alone would need twice as much staff as they had in May, i.e. 500 more police officers.²²⁵ Therefore, the German Federal Police increased its staff for the internal border controls significantly from 11,000 per day to up to 14,000 per day.²²⁶ The additional staff (mobile control and monitoring units, call units or operational units from the Federal Riot Police Directorate) was reported to support the existing police stations from case to case.²²⁷ In August 2025, the Federal Police of the Saarland stated that still 70-100 persons would lack to efficiently conduct the border controls any further. Federal Police officers from other regions needed to support them.²²⁸ One month later, Rhineland-Palatinate stated that it could only manage the controls thanks to the support of additional external Federal Police personnel.²²⁹ Nationwide, border controls cost around 80,5 million euros in the first year. The majority of these costs are spent for

²¹⁷ BMI (2024): Binnengrenzkontrollen an allen deutschen Landgrenzen angeordnet.

²¹⁸ BPB (2024): Grenzkontrollen bei der Einreise nach Deutschland.

²¹⁹ Interview Federal Police Germany, 29.07.2025.

²²⁰ tagesschau.de (2025a): Fast 12.000 Zurückweisungen an deutschen Grenzen.

²²¹ Lehnert, Matthias & Nestler, Robert (2024): Der Mythos von der Notlage; ECCHR (n.d.): Kontrollen und Zurückweisungen an den deutschen Grenzen. Fragen und Antworten; LTO (2025): Faeser benachrichtigt EU-Kommission. Grenzkontrollen für weitere sechs Monate angekündigt.

²²² BPB (2024): Grenzkontrollen bei der Einreise nach Deutschland; Thym, Daniel (2024): Nun also doch? Zurückweisungen von Asylbewerbern aufgrund einer “Notlage”; Lehnert, Matthias & Nestler, Robert (2024): Der Mythos von der Notlage; ECCHR (n.d.): Kontrollen und Zurückweisungen an den deutschen Grenzen. Fragen und Antworten.

²²³ CORRECTIV (2025): Rechtslage unklar: Wie lange dürfen die deutschen Grenzen kontrolliert werden?; SRF (2025): 30 Jahre Schengen-Abkommen. “Für die meisten Reisenden funktioniert Schengen, wie es sollte”.

²²⁴ Redaktion beck-aktuell (2025): Polizeigewerkschaft: Intensive Grenzkontrollen lassen sich nicht durchhalten.

²²⁵ SR (2025b): Grenzkontroll-Pläne: Bundespolizei-Gewerkschaft will mehr Personal im Saarland.

²²⁶ Deutscher Bundestag (2025a): Personaleinsatz der Bundespolizei bei Grenzkontrollen.

²²⁷ Deutscher Bundestag (2025b): Personalbedarf der Bundespolizei für Binnengrenzkontrollen.

²²⁸ Wachs, Sabine (2025a): Akuter Personalmangel bei der Bundespolizei in Saarbrücken.

²²⁹ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

the overtime of federal police officers. Hotel and food costs for non-resident police officers are also a major expense.²³⁰ Equipment (2,6 million Euros) and the operation of the stationary controls (2 million Euros) were further costs.²³¹ In July 2025, the German Police Union questioned the efforts and called them disproportionate compared with the numbers of refugee rejections.²³² Between September 2024 and August 2025 1,419 illegal entries were registered from Luxembourg.²³³ Only a small number of them wanted to apply for asylum in Germany. 907 of them were sent back to Luxembourg. Besides that, several human traffickers were provisionally arrested and people with outstanding arrest warrants were apprehended.²³⁴ The German Federal Police coordinates the rejection process in collaboration with the Luxembourgish police. Individuals who are rejected people are reported to the Luxembourgish police and escorted to the Luxembourgish border by German police officers. The Luxembourgish police then either assume custody over the rejected individuals or allow them to return on their own, a decision that rests solely with the Luxembourgish police. The border crossing of these individuals is monitored by the German police. However, a spokesman of the Federal Police in Trier acknowledged that rejected persons might re-enter Germany through another uncontrolled border crossing without being detected. The Federal Police could not guarantee a permanent comprehensive control because of the high number of border crossings between the two countries (see Figure 25).²³⁵ Surveyed cross-border commuters questioned the efficiency of the controls: ‘Since checks are not carried out regularly [...] at all border crossings, anyone who is a little clever can find the right moment to cross the border’. Among the German political parties, it is discussed controversially if the high costs are worth the benefits.²³⁶ At the same time, several chambers of commerce and industries are raising this question.²³⁷ Commuters criticised the high costs associated with the controls, such as police staff costs, and the disruption of cross-border traffic flows, arguing that these measures cannot be justified by the ‘few successful searches’. They also questioned the existence of reliable data ‘regarding the balance between the costs and benefits of the controls’. Only a few people stated that the situation should remain as it was or that controls should be intensified.

Currently there is only one permanent stationary border control between Germany and Luxembourg at the A 64 close to Trier, approximately 14 km behind the border. Only 10 persons that wanted to apply for asylum in Germany have been rejected on this motorway in the last year.²³⁸ The maximum speed is reduced to 40km/h and vehicles to be controlled are directed to a tent for the control. This control station leads to congestion in the peak hours. This is why even some commuters adapted their working hours to avoid traffic jams on their way home.²³⁹ Until August, the German police also maintained permanent controls on the A 8 motorway that links both countries: The motorway at the border crossing was reduced to one lane and the maximum speed to 20 km/h, which led to heavy traffic jams during peak hours. Since

²³⁰ Wachs, Sabine (2025b): Mehr als 4200 unerlaubte Einreisen im Saarland und in Rheinland-Pfalz.

²³¹ Markwald, Nicole (2025): Mehr als 80 Millionen Euro für Grenzkontrollen.

²³² DIE ZEIT & AFP & Anna-Lena Schlitt (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten mehr als 80 Millionen Euro.

²³³ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

²³⁴ *ibid.*

²³⁵ SWR RP (2025): SWR Aktuell Rheinland-Pfalz. Sendung 19:30 Uhr vom 15.9.2025.

²³⁶ AFP & dpa (2025): Deutsche Grenzkontrollen kosten mehr als 80 Millionen Euro; AFP & epd & dpa & ZDF (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten mehr als 80 Millionen Euro.

²³⁷ UECC (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten Milliarden - und zerstören das Herz Europas, 2.

²³⁸ SWR RP (2025): SWR Aktuell Rheinland-Pfalz. Sendung 19:30 Uhr vom 15.9.2025.

²³⁹ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

August, vehicles selected for inspection have been identified by German police officers on the Luxembourg side and, after crossing the border, directed to a parking lot on the German side to avoid further traffic disruptions during the bridge renovation.. This temporary and coordinated police procedure was made possible due to an agreement between the ministers of the interior of both countries about a more flexible handling of the border controls.²⁴⁰ In addition to the two motorway border crossings the cross-border region contains a high number of small border crossings (see Figure 25). These further border crossings, respectively the 30 km zone from the Luxembourgish border, are controlled by the Federal Police with random mobile checks.²⁴¹

The impact of the border controls varies between the different types of infrastructure that connect the two countries and the level of interconnectedness of German and Luxembourgish municipalities. The frequency of the flexible border controls differed according to the German border municipalities interviewed. The mayor of Perl reported that, at the moment, the border crossings between Perl and Schengen respective Nennig would be controlled by the police only sporadically. Until the stationary control at the motorway A 8 was abolished at the end of July, citizens living in the vicinity of Schengen (L) and Perl (D) and many cross-border commuters were strongly impacted by the controls. Many inhabitants complained to the local council about this. While the controls on the motorway were executed in peak hours leading to congestion, the borders on the old Moselle bridge between Schengen and Perl as well as between Nennig (D) and Remich (L) were controlled only sporadically. As a result, people left the motorway before the border crossing, pass the local border on road N10/B407 between the two villages, and drive back to the motorway after the police control.²⁴² In peak hours many drivers took this detour, which led to congestion in the two villages. This motorway controls also reduced the frequency of cross-border shopping trips by Luxembourgish residents. Several retail stores reported lower sales volumes and fewer clients from Luxembourg.²⁴³ Cross-border buses were also observed deviating from their original routes to circumvent the controls. According to bus drivers of the Saarbrücken-Express, which connects the train stations of Luxembourg City and Saarbrücken,²⁴⁴ buses were stopped and controlled almost every single time they crossed the border. The intensity of control varied depending on the police officers. In some cases, officers entered the bus and requires all passengers to present their IDs; in others, were asked to step off the bus and show their IDs outside. Those unable to prove their identity or lacking official authorisation to enter Germany were forced to remain at the border. Bus drivers interviewed expressed strong criticism of these border controls because of significant delays and questioning their added value. During peak hours, these practices caused severe delays of up to 35 minutes. Consequently, some bus drivers opted to circumvent the controls by slightly deviating from the official route.²⁴⁵ Since the abolishment of the stationary controls, the number of such challenging situations has decreased.²⁴⁶ The bridge between Wellen (D) and Grevenmacher (L) is used by up to 14.000 vehicles per day, the majority of them being cross-border commuters. This leads to congestion in the peak hours even without controls.

²⁴⁰ BPOLD-KO (2025): BPOLD-KO: Gemeinsame Pressemitteilung der Großherzoglichen Polizei Luxemburg und der Bundespolizeidirektion Koblenz zum konsentierten Kontrollverfahren der Bundespolizei auf der BAB 8.

²⁴¹ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

²⁴² SR (2025b): Wie Grenzkontrollen das Miteinander in der Region verändern: Beispiel Schengen-Lyzeum Perl.

²⁴³ SR (2025c): Wie wirken sich die Grenzkontrollen auf die Saar-Wirtschaft aus?

²⁴⁴ This bus replaces a railway connection between the two cities on behalf of the Luxembourgish railway company.

²⁴⁵ Interview Emile Weber, 17.6.2025; Interview IBA, 29.08.2025)

²⁴⁶ Interview Perl, 1.10.2025.

The German Federal Police conducted occasional traffic checks.²⁴⁷ Border controls at the Langsur/Wasserbilligerbrück and Wasserbillig crossings caused congestion on the Luxembourgish side. Additionally, due to an ongoing motorway construction site, many commuters chose the local crossings to avoid motorway delays, which led to increased traffic.²⁴⁸ In our poll, controls between Wasserbillig and Langsur were reported to be rare, so that persons crossed the bridge here to travel to Trier. On the border between Ralingen (D) and Rosport (L) checks have been very rare although people cross the border frequently for shopping or buying petrol.²⁴⁹ Echternacherbrück (D) reported short traffic jams in peak hours due to the border controls that alternate between the two border bridges.²⁵⁰ Border controls on the bridge between Wallendorf (D) and Wallendorferbrück (L) have not influenced the cross-border traffic because it was not a highly frequented border crossing.²⁵¹ The mayor of Roth an der Our mentioned that the two border crossings of the village were controlled on a daily basis in the beginning. Later on, this had been reduced to one control per week.²⁵² Random border controls have taken place in Dasburg, with police occasionally maintaining a visible presence without stopping vehicles.²⁵³

The Federal Police stated that it would regularly review the selection of suitable checkpoints and adjust them in accordance with legal and operational requirements, aiming to minimise disruptions to cross-border flows of persons and goods.²⁵⁴ However, according to the Federal Police Inspectorate Trier, the current border controls increased the travel time of cross-border commuters by 15 or, in some cases, even 25 minutes.²⁵⁵ 60% of the surveyed cross-border commuters stated to have been impacted by border control effects so far. Most of them experienced longer travel times (50%). Almost all commuters, regardless of their opinion on border controls, called for reducing control-related barriers that prolong their daily travel times. Common demands included eliminating controls in peak hours or introducing dedicated commuter lanes respectively vignettes.

The majority (64,4%) of the surveyed professional cross-border commuters cross the border 5-7 days a week. They were most affected by the controls (81%). 34% of them highly although only 15,8% have been controlled once and even less several times. 66% of them experienced longer travel times due to the controls. Surveyed leisure commuters, most of whom live in Germany, reported being affected by the controls less frequently (43%). Only 22% had been checked at least once, and 33% experienced longer travel times. Shopping commuters were impacted even less (39%). The majority (65%) crossed the border only occasionally and as often as needed. Among this group, 28% had been controlled once and 28% experienced longer travel times. Professional cross-border commuters were the most critical of border controls, with 61% opposing them, compared to a smaller majority of the leisure commuters (39%) . In contrast, 40% of the shopping-commuters expressed support for the controls. This might be due to their lower exposure to controls and congestion, as well as greater flexibility in terms of scheduling.

²⁴⁷ Interview Wellen, 11.09.2025.

²⁴⁸ Interview Langsur, 7.10.2025.

²⁴⁹ Interview MOSE, 10.10.2025.

²⁵⁰ Interview Echternacherbrück, 9.10.2025.

²⁵¹ Interview Wallendorf, 9.9.2025.

²⁵² Interview Roth an der Our, 25.9.2025.

²⁵³ Interview Dasburg, 30.9.2025.

²⁵⁴ Interview Federal Police Germany, 29.07.2025.

²⁵⁵ Verkehrsrundschau (2025): Grenzkontrollen bis 2026 verlängert – Kritik aus Luxemburg und Grenzregionen.

9% of the commuters that have already been controlled so far experienced discriminatory practices during the border controls. Overall, 21,4% of the surveyed cross-border commuters stated that they had observed discriminatory practices at the border controls. Professional cross-border commuters were affected more (27%) than those crossing the border for leisure activities (18%) or shopping (9%). Since the reintroduction of the border controls, the number of complaints about controls based on appearance rather than concrete cause (i.e. racial profiling) has risen significantly. In 2024, national delegate for police was elected for the first time to serve as a contact point for Federal Police officers as well as for citizens wanting to report any behaviour of misconduct. Professional commuters reported being subjected to controls more frequently based on their appearance, e.g. their migration background or skin colour, which is prohibited. Police officers must use other criteria when deciding whom to stop and control. The national delegate has the task to interfere and sensitise the police in this issue.²⁵⁶

Eight mayors of the cross-border villages between Germany and Luxemburg were asked about their opinion on the controls. The majority approves random border controls on their border crossings (Wallendorf, Wellen, Körperich, Dasburg, Langsur). Two of the interviewed parties compare the current controls to the closed-border situation before the Schengen agreement. The mayor of Dasburg sees major differences between the current situation and the closed borders at the time. She is in favour of the controls at Dasburg village in order to prevent criminals and illegal migration over the smaller border crossings. She does not understand why border citizens complain about current ‘minor restrictions – traffic jams, longer commutes to work, [...]’ while at the same time wishing to live in safety and freedom: ‘When checks are carried out, people find them excessive and complain; when the authorities and police do nothing, it’s also not good. Nowadays, it’s hard to please everyone’. Due to the high impact on the daily lives of their inhabitants, the municipal councils of Perl (D), Schengen (L) and Apach (F) signed a joint declaration against border controls in November 2024. They called for more ‘sustainable solutions that ensure security without discriminating against people in the border region’. Otherwise, people might lose confidence in the European ideal.²⁵⁷ Respondents from Roth an der Our are also against the border controls. The latter reminded them of the pre-Schengen closed-border situation, and they do not want that to happen ever again. The representative of Echternacherbrück criticised the low efficiency of the current border controls. Those controls should take place throughout the entire region instead of at the borders only.²⁵⁸ The mayor of Perl too recommended moving the border controls further inland, so as to cause less disruption (i.e. hamper cohesion) to everyday life in the border region, as it was the case during the stationary controls on the motorway A 8.

Overall, current border controls are costly and hamper mainly the professional cross-border commuters, which are an integral part of the cross-border functional interlinkages of the German-Luxembourgish borderland. Stationary border controls in particular lead to additional traffic barriers because they produce more congestion and more people try to take a detour. In the media as well, commuters and many politicians are critical of stationary border controls. There are doubts as to whether they are efficient, given that they do not exist at all border crossings.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ tagesschau.de (2025b): Mehr Beschwerden beim Polizeibeauftragten.

²⁵⁷ Gemeng Schengen (2024): Déclaration commune contre les contrôles aux frontières actuels.

²⁵⁸ Interview Echternacherbrück, 09.10.2025.

²⁵⁹ SWR (2025): Ein Jahr Grenzkontrollen - Politiker und Pendler genervt.

Luxembourgish perspective

Generally, the reintroduction and prolongation of border controls at the German-Luxembourg border since September 2024 have triggered a complex and evolving discourse on the state of EU integration in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Stakeholder responses and media coverage draw a picture of legal ambiguity, institutional fragmentation and socio-political tension. Together they somewhat challenge the foundational principles of the Schengen Area and the European Union (both strongly supported by Luxembourg).²⁶⁰ This situation illustrates the tension between legal principles underpinning EU integration and the political realities at national borders. Stakeholder responses reveal a lack of institutional preparedness to assess the proportionality and legality of border controls. Ministries such as the Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, among others, acknowledge that they have neither the data nor the experience to evaluate the impacts of border controls within their respective policy domains.²⁶¹ This absence of monitoring mechanisms highlights a critical shortcoming in the implementation of the Schengen Borders Code: when one Member State unilaterally deems controls justified, proportionate, and temporary, other affected states, especially small ones, appear to have limited means to quickly contest or verify these claims. This points to a broader legal and institutional fragility within the wider EU's border governance framework.

The lack of transparency and shared evaluation tools also undermines the principle of accountability that underpins EU integration. Media reports in Luxembourg reinforce these concerns, noting that while the Luxembourg government expressed disapproval, it refrained from legal action due to procedural delays at the European Court of Justice.²⁶² Meanwhile, civil society organisations and legal experts argue that Germany's actions violate EU law, particularly in the absence of a clearly defined threat and a transparent justification for extending controls.²⁶³ Operational coordination between police forces when it comes to the border controls, as noted by Luxembourg's Police Grand-Ducale, does exist but remains largely bilateral and security-driven. Media analysis shows that while bilateral cooperation is expanding (for instance through joint patrols and data exchange), it coexists with contradictory political signals: Germany announces control extensions while Luxembourg continues to promote the dismantling of checkpoints.²⁶⁴ This duality reflects a fragmented implementation of EU border policy, where national interests increasingly overthrow collective norms such as mutual trust, proportionality, transparency, and solidarity. These norms are meant to ensure that border controls are not only legally justified but also collectively scrutinised and democratically accountable.

²⁶⁰ Wort.lu (2024): Neue Geduldprobe? Deutschland ordnet wieder Grenzkontrollen an; Javel, Florian (2025b): Wie effektiv die deutschen Grenzkontrollen bisher wirklich waren; Saenz de Tejada, Miriam (2025): Im Schengen-Raum sind Grenzkontrollen die neue Normalität; Wort.lu (2025): Deutscher Innenminister: Wir halten Grenzkontrollen aufrecht; Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeoises, 24.09.2025.

²⁶¹ Interview Ministère du Logement et de l'Aménagement du territoire, 16.09.2025; Interview Office Régional du Tourisme Région Mullerthal, 29.09.2025.

²⁶² Javel, Florian (2025a): Wie die Regierung vor den deutschen Grenzkontrollen klein beigt.

²⁶³ Thill, Alexandra (2025): Organisationen fordern Gerichtsverfahren gegen Deutschlands Grenzkontrollen.

²⁶⁴ Schartz, Nadine (2025): Luxemburg und Deutschland verstärken ihre Zusammenarbeit; Wort.lu (2025): Deutscher Innenminister: Wir halten Grenzkontrollen aufrecht; Offner, Sebastian (2025): Die stationären Grenzkontrollen bei Schengen sind vorbei; Javel, Florian (2025c): Gloden rückt widersprüchliche Aussagen zu Schengen-Lockerungen zurecht.

In other words, the Schengen system, once the symbol of European unity and free movement, from Luxembourg's point of view is now vulnerable to unilateral reinterpretation. This fragmented governance has tangible consequences: it undermines the principle of solidarity by placing the burden of unilateral decisions down on local populations, cross-border workers, companies engaged in cross-border trade and cross-border institutions. Often deeply integrated economically, socially and culturally, cross-border regions like the Greater Region experience the immediate disruptions of border controls, while lacking the political leverage to influence their implementation. The most tangible impacts of border controls are felt in the daily lives of cross-border workers. The LCGB trade union highlights how controls disrupt commuting routines, increase stress levels, threaten the work-life balance, and therefore reduce the attractiveness of Luxembourg's labour market, particularly for workers from neighbouring regions, which are crucial for the Luxembourgish economy. As such, these disruptions are not only logistical but also psychological, affecting perceptions of stability and trust in cross-border mobility, which in turn may lead to economic repercussions for the small state of Luxembourg.²⁶⁵

Media reports in Luxembourg report these concerns, pointing to economic and travel time losses and growing public frustration.²⁶⁶ While precise data is lacking due to the absence of coordinated monitoring mechanisms, these claims stem from observable patterns: delays at checkpoints discourage spontaneous travel, reduce cross-border shopping, and complicate service provision in sectors like hospitality and retail. Public frustration, meanwhile, is amplified by the lack of transparency and the feeling that decisions are made without consultation or clear justification.²⁶⁷ This finding shows a growing awareness in Luxembourg about the fragility of European border governance in general. The Schengen system creates a paradox for border regions: they are the most integrated spaces in Europe, yet the most exposed to fragmentation.

²⁶⁵ Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025

²⁶⁶ Javel, Florian (2025b): Wie effektiv die deutschen Grenzkontrollen bisher wirklich waren; Reale, Jil (2025): Grenzstress mit Deutschland: Luxemburg bittet Bürger um Rückmeldung; Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025.

²⁶⁷ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025; Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025; Reale, Jil (2025): Grenzstress mit Deutschland: Luxemburg bittet Bürger um Rückmeldung.

3.5.4 Evaluation of the theme of Sustainable/Socio-Economic Development

German perspective

General economic activities

Germany is one of Luxembourg's most important trading partners. This applies to both the service sector and imports and exports. In 2022, Luxembourg purchased goods worth €6.68 billion from Germany. During the same period, Germany purchased goods worth €4.2 billion from Luxembourg.²⁶⁸ The German-Luxembourgish borderland is a prime example of a cross-border functional region. Its companies, service providers, and commuters are closely intertwined economically across borders.²⁶⁹ Many companies have employees or goods crossing the border daily.²⁷⁰

Additionally, many Germans fill up their cars in Luxembourg, as petrol and diesel prices in the Grand Duchy are generally lower than in Germany. Therefore, many Luxembourgish petrol stations are located in the vicinity of the German border. In addition, some products such as coffee, sparkling wine, soft drinks and tobacco are cheaper to buy in the Grand Duchy because they are taxed less. At the same time the German retail sector at the borders is geared to additional Luxembourgish customers that often cross the border to buy cheaper basic groceries in Germany. 79% of the commuters polled in our survey stated to cross the border for shopping. The most mentioned destinations in Luxembourg were petrol stations, followed by grocery stores, particularly to buy drinks and coffee, and to do groceries on Sundays when the supermarkets are closed in Germany.

According to a survey of the German-Luxembourg Economic Initiative (DLWI) of 2025, the border controls and related congestion have had a strong impact on cross-border trade. Increased fuel costs and delays in supply chains in the logistics industry were the consequence. The companies surveyed reported reduced competitiveness, increased coordination and personnel costs, disruptions in the production process and delayed deliveries. 53.3% of companies polled stated that border controls restricted their operational processes and 72.4% of them suffered from significant delays. 27.6% of them even reported financial losses.²⁷¹ Also the Union of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry for Transport (UECC) confirmed that companies with cross-border supply chains such as those of the German-Luxembourgish borderland suffered greatly from border controls. Furthermore, the controls increased costs for logistics, service providers, freight forwarders, and producers because additional documentation had to be provided.²⁷²

At the same time, retail markets in the vicinity of the border were concerned: experts expected a negative impact because border controls hampered the customer exchange. Luxembourgish citizens drove less frequently to Germany and vice versa because of increased travel times due to congestions.²⁷³ Several retailers noticed and complained about it in the media, such as a shop located in Perl (DE). 80% of the customers in said shop previously came from Luxembourg, mainly because it was cheaper to have parcels ordered online sent to the shop in Germany than to their place of residence in Luxembourg. These

²⁶⁸ Auswärtiges Amt (2025): Luxemburg und Deutschland: Bilaterale Beziehungen.

²⁶⁹ UECC (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten Milliarden - und zerstören das Herz Europas.

²⁷⁰ Luxemburger Wort (2025): Umfrage belegt: So sehr belasten die Grenzkontrollen Pendler und Unternehmen.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² UECC (2025): Grenzkontrollen kosten Milliarden - und zerstören das Herz Europas, 1f.

²⁷³ Interview Handwerkskammer Trier, 11.09.2025.

customers visited the shop less frequently during the stationary border control. Some customers took detours to avoid the controls. Because of the abolishment of the stationary border control and reduced congestion, the situation improved.²⁷⁴ 27% of the professional commuters surveyed mentioned that they also crossed the border for shopping reasons. Experts, however, suggested that the increased time commuters have to spend travelling to and from work because of the controls may mean that they no longer do their shopping in the country where they work but in the country of residence at a different time of day.²⁷⁵ To safeguard the cross-border economy, the DLWI called on politicians to increase the efficiency of border controls as 83.3% of the respondents of their survey complained about the low or lack of efficiency of the controls.²⁷⁶

The short-term effects of border controls are losses in productivity, additional logistics costs and a deterioration in the social climate as it was reported in the German-Luxembourgish borderland. If the controls continue for a longer period, the Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT) expects negative effects in the medium term on employment (difficulties in recruiting staff), investment (exodus of cross-border workers, decline in cross-border shopping, shift towards more teleworking) and the economic cohesion of the Greater Region (erosion of the Greater Region as an integrated area, reduced attractiveness of Luxembourg, increased pressure on the property market, social and political tensions).²⁷⁷

Labour market

As mentioned earlier, the labour market in the German-Luxembourgish borderland is highly integrated. In 2024, 52,060 people commuted from Germany to Luxembourg to work there. Most of them (17%) work in the construction industry, followed by the finance and insurance sector (13%), health and social services (12%), manufacturing (12%) and trade, including vehicle repair (13%).²⁷⁸ Luxembourg is highly dependent on its neighbouring countries and their labour force, because it needs a larger workforce to sustain its economic growth rate. At the same time, the competition between Germany and Luxembourg for skilled labour in all sectors has increased in the last years.²⁷⁹ The reasons for the presence of so many cross-border commuters are, on the one hand, higher wages in Luxembourg combined with lower prices for building land and rents on the German side on the other. These differences lead to a considerable high daily commuter traffic from Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland towards Luxembourg.²⁸⁰ Several working agreements facilitate the professional mobility across borders between the two countries. EURES as well as the 'Task Force Grenzgänger' offer practical and legal advice to the cross-border commuters within the Greater Region.²⁸¹ The DLWI, founded in 2010, is a contact point for German-speaking cross-border commuters working in Luxembourg in particular, to clarify questions and address problems²⁸². Its aim is to promote economic relations between German and Luxembourgish companies in Luxembourg and to represent the interests of Germans working in Luxembourg.²⁸³ Luxembourg and Germany also cooperate

²⁷⁴ SR (2025c): Wie wirken sich die Grenzkontrollen auf die Saar-Wirtschaft aus?; Interview Sabine Jänschke, 01.10.2025.

²⁷⁵ Interview IBA, 29.08.2025.

²⁷⁶ SR (2025c): Wie wirken sich die Grenzkontrollen auf die Saar-Wirtschaft aus?

²⁷⁷ Interview CFDT, 01.08.2025.

²⁷⁸ IGSS & IBA (2024): Grenzgänger in Luxemburg nach Herkunftsland und Branchen.

²⁷⁹ Interview IBA, 29.08.2025.

²⁸⁰ Auswärtiges Amt (2025): Luxemburg und Deutschland: Bilaterale Beziehungen.

²⁸¹ Greater Region (n.d.a): Abbau von Mobilitätshemmnissen.

²⁸² DLWI (2023): SR3: Die Deutsch-Luxemburgische Wirtschaftsinitiative.

²⁸³ DLWI (n.d.): Mitglied werden.

in the field of education. There is a training agreement between the chambers of crafts of Luxembourg and Germany, a framework agreement on cross-border vocational training in the Greater Region from 2015²⁸⁴ and a university network called 'University of the Greater Region' which offers 30 cross-border degree programmes.²⁸⁵

In the past, the number of German workers (from Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland) commuting to Luxembourg has risen steadily. However, this year, for the first time in 20 years, the number has fallen: in 2025, a total of 51,700 people will commute from Germany to Luxembourg to work there. This is 0.7% less than in the previous year. The number of German commuters to France and Belgium is also declining. The number of commuters from France to Luxembourg, however, continued to rise (+1.9%, 2,290 more people).²⁸⁶ This shows that, especially for Germans, the attractiveness of crossing national borders to work in the Greater Region declined. Despite the declining number of commuters from Germany to Luxembourg, the number of atypical cross-border commuters from Germany continues to rise:²⁸⁷ In 2025, 4,930 Luxembourgers living in Germany commute across the border to Luxembourg for work. That is 130 more people (almost 3%) than in the previous year and 48% more than in 2019.

In the 2025 poll of the DLWI, 78.3% of the interviewed cross-border commuters complained about recurring delays on their way home. 30.8% stated that they would regularly spend 30 minutes a day in traffic jams. To avoid these congestions, 43.8% adjusted their working hours, which has often affected family routines. 10.5% associated the border controls with personal financial disadvantages. These concerns led 33.7% of the commuters state that they are seriously considering changing jobs due to longer journeys caused by border controls²⁸⁸. This would strongly impact the cohesion of the cross-border territory. The DLWI concludes from their poll that the controls had a negative impact on the quality of life of commuters and reduced the attractiveness of the Luxembourg labour market. The 'Task Force Grenzgänger' was often confronted with the complaints of German cross-border commuters, both those travelling in their private car but also in public buses, about border controls, because of the related traffic jams and longer journey times due to roadworks. The Task Force, however, relativises these traffic-related complaints not to be so particular for the cross-border labour market, because people commuting within Germany also needed to cope with congestion, e.g. due to roadworks, that caused delays. Therefore, the Task Force does not expect that many cross-border commuters will adapt their situation due to the controls: To work in Luxembourg would be attractive because it offered many jobs and generally paid higher incomes. Moving to Luxembourg to avoid commuting was unattractive because of higher costs of living. Finding a comparable alternative job in Germany might be difficult because the labour market would be less prosperous.²⁸⁹ The Interregional Labour Market Observatory of the Greater Region (IBA) emphasises the growing relevance of work-life balance and family time, which increasingly conflict with the already long and now further extended travel times of cross-border commuters. In this respect, the importance of higher wages in Luxembourg would decline, also given that the minimum wages in Germany were recently increased. In addition, growing competition between Germany and Luxembourg for skilled labour in all sectors has led Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland to offer trainees attractive jobs comparable

²⁸⁴ Grand Duchy of Luxembourg et al. (2018): Vereinbarung zur Umsetzung der Rahmenvereinbarung über grenzüberschreitende Berufsbildung in der Großregion.

²⁸⁵ Greater Region (n.d.b): Grenzüberschreitende Strukturen.

²⁸⁶ IGSS & IBA (2025): Grenzgänger nach Luxemburg.

²⁸⁷ IGSS & BA & IBA (2025): Atypische Grenzgänger in der Großregion 2025.

²⁸⁸ Luxemburger Wort (2025): Umfrage belegt: So sehr belasten die Grenzkontrollen Pendler und Unternehmen.

²⁸⁹ Interview Task Force Grenzgänger, 26.08.2025.

to those in Luxembourg. Consequently, the IBA anticipates that Luxembourg may become less appealing to German workers in the future and that the number of professional cross-border commuters continues to decline. This would worsen the shortage of skilled workers in Luxembourg.²⁹⁰

The German border communities of Wallendorf, Wellen, Roth an der Our, Körperich, Dasburg and Perl have many inhabitants with Luxembourg nationality that live in Germany but continue to work in Luxembourg. The demand of Luxembourgish nationals for housing remains high due to the favourable prices, despite border controls. No decline has been observed in this respect.²⁹¹ Echternacherbrück, however, reported noticing a reluctance among Luxembourgish nationals to purchase houses in the municipality since the reintroduction of border controls.²⁹² Prof. Birte Nienaber from the University of Luxembourg argues that border controls have reduced the attractiveness of Saarland as a place of residence for atypical cross-border commuters working in Luxembourg. A decline in this group would negatively impact Saarland's economy, as these commuters contribute not only through rent payments but also by shopping, using local services and spending their leisure time in the region.²⁹³

Traffic/Transport

There are different cross-border transport infrastructures for automobiles, trains, bicycles, and pedestrians between the two countries. Luxembourg and Germany are connected by nine pedestrian/bicycle bridges and one rail bridge. In addition, there are two ferry connections: one between Oberbillig and Wasserbillig, and another between Nittel and Wormeldingen. The latter is a passenger and bicycle ferry and operates seasonally only. The countries are connected by 22 roads, many of which are subjected to strong cross-border commuter flows that enter and leave Luxembourg every day. Motorways are heavily congested during peak hours, primarily because they were not originally designed to accommodate such high traffic volumes. To reduce congestion and pollution, the two countries have built car-pooling parking spaces in the vicinity of the border. Many public rail and bus connections are significantly overloaded during peak hours too. In addition, several cross-border public transport services operate in the German-Luxembourgish borderland. These include rail, bus and ferry connections.²⁹⁴ Three train lines connect Rhineland-Palatinate with Luxembourg (RE11 Luxembourg - Koblenz; RB83 Luxembourg - Wittlich and train 30: Luxembourg - Wasserbillig - Trier).²⁹⁵ There is no train connection between Luxembourg and Saarland due to topographic and financial reasons. Instead, six bus lines connect Luxembourg and Saarland. One of them is the Saarbrücken Express between Saarbrücken and Luxembourg City, operated by Emile Weber on behalf of the Luxembourg National Railway Company. Luxembourg and Rhineland-Palatinate are connected by 11 bus lines. These bus lines complement the rail network by providing access to key residential areas of cross-border commuters that lack a train station.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, there are two private cross-border bus lines operated by FlixBus: one between Luxembourg-City and Trier, and another between Luxembourg and Saarbrücken via Merzig. Several cross-

²⁹⁰ Interview IBA, 29.08.2025.

²⁹¹ Interview Wallendorf, 09.09.2025; Interview Wellen 11.09.2025; Interview Roth an der Our, 25.09.2025; Interview Körperich, 29.09.2025; Interview Dasburg, 30.09.2025; Interview Perl, 01.10.2025.

²⁹² Interview Echternacherbrück, 10.10.2025.

²⁹³ SR (2025c): Wie wirken sich die Grenzkontrollen auf die Saar-Wirtschaft aus?

²⁹⁴ An overview of all cross-border bus and train connections can be accessed at the GIS-GR Website.

²⁹⁵ GIS-GR (2023): 2022.

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*

border commuters polled wished that public transport between the two countries would be extended, e.g. by offering more rail connections.

50% of all surveyed commuters reported an increase of their waiting and travel times across the border due to the reintroduced police controls. Professional cross-border commuters were particularly affected. However, not all border crossings experienced severe congestion. Half of the interviewed border municipalities (Wallendorf, Wellen, Körperich, Dasburg) did not observe increased congestion linked to the controls. In Roth an der Our, traffic disruptions were primarily attributed to COVID-related measures. Langsur reported congestion on the Luxembourgish side of the border but not within the village itself. Only Perl and Echternacherbrück experienced traffic-related disturbances. Echternacherbrück noted minor congestions during peak hours while Perl faced significant delays during peak hours due to stationary border controls on the motorway. Since the removal of this control station, conditions have improved.²⁹⁷ In addition, the last remaining stationary border control on the motorway A64 causes congestion during peak hours. A German national public transport provider reported being partially affected by congestion as a result of border controls during peak hours on the motorway near Trier, despite its busses not crossing the border.²⁹⁸ This shows that the border controls had a severe impact on motorway traffic and less so on the smaller border crossings.

Nearly all commuters use a car to cross the border, particularly for shopping (98%) and leisure activities (96%), while 32% of professional commuters rely on carpooling or alternative transport modes. Public transport options were rarely used by respondents. Cross-border bus connection services were frequently subject to controls, reducing their attractiveness. Two respondents reported switching from bus to car for greater speed, flexibility and to avoid checks. Cross-border trains were rarely controlled according to surveyed commuters. One respondent stated to have switched from car to train to avoid road congestion.

Only 17% of cross-border commuters that participated in our survey stated that they adjusted their route as a result of police controls. Among them, six respondents reported that they tried to exit the motorway earlier, particularly in the afternoon, to avoid congestion and stationary police controls. Five switched to alternative border crossings with no or less frequent controls while four preferred driving longer distances to bypass border controls. Others mentioned adjusting their routes during congestion to prevent unnecessary travel time: 'I use two navigation systems, Google Maps and Waze. The goal is always the shortest travel time, as the journey is already very long.' One commuter reported that he did not adjust his traditional route because traffic had increased on alternative roads since the reintroduction of border controls. Overall, only 9% of commuters stated that they reduced the frequency of their cross-border trips due to the controls.

Tourism

The German-Luxembourgish borderland offers a variety of cross-border tourism and leisure activities, such as hiking, cycling and wine tours, boat trips, bus excursions, cultural events and the QuattroPole city network, connecting Luxembourg, Metz, Saarbrücken and Trier. Visitors are encouraged to combine trips to these cities due to their proximity.²⁹⁹ Another key attraction is the German-Luxembourg cross-border

²⁹⁷ Interview Perl 01.10.2025; Interview Echternacherbrück, 10.10.2025.

²⁹⁸ Interview Kylltal Reisen GmbH, 09.09.2025.

²⁹⁹ Interview Saar-Obermosel Touristik e.V., 16.09.2025; Interview Eifel Tourismus GmbH, 10.10.2025; Interview Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, 22.09.2025; Mosellandtouristik GmbH. (n.y.): Drei Länder an drei Tagen.

nature park, established in 1964. It is located near the Our and Sauer rivers and aims to protect and sustainably develop the area.³⁰⁰ Surveyed 'leisure commuters' most frequently crossed the border for waling/hiking or cycling in the neighbouring country, visiting family or friends and attending concerts or other cultural events.

Luxembourgish tourists mainly travel to Saarland and the Trier region by car, while some by public transport (train or bus), taking advantage of Luxembourg's free local transport system. A smaller number choose to travel by bicycle.³⁰¹ 28% of the surveyed professional commuters stated that they also spend leisure time across the border. Border controls appear to have a lesser impact on tourists than on commuters, as tourists can avoid rush hours.³⁰²

A representative of the German village of Echternacherbrück, historically reliant on cross-border tourism, with most shops and restaurants located on the Luxembourgish side, reported that during the summer, tourists were uncertain whether crossing the border was still permitted. The local swimming pool continued to attract visitors from Luxembourg. Fortunately, border controls have not had any significant negative effect on the local economy.³⁰³

In principle, tourism experts view border controls critically as they contradict the concept of a borderless Europe. In some cases, such controls can disrupt and affect holiday travel.³⁰⁴ They can also deter tourists by creating uncertainty and additional effort³⁰⁵, as observed in the case of Echternacherbrück. During the COVID-19 pandemic, day visitors to Trier expressed strong frustration over border closures (Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH). However, none of the interviewed tourism experts have observed a significant decline in tourism as a result of border controls so far.³⁰⁶

According to the experts, it would be desirable for the future development of cross-border tourism to be better informed about the controls and their effects to enable better travel planning. They also suggest developing innovative cross-border tourism products that deliberately incorporate the 'border experience' — e.g. combined packages offering activities on both sides of the border.³⁰⁷

Environment

As mentioned in the transport section, very few surveyed people reported to have made adjustments to their route due to the police controls. Additionally, only a few of the interviewed border municipalities stated that the border controls led to a strong transport increase. Consequently, the environmental impact of border controls at municipal border crossings is expected to be relatively low. In contrast, stationary controls on the two motorways caused severe congestion during peak hours, resulting in significantly higher traffic emissions and therefore a substantial environmental impact.

³⁰⁰ SIP (2025): Naturparks: der deutsch-luxemburgische Naturpark, Natur ohne Grenzen.

³⁰¹ Interview Saar-Obermosel-Touristik e.V., 16.09.2025; Interview Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, 22.09.2025; Interview Tier- und Archepark Merzig, 12.09.2025.

³⁰² Interview Saar-Obermosel Touristik e.V., 16.09.2025.

³⁰³ Interview Echternacherbrück, 09.10.2025.

³⁰⁴ Interview Saar-Obermosel Touristik e.V., 16.09.2025.

³⁰⁵ Interview Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, 22.09.2025.

³⁰⁶ Interview Saar-Obermosel-Touristik e.V., 16.09.2025; Interview Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, 22.09.2025; Interview Tier- und Archepark Merzig, 12.09.2025; Interview Eifel Tourismus GmbH, 10.10.2025.

³⁰⁷ Interview Trier Tourismus und Marketing GmbH, 22.09.2025.

Luxembourgish perspective

The reintroduction of border controls within the Greater Region has had tangible and multifaceted repercussions on Luxembourg's socio-economic development model. This model is built on regional interdependence, cross-border labour mobility, and open market access, with Luxembourg functioning as a central employment hub for tens of thousands of workers from Germany, France, and Belgium. The country's competitiveness and growth are closely tied to its ability to attract and retain this mobile workforce, while maintaining fluid logistical and economic exchanges across borders. Luxembourg's labour market relies on the daily commuting of over 200,000 cross-border workers, including approximately 55,000 from Germany alone. These workers are essential to sectors such as finance, construction, logistics, healthcare, and retail.³⁰⁸ The reintroduction of border controls has led to commuting delays of 30 to 60 minutes, as reported in surveys and media coverage, with 78.3% of commuters experiencing regular delays and 30.8% losing more than 30 minutes daily. These disruptions affect punctuality, increase stress, and reduce work-life balance, particularly for workers with rigid schedules or caregiving responsibilities.³⁰⁹

The attractiveness of Luxembourg as a workplace is diminishing. Workers are reported to be reconsidering their employment choices due to the cumulative burden of border checks, limited telework options (constrained by fiscal and social security regulations in Germany, Belgium and France), and taxation of overtime (as in the case of Germany).³¹⁰ This trend is particularly concerning for sectors already facing labour shortages, such as construction, logistics and artisanal trades. Luxembourg has responded by strengthening bilateral cooperation, advocating for more flexible telework arrangements and collecting feedback via a dedicated contact point (through the Centre commun de la sécurité sociale - www.teletravail.ccss.lu).³¹¹ but structural constraints remain. Border-area businesses in Luxembourg, including supermarkets, service providers, and SMEs, report a decline in cross-border customer flows and logistical disruptions.³¹² Artisanal enterprises and small firms are especially vulnerable, as they depend on predictable labour availability and efficient supply chains. The estimated 1.7% rise in logistics costs due to delays reflects increased fuel consumption, longer delivery times, and reduced operational flexibility. These costs are difficult to absorb, especially for smaller firms operating on tight margins.³¹³ Overall, it could be claimed that Luxembourg's economic ecosystem is thus facing a slowdown in competitiveness pointing towards a structural vulnerability in the face of unilateral border decisions.

While official data is missing, newspaper articles report that tourism in the Greater Region has also suffered. According to the public discourse in Luxembourg, the spontaneity of short cross-border leisure

³⁰⁸ Observatoire du développement territorial & LISER & Ministère du Logement et de l'Aménagement du territoire luxembourgeois (2025): L'Emploi des actifs occupés au Luxembourg. Lieux de travail, lieux de résidence et flux de déplacements.

³⁰⁹ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 08.09.2025; Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025

³¹⁰ Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025

³¹¹ Ministère de la Santé et de la Sécurité sociale (2023): Declaration of cross-border telework from 1st July 2023;

³¹² Interview Chambre des Métiers luxembourgeois, 22.09.2025; Saenz de Tejada, Miriam (2025): Im Schengen-Raum sind Grenzkontrollen die neue Normalität; Luxemburger Wort (2025): Umfrage belegt: So sehr belasten die Grenzkontrollen Pendler und Unternehmen.

³¹³ Interview Ministère des Affaires intérieures luxembourgeois, 24.09.2025.

trips has been curtailed, affecting regional tourism flows and local hospitality businesses.³¹⁴ From an environmental perspective, the increased reliance on private vehicles, due to delays and reduced public transport efficiency, likely contributes to higher emissions and ecological stress. However, no systematic data is currently available to properly quantify these effects.

Moreover, significant vulnerabilities in Luxembourg's socio-economic development model are surfacing the longer the border controls remain in place. Luxembourg's competitiveness and growth depend on its ability to attract and retain a very mobile workforce while ensuring fluid logistical and economic exchanges. Yet, despite manifest signs of strain, Luxembourg does not appear to be engaging in a strategic reassessment of its development trajectory. There is no evidence, in either the survey responses or the media discourse, of an ongoing or planned public or political debate on the future of its socio-economic model. The absence of such a debate is striking, especially given the scale and persistence of the disruptions. This suggests a specific form of *modus vivendi*, i.e. Luxembourg displays a pragmatic acceptance of current conditions without deeper questioning of structural dependencies. Luxembourg's response has focused on technical fixes (e.g. bilateral coordination, contact points, telework negotiations), rather than on a strategic reorientation. This inertia in Luxembourg's response to the reintroduction of border controls may be rooted in several interrelated dynamics. First, there is a strong element of institutional path dependency. That means that Luxembourg's socio-economic model has delivered consistent growth and prosperity over the past decades. This success makes it politically and economically difficult to challenge or rethink the model, even when its vulnerabilities become apparent. Second, Luxembourg's scale and leverage as a small state may contribute to a perception of limited influence over broader EU border governance. This reinforces a reactive posture, where the country seeks to manage disruptions through bilateral coordination and technical adjustments rather than initiating a strategic reorientation of its economic policy. Third, the lack of systematic data and monitoring mechanisms makes it harder to build a compelling case for reform. While stakeholder testimonies and media reports point to significant disruptions, the absence of robust evidence limits the scope for informed public debate or policy innovation. Fourth, political caution appears to shape Luxembourg's approach. The government has consistently opted for diplomatic engagement over legal confrontation. This suggests a strategy aimed at minimising conflict and preserving bilateral relations, rather than challenging the structural conditions that undermine Luxembourg's competitiveness and mobility. This silence is telling. One would expect that a country facing sustained disruptions to its labour market as well as its regional connectivity would engage in a broader reflection on its long-term resilience. Yet Luxembourg shows an internal reluctance to rethink it and continues to operate within a framework that is increasingly misaligned with the realities of border fragmentation.

³¹⁴ Interview LCGB, 15.09.2025.

3.5.5 Conclusions and recommendations from a Euregional perspective

This case study illustrates how the cohesion and cooperation of a functionally integrated cross-border region can be undermined by unilateral politics. Germany's reintroduction of border controls at its border with Luxembourg has had a strong impact on the daily lives of border residents on both sides. The controls call into question the increasingly interconnected realities that have evolved since the implementation of the Schengen Agreement.

Luxembourg and its borderland with Germany have become collateral victims of the side effects of these controls. Introduced in September 2024 and extended several times (currently until March 2026), the controls reveal the vulnerability of the reformed Schengen Borders Code to unilateral reinterpretation. Even though legality of controls is questioned within Germany, the national government justifies them with the necessity of increasing the internal safety given that the European Union's external border management is inefficient. Luxembourg formally objected to the European Commission arguing that German interests override EU solidarity. As a result, trust in the federal government in Germany, the EU and the Schengen system has been diminishing.

Cross-border governance in the German-Luxembourgish borderland appears fragile due to asymmetrical power dynamics. Despite this, bilateral cooperation between police forces and national politicians has intensified and mutual concessions were made. Luxembourg, as a small EU state, dependent on German workforce and goods, has chosen to adopt pragmatic solutions to mitigate disruptions. However, the impact on cross-border commuters and the regional economy is significant. Only single German border municipalities with strong cross-border interlinkages, or those located in the vicinity of stationary controls, reported challenges in the labour market or their economy. However, the fear that the border controls threaten the common identity, mutual understanding and foster the recreation of mental borders, which contradicts the idea of cross-border cohesion inherent in the Schengen principles, is formulated frequently in both the public and the political discourses in Luxembourg and the German federal states Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland. Police controls filter the movements across the border and separate residents unequally. Free movement across borders is hampered, which is ultimately detrimental for territorial cohesion. Despite these challenges, the willingness to cooperate has not diminished. Opposition to the controls is growing, among cross-border professionals who experience tangible negative effects. Many view the controls as anti-European, regressive and inefficient. Widespread controls and delays have affected the attractiveness of Luxembourg's labour market.

Germany's border controls rely on a mix of stationary and flexible mobile police controls. While not being comprehensive, they still incur high staff costs and negative consequences for the labour market and cross-border economy. Retail in the vicinity of stationary border controls suffered in particular. Controls often congested the motorways in peak hours, which hampered cross-border trade and commuting. While most commuters stuck to their habitual routes and modes of transportation, some were motivated to take detours or switch modes. Buses were frequently controlled, trains rarely. Increased congestions have a negative effect on the environment. Rural border crossings have been rarely affected by detours. No decline in tourism has been observed in the Luxembourgish-German border land. However, better information for tourists about border control rules would be desirable. The constant prolongation of controls might ultimately lead to a lower willingness to work across borders, fewer investments and integration and increased social and political tensions within the German-Luxembourgish borderland.

To mitigate the effects of border controls in the German-Luxembourgish borderland and to reinforce the principles of European integration, the following five measures are recommended:

Professional commuters are disproportionately affected by delays and unpredictability. To support them, a dedicated commuter lane and/or digital vignettes should be introduced at the major crossings in Schengen/Perl and in Wasserbillig/Trier, which are among the busiest and most strategically important. The introduction of dedicated commuter lanes would allow daily cross-border workers to bypass general traffic and reduce waiting times during peak hours. Additionally, a digital vignette system could be developed to pre-register commuters, enabling faster identification and clearance during police checks. These measures would not only streamline border procedures but also signal a commitment to maintaining the functional integration of the Greater Region. By reducing friction for those who cross the border daily, Luxembourg and Germany can help preserve the socio-economic interdependence that underpins regional cohesion and competitiveness.

Residents of the German-Luxembourgish border region increasingly feel excluded from decisions made in distant political centres such as Berlin. The unilateral reintroduction and prolongation of border controls by the German federal government without prior consultation with affected regions has deepened this sense of disconnection and mistrust. Local concerns, particularly those voiced by municipalities and commuters, have often been overlooked in national-level decision-making. To address this obvious democratic deficit, national governments on both sides of the border should establish regular and structured consultations that actively engage border residents, local authorities, and cross-border institutions. These consultations should go beyond symbolic gestures, e.g. Luxembourg's grenzkontrollen@gouvernement.lu initiative, and enable active policy adaptation and accountability. Results from these consultations could feed into parliamentary debates and, hopefully, into ministerial decisions.

The lack of systematic data collection and impact evaluation hampers informed decision-making. Member States in general and Luxembourg in particular should develop shared indicators and reporting tools to assess the effects of border controls on mobility, economy, and cohesion. Shared indicators are commonly agreed-upon metrics that allow for consistent monitoring, comparison, and evaluation of economic, mobility-related and social cohesion indicators across borders. Academic and civil society contributions could also be integrated into such assessments to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Differences in how border controls are perceived and reported on either side of the German-Luxembourgish border reveal a growing disconnect over the course of a bit more than twelve months. Luxembourgish actors emphasise disruption and loss of trust, while German federal narratives focus on national security. If these diverging perceptions remain unaddressed, they risk deepening political and social divides and weakening cross-border cohesion. Rather than masking these differences, they should be openly acknowledged and discussed, for instance with the help of a cross-border media observatory. The role of such a cross-border media observatory could systematically compare narratives and bring them into public discourse and thus into the general public's awareness.

Joint cross-border impact assessments, like they have been done in the field of cross-border spatial planning in the Greater Region (e.g. in the case of Luxembourg's national spatial planning strategy

(Programme Directeur Aménagement du Territoire),³¹⁵ should become a prerequisite before any unilateral decision on border controls is taken. Of course, such an approach may require the coordination of the EU, curtail national sovereignty and lead to lengthy assessment processes, but it would significantly enhance transparency, legitimacy, and trust in public institutions. Joint cross-border impact assessments would ensure that decisions reflect shared realities of the borderlands and uphold the principles of EU regional cohesion.

³¹⁵ DATer, Département de l'aménagement du territoire (2023b): PDAT. ADDENDA II - Processus Participatif 2018-2022.

4. Evaluation of the research themes

4.1 Evaluation of the theme of European Integration

Under the theme of European Integration, in light of the principles of free movement in the EU and the open Schengen area, this dossier examined how internal border controls are applied in relation to legal requirements such as the proportionality test. It also assessed the practical outcomes of these controls, including the number and effectiveness of checks, the extent to which they address the threats used to justify them. Furthermore, in this dossier it was evaluated how Member States define cross-border regions under the SBC and how they apply the ‘cross-border impact assessment’ when evaluating the effects of internal border controls on cross-border regions.

Internal border controls imposed in the examined case study cross-border regions include those of unilateral (e.g., Germany-Luxembourg, Netherlands-Belgium, Austria-Hungary), and bilateral controls (e.g., Germany-Netherlands, Germany-France), border checks under Art. 23 SBC which do not constitute as border controls as such (Belgium, the Netherlands), as well as border controls not subject to SBC (Switzerland). Furthermore, the case studies included examples of cross-border regions with no or little history of border controls (e.g., Germany-Netherlands, Netherlands-Belgium) and those with a longer history (e.g., Austria-Hungary, Switzerland). As described in Chapter 2, Member States may reintroduce temporary internal border controls in exceptional situations, where there is a serious threat to public policy or internal security. In all cases, such border controls must be a measure of last resort. The scope and duration of the temporary reintroduction of border control shall not exceed what is strictly necessary to respond to the serious threat identified.

Proportionality

The reintroduction and prolongation of internal border controls raise concerns regarding their proportionality, and compatibility with the objectives of the Schengen Borders Code. While Member States formally comply with procedural requirements such as the notification procedure (despite few delayed notifications identified in Austria and Germany), they justify their border controls by invoking a broad range of ‘serious threats to public policy or internal security’. Germany and the Netherlands highlight security risks linked to irregular migration and smuggling, and the strain on migration systems such as refugee accommodation and the asylum reception. France, also under Article 25 of the SBC, points to the persistent jihadist threats, a rise in antisemitic attacks, irregular migration and smuggling, and cross-border delinquency. Austria describes long-standing serious threats related to irregular migration, asylum, basic services, the broader national migration situation, conditions in the Austrian pre-frontier area, and migrant smuggling.

However, as the EU Court of Justice has emphasised, internal border controls must be based on new threats and cannot be repeatedly prolonged on the same grounds. Migration, or the pressure it places on migration and asylum systems, does not in itself constitute a valid justification for the reintroduction of controls. Whereas recital 26 of the Schengen Agreement initially stated that ‘migration and the crossing of external borders by large numbers of third-country nationals should not be considered per se as a threat to public order or internal security’, this was amended with the revision of the Schengen Agreement in the summer of 2024. Indeed, Article 25(1)(c) now prescribes as a possible cause of a serious threat to public policy: “an exceptional situation characterised by sudden large-scale unauthorised movements of third-country nationals between the Member States, putting a substantial strain on the overall resources

and capacities of well-prepared competent authorities and which is likely to put at risk the overall functioning of the area without internal border control, as evidenced by information analysis and all available data, including from relevant Union agencies.” A study commissioned by the European Parliament was quick to criticise this, precisely because the Schengen Borders Code did not authorise internal border controls as a migration tool.³¹⁶ Other European agreements and rules, such as the Dublin Regulation, were established for that purpose. Forty years ago, the five member states Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France and Germany signed the Schengen Treaty, abolishing internal border controls. Except for Luxembourg, now even the founding members of the Schengen treaty implement some form of controls. All four motivated by, among other things, asylum flows.

Despite this, Member States increasingly rely on broad and evolving crises combined with complex global risks to justify introducing and maintaining internal border controls. In several case studies, such as at the Austria–Hungary and Germany–Luxembourg borders, the justifications rest heavily on long-standing or foreseeable threats. This approach undermines the requirement that internal controls be used only as a last resort, raising doubts about the necessity and proportionality of repeated extensions. As a result, there is a growing risk that temporary measures become continuously extended, creating a *de facto* permanent state of emergency. Indeed, academics and stakeholders have mentioned a trend of rebordering, visible after the migration crisis of 2015. With COVID-19 as catalyst, Member States are more eager to rely on border controls as first measure of choice to certain external threats or developments. Over the years, migration has become the main argument for Member States to reintroduce border controls in the Schengen area.³¹⁷

Such a situation is incompatible with the objective of the Schengen Borders Code, which requires that internal border controls remain exceptional and strictly time-limited. In Germany, several legal experts have also questioned whether a serious threat to internal security actually exists, particularly one that cannot be addressed by less intrusive and equally effective alternatives. Concerns have additionally been raised about the legality of Germany turning away refugees directly at the border. Luxembourg has even formally objected to the European Commission, arguing that Germany’s approach allows national interests to override EU solidarity. Similar concerns have been raised by multiple stakeholders across Europe, who question the necessity, proportionality, and evidentiary basis of the reintroduced border controls. It is noted that Member States have consistently failed to provide convincing evidence that such controls effectively address the threats they invoke.³¹⁸ Also, the effectiveness of these border controls is debated. While the proportionality test requires demonstrating that reintroduced controls can adequately address the identified threats, and that no less intrusive alternatives would suffice, the case studies in the Netherlands and Austria-Hungary show that the controls are largely ineffective. Yet, the border controls are maintained and prolonged. As a result, many perceive the visible border presence as largely symbolic, aimed more at signalling state authority than at meaningfully addressing the threats invoked to justify the controls.

³¹⁶ Carrera, S., Colombi, D., Cortinovis, R. (2023). An Assessment of the State of the EU Schengen Area and its External Borders. Brussels: European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

³¹⁷ Wille, C. (2025). On the Reintroduction of Temporary Controls at EU Internal Borders. Developments and Challenges 40 Years After the Schengen Agreement. UniGR-CBS Working Paper 24. Doi: 10.5281/zenodo.15575146; Mertens, P. & Unfried, M. (2025). ITEM Brief: 40 years of Schengen in times of border controls. <https://crossborderitem.eu/en/item-brief-40-years-of-schengen-in-times-of-border-controls/>

³¹⁸ Sergio CARRERA, Davide COLOMBI, Roberto CORTINOVIS, "An Assessment of the State of the EU Schengen Area and its External Borders", 15.5.2024, accessed via: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2023\)737109](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2023)737109)

The SBC also includes a Cross-Border Impact Assessment, requiring the Member States as part of the proportionality test to evaluate the effects of internal border controls to cross-border regions. More specifically the SBC notes that “regarding the impact of the measure, it should be evaluated against the free movement of persons and the functioning of the cross-border regions, taking into account the strong social and economic ties between them.” Across the case studies, the Netherlands and Austria both made their notifications public and indicated how they considered these aspects. However, in both notifications, the reference to cross-border impacts was found to be superficial, lacking any concrete measures or incentives. It remains unclear what “minimising the impacts” entails, how authorities address delays for cross-border commuters, or what level of waiting time is deemed acceptable. The “Cross-Border Impact Assessment” therefore seem to be carried out so far as a superficial formality, lacking in-depth assessment and concrete measures to evaluate and mitigate effects on cross-border regions. In the France-Spain case study, it was noted that national authorities emphasise compliance with the Schengen Code and limited disruptions, whereas residents and local actors report noticeable daily life disruptions, and economic impacts. This discrepancy demonstrates the different realities and narratives, prioritised on the central and local level. In this sense, there seems to be a need to better connect these narratives and test them on basis of facts and evidence.

National definitions

Regarding cross-border regions, Article 42b SBC obliges Member States to designate and report areas of territory considered as cross-border regions, explicitly recognising the importance of safeguarding socio-economic integration in these areas when making decisions related to border controls. The case studies examined in this report show that the way Member State they define these areas varies. The definition is not always based on with the link or justification to socio-economic integration. For instance, Germany demarcated its cross-border regions according to the NUTS-3 category of German “Kreise” and “Kreisfreie Städte”. However, the cities of Trier or Karlsruhe, being surrounded by a Kreis, were excluded from the definition, although they are located in the vicinity of the border. Belgium and the Netherlands have opted for the NUTS 2-category, by nominating their border provinces. Also, in the Hungary-Austria case study it was noted that the delimitation of the cross-border regions should be more strongly based on functional ties. The Schengen Member States mostly applied administrative factors to define the spatial expansion of the cross-border regions, neglecting the functional interdependencies. Hungary used a fixed 20 km border zone based on an older legal act which fails to reflect real cross-border mobility patterns.

Furthermore, even it was the Council that urged during the negotiations of the revision of SBC that cross-border regions should be assessed, in coordination with the neighbouring states³¹⁹, the case studies reveals that none of the Member States defined a *cross-border* region in coordination with their neighbours. Instead, local or regional concepts of border regions within the national territory are communicated to the Commission. The same finding is true of the entire list of ‘cross-border regions’³²⁰, notified by the Member States: none of them include a true cross-border region, but is merely an administrative concept of a national border region. This also means that impacts formally are only assessed for the own border regions and not for a cross-border functional area. That should be regarded as problematic, as the case studies show that the effects are asymmetrical. For instance, German border controls mainly lead to waiting times and traffic jams at the other side of the border. Hence, the case study concluded that cross-border regions should be defined according to functional connections, and

³¹⁹ Council of the EU, Interinstitutional file 2021/0428(COD), 13 February 2024, 6331/24.

³²⁰ Official Journal of the European Union, C/2025/4643, 18.8.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/4643/oj>

that temporary border control measures should align with the spatial realities and everyday mobility practices of cross-border residents in a cross-border perspective.

Finally, the case studies show that there is no one method or format for border controls. Despite that there is only one definition of 'border control' in the SBC, the practical implications are more diverse. This is important to note, as the implications and effects differ greatly according to the applied method. Even more, there may be ambiguities whether certain formal border controls under Article 25 SBC are more equal to entry controls under Article 23 SBC and vice versa. This may give rise to stronger guidance and rules on the definition of a border control.

4.2 Evaluation of the theme of Euregional Cohesion

Under the theme of Euregional Cohesion, the case studies of this dossier analysed the degree of cooperation and coordination in the selected cross-border regions. This included an examination if and how border control activities are coordinated, and whether the border controls affect the institutional trust between neighbouring countries. The analysis also considers how these border control practices relate to broader objectives of territorial cohesion and good cross-border governance, including potential concerns brought forward by the cooperating parties.

Effects of internal border controls on institutional trust and cross-border cooperation

Across the examined regions, institutional trust has been unevenly affected by the reintroduction of internal border controls. While some regions report stable or unaffected trust, others show clear signs of frustration and symbolic damage to Euregional cohesion in cross-border regions. In some areas, such as the Euregion Meuse-Rhine, German–French and German–Swiss Rhine region, trust has remained stable: long-standing cooperation structures continued to function effectively, and no loss of institutional trust was reported. In contrast, the Hungary–Austria borderland shows signs of a gradual erosion of trust. While everyday professional cooperation remains strong, interviewees noted declining engagement, reduced institutional partnerships compared to earlier decades, and frustration over unpredictable, unilateral Austrian measures. The constant presence of border guards was also seen as sending an exclusionary message, weakening interest in cooperation over time. The Luxembourg–Germany case reveals a more complex picture. Although Germany's trust in Luxembourg has not diminished, it was noted that internal trust within Germany has suffered, with border municipalities feeling overlooked by national decision-makers. This is equally true in the Dutch-German case, where the Euregional connection is rather well working but feel disconnected with 'Berlin'. Political divisions between the federal level and the Länder further complicate the landscape. This is also true in a cross-border setting, where for example Dutch border municipalities found it impossible to reach the German federal government to raise their concerns and problems. However, a growing trust deficit among citizens was not only identified toward Germany's actions but also toward the EU and the Schengen border system itself. In Luxembourg and neighbouring German regions, many fear that border controls are rebuilding "mental borders", symbolically undermining the principles of free movement and territorial cohesion. Despite constructive administrative cooperation, the controls create doubts about long-term commitment to cross-border cohesion and the European project. From a Luxembourgish perspective, the questioning of the open border and cross-border cohesion is directly linked to essential economic questions, as in the first place the functioning of the cross-border labour market. In the France–Spain region, the impact varies by

territory. While trust between local authorities remains largely intact, many cross-border bodies report reduced transparency, lack of consultation from national administrations, and delays in project implementation. These issues generate mistrust and reinforce a symbolic sense of weakened solidarity and diminished recognition of cross-border cooperation structures. Overall, although operational cooperation continues, strategic trust between countries and between local and national levels is strained. The cumulative effect is a gradual weakening of territorial cohesion and confidence in the stability of cross-border cooperation frameworks.

The case studies also highlight how the experience of COVID-19 border closures continues to shape perceptions of internal border controls today. In the France-Spain case study, closures and restrictions in 2020–2021 were found to have undermined trust between states and border communities. This trust, built over decades, was weakened by decisions perceived as unilateral and has not yet been fully restored, leaving it still fragile. Similarly, in the Luxembourg–Germany case study, stakeholders noted that although much effort had been invested in “removing borders from people’s minds”, the reintroduction of controls has contributed to their reappearance. Indeed, some early evidence from research shows the mental rebordering effects, also affecting cross-border cooperation and the willingness to do so.³²¹ In contrast, the German–French and German–Swiss Rhine bridges case study suggests that interior ministries and police forces in these countries have taken cross-border working mobility to Germany into account when introducing border controls. Here, it appears that important lessons were learned from the traumatic border closures during the first wave of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the assessment of impacts on everyday life in the cross-border region is still insufficient.

To conclude, direct effects on institutional trust or cross-border relations and cohesion are difficult to measure. It is obvious that what has been established during decades is not immediately damaged. However, cross-border practitioners for instance from cross-border Euregions or Eurodistricts have the perception that the “border narrative” is changing. The closure and controls during the COVID-19 crisis and the present controls are decisive disruptions of the old Schengen narrative, meaning that border controls become normal. The negative mental aspects are especially to be observed in the cases of unilateral border controls and those with a long history of border controls (e.g., Austria-Hungary). Regarding the latter, the case study warned for an increasing trend of narcissism and mistrust as a result of long-lasting border controls. This normalisation is regarded as a threat to the narrative of the joint cross-border territory without borders as part of the identity of citizens in border regions. Unilaterally controlling the border to reduce the risk on one side of the border also means that the risk comes from the other side or must be sent back to the other side. This fundamentally contradicts the idea of a joint cross-border region with a particular cross-border solidarity. In this sense, unilateral border controls are contributing to a sort of slippery slope scenario leading to rebordering and renationalisation. Indeed, we observe a certain domino-effect of internal border controls, where Member States feel inspired or urged to reinstall them as well.

Cross-border cooperation and coordination of border controls

Across the examined case studies, cross-border police cooperation was already well established before the reintroduction of internal border controls, and in several regions these controls have even intensified

³²¹ Sohn, C. (2025). The impact of rebordering on crossborder cooperation actors’ discourses in the Öresund region. A semantic network approach. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 107(2), 79-101.

existing cooperation, however it remains unclear how far border control activities in practice are coordinated or carried out together in border areas with bilateral controls in place. In many cases, on paper and in declarations border controls are at least coordinated and formally agreements are made to transfer individuals, lacking the correct documentation, back to the other side of the border. Yet, signals are there, for example portrayed in the media, that this is not always the case.

It is also striking that “intensifying cross-border police cooperation” was hardly discussed as an alternative to the reintroduction of border controls but as an accompanying measure, despite this was explicitly promoted via the revision of the Schengen Borders Code. This is even more the case, since in multiple case studies bilateral or multilateral police cooperation and patrols have been in place (German-French and German-Swiss Rhine bridges case study; the Fox operations in the Hungary-Austria case study, NeBeDeAgPol in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine, joint Police Cooperation Centre in the Grande Region). Yet, these cooperations did not prevent unilateral border controls indicating that the quality of cross-border police cooperation is not up to the new challenges and not seen as a tool to avoid unilateral controls. In case of the German border controls, some particularities were found. The French population was accustomed to bi- and trinational police patrols and was suddenly confronted with German police officers who did not speak French. This seems to be a little detail, but it indicates that practices are today outside the “cross-border spirit” and turned into rather national than Euregional cooperation. In case of Luxembourg-Germany, political positions diverge: Germany continues to extend controls, whereas Luxembourg advocates for their removal. This results in a fragmented implementation of EU border policy, with national interests overshadowing shared principles such as proportionality, transparency, and mutual trust.

To conclude, the different cases show that in the cross-border territories in question, cross-border policy cooperation exists and has been established during the last decades in the framework of Schengen. In most border regions, the structures today help to coordinate and mitigate the disruption of unilateral border controls. However, there are no joined strategies or plans to intensify cross-border police cooperation in way to make unilateral border controls abundant and go back to the old Schengen situation without border controls. Irregular migration, human trafficking, threat of terrorism: it is obvious that the challenges at the internal borders are different from 40 years ago. It is also obvious that intensified policy cooperation is one of measures to avoid the dismantling of Schengen.

4.3 Evaluation of the theme of Sustainable/Socio-Economic Development

Under the theme of Socioeconomic Development, the dossier examined the broader impacts of internal border controls on the labour market and economy of cross-border regions, citizens and businesses. This included analysing if and how the internal border controls have changed the incentives to work across the border, how commuting patterns for cross-border workers, students, and leisure travellers are affected, and how border-area businesses are impacted.

In general, the cost of a non-Schengen (that is the costs related to the reintroduction of border controls in operational and economic terms) has been quantified by the European Parliamentary Research Services

in 2016 to 64 billion euros yearly.³²² The Impact Assessment of the European Commission on the revision of the Schengen Borders Code also summarises some economic impacts of (long-lasting) border checks³²³: from 5-18 billion euros annual direct costs for the EU economy, to 6.5-13 billion euros annual costs for the road freight sector specifically to 168-606 million euros annual costs for cross-border commuters. Furthermore, cross-border commuting was found to be positively impacted by the abolishment of border controls under the Schengen area.³²⁴ Indeed, in case of reintroduction, the Commission refers to a study for France, estimating that if the waiting time increased by 10 minutes, this will lead to a decrease of more than 5.000 workers who are willing to cross the border. If the waiting time increased by 20 minutes, it would be more than 10.000 workers, which would equal an economic loss of EUR 150 million or EUR 300 million respectively.³²⁵

In summary, open borders result in more cross-border cooperation and regional growth in border regions.³²⁶ Thus, the reintroduction of border controls does impact national and European GDP and cross-border mobility, as is the expectation. Even more, the reports of Draghi³²⁷ and Letta³²⁸ emphasise that the Schengen system is dysfunctional and currently already limiting the internal market and Europe's competitiveness. However, the quantification of economic costs and effects appeared to be less evident in the case studies. Businesses and entrepreneurs report that any delay automatically results in additional costs. Examples are the additional costs for employers, who have cross-border commuters delayed by traffic jams.³²⁹ Also, the Dutch transport sector estimated that every hour delay results in at least €75 additional costs. However, in most cases, there is no real monitoring of all costs related to border controls, but remains anecdotal evidence or incidental predictions from stakeholders. Yet, the case studies also highlight that the economic costs should not solely be based on the costs for businesses, local economies and workers. Even more, also central and local governments are incurring additional costs related to border controls. In the case of the Netherlands, for example costs for traffic regulators, signs and other traffic measures are incurred. Also, the German *Bundespolizei* report significant costs related to personnel

³²² EPRS (2016). The cost of non-Schengen.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/581383/EPRS_STU%282016%29581383_EN.pdf

³²³ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Report accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders, SWD(2021) 462 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2021%3AQ462%3AFIN>.

³²⁴ See for instance: Parenti, A.; Tealdi, C. (2019). Does the Implementation of the Schengen Agreement Boost Cross-Border Commuting? Evidence from Switzerland, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 12754, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), Bonn

³²⁵ France Strategie "The Economic Cost of Rolling Back Schengen", La Note d'Analyse No. 39, February 2016, p. 5.

³²⁶ See for instance: Basboga, K. (2020) The role of open borders and cross-border cooperation in regional growth across Europe, Regional Studies, Regional Science, 7:1, 532-549, DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2020.1842800

³²⁷ Draghi, M. (2024). The future of European competitiveness. Part B | In-depth analysis and recommendations. https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en

³²⁸ Letta, E. (2024). Much more than a market. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>

³²⁹ European Commission, Commission Staff Working Document Impact Assessment Report accompanying the document Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders, SWD(2021) 462 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2021%3AQ462%3AFIN>. In the case of France, it was noted that there are 350.000 French residents working across the border. Based on a value of time of €10 per hour, 10 minutes delay would result in additional cost of €1,70 per border crossing – accumulating to €723 a year on individual level and €250 million per year in total.

and exploitation (such as tents). Thus, internal border controls may not only limit GDP and mobility, but also investments and funding for other topics.

Across all examined case studies, internal border controls have reduced the attractiveness and predictability of cross-border mobility, though to differing degrees depending on the degree of cross-border mobility and integration in the area, geography, commuting patterns, and the intensity, duration and methods of internal border controls. Some cross-border regions report no visibility of border controls or effects to traffic or commuting, while the effects are more visible in areas where border controls are more intensively carried out. There appears to be a link to the effects with the intensity, visibility and duration of the border controls. The mode of transport also shapes how border crossers experience these effects. In general, those travelling by car report more negative consequences, such as traffic jams and delays. Rail commuters, by contrast, seem to be less affected - although when controls do cause delays, this can be particularly problematic for travellers who miss their connections. As a result, some citizens consider alternative modes of transport to a car, including public transport. In certain regions citizens even opt for the bicycle, as reported in the case studies France-Germany-Switzerland, and Hungary-Austria.

The impact also varies strongly between categories of commuters: cross-border workers who commute daily are consistently the most affected, experiencing the highest delays, the strongest opposition to controls, and the greatest difficulty adapting due to fixed work schedules. Incentives to work across borders have been negatively affected wherever controls introduce uncertainty, longer travel times, or fear of recurrent delays. However, no large-scale withdrawal from cross-border employment has not been observed and the effects vary from border region to another. Commuters between Kehl (Germany)-Strasbourg (France) and the Austria-Hungary border area reported to have adjusted to the possible delays caused by border controls, for instance by earlier departures, rerouting via secondary roads, switching to bicycles or rail where possible, and in some cases avoiding spontaneous trips entirely. In some cases, the (introduction of) teleworking has helped cross-border workers to avoid these delays. Interestingly, many commuters have noted that the issue is not the border control procedure itself but rather the stress, unpredictability, and the need to factor in extra travel time. In general, it can also be said that cross-border workers were most critical of the controls, with many perceiving them as disproportionate, disruptive to integrated labour markets, and contradictory to the European right of free movement. In the case study of France-Spain, citizens who responded to a survey even suggested that, given the scale of cross-border mobility and the cross-border labour market, these commuters should be more clearly recognised as a distinct category, ensuring them greater freedom of movement and fewer administrative restrictions than other border crossers. They also emphasised the need for stronger cooperation between public authorities in cross-border regions to develop shared solutions.

Regarding educational mobility and students, although only case examples were collected, several observations can be made. In the France-Spain and Luxembourg-Germany case studies, stakeholders reported that student mobility had been challenged and, in some instances, had even decreased. In the Luxembourg-Germany case study, it was noted that pupils were particularly sensitive to police presence: “French, German and Luxembourgish pupils of the Schengen-Lyzeum in Perl reported mixed feelings about the controls they encountered on their way to school. They were frightened by police officers equipped with machine guns when checking pupils crossing the border—recognising that the aim was to increase safety, yet questioning the necessity of such heavy armament.” Teachers also expressed

concerns that border checks contradict the educational mission of cross-border schools. GECT Pirineos–Pyrénées reported that student mobility between institutions on both sides of the border has decreased.

Tourism, leisure and shopping commuters, who travel less regularly and enjoy more flexibility, report fewer problems and, in some cases, remain more supportive of controls. Internal border controls have generally not stopped leisure mobility, but they have made cross-border travel less spontaneous, less convenient, and more uneven across regions. In most areas, leisure travellers and occasional shoppers continue to cross the border, yet many do so more cautiously, planning their trips in advance or avoiding peak hours to prevent delays. The Hungary–Austria and German–Switzerland case studies show that tourism flows and shopping tourism largely remained stable (with cycling tourism even increasing around Lake Fertő/Neusiedler See). Where disruptions occur, they are mostly described as episodic nuisances rather than structural barriers. By contrast, in regions exposed to heavier or stationary controls, such as Perl on the Luxembourg–Germany border or parts of the France–Spain and German–French Rhine areas, controls reduced the spontaneity of short leisure trips, caused missed connections, and generated localised congestion that discouraged cross-border visits. Surveyed leisure travellers in Germany–Luxembourg and the Rhine area reported increased travel times, though they were less affected than daily workers due to their flexibility. For border-area businesses, the economic effects vary sharply by location and dependency on cross-border customers. In many Rhine locations and parts of the German–Swiss border, businesses and chambers of commerce reported no significant economic impact, and employers noted no complaints. However, retail sectors in several hotspots, including Kehl, French–Spanish commercial zones, and German municipalities near Luxembourg, experienced noticeable declines in customers, with some businesses reporting drops of up to 15–30% in turnover due to reduced cross-border shopping. In the Luxembourg–Germany border area, stationary motorway controls led to fewer Luxembourgish shoppers entering Germany, lower sales for local shops, and congestion that disrupted daily business operations. Companies dependent on cross-border logistics were particularly affected: increased fuel costs, delayed deliveries, additional documentation requirements, and lower competitiveness were widely reported, with over half of surveyed businesses stating that controls restricted their operations and nearly a third reporting financial losses. In Hungary–Austria, shopping patterns shifted more due to price differences than border controls themselves, though long-term reconfigurations in where people shop and access services are noted to be emerging.

Across all regions, traffic jams caused by internal border controls are clearly documented. Rhine bridges experience 10–45-minute waiting times at peak hours; commuter trains between Strasbourg–Kehl and Strasbourg–Offenburg face systematic 5–15-minute delays; the Austria–Hungary motorway sees queues lasting hours at times; and at the Luxembourg–Germany border, commuters report 15–25-minute increases in daily travel time. At the fixed border controls between Germany and the Netherlands, daily delays are also reported on average between 15 to 30 minutes. The case study reported many traffic jams at the Dutch–German border since the intensification of the German border controls. These delays not only disrupt work schedules but also spill over into social life, shopping patterns, access to health or education services, and local economies. People sought to avoid these “hot spots” of traffic jams where border controls were known to take place, leading many to take detours and use smaller alternative roads to cross the border. This, in turn, causes congestion and additional nuisance in villages at the border areas.

Overall, it should be noted that the findings are based on case studies and surveys involving relatively small populations. This highlights that the lack of systematic data collection and structured impact evaluation hampers informed decision-making and limits the ability to assess the real effects of internal border controls on cross-border regions and economic activities. The Hungary–Austria case study recommends that Member States develop shared indicators and reporting tools to measure the impact of border controls on mobility, economic activity, and social cohesion. Such shared indicators based on commonly agreed metrics would allow for consistent monitoring, comparison, and evaluation across borders. The integration of academic research and civil society perspectives into these assessments would further support a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding.

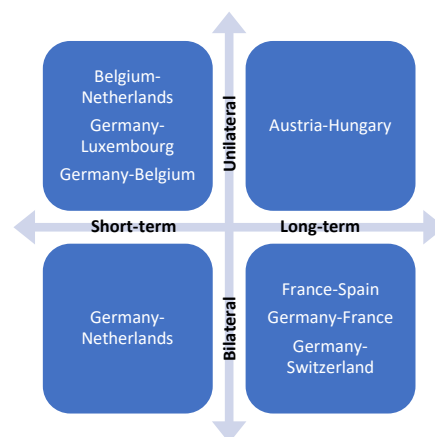
5. Conclusions and recommendations from a Euregional perspective

5.1 Conclusions

This dossier examined the revision of the Schengen Borders Code (SBC) and the reintroduction of border controls in several case studies of European cross-border regions. The assessment of the cross-border impact of border controls was central in this dossier, which has, after the revision of the SBC, become a part of the proportionality test itself. The investigated cross-border regions were Benelux–Germany, Germany–France, Germany–Switzerland, France–Spain, Hungary–Austria, and Luxembourg–Germany. The research aimed to assess what are the current effects of the reintroduction of internal border controls on (cross-)border regions. It analysed differences between highly integrated Euroregions and other border areas, the impact of controls on various categories of cross-border commuters, and the socio-economic consequences for businesses in border regions. It also assessed how cooperation, coordination, and mutual trust between neighbouring authorities and institutions are affected in practice.

State of Border Controls

At the moment of finalising this report, i.e. at the end of November 2025, there are in total 485 notifications of internal border controls made to the European Commission since 2006, of which 14 notifications across 10 Member States are currently in place.³³⁰ The case studies show a great variety of border controls, in terms of unilateral/bilateral and short-/long-term controls. As shown in the case studies, the Netherlands for example has no history with border controls as such, but rather a history of abolishing them. On the other hand, the Austria-Hungary border is characterised by border controls for a relatively long term. In general, also France and Germany have reintroduced border controls multiple times.



The report warns for a normalisation of the use of internal border controls as a reaction to various threats and developments and most prominently migration and asylum. Started in 2015 with the migration crisis and catalysed with COVID-19, the amount of notified border controls increased rapidly. While border controls were mainly found to be ineffective for regulating

³³⁰ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen/schengen-area/temporary-reintroduction-border-control_en

migration and asylum, Member States are more eager to rely on border controls as first measure of choice with migration as main argument. Such a situation is incompatible with the objective of the Schengen Borders Code, which requires that internal border controls remain exceptional and strictly limited in time.

While in legal sense, there is only one definition of 'border controls', the case studies also showed a wide variety of methods of border controls. Most Member States apply flexible on-the-spot border controls, being increased in capacities or not, whereas Germany also introduced permanent control posts at certain borders. Also, instructions and possibilities for cross-border cooperation or coordination appear to be different across borders.

Impact

The method, the duration and the uni-/bilateral character of border controls are found to be strongly related to the experienced impact on border regions and mobility. Indeed, where border controls do not legally affect the right of free movement, the practical implementation and execution of border controls may (in)directly impact (the willingness to exercise) free movement. The studied regions around Germany confirmed that border controls may lead to delays and traffic jams, negatively impacting cross-border mobility. Also, the mobility itself changed in some cases, by mode of transport, in terms of routes or the willingness to cross the border. While based on estimations or anecdotal evidence, border controls have resulted in costs in the cross-border regions. The case studies showed effects on local tourism, shopping behaviour, transport companies and even operational costs for traffic measures and the border controls themselves.

Furthermore, the duration of border controls has shown to be a relevant aspect when assessing the effects. The Austria-Hungary case study is a prime example of how long-term border controls impact the perception of cross-border citizens and the cross-border cooperation between local actors in general. Thus, the Euregional cohesion is found indeed to be a relevant indicator to be more critically assessed and monitored when reintroducing border controls. Even more, the report warns for a 'slippery slope'. While in certain areas the effects of border controls are not seen or experienced yet, duration and intensity of border controls are two important variables increasing the impact. The case of Germany (increased intensity) and Austria (long duration) are exemplary to this. This dossier noticed a similar tendency, where unilateral border controls are in place.

Finally, the report concluded that qualitative measurements of cross-border impacts is of great value, but limitedly structurally done at regional, national and European level.

The "Cross-Border Impact Assessment"

Since the revision of the Schengen Borders Code, there is a "cross-border impact assessment" as part of the proportionality test. From the case studies, two Member States have made their notification public and referred to border regions. However, the cross-border impact assessment in the SBC was only applied superficially without concrete measures/evaluation methods. Thus, the report concludes that this additional safeguard for border regions did not result in significant impact for border regions. Even more, the report signals that effects are asymmetrical: it is often the neighbouring region across the border that is affected by the decision to reintroduce border controls. However, all Member States have demarcated their 'cross-border region' to the national boundaries. This seems to be a fundamental problem, as the definition and impact assessment requires a true cross-border dimension.

5.2 Recommendations

This dossier emphasised a bottom-up approach, with the experiences in the cross-border regions placed centrally. Based on the findings in the different case studies and the overall evaluation of European Integration, socio-economic development and Euregional cohesion, this report formulates the following recommendations:

1. Enforce the temporary nature of border controls, as time is found to be relevant for impacts on Euregional cohesion.

The reintroduction of border controls should be a last resort and of temporary nature. However, the dossier signals an increasing tendency of Member States to reintroduce border controls as first measure and prolong it without proper proportionality assessments. This erodes the temporary and strict nature of border controls. With the case study of Austria-Hungary as one of the extreme cases, long-lasting border controls are shown to be eroding the cross-border spirit and quality of cooperation. For Euregional cohesion, the temporary nature of border controls is therefore of great relevance.

2. Redefine 'cross-border regions' based on a true cross-border concepts, such as euroregions, Interreg areas or other cross-border functional demarcations.

The revised SBC requires Member States to formulate and demarcate their 'cross-border regions', as stipulated by Article 42b SBC. The entire list of definitions was published in August 2025. This dossier highlights that all definitions are demarcated to the national borders and based on national concepts, e.g. provinces, regions or cities. However, there are no real cross-border conceptualisations. This is found to be problematic, as the impact of border controls are often visible across the border. Due to the national demarcations, Member States are currently insufficiently addressing these effects on the other side of the border. Therefore, this dossier stresses the need for reconsidering the national definitions and transforming them to real cross-border ones.

3. Make the different methods applied in border controls better visible, comparable and assessable.

This dossier showed different methods, practices and instruments for border controls along the investigated borders. Even more, in some cases the distinction between the practices under Article 23 (such as entry checks) and Article 25 SBC is unclear. While there is one legal definition of 'border control', the practices show a greater variety. From a societal point, this universal term may be confusing and lead to commotion and frustration. Indeed, in the case of the Netherlands-Germany, it was found that Dutch municipalities often confuse the Dutch border controls with the German ones. Furthermore, and logically, the intensification of border controls has shown to increase the effects on the cross-border territory. Therefore, also the practices and the level of border controls should be better monitored and assessed in a structural manner.

4. Provide Member States more guidance on how to properly assess cross-border impacts.

In general, when done, the impact assessment on border regions as part of the proportionality assessment is done at a superficial level. Furthermore, the national definition of cross-border regions, limit the assessment by Member States to the internal border regions. As stated earlier, the impact across the border is neglected or hardly taken into account. When considered, the impact assessment is limited to the traffic jams but not assessing aspects as cohesion and alternative measures such as cross-border

cooperation. Since the cross-border impact assessment under the SBC is defined in a rather open way, the dossier highlights the need for more guidance on the assessment.

5. Invest in better data collection of economic, social and territorial impacts of border controls.

Finally, the dossier showed that in various domains data is lacking to assess the impact of border controls. In official statistics, often the amount of border controls in terms of hours and manpower is shown, as well as how many people are stopped at the border. In the Netherlands, it was shown that there is structural data available on traffic jams. However, this was found to be rather unique and not available in all case studies. Even more, when assessing the economic effects, relevant economic stakeholders do not monitor or gather the economic effects on a structural basis. Therefore, often we have to rely on theoretical predictions and estimations. Finally, for cohesion, there seems to be a strong demand for better coordination between the central and decentral governmental levels, when assessing the impact.

Annexes

Annex 1. Case study: Benelux-Germany

We thank our interview partners from among others: VNG, VVSG, LWV, DNHK, Euregio Meuse-Rhine, EUREGIO,, BENEGO, Eurode, Secretariat-General of the Benelux Union, Statistics Netherlands.

Furthermore, we thank our PREMIUM students and those who cooperated with our joint survey and interviews. We also thank Tobias Pardoën for the help with the media collection.

We opted to have full references in the footnotes, instead of including a literature list.

Annex 2. Case study: German-French and German-Swiss Rhine bridges

The following institutions have provided valuable information in the form of interviews and data, thank you:

- Stadt Kehl
- Eurométropole Strasbourg
- Collectivité européenne d'Alsace
- Eurodistrikte Strasbourg-Ortenau und trinationaler Eurodistrikt Basel
- Industrie- und Handelskammer Südlicher Oberrhein
- Oberrheinrat
- Ausschuss für grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit
- French Ministry of Interior (Ministère de l'intérieur)
- Gendarmerie nationale
- German border police: Bundespolizeidirektion Stuttgart
- Gemeinsame deutsch-französische Dienst Einheit
- Deutsch-Französische Einsatzeinheit
- Gemeinsames Zentrum der deutsch-französischen Polizei- und Zollzusammenarbeit
- Verein Garten/Jardin (Kehl-Strasbourg)
- Deutsch-französischer Stammtisch
- Conseil citoyen de Port du Rhin (Strasbourg)
- Infobest
- EURES-T und deutsch-französische Arbeitsagenturen
- Office eurométropolitain du tourisme, des loisirs et des congrès de Strasbourg
- Kehl City Forum
- City Center Kehl
- Informal discussions in July 2025: Restaurants, stores, passengers in Kehl, staff and partners of Euro-Institut and GFGZ
- Regio Basilensis
- Hochrheinkommission
- Thurgo AG
- Schweizer Zoll
- Europa Union Freiburg
- Europa Union Lörrach
- Volksinitiative Zämme in Europa
- 290 respondents to the survey 13.07 - 13.08.2025 and all the people who had shared it

Annex 3. Case study: France-Spain-Andorra border

List of respondents

- Communauté d’Agglomération du Pays Basque (CAPB) (France)
- The Working Community of the Pyrenees (WCP) (France-Spain-Andorra)
- EGTC Euroregion Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra (France-Spain)
- Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region (France)
- Basque Government (Spain)
- Pirineos-Pyrénées EGTC (France-Spain)
- Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion (France-Spain)
- Cerdanya Hospital (EGTC – HC) (France-Spain)
- Municipality of Larrau (France)
- Occitania Region (France)

Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE



Questionnaire

Analyse d'impact de la mise en œuvre du Code Schengen révisé sur la frontière France-Espagne-Andorre

Certains Etats, dont la France depuis 2015, ont réintroduit des contrôles aux frontières intérieures, dérogeant ainsi au principe de libre circulation inscrit dans le Code Schengen. Celui-ci autorise en effet les États à rétablir temporairement des contrôles en cas de menace grave pour l'ordre public ou la sécurité intérieure. Depuis 2015, la France a renouvelé cette mesure tous les six mois, invoquant la menace terroriste, la lutte contre l'immigration irrégulière et contre les trafics illégaux ou la crise sanitaire pour justifier les contrôles.

Sur certaines frontières, les opérations de contrôle ont récemment gagné en ampleur. Or, l'effet de ces contrôles est souvent source de mécontentement local, dans les bassins de vie rythmés par les flux et les échanges transfrontaliers.

Le Code Schengen révisé, publié en 2024, insiste désormais sur la nécessité d'adapter les contrôles de façon proportionnée, et de prendre en compte leur impact sur les "régions transfrontalières"¹.

Dans ce contexte, la Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) participe à une analyse coordonnée par le réseau Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN), visant à évaluer les effets concrets de la mise en œuvre du Code Schengen révisé et des contrôles frontaliers sur la cohésion, l'intégration et le développement socio-économique des territoires transfrontaliers.

Au travers de ce questionnaire, la MOT souhaite recueillir le retour des collectivités et structures transfrontalières situées à la frontière franco-hispano-andorrane.

Nom*:

Prénom*:

Adresse email*:

Fonction*:

Structure:

* = facultatif

¹ La France a désigné ses départements frontaliers comme la composante française des « régions transfrontalières » au regard du code Schengen révisé (voir : <https://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/cartes/code-schengen-2025-regions-transfrontalieres-aux-frontieres-francaises/>)

Thème : Cohésion eurorégionale

- Quel est l'impact des contrôles aux frontières sur la vie quotidienne des habitants de la région transfrontalière / du bassin de vie transfrontalier ?
- Comment les contrôles aux frontières affectent-ils le travail des structures de coopération transfrontalière (GECT, Eurorégions,...) ?
- Comment la confiance institutionnelle entre les pays / les collectivités voisines est-elle affectée ?
- Quels sont les effets sur la perception citoyenne de la "frontière ouverte" et de la "cohésion" dans le territoire transfrontalier?

Thème : Développement durable / socio-économique

Activités économiques générales

- Quantitatif: Observez-vous une diminution des activités économiques transfrontalières (achats, tourisme, etc) depuis la réintroduction des contrôles aux frontières ? Si possible, fournissez des données.

Marché du travail

- Quantitatif: Observez-vous une diminution des déplacements transfrontaliers ? (nombre de travailleurs frontaliers, d'étudiants,...) Si possible, fournissez des données.
- Qualitatif: Les experts du marché du travail et professionnels de l'éducation font-ils part de revendications en ce qui concerne les contrôles aux frontières ?

Circulation/transports

- Quantitatif: Observez-vous une augmentation des temps d'attente/de trajet liés aux contrôles sur les routes transfrontalières et les transports publics? Si possible, fournissez des données.
- Qualitatif: Constatez-vous une modification du trafic routier sur certains itinéraires? Y a-t-il une diminution de l'utilisation des transports publics ?

Tourisme

- Quantitatif: Observez-vous une diminution du tourisme de proximité dans la région transfrontalière ? Si possible, fournissez des données.
- Qualitatif: Quel est l'opinion des professionnels du tourisme sur les impacts potentiels de contrôles permanents aux frontières sur le tourisme dans la région transfrontalière ?

Environnement

- Quantitatif: Observez-vous une augmentation des déplacements en voiture et des pollutions liées au trafic dans les zones rurales et aux passages frontaliers dans les villes ? Si possible, fournissez des données.
- Qualitatif : Prévoyez/Constatez-vous une augmentation du trafic dans les zones rurales et sur les routes communales en raison des personnes cherchant à éviter les contrôles aux frontières ?

Merci de vos contributions !

Les résultats seront rendus publics à l'automne.

Parliamentary question and answer on the closure of four border crossings between France and Spain



ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

16ème législature

Closure of four border crossings between France and Spain

Written question no. 3398

Text of the question

Mr. Inaki Echaniz draws the attention of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs to the reopening date of four border crossings between France and Spain, which have been closed since January 2021. The unilateral decision to close these crossings in order to combat terrorism and illegal immigration has had a significant impact on the social and economic life of the region. While nine border crossings were initially closed, five have been reopened to the public, but four remain closed. However, these crossings at Port de Larrau, Les Aldudes, Col d'Ispéguy, and Pont de Marchandises d'Hendaye are usually heavily used by local residents. These closures cause significant mobility difficulties and hinder the development of relations with our European neighbour. More seriously, the closure of these routes is causing numerous tragedies, as migrants wishing to reach France are forced to take very dangerous routes on foot: motorways, railways, and rivers. The new risks they are forced to take have already caused the tragic deaths of several of them. At a time when the countries of the European Union need more than ever to strengthen their ties and show solidarity, this decision to weaken the links between our two countries is poorly understood, both by French and Spanish elected officials and by many local residents and stakeholders, who have repeatedly expressed their dissatisfaction through demonstrations, letters, and appeals to members of the government. The representative therefore calls on the minister to resolve this particularly sensitive situation.

Text of the response

The persistent terrorist threat on the continent has led France to reintroduce internal border controls since November 13, 2015, in accordance with the provisions of the Schengen Borders Code (Articles 25 and 27 SBC). The latest reintroduction runs from May 1, 2023, to October 31, 2023. Entry into France by land from a neighbouring country must be through "authorized crossing points" (ACPs), a list of which is notified to the European Commission. This screening allows border guards to ensure that foreign nationals do not pose a threat to public order and internal security, have the documents required to authenticate their identity, and can justify the reasons for their stay on national territory. Following the attack in Nice on October 29, 2020, committed by an undocumented Tunisian national who had arrived from Italy, France closed three ACPs on the French-Italian border and seventeen on the French-Spanish border. These closures were accompanied by a redeployment of border guards to the points where most of the migratory flows pass through, thus enabling more effective controls to be carried out. Currently, nine ACPs remain closed, either totally or partially, on the border with Spain, including four in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department (Port de Larrau, Aldudes, Col d'Ispéguy, and Pont de Marchandises d'Hendaye). The French-Spanish border remains the second largest entry point for irregular immigration into France by land, behind the border with Italy. The number of irregular foreigners apprehended continued to rise in 2022, with nearly 20,000 refusals of entry issued over

eleven months, the highest level since 2015. The Pyrénées-Atlantiques department, the most affected on this border, accounted for nearly 49% of arrests on the border at the end of 2022. The national gendarmerie therefore deployed three mobile gendarmerie squadrons on a permanent basis in 2022 to reinforce border security (departments 64 [*Pyrénées-Atlantiques*] and 66 [*Pyrénées-Orientales*]). In this context, the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories remains committed to preserving cross-border traffic conditions, particularly between France and Spain, in accordance with European Union law. The French-Spanish border currently has 29 border crossing points open, half of which are in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques department, allowing border residents and travelers familiar with the currently closed border crossing points to cross the border at other nearby border crossing points. Border risk analyses are regularly updated to assess the possibilities for changing control measures and reopening crossing points. In order to consider any changes, which must be carried out under controlled conditions, progress is expected in bilateral cooperation with Spain, both at the operational level and in the application of the Malaga bilateral agreement on readmissions. The signing of the Barcelona Treaty on January 19, 2023, which provides for the establishment of binational operational units for the security of major events and public safety, as well as binational operational units for the fight against irregular immigration, is a definite step forward in this regard. It is within this framework that work has been undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories to consider the conditions under which the system could evolve in the future, without prejudice to possible changes in the threats or their characteristics, which have justified and continue to justify the measures in force.

Key data

Author: Mr. Inaki Echaniz

Constituency: Pyrénées-Atlantiques (4th constituency) – Socialists and allies (member of the NUPES intergroup)

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Annex 4. Case study: The Hungarian-Austrian border area

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List of Hungarian-Austrian border crossings in 2025

Border crossing point/Name of road crossing the border	Type of road on the Hungarian side	Type of road on the Austrian side
Hegyeshalom – Nickelsdorf I	Motorway	Motorway
Hegyeshalom - Nickelsdorf II.	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)
Várbalog (Albertkázmerpuszta) - Halbtorn	Secondary road (lower-level national roads)	Local public road (road managed by the local government)
Jánossomorja – Andau	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Local public road (road managed by the local government)
Ólmod-Klostermarienberg	Macadam/gravel road	Macadam/gravel road
Kőszeg – Rattersdorf	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)
Kőszeg Írott-kő Naturpark-Geschriebenstein	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked hiking trail)	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked hiking trail)
Bozsok – Rechnitz	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Bucsu – Schachendorf	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)
Bucsu – Rechnitz	Macadam/gravel road	Macadam/gravel road
Narda – Schandorf	Side road (lower-order national roads)	Other asphalt road
Felsőcsatár - Burg	Footpath (pavement, cobbled road, marked tourist route)	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked tourist route)

Border crossing point/Name of road crossing the border	Type of road on the Hungarian side	Type of road on the Austrian side
Vaskeresztes – Eisenberg	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt roads
Horvátlovő – Deutsch Schützen	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Pornóapáti - Deutsch Schützen	Side road (secondary national roads)	Other asphalt roads
Pornóapáti – Bildein	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Ják – Eberau	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked tourist route)	Other asphalt roads
Szentpéterfa – Eberau	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Szentpéterfa-Gaas	Other	Other
Szentpéterfa - Mochendorf	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Pinkamindszent – Moschendorf	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Pinkamindszent – Heiligenbrunn	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Kemestaródfa – Luising	Footpath (pavement, cobbled road, marked tourist route)	Footpath (pavement, cobbled road, marked tourist route)
Nemesmedves - Reinersdorf	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked hiking trail)	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked hiking trail)
Rönök - Inzenhof	Side road (minor national roads)	Macadam/gravel road
Rábafüzes - Heiligenkreuz	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)
Szentgotthárd and Heiligenkreuz Industrial Park	Other asphalt roads	Other asphalt roads
Szentgotthárd – Heiligenkreuz (memorial site)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road accessible by passenger car
Szentgotthárd - Heiligenkreuz (Transzkavics)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Szentgotthárd - Mogersdorf, customs road (Zollhausstrasse)	Other asphalt roads	Other asphalt roads
Alsószölnök - Neumarkt a/d Raab	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Rajka - Deutsch Jahrndorf	Other asphalt roads	Other asphalt road
Fertőd - Pamhagen road border crossing	Side road (lower-order national roads)	Other asphalted roads
Sopron - Klingebach	Motorway	Motorway
Kópháza - Deutschkreutz	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)	Main road (national road with 1 or 2 digits)
Fertőrákos - Mörbisch	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked tourist trail)	Footpath (pavement, stone path, marked hiking trail)
Zsira - Lutzmannsburg	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)

Border crossing point/Name of road crossing the border	Type of road on the Hungarian side	Type of road on the Austrian side
Kapuvár - Andau (road leading to the Andau bridge)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Kapuvár - Wallern (road leading to the Wallern bridge)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Sopron - Klingenbach (cycle path)	Cycle path	Cycle path
Rajka - Nickelsdorf (dirt road)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Várbalog - Halbtorn (dirt road)	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Sopron – Baumgarten	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars	Dirt road suitable for passenger cars
Ágfalva – Schattendorf	Other asphalt roads	Side roads (lower-order national roads)
Ágfalva – Loipersbach	Other	Other
Zsira - Lutzmannsburg (thermal bath)	Other	Other
Zsira - Lutzmannsburg (vineyard)	Other	Other
Zsira – Nikitsch	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Sopronkövesd – Nikitsch	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Nagyecenk - Deutschkreutz	Macadam/gravel road	Macadam/gravel road
Harka – Deutschkreutz	Macadam/gravel road	Macadam/gravel road
Harka – Neckenmarkt	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Sopron (Brennbergbánya) - Ritzing (Helenenschacht)	Other asphalt road	Other asphalt road
Sopron (Görbehalmtelep) – Sieggraben (Herrentisch)	Macadam/gravel road	Macadam/gravel road
Fertőrákos (Sopronpuszta) - Sankt Margarethen	Side road (secondary national roads)	Side road (secondary national roads)
Hegyeshalom railway station	Rail	Rail
Fertőd railway station	Rail	Railway
Sopron railway station (railway line to Schattendorf)	Rail	Rail
Sopron railway station (railway line towards Loipersbach)	Rail	Railway

Austrian notifications of the temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders pursuant to Article 25 and 28 et seq. of the Schengen Borders Code

Number	Duration	Reasons/Scope
468	12/05/2025 – 11/11/2025	Threats associated with the continued high levels of irregular migration and migrant smuggling across Austria's southern borders, as well as the strain on the

		asylum reception system and basic services, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the security situation in the Middle East, intensifying the threat posed by Islamist extremism and terrorism; land borders with Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia.
465	16/04/2025 – 15/10/2025	Threats associated with irregular migration, such as via the Balkan routes (including expected migratory pressure), as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and basic services, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and the security situation in the Middle East aggravated by terrorist groups; land borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic.
453	12/11/2024 – 11/05/2025	Continued high levels of irregular migration and an increase in smuggling activities across Austria's southern borders, disproportionate pressure on Austria's asylum reception system, security risks resulting from the global security policy developments in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as the threat of terrorism throughout the European Union; land borders with Hungary and the Republic of Slovenia.
449	16/10/2024 – 15/04/2025	Risks associated with irregular migration, such as via the Balkan routes, migratory pressure in the pre-frontier area, as well as the strain on the asylum reception system and basic services, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and the security situation in the Middle East aggravated by terrorist groups; land borders with the Slovak Republic, and all internal borders with the Czech Republic.
440	03/06/2024 – 15/10/2024	The irregular migration, migrant smuggling activities, and organised crime, as well as the strain on the asylum reception system, Russia's aggression in Ukraine, espionage, cyber fraud, and the security situation exacerbated by terrorist groups, particularly in the Middle East; borders with Slovakia and the Czech Republic
434	17/04/2024 – 16/06/2024	Persistent threat situation in connection with the extremely unstable migration and security situation in the EU, high migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe, extensive secondary migration, increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes, security risk from terrorist threats via the smuggling routes, increased risk following the events in the Middle East; border with Czechia
432	12/05/2024 – 11/11/2024	New threat situation in connection with the extremely unstable migration and security situation in the EU, pressure on the asylum reception system, high migratory pressure at the EU's external border to Türkiye and the Western Balkans, threat of arms trafficking and criminal networks due to the war in Ukraine, human smuggling, the security implications following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the terrorist attack in Brussels on 17 October and numerous terror warnings and threats in the EU Member States, the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, the risk of criminals and terrorists infiltrating migration flows; borders with Slovenia and Hungary.
427	03/04/2024 – 02/06/2024	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with Slovakia.
425	17/02/2024 – 16/04/2024	High migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe, extensive secondary migration, increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes, security risk from terrorist threats via the smuggling routes, increased risk following the events in the Middle East; border with Czechia.

424	03/02/2024 - 02/04/2024	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with Slovakia.
416	17/12/2023 - 16/02/2024	High migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe, extensive secondary migration, increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes, security risk from terrorist threats via the smuggling routes, increased risk following the events in the Middle East; border with Czechia.
411	07/12/2023 - 16/12/2023	High migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe, extensive secondary migration, increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes, security risk from terrorist threats via the smuggling routes, increased risk following the events in the Middle East; border with Czechia.
408	03/12/2023 - 03/02/2024	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with the Slovak Republic.
407	23/11/2023 - 02/12/2023	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with the Slovak Republic.
402	17/11/2023 - 06/12/2023	High migratory pressure on the migration routes towards Central Europe, extensive secondary migration, increase in migrant smuggling along the illegal migration routes, security risk from terrorist threats via the smuggling routes, increased risk following the events in the Middle East; border with Czechia.
398	03/11/2023 - 22/11/2023	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with the Slovak Republic.
392	28/10/2023 - 16/11/2023	High migratory pressure, extensive secondary migration, increase in trafficking along the illegal migration routes; border with Czechia.
387	18/10/2023 - 27/10/2023	High migratory pressure, extensive secondary migration, increase in trafficking along the illegal migration routes; border with Czechia
383	12/11/2023 - 11/05/2024	Pressure on the asylum reception system, high migratory pressure at the EU's external border to Türkiye and the Western Balkans, threat of arms trafficking and criminal networks due to the war in Ukraine, human smuggling; borders with Slovenia and Hungary.
382	14/10/2023 - 02/11/2023	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with the Slovak Republic.
374	04/10/2023 - 13/10/2023	High migratory pressure and increase in apprehensions in the Western Balkans, extensive secondary migration, pressure on the asylum reception system, threat of human smuggling; border with the Slovak Republic.
358	12/05/2023 - 11/11/2023	Pressure on the asylum reception system, high migratory pressure at the EU's external border to Türkiye and the Western Balkans, threat of arms trafficking and criminal networks due to the war in Ukraine, human smuggling; land borders with Hungary and Slovenia
354	27/01/2023 - 05/02/2023	High migratory pressure, strain on basic care system, smuggling activities, secondary movements; the land border with the Slovak Republic
352	27/12/2022 - 26/01/2023	High migratory pressure, strain on basic care system, smuggling activities, secondary movements; the land border with the Slovak Republic
351	12/12/2022 - 26/12/2022	Secondary movements, illegal migration from the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan routes, overburdened basic care system due to high number of asylum applications and displaced persons from Ukraine; the land border with the Slovak Republic
349	12/11/2022 - 12/12/2022	Increase in irregular migration flows, secondary movements and the situation at the EU's external borders; the land border with the Slovak Republic

346	29/10/2022 - 12/11/2022	Increase in irregular migration flows, secondary movements and the situation at the EU's external borders; the land border with the Slovak Republic
342	12/11/2022 - 11/05/2023	Secondary movements, increase in irregular migration flows, smuggling activities, illegal entry of potential terrorist threats, land borders to Slovenia and Hungary
340	09/10/2022 - 28/10/2022	Increase in irregular migration flows, secondary movements and the situation at the EU's external borders; the land border with the Slovak Republic
337	29/09/2022 - 08/10/2022	Secondary movements, activity of organised groups of smugglers; the land border with the Slovak Republic
329	12/05/2022 - 11/11/2022	Secondary movements, situation at the external borders, effects of the war in Ukraine (potential risk that weapons are brought to the EU, use of established flight and migration routes by organised crime actors); land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
316	12/11/2021 - 11/05/2022	Secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
301	29/04/2021- 28/05/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
292	12/05/2021- 11/11/2021	Secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
281	30/03/2021- 28/04/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
265	28/02/2021- 29/03/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
257	08/02/2021- 27/02/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
251	19/01/2021- 07/02/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
250	09/01/2021- 18/01/2021	Coronavirus COVID-19; borders with the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
244	12/11/2020- 11/05/2021	Secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
209	01/06/2020- 15/06/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Slovakia and Czechia
193	08/05/2020- 31/05/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Slovakia and Czechia
181	28/04/2020- 07/05/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Slovakia and Czechia
178	12/05/2020- 11/11/2020	secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders, risk of Coronavirus causing additional migrant movements; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia.
167	10/04/2020- 27/04/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Czechia and Slovakia
162	08/04/2020- 27/04/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Liechtenstein
143	18/03/2020- 07/04/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Liechtenstein
129	14/03/2020- 24/04/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land borders with Switzerland and Liechtenstein
125	11/03/2020- 21/03/2020	coronavirus COVID-19; land border with Italy

120	12/11/2019 - 12/05/2020	coronavirus COVID-19 (as of mid-March), secondary movements, risk related to terrorists and organized crime, situation at the external borders; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia;
114	12/05/2019- 12/11/2019	security situation in Europe and continuous significant secondary movements; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia;
108	12/11/2018 - 11/05/2019	security situation in Europe and threats resulting from the continuous significant secondary movements; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
102	17/09/2018- 21/09/2018	informal meeting of the European Council in Salzburg; border Salzburg and Upper Austria to Germany, border East Tyrol and Carinthia to Italy, Salzburg Airport (all arriving flights)
101	09/07/2018 - 13/07/2018	informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Innsbruck; border Tyrol to Germany, border North Tyrol to Italy, Innsbruck Airport (all arriving flights).
96	12/05/2018 - 11/11/2018	security situation in Europe and threats resulting from the continuous significant secondary movements; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
89	12/11/2017 - 12/05/2018	Security situation in Europe and threats resulting from the continuous significant secondary movements; land borders with Hungary and with Slovenia
80	11/05/2017- 11/11/2017	In line with Recommendation of the Council of 11 May 2017, land border with Slovenia and with Hungary
75	11/02/2017- 11/05/2017	In line with Recommendation of the Council of 7 February 2017, land border with Slovenia and with Hungary
68	12/11/2016 - 12/02/2017	In line with Recommendation of the Council of 11 November 2016, land border with Slovenia and with Hungary
62	16/05/2016 - 12/11/2016	In line with Recommendation of the Council of 12 May 2016 under Art.29 of the SBC, land border with Slovenia and with Hungary
52	16/11/2015 - 16/05/2016	Continuous big influx of persons seeking international protection All borders, with special focus on the land border with Slovenia, Hungary and Italy, subject to possible changes The border can be crossed only at authorised border crossing points
41-44	16-25/9; 26/9- 15/10; 16/10- 4/11/2015; 5/11/2015- 15/11/2015	Big influx of persons seeking international protection, all borders, focus on land borders with Italy, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia
24	04/06/- 09/06/2011	World Economic Forum (07/06/-09/06/2011)
7	02/06/2008– 01/07/2008	European Football Championship EURO 2008, AT — CH (7/6-29/6/2008). Land and air borders

Source: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents/public-register/public-register-search/>

Annex 5. Case study: German-Luxembourgish cross-border region – List of references and interviews

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