

# ITEM CROSS-BORDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2025

With its annual Cross-Border Impact Assessment, ITEM provides more insight into the effects on cross-border regions of European and national legislative and policy initiatives. The report is intended as a valuable tool for policymakers at regional, national and European level in making decisions regarding (cross-)border regions. These impact assessments notably help to identify existing or future cross-border effects and are thus contributing to the political debate.



To account for the realities of the respective (border) region and higher education institutions, the report recommends to examine on a case-by-case basis what the situation is on the ground and refrain from too generic measures.

## DOSSIER 1 "Internationalisation in balance" – cross-border regional effects on limiting international student mobility

*WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL CROSS-BORDER EFFECTS OF THE DUTCH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE LEGISLATIVE BILL 'INTERNATIONALISATION IN BALANCE' FOR BORDER REGIONS?*

- Higher education institutions and other stakeholders fear that the uniqueness of border regions is not recognised sufficiently by the proposed legislation yet: the introduction of the WIB and TAO, requiring that (bachelor's) education should be mainly in Dutch, could have detrimental effects on the welfare/prosperity, economy, labour market, and knowledge infrastructure in border regions
- The report argues that in light of cross-border impact assessments and the perspective of border regions, the debate and legal instruments on internationalisation should be nuanced: calling for an differentiation in the umbrella term 'internationalisation': Euregionalisation, Europeanisation and Internationalisation

## DOSSIER 2 360° labour market: Challenges and solutions for recognising professional qualifications in cross-border regions

*UPDATED INSIGHTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CROSS-BORDER REGIONS INTO THE OBSTACLES THAT STILL PLAY A ROLE FOR BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES, AND TO COLLECT EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTISES*

- Nearly a decade after the previous ITEM assessment, the recognition of professional qualifications continues to represent an obstacle to labour mobility in the EU, and particularly in (cross-)border regions - hindering the development of a genuine 360° cross-border labour market
- The EU Directive 2005/36 on professional qualifications is found better suited to transnational mobility and does not adequately address the challenges encountered in cross-border regions
- Streamlining and accelerating recognition processes, and promoting harmonisation and automatic recognition via bi/multilateral agreements, is therefore essential to strengthen cross-border labour markets



The study highlights that challenges in the recognition of professional qualifications are not only rooted in EU-wide legislation but also in the limited development of bi/multilateral and regional agreements such as mutual recognition.

## DOSSIER 3 The revised Schengen Borders Code – an ex-post evaluation in times of border controls

*THIS YEAR'S JOINT STUDY BY ITEM AND THE TRANSFRONTIER EURO-INSTITUT NETWORK (TEIN) EXAMINES THE IMPACT OF BORDER CONTROLS ACROSS SEVERAL BORDER REGIONS IN EUROPE*



The report recommends to redefine 'cross-border regions' based on a true cross-border concepts, such as eureregions, Interreg areas or other cross-border functional demarcations.

- 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. Yet, rarely has the list of notified border controls been so long.
- In cross-border regions, 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
- The amended Schengen Borders Code explicitly talks about "cross-border" regions (different from the term border region). Member States are also asked to determine the areas of their territory considered as cross-border regions, and to assess the impact of border controls to these regions
- The report warns for a normalisation of the use of internal border controls. 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.