

Impact of Covid 19 on **cross border regions**

ITEM approach and results for the border DE/NL/BE

ITEM, Maastricht University



18th EUROPEAN WEEK of REGIONS and CITIES

05>09 OCTOBER 2020

12>16 OCTOBER 2020

19>22 OCTOBER 2020



European Committee
of the Regions



European
Commission

Threats: three dimensions

Socio-economic impact on border regions
(social, economic, environment)

Impact on European Integration

- **Citizenship**/freedoms/European Integration/Schengen

Impact **cross border cohesion** and cooperation



The steps

- Defining the cross border territory
- Defining timing: ex post/ex ante
- Defining principles, benchmarks and indicators
- Qualitative and quantitative data
- Practical recommendations



Schengen/Citizens

| Indicator | NL | DE | BE |
|--|--|---|---|
| Days with border controls | 0 | 0 | 87 |
| Closed border for all travel without essential reasons | 0 | 66 | 87 |
| <i>1. Border restrictions in comparison</i> Closed borders: traffic jams/waiting time at the border | To NL: no official controls Accidental policy controls (recommendations not to enter) | To DE/NRW: no official controls at the border (incidental controls in the border region) | Strict controls travel to Belgium: short waiting times first days of the controls |
| Requirement of a special commuter permit | Travel to NL: no | Travel to DE: not required by law, but a form was offered by German Federal Police | As of 22 March: confirmation from employer required for cross-border workers, Special vignette (health care, etc.) |
| potentially affected by border restrictions | There are around 36,000 cross-border-workers, with 5,000 working in the health sector | | |

Socio-economic Indicators

- Reduction of **GDP in border regions**
- Decreased turnover of shops due to reduction in cross-border shopping
- Reduction of **cross-border relations of companies**
- Number of **cross-border workers with compulsory work reduction/unemployment**
- Qualitative
- **Extra administrative or organisational extra burden for citizens and companies**
- Future development of the labour market (cross-border work)



Cohesion

- **Cooperation health sector:** patients, staff, equipment, material - effects?
- Quality of the exchange and comparability of data (infections, death rate, etc.) across the border – effects?
- What type of CBC/governance was still functioning?
- **cross-border entities** (Euroregions, Eurodistricts, INTERREG Management, Benelux, etc.)
- National measures versus cross-border relations?
- Impact of COVID-19 measures **on the perception of citizens?**



General Observations

- Lack of economic data – special border effect difficult!
- Cross border structures/governance not fit for cross border health crisis – new protocols/agreements/structures
- Closure of Belgian border: result of weak coordination and lack of information exchange between neighbouring countries
- German-Dutch border: exemption to the experiences at other European borders (no strict controls, some cooperation, confusion rules/recommendations)
- Ad- hoc political Task-Force could solve problems but not prevent non-coordination

