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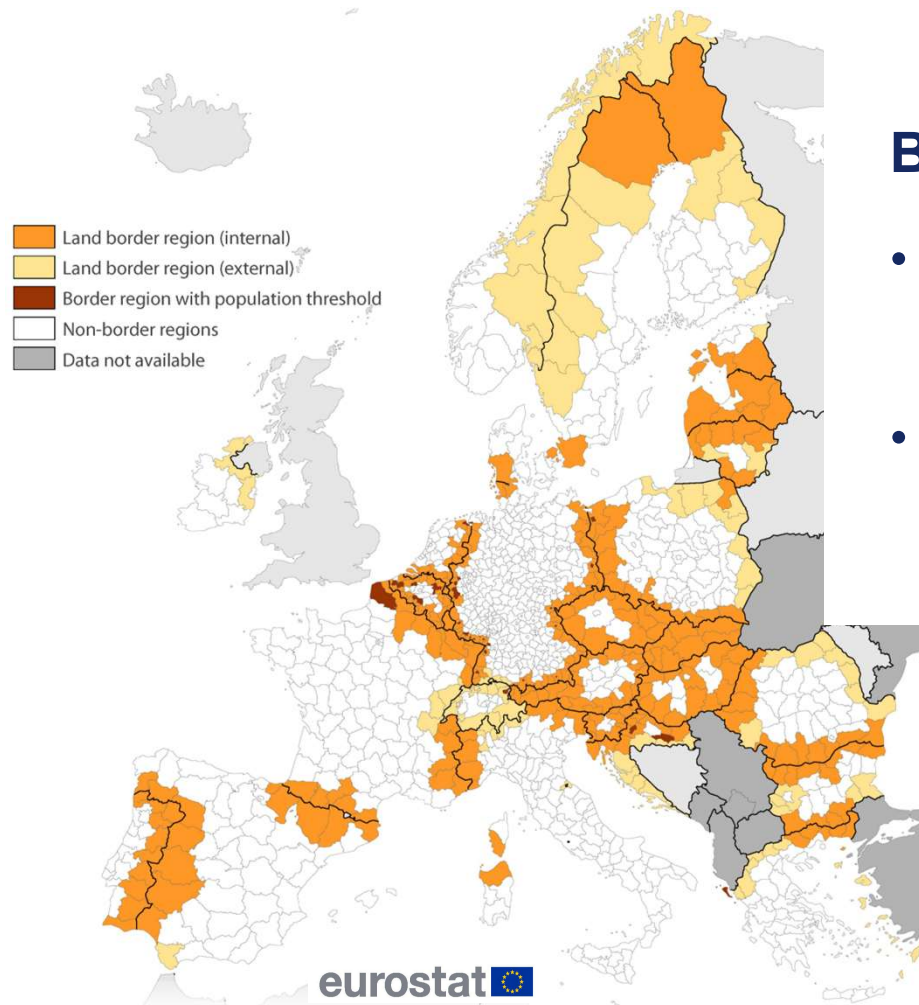
Setting the Scene

**Cross-border regions in Europe and
insights from the CROSSGOV project**

Olle Järv

University of Helsinki

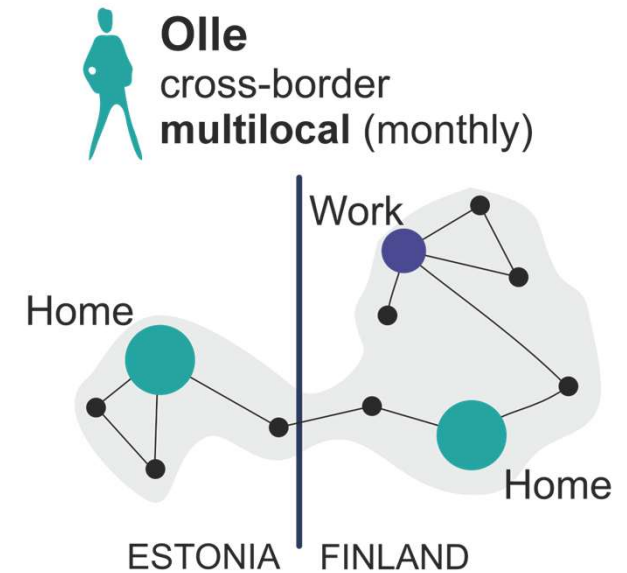
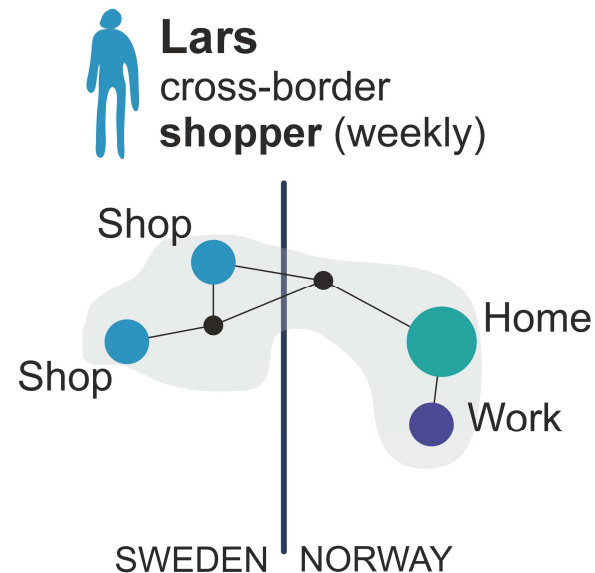
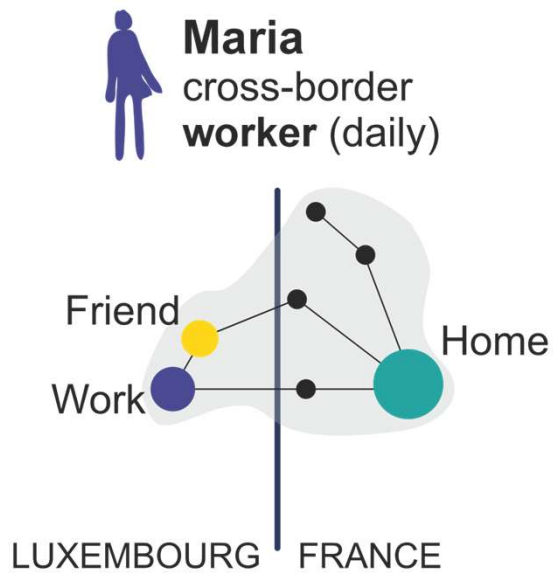
Border regions in Europe



Border regions:

- Central for territorial cohesion in the EU
 - *The ‘living labs of European integration’*
- Research from institutional & economic perspectives
 - **Less knowledge about the perspective of people**

People cross country borders for various reasons



150 million people live close to country borders in the EU

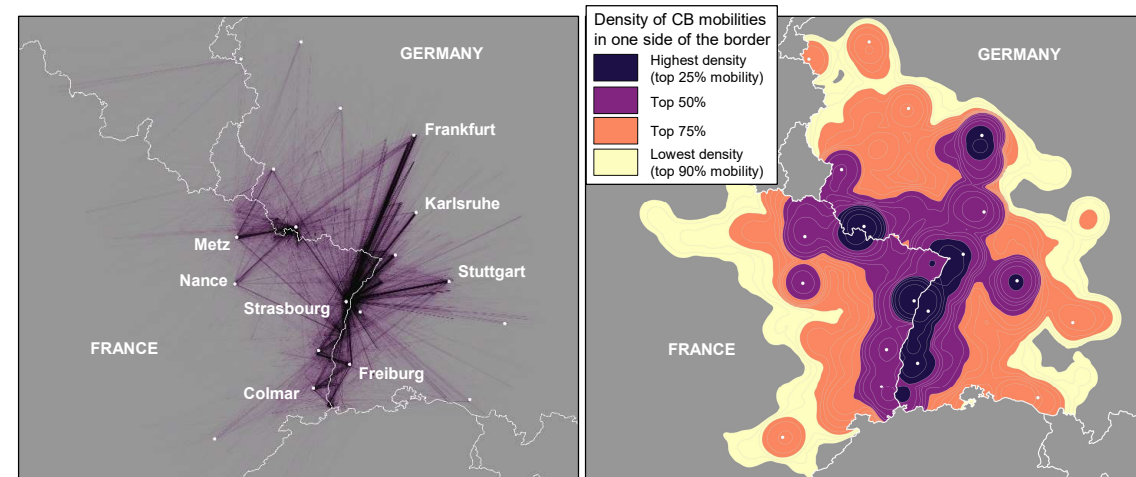
Reimagine border regions from the perspective of people

Cross-border regions are as living spaces

- *areas where cross-border interactions take place for social, cultural, and economic reasons*

Cross-border interactions of people forming functional cross-border regions

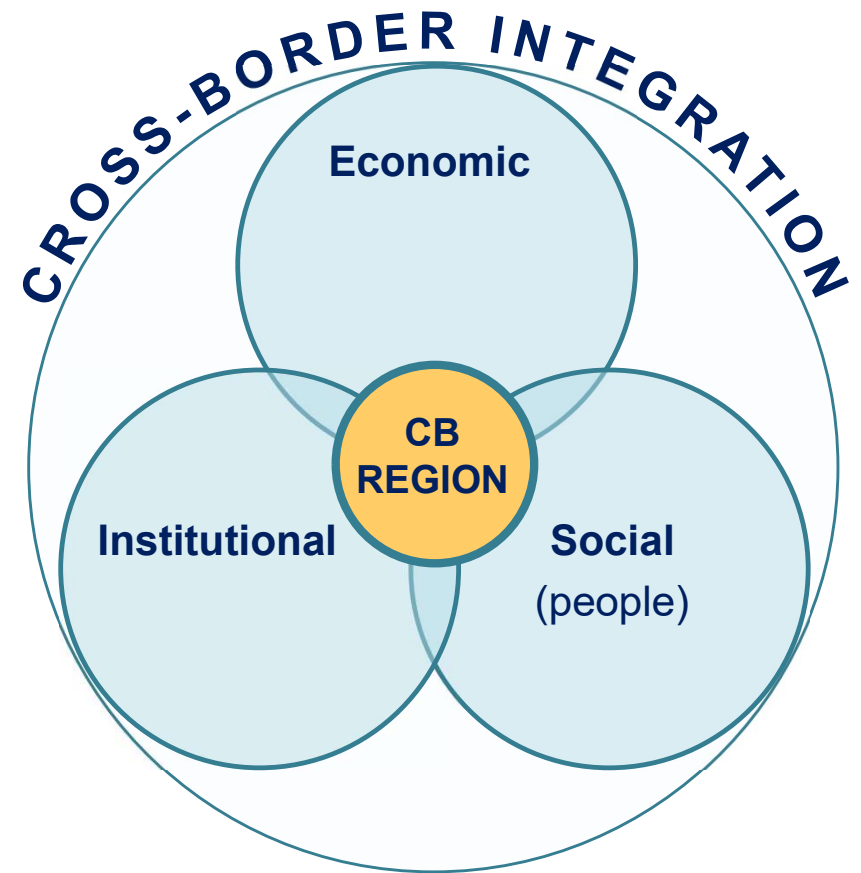
- *understanding cross-border interactions beyond commuting to work*



Multilayered cross-border regions

- Cross-border regions are multilayered and complex
- Cross-border governance solutions in the EU are diverse, incremental & ad hoc

We need a holistic view on cross-border functional regions and governance to better plan, develop and govern border regions

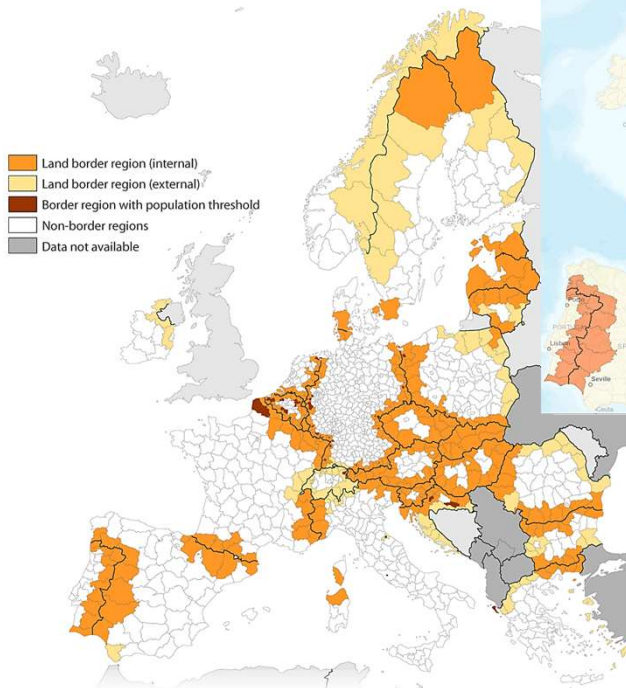


Cross-border regions vary by context

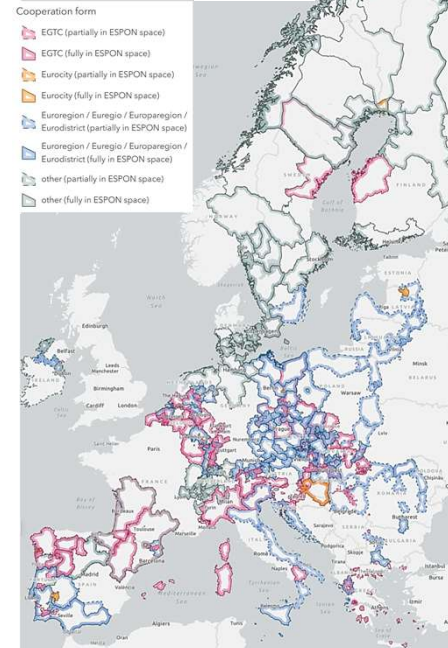
CB regions by the amended Schengen Borders Code



Border regions by EUROSTAT

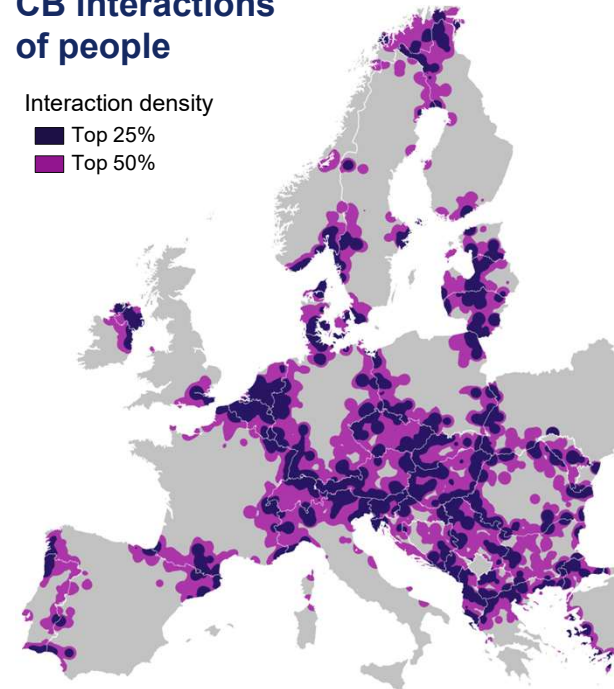


CB governance structures



CB interactions of people

Interaction density
■ Top 25%
■ Top 50%



How to plan, develop and govern cross-border regions?

New knowledge about cross-border regions

REGIONAL STUDIES
2026, VOL. 60, NO. 1, 2601248
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2025.2601248>

RSA Regional Studies Association **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

 OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Reimagining functional cross-border regions in Europe through the mobilities of people

Olle Järv ^a, Håvard W. Aagesen ^{a,b} and Ate Poorthuis ^c

EUROPEAN PLANNING STUDIES
2026, VOL. 34, NO. 8, 1673–1696
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2026.2661064>



Routledge
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Cross-border functional areas (CBFA): a multi-indicator definition at the European level

026.2628289

Stefan Hippe ^a, Tobias Chilla ^a, Elias Günther^a, Hannah Paul ^a, Theresa Wein^a,
Roland Gaugitsch ^b and Olle Järv ^{c,d}

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Mapping flows, shaping spaces: a review of data-driven approaches to EU cross-border regions

Matteo Berzi ^a, Mattia Albertini ^b, Ricardo Barranco ^c, Emmanuel Brunet-Jail

EUROPEAN PLANNING STUDIES
2023, VOL. 31, NO. 8, 1754–1775
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2022.2108312>


Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Revealing mobilities of people to understand cross-border regions: insights from Luxembourg using social media data

Olle Järv ^{a,b}, Håvard W. Aagesen ^{a,b}, Tuomas Väisänen ^{a,b} and Samuli Massinen^{a,b}

GEOGRAFISKA ANNALER: SERIES B, HUMAN GEOGRAPHY
2023, VOL. 105, NO. 4, 356–378
<https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2022.2101135>

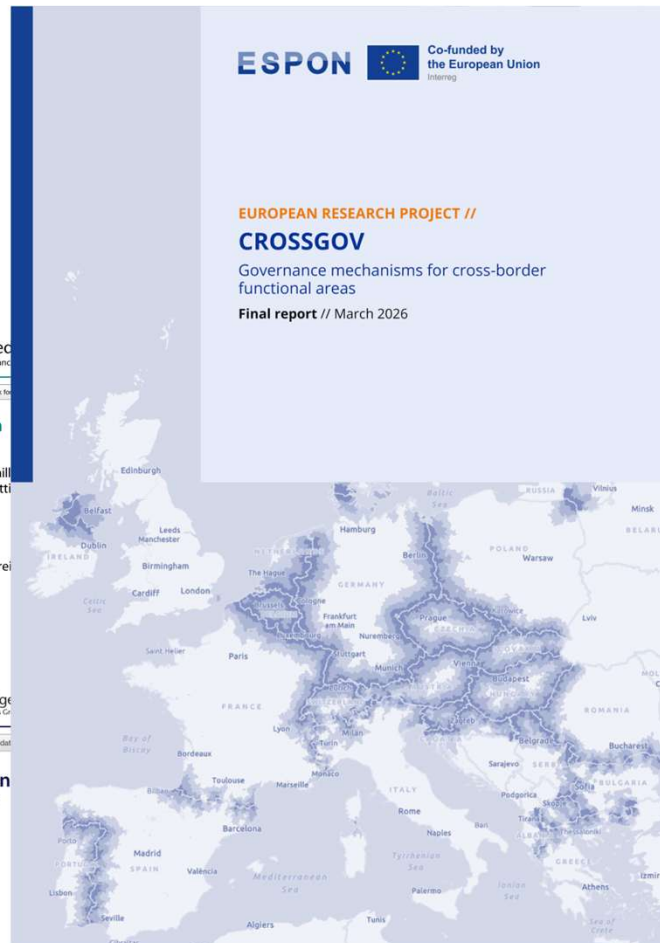
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The effect of COVID-19 on cross-border mobilities of people and functional border regions: the Nordic case study from Twitter data

Håvard Wallin Aagesen ^a, Olle Järv ^a and Philippe Gerber ^b

Mapping activity locations of people from social media data enriched with time-use and satellite data: the case of cross-border commuting to Luxembourg

Oleksandr Karasov^{a,b,c} and Olle Järv^{a,b}



Joint Research Centre

Living spaces, flows
and structures across
the EU internal borders

Berzi, M.; Hermann, B.; Albertini, M.; Attardo, C.; Auteri, D.; Barranco, R.; Brunet-Jailly, E.; Chilla, T.; Dykstra, L.; Duverniet, C.; Finnisdottir, M. S.; Galic, A.; Gareis, P.; Gaugitsch, R.; Günther, E.; Hallgrímsdóttir, H. K.; Hippe, S.; Jacobs-Crisisken, C.; János, V.; Jány, O.; Kompf, M.; Kučas, A.; Paszto, V.; Poorthuis, A.; Rowe, F.; Rubio, J.; Van de Weghe, N.; van der Valk, J.; Ferreira, R.

2026

CROSSGOV: Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas



CROSSGOV:

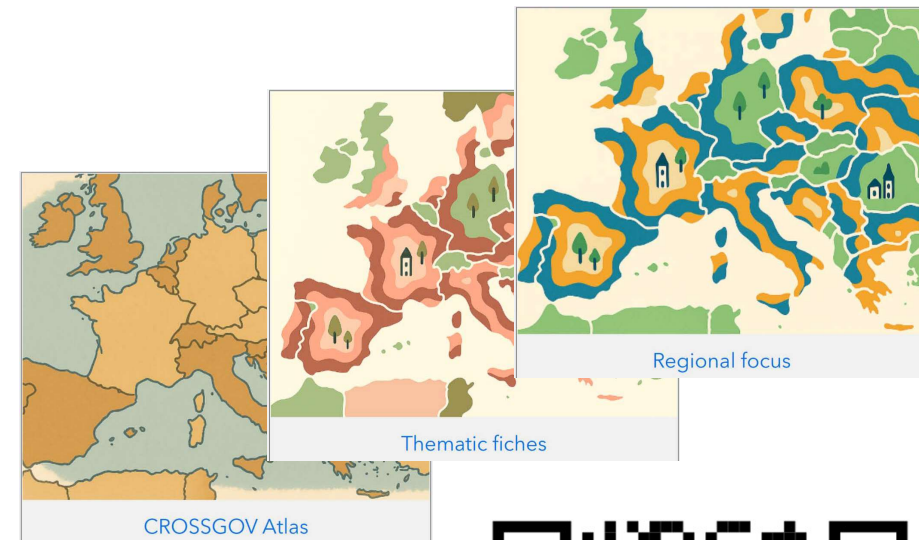
Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas

Aims:

- Provide a comprehensive understanding of the multilayered nature of cross-border functional areas

➔ **ESPON CROSSGOV HUB**

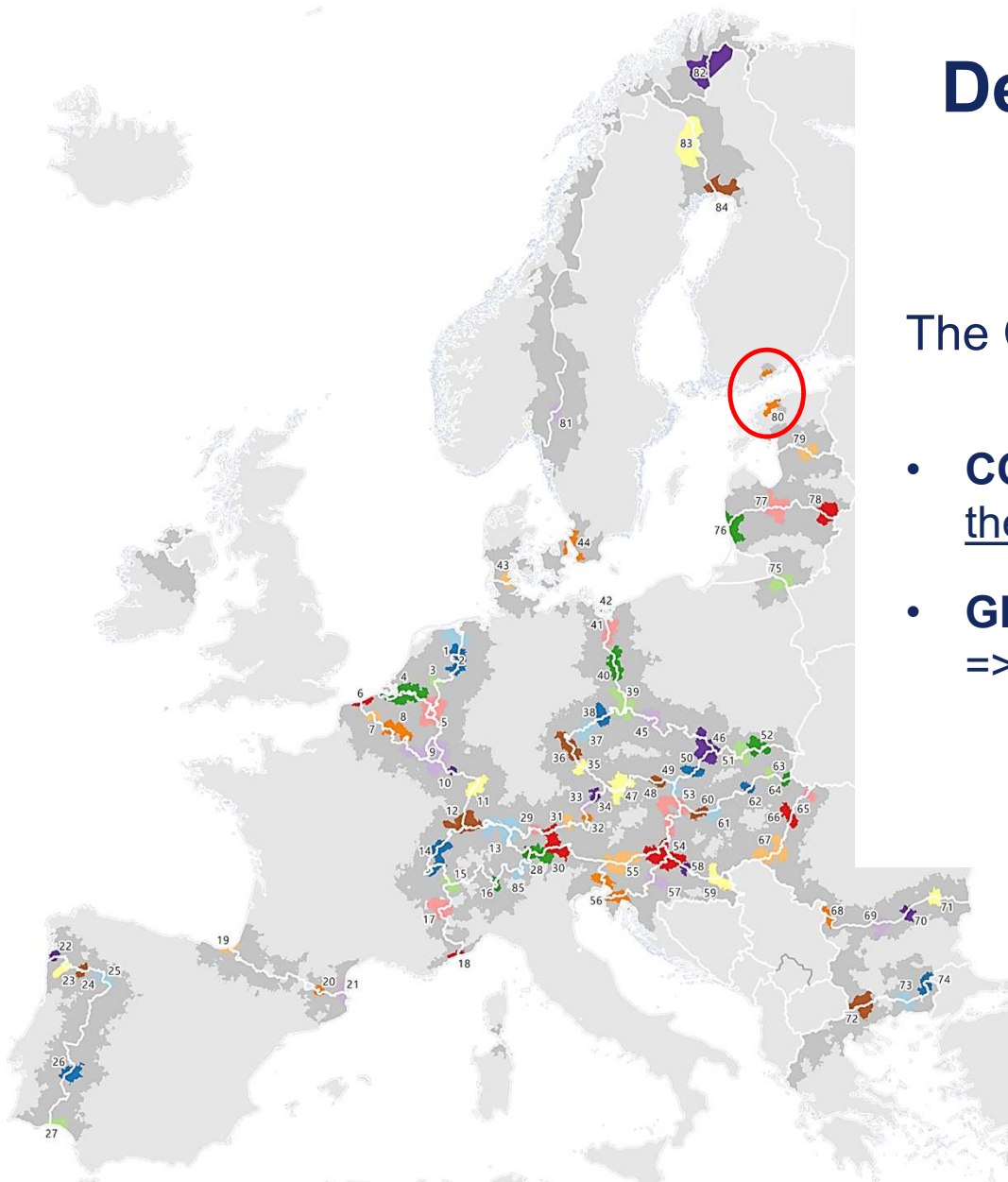
- Support the development & governance of cross-border regions in the EU:
 - 10 in-depth case studies
 - Policy recommendations
 - Future research agenda



Defining cross-border functional areas (CBFAs) in Europe

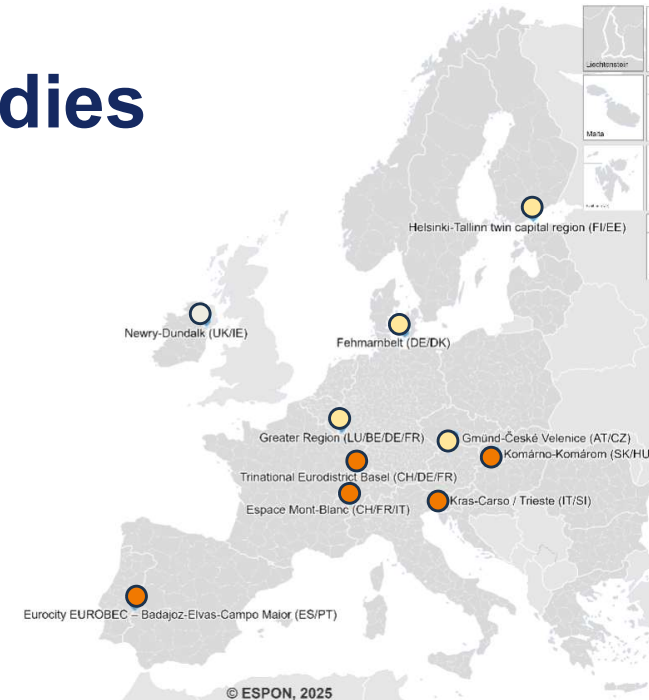
The CBFAs based on the CROSSGOV methodology

- **COLORED AREA:** The 85 delineated CBFAs with the high intensities of cross-border functionality
- **GREY AREA:** low to medium cross-border functionality
=> potential cross-border functional areas



CROSSGOV: Lessons from the case studies

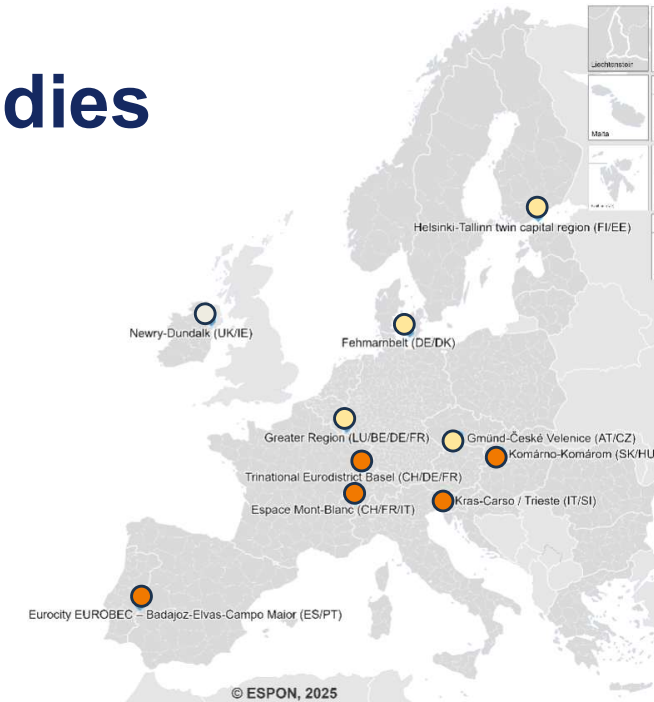
- **Strong CB functionalities are supported by:**
 - Transport links & accessibility
 - Cross-border public services
 - Economic relations & interdependencies
 - Border asymmetry (cost of living, retail, services)
 - People interacting: labour; student mobility; social life...
- **Strong CB governance is supported by:**
 - Historical depth and institutionalization
 - Strong political will and local commitment
 - Dynamic and adaptive structure



Cross-border governance systems are built on decades of cooperation, trust building, and institutional innovation.

CROSSGOV: Lessons from the case studies

- **Challenges in CB governance:**
 - Institutional fragility & reliance on soft structures
 - Overlapping frameworks
 - Political and financial asymmetries
 - Legal and administrative mismatches



Positive scenarios hinge on three conditions:

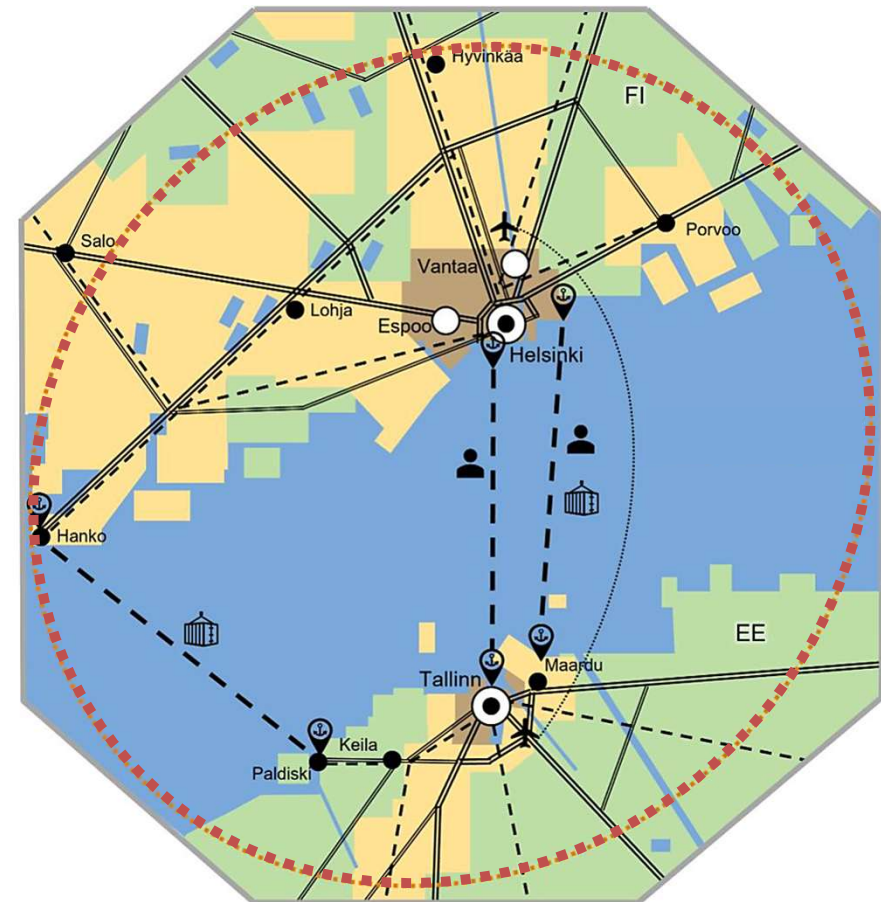
1. Durable CB institution
2. Regulatory alignment
3. Socio-economic interactions
(people, services & innovation)

Multi-level governance should be approached systemically with a strong interaction between institutional and functional entities, and people!

CROSSGOV: Lessons from the case studies

Helsinki-Tallinn twin capital region (FI/EE)

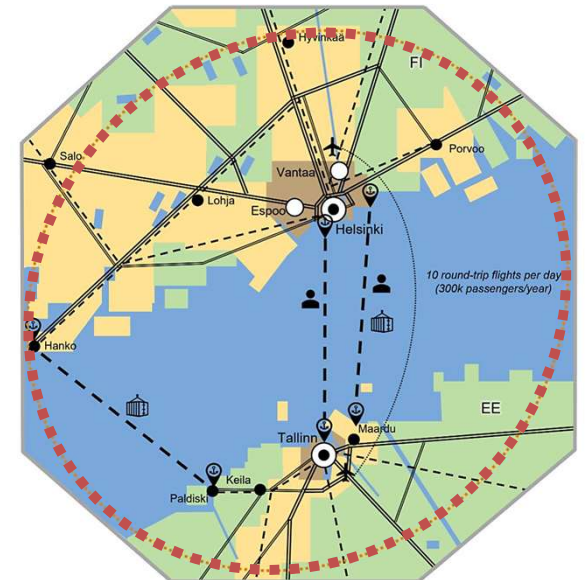
Case study report



CROSSGOV: Lessons from the case studies

Helsinki-Tallinn twin capital region (FI/EE)

- **More than just two capital cities**
- **Functional CB region without CB governance**
 - Active socio-economic interactions
 - High cooperation interest: many MoU-s
 - Great CB potential to be unlocked (e.g. Rail Baltica)
- **Agile, yet reactive CB cooperation**
 - Project (and people)-dependency
 - No long-term plan & scarce (financial) resources

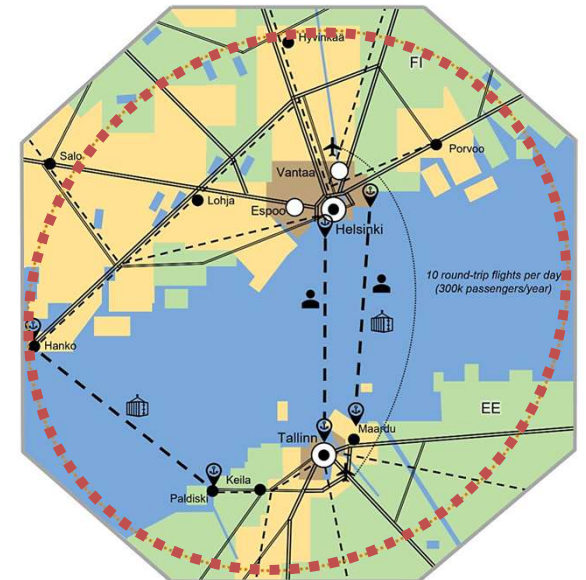


CROSSGOV: Lessons from the case studies

Helsinki-Tallinn twin capital region (FI/EE)

Challenges for CB governance:

1. Maritime border context
2. Unclearity of what constitutes the CB functional region
3. Legal and administrative mismatches between countries



CROSSGOV: Policy recommendations

CROSSGOV offers not a conclusion, but a structured basis for research and policy debate

Strengthen CB functionalities:

1. Remove obstacles
 - Tackle structural & regulatory barriers
2. Foster complementarities
 - Division of functions
 - Border asymmetry as strength

***Borders are not barriers,
but resource!***

Strengthen CB governance:

1. Balance stability & flexibility
 - Combine institutionalization with a dynamic “out-of-box thinking”
2. Ensure multi-level coordination
 - CB local and **regional level**, national level
3. Improve data and evidence for policy
 - Data harmonization, new data sources



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