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Interreg

EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT //

Collecting and analysing data for the post-27 INTERREG (Core-IB)

Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/ Brandenburg-Poland

Border profile

March 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context and objective of the border profile

The ESPON Core-IB project (Collecting and analysing data for the post-27 INTERREG) provides evidence-based, non-binding analytical work to support the next generation of Interreg programmes post-2027. By collecting and analysing harmonised territorial data, the project highlights key socio-economic characteristics, cross-border interactions, and governance structures. Its spatial focus covers 48 cross-border cooperation areas (40 land and 8 maritime), including all EU internal border regions and those bordering Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Norway. The findings are analytical and informative; they do not create regulatory or policy obligations for Member States, the European Commission, or programme authorities. Each border profile serves as a comparable knowledge base for policymakers at EU, national, and regional levels, supporting dialogue and reflection rather than prescribing policy choices. The profiles aim to provide consistent, data-driven territorial evidence that can inform strategic discussions about future cross-border cooperation and contribute to the preparation of Interreg programmes post-2027.

The Core-IB border profiles are designed to support the upcoming steps in the Interreg programming process with analyses based on data that is available at the European scale, including ESPON, Eurostat, DG REGIO, JRC, and Interreg databases. Their main purpose is to ensure comparability of data analyses and to provide programme areas with access to recent harmonised data at high geographical resolution (NUTS3 level or finer). Member States may hold additional or more detailed data which can further enrich or contextualise the findings beyond the Core-IB project. These national sources are essential for refining and validating territorial evidence in policymaking processes, including additional regional, fine-scale information and insights from political processes related to prioritisation and objective setting. All border profiles follow a systematic and methodologically robust approach. They provide territorial evidence, structured along 6 thematic dimensions, offering insights into the geographic, economic, environmental, socio-economic, border security and governance characteristics of the border region. Quantitative data and qualitative analyses are combined to ensure meaningful insights into all 48 border areas. Due to methodological constraints and limited resources, local studies and national datasets falling outside the European data framework could not be included. Visualisations, such as maps and charts based on descriptive statistics, facilitate understanding and support evidence-based policymaking. The profiles analyse the border region as a whole at NUTS3 (2021) level (corresponding to the current Interreg VI-A programme area)[1] and position it within a broader European context. For comparative purposes, several reference categories are applied:

- European averages (EU27 + Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, depending on data availability)
- National averages
- National border region averages
- Aggregated border region averages

To complement the quantitative evidence, the profiles also draw on strategic and qualitative sources, including:

- Strategic documents from the Interreg Programme 2021-2027
- Border Orientation Papers from the 2021-2027 programming period
- Information from the keep.eu database on cross-border cooperation activities
- Information from the Cohesion Open Data platform
- Information from the b-solutions initiative
- Information from recent ESPON Projects (i.e., CROSSGOV, House4All, PROFECY Update, CPS 2.0)

[1] As defined by Annex 1, Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/74 of 17 January 2022, as amended by Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/1638 of 14 August 2023 (OJ L204, 17.8.2023, p. 9): https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2022/75/oj/eng

Within the ESPON framework, the CROSSGOV project (Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas) has been implemented in parallel to Core-IB. The CROSSGOV hub[2] provides a comprehensive platform for interactive data exploration, and selected data have been incorporated into this study.

Additional project-related information can be explored separately in the Core-IB **Final Report**. Further technical information on this border profile can be found in a separate **Technical Annex** providing an overview of data and methods.

1.2 Presentation of the border area

The Interreg VI-A border region 'Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland' covers the area between north-eastern Germany and north-western Poland (see Figure 1.1). In Germany, the programme area includes most of the regions of Brandenburg-Northeast in Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, comprising a total of 6 NUTS3 regions. In Poland, it covers the voivodeship of Zachodniopomorskie, encompassing a total of 4 NUTS3 regions.

Figure 1.1: Overview map

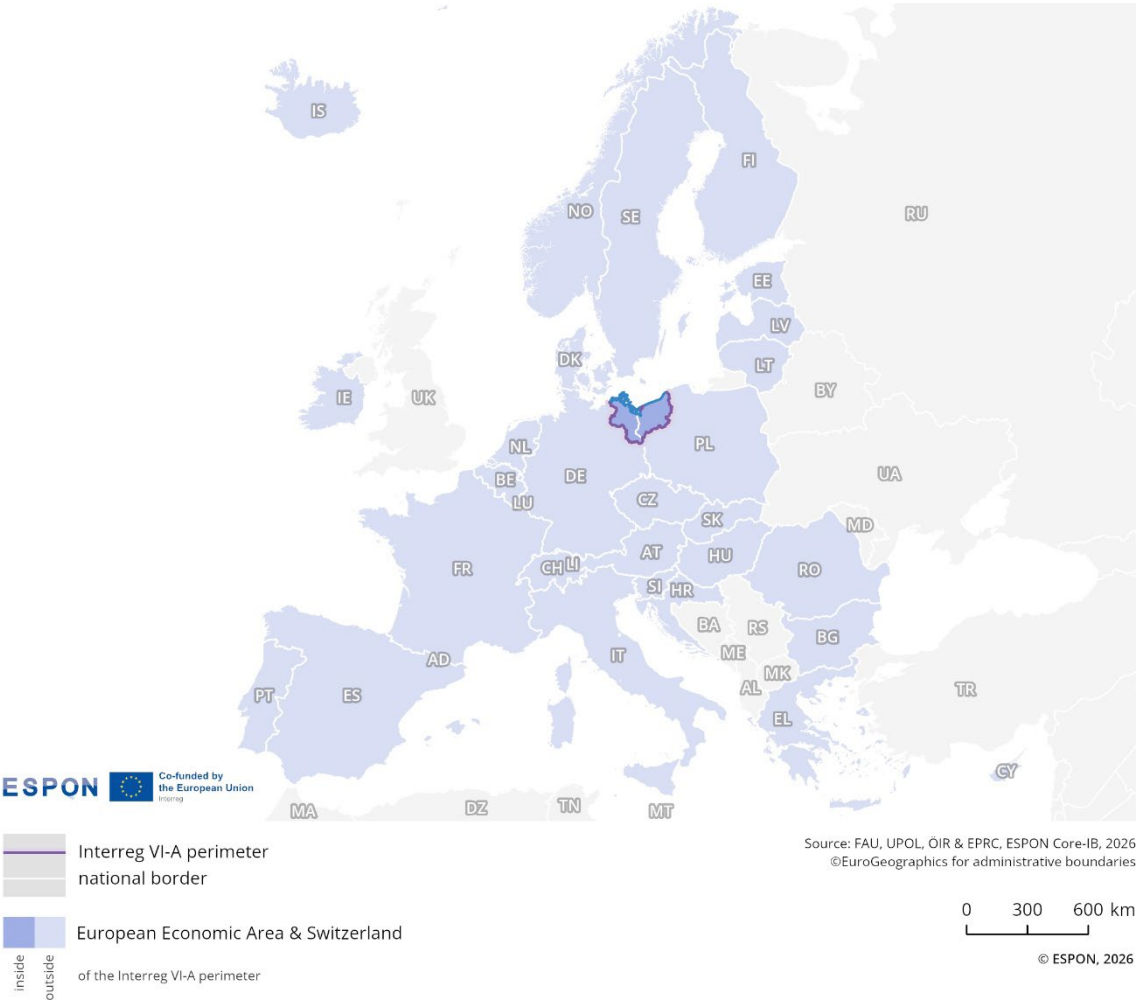
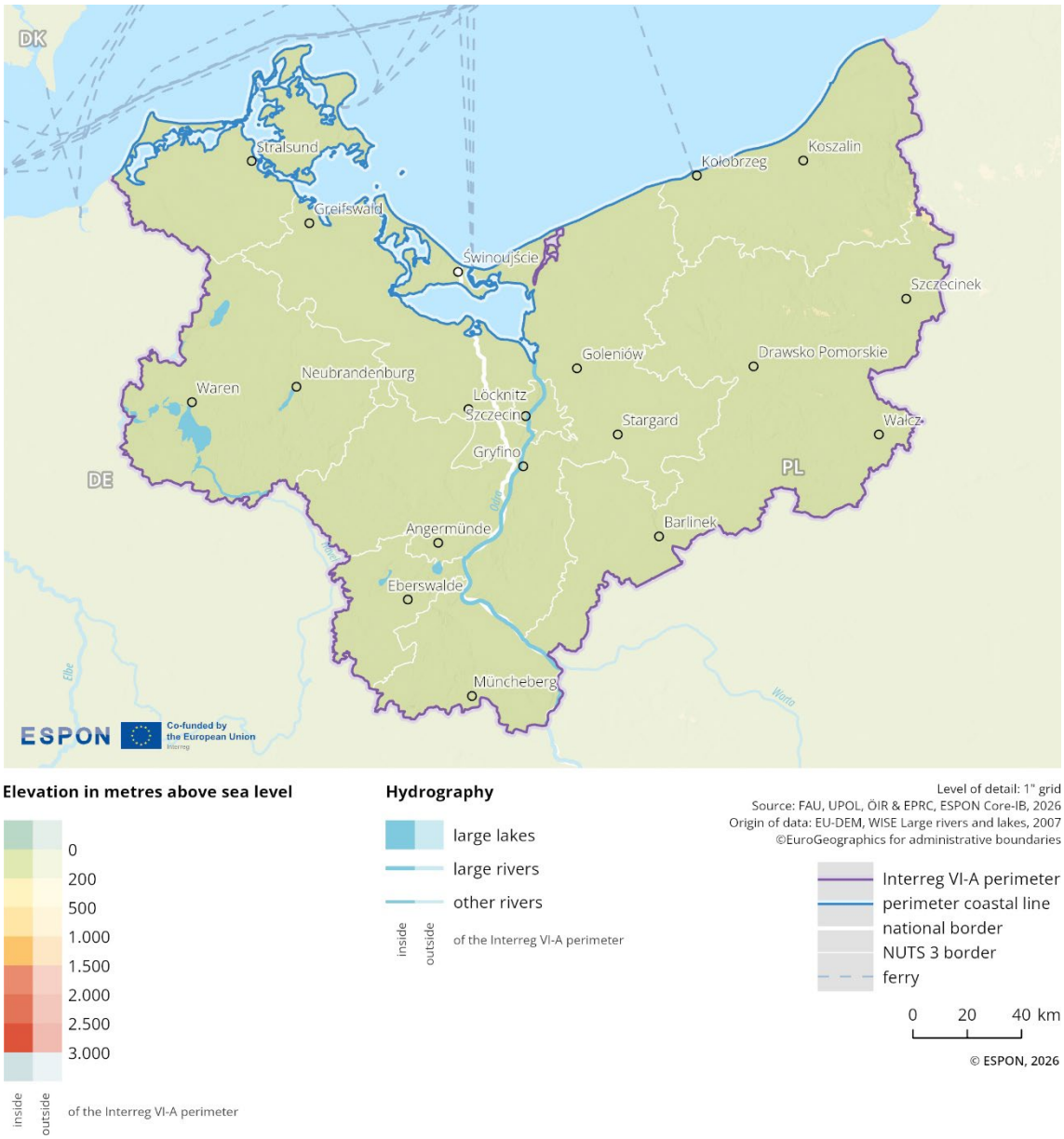


Figure 1.2 shows the region's geomorphological features and the perimeter of the current Interreg VI A programme area. The border region, which covers an area of approximately 42,278 km², extends

[2] ESPON CROSSGOV Hub: https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=27e3b86ef44441b08793a2239c370607

along the German-Polish border. Starting at the Baltic Sea in the north, it follows the course of the Oder River southwards. The landscape is entirely flat and consists largely of coastal areas. It lies between the Stralsund, Koszalin and Müncheberg regions.

Figure 1.2: Geographical features and characteristics[3]



The programme area is characterised by a diverse lowland landscape shaped by glacial and post-glacial processes. It includes extensive moraine plateaus, outwash plains, and a dense network of rivers and lakes. The northern part of the region encompasses coastal zones along the Szczecin Lagoon and the Pomeranian Bay. This area features dune landscapes, barrier islands, estuaries and brackish wetlands.

The inland region is dominated by broad river valleys such as the Oderbruch, as well as glacial lakes, particularly in the Uckermark and Pomeranian Lakelands. The Oder and its tributaries (e.g. the Welse, the Randow and the Ina) play a central role in the area's natural structure by providing important

[3] The selection of displayed settlements is based on factors such as size, administrative or cultural importance, transport links, regional coverage and cartographic clarity. This is part of a standard cartographic generalisation process with no pre-set thresholds, and the main aim is to provide orientation.

ecological corridors. The region is also part of the European Green Belt and comprises several Natura 2000 sites, wetlands and cross-border nature reserves.

Key towns in the programme area include Szczecin and Koszalin in Poland and Stralsund, Greifswald, and Neubrandenburg in Germany. The region's proximity to the Baltic Sea, its strong land–sea interactions and its ecologically sensitive areas define its geographic character, influencing patterns of settlement, infrastructure and land use.

2 Cross-border analysis

2.1 Territorial dimension

The territorial dimension refers to the spatial characteristics and dynamics of a border region. It specifically depicts how factors such as population density, demographic trends, changes in settlement areas and accessibility influence and reflect cross-border integration.

2.1.1 Population and settlements

This sub-dimension illustrates the population characteristics and land use dynamics of the border region, based on analysed indicators. It examines population density, population development by age groups, and changes in settlement areas. The analysis highlights whether the border functions as a catalyst for integration or as a barrier. Comparisons with the respective countries and the EU average provide context for understanding the region's dynamics.

2.1.1.1 Population density

Indicator description

Population density refers to the number of residents per km². This indicator shows the number of inhabitants per square kilometre in a 1x1 km grid. It therefore provides information on the distribution and concentration of population across the region and allows to identify agglomerations of high density. In particular agglomerations at or close to the border area of key interest.

- **Source**: Eurostat
- **Temporal coverage**: 2021
- **Unit**: Inhabitants/km^2

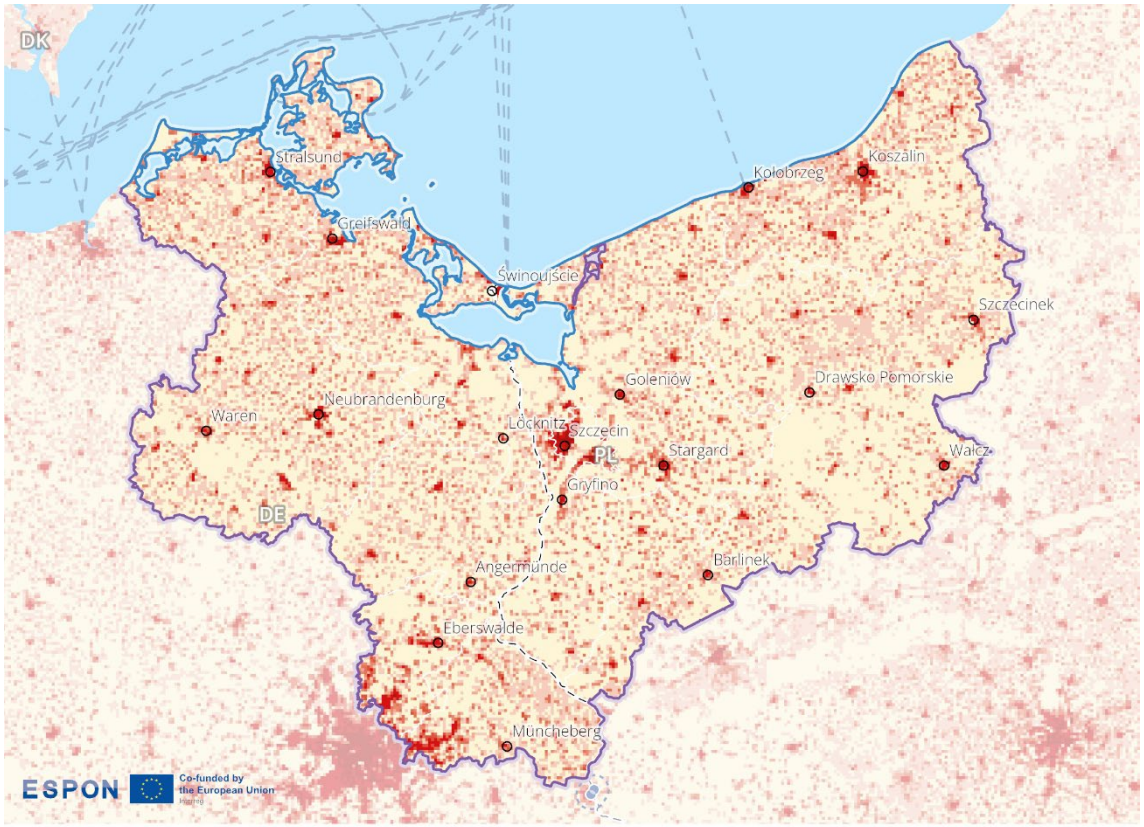
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

The border region includes 13 urban centres with a population of over 30,000 inhabitants. The map shows that the population density is lower and concentrated in only a few medium-sized towns in both countries. The largest centre and most highly populated is Szczecin (nearly 400,000 inhabitants) near the border in Poland. Other Poland towns are Koszalin, Szecinek and Drawsko Pomorskie. The suburbs of Berlin with higher population density are visible in the southern part of Germany. The other towns are Stralsund, Greifswald, and Neubrandenburg in German. In this vast agricultural region, the population lives in small villages.

The population density in this whole border region is 68 inhabitants/km², which is therefore lower the EU average of 109 inhabitants/km² (according to EUROSTAT), and it is therefore lower than the aggregated average of all EU evaluated border regions, which is 125 inhabitants/km².

The part of the border region in Germany has an average population density of around 66 inhabitants/km². It is therefore lower than the national average population density in Germany (231 inhabitants/km²). The part of the border region in Poland has an average population density of around 70 inhabitants/km². It is therefore lower than the national average population density in Poland (118 inhabitants/km²) (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Spatial patterns of population distribution



Number of inhabitants/km² (2021)

- 1–50
- 51–100
- 101–200
- 201–500
- 501–1,000
- 1,001–5,000
- 5,001–56,158
- no population

inside / outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Twin cities (2025)

cities/towns with 10,000+ inhabitants not further than 5km from another one accross a country border

Border cities (2025)

other cities/towns with 10,000+ inhabitants not further than 10km from another one accross a country border

Level of detail: 1km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: GISCO Population Grid (version 1.3), 2021
OpenStreetMap, 2025
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

- Interreg VI-A perimeter
- perimeter coastal line
- national border
- NUTS 3 border
- ferry

0 20 40 km

2.1.1.2 Population development (by age groups)

Indicator description

Population development refers to the percentage change in population at regional level between 2014 and 2024. The data reflects on the total population, as well as on the age groups 0-14, 15-64 and 65+.

- **Source**: Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2024
- **Unit**: Change in %

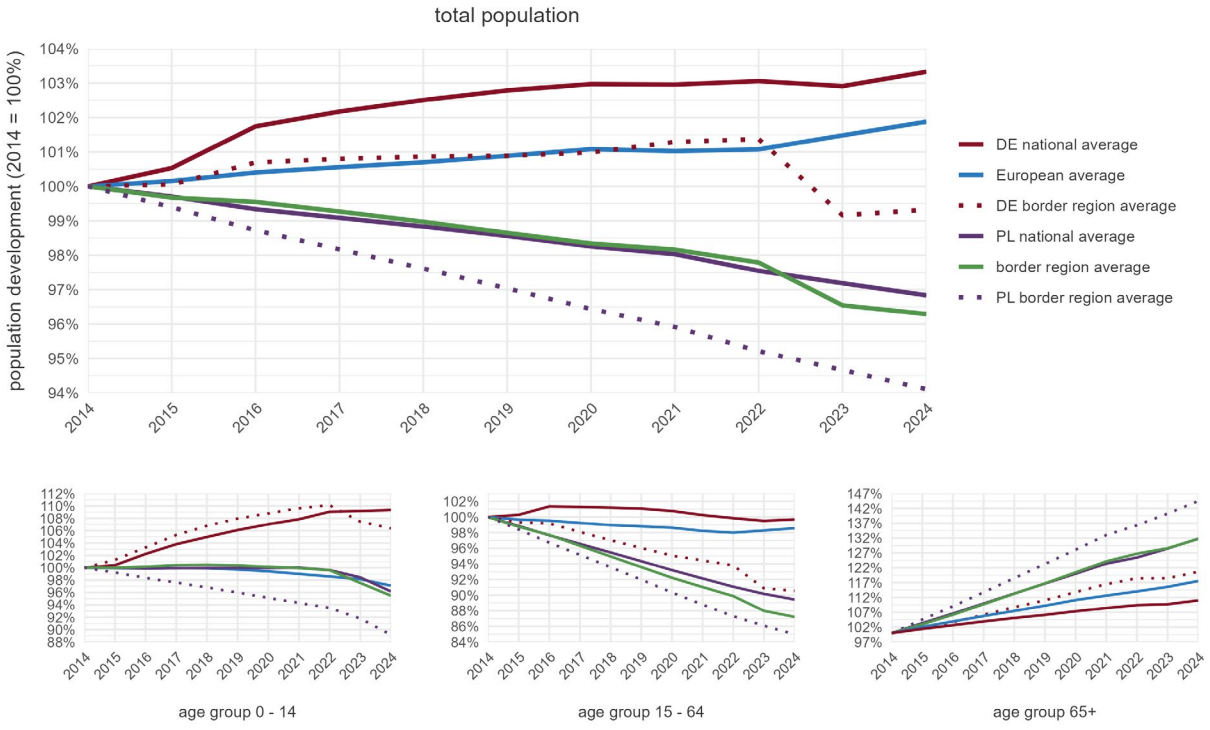
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Population in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland region in 2024 (Eurostat): 2.8 million inhabitants, of which:

- 56.9% in the Polish border territory (1.6 million inhabitants)
- 43.1% in the German border territory (1.2 million inhabitants)
- Region within the border region with the highest population increase since 2014: Barnim (DE405) at 10.9%

Figure 2.2 shows the population change in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/ Brandenburg–Poland region between 2014 and 2024. During this period, the region has experienced a moderate decline of 3.7%, with the most pronounced decrease observed on the Polish side.

Figure 2.2: Population development (2014=100)



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Population development across the border region is substantially below the European average (-3.7% vs. 1.9%) and also substantially below the average development in all border regions (-3.7% vs 1.5%).

While the Polish parts show a decline at both the regional and national levels (-5.9% vs. -3.2%), the German border area shows a decline compared to the national average (-0.7% vs. 3.3%).

In terms of the development of individual age groups in the region, the population aged 0–14 experienced a slight decrease of -4.5%, while the working-age population (15–64) showed a sharp decrease of -12.8%. The population aged 65 and over underwent a substantial increase of 31.7%.

2.1.1.3 Change in settlement areas

Indicator description

The indicator shows the relative change in settlement areas per LAU in the border region. It considers changes in land cover, from non-artificial areas (such as agricultural, forest and seminatural areas, wetlands and water bodies) to artificial areas (such as urban, industrial, construction sites) between 2012 and 2018. This indicator has to be viewed alongside population development in particular.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is retrieved via processing of raster data from CORINE Land cover. The raster information is crossed with Local Administrative Units (LAU) to calculate a change in %.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2012-2018
- **Unit**: Change in %

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.3 illustrates the change in settlement areas at municipal level between 2012 and 2018. Overall, the map shows different patterns of change in settlement areas on both sides of the German-Polish border. Changes are evident in particular around the urban centres of Neubrandenburg, Müncheberg, Stralsund, Świnoujście, Szczecin, Koszalin, Szczecin and Drawsko Pomorskie. Waren and Angermünde are exceptions, with no significant changes during the observed time period. High growth in settlement areas is particularly evident between and around the Polish cities, Koszalin and Szczecin as well along the Polish coast. In close proximity to the national borders, the settlement area increases on the Polish side around the city Szczecin. On the German side, this is true around Angermünde and Müncheberg. The map also reflects the topographical characteristics of the border region, with hardly any changes in settlement areas visible around the lake areas along the German border.

Figure 2.3: Settlement area dynamics

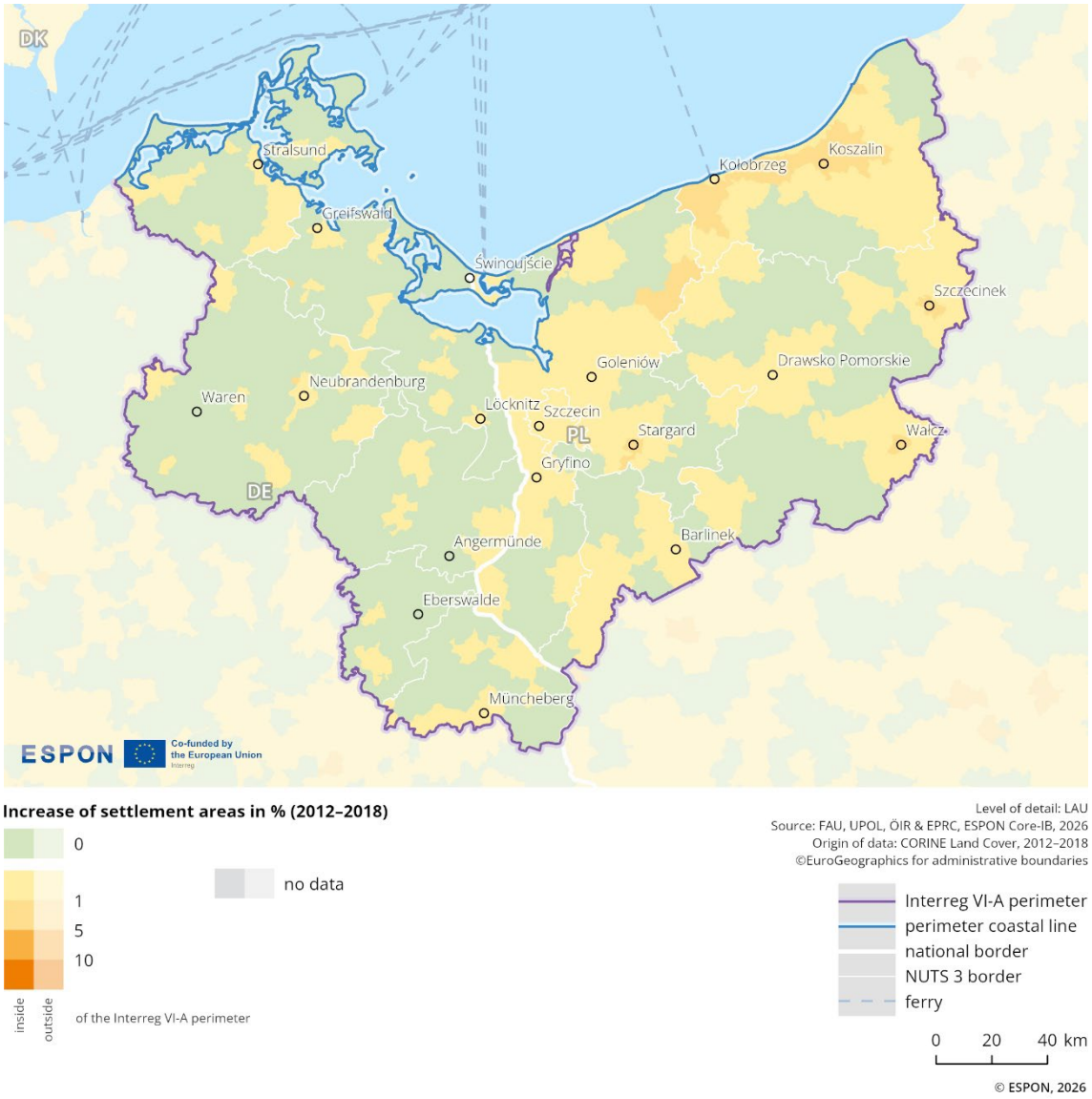
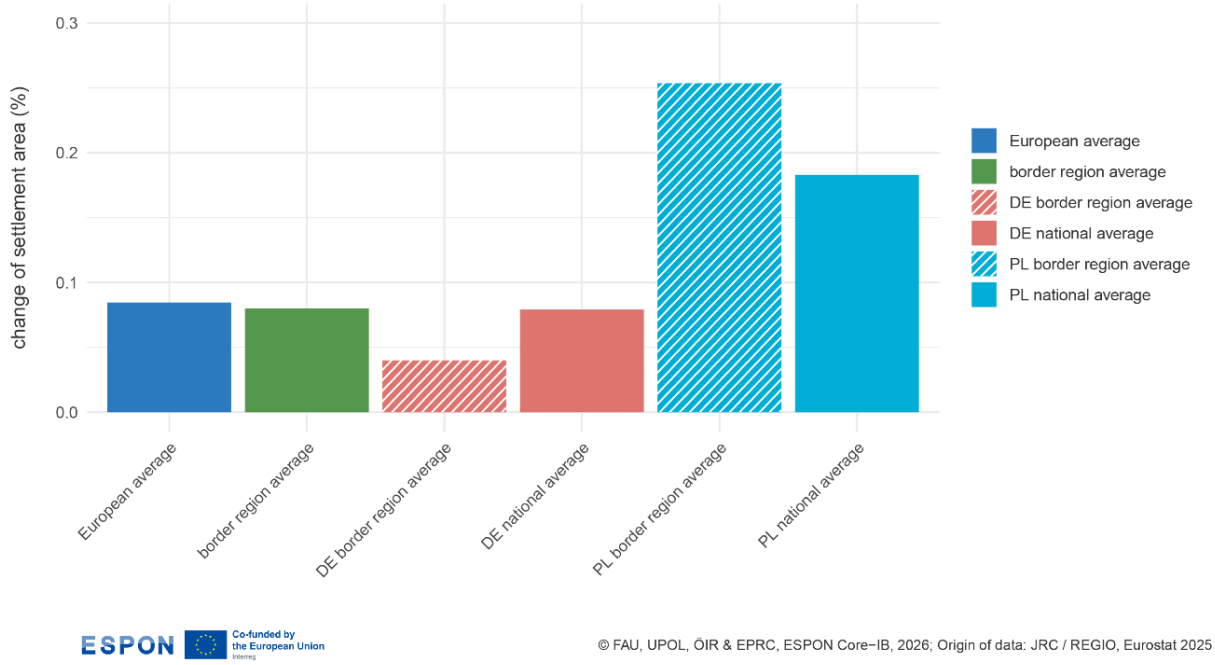


Figure 2.4 presents the change in settlement areas from a comparative perspective. The average for the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland programme area is similar to the overall European average, which includes both EU member states and the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. The national Polish value is higher than the national German one. The Polish border-regional average lies above the German border-regional average. The German border-regional average is lower than the German national average. The Polish border-regional average is higher than the Polish national average.

In general, the programme area shows a dynamic settlement development. The need for an integrated approach to spatial development is obvious. Spatial development has to balance the various demands on land use (e.g., residential, commercial, tourism, transport, agriculture, and nature conservation), and this requires ongoing coordination and exchange, also across the border.

Figure 2.4: Change in settlement areas (2012-2018) (comparison)



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2.1.2 Accessibility of the border area

This sub-dimension illustrates the functional travel connections that already exist in the border region. It examines average cross-border travel times for different modes of transport and cross-border catchment areas based on mobility flows. It also considers travel times to and from border crossings. The analysis shows whether mobility flows are integrated between border regions or if the border hampers mobility.

2.1.2.1 Comparative quality of selected cross-border connections

Indicator description

The indicator presents a comparative perspective for different modes of transport (public and private) and their average travel speed (so-called space-time-lines). As such it helps to understand and interpret accessibility patterns along the border and highlights the comparative quality of selected cross-border connections.

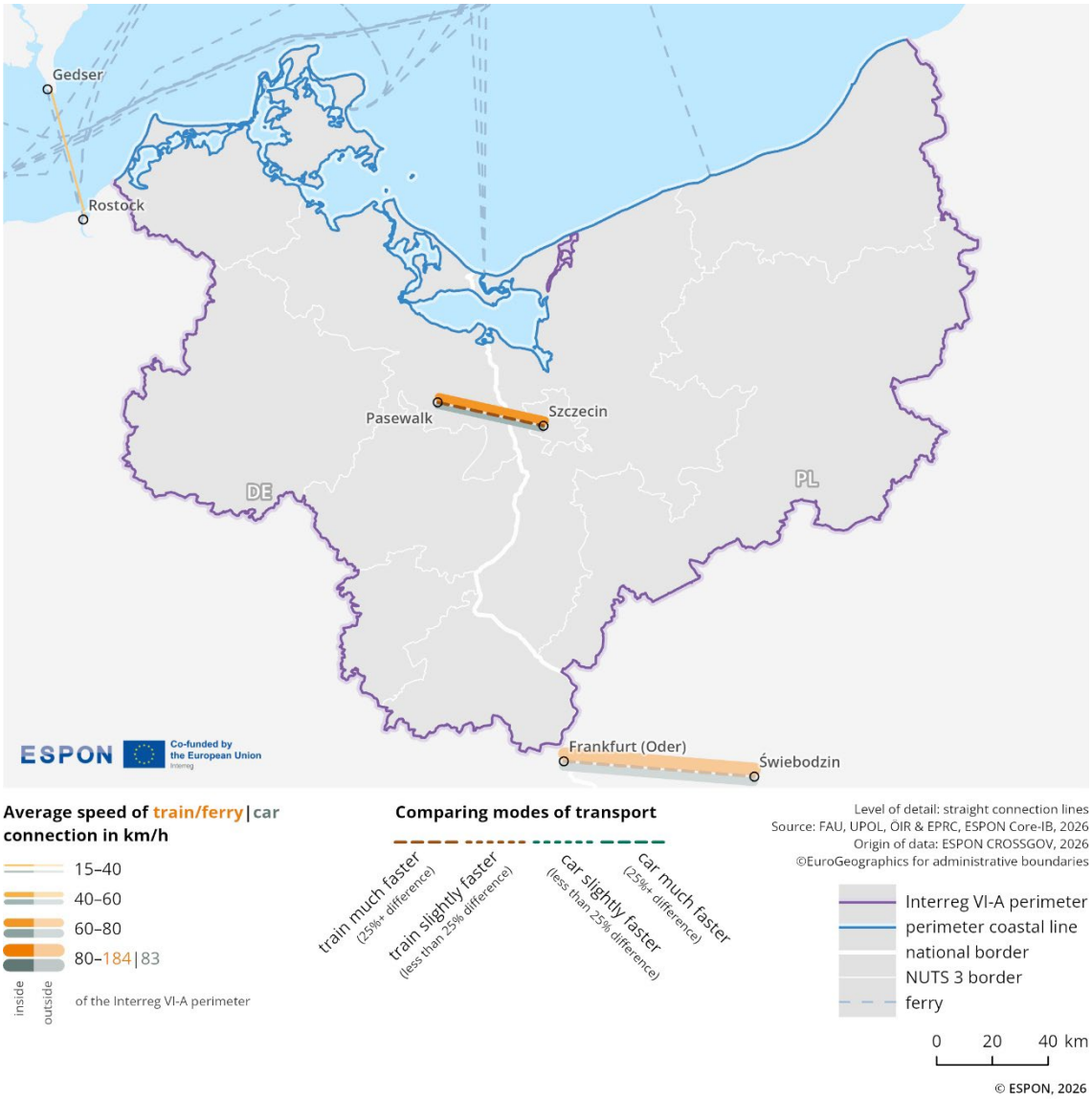
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Average number and speed of rail connections/ferries, average speed of car connections between selected cities and towns in border regions using Rail Travel Sites, Google Maps, luftlinie.org, Direct Ferries, local ferry companies
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025 (first quarter)
- **Unit**: km/h

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Cross-border accessibility shapes cross-border interactions. Figure 2.5 illustrates this using a "space-time-line" map, which shows parts of a European overview of car, train and ferry travel times in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland border region. This visualisation

enables an assessment of transport quality by highlighting differences between public (train, ferry) and private (car) transport modes.

Figure 2.5: Comparative quality of selected cross-border connections



The selection of cities and connections covered is based on a set of criteria applied throughout Europe within the ESPON CROSSGOV project[4]. These criteria include the presence of a railway station, population size, distance to the border, node hub and functionality. The thickness of the lines (orange for trains and ferries, grey for cars) indicates the average speed of connections in km/h, with thicker lines representing faster connections. Dotted lines in-between reflect the indexed ratio between train and car speeds. A brown colour scale (values below 100) denotes that trains are faster than cars along the specific route, while a green scale (values above 100) indicates the opposite.

The selected connection within the programme area is Pasewalk–Szczecin. For this route, the train connection outperforms car travel in terms of speed.

[4] ESPON CROSSGOV Atlas, see Storymap on 'Space-time-lines': https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/storymaps/collections/345c978adf784ad-fac30c16b90219d35?item=4

2.1.2.2 Cross-border catchment area based on mobility flows

Indicator description

This indicator measures the movement of people across borders. The density of cross-border movements by Twitter/X users is displayed on a grid cell covering an area of 20x20 km. The indicator does not differentiate between reasons for movement.

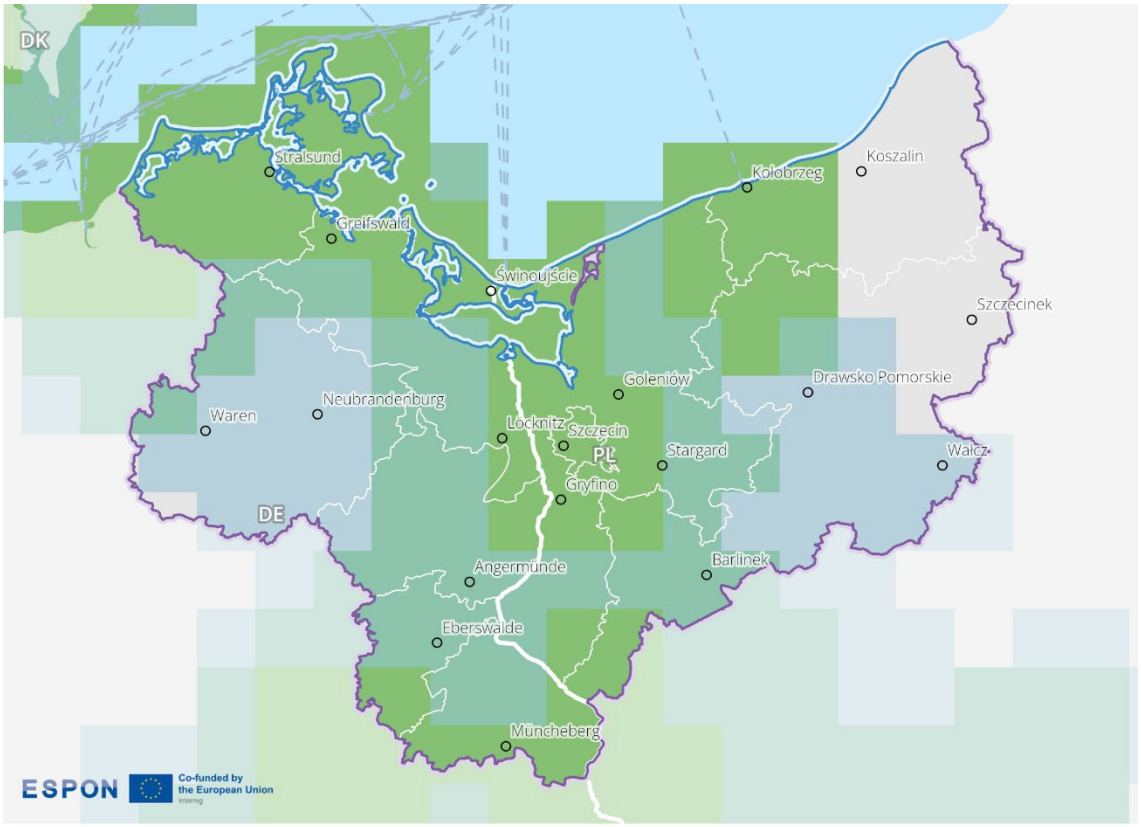
- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is calculated based on Twitter (currently X) data. The digital footprint of individual users provides information about physical mobility flows and is used to calculate cross-border catchment areas of different intensity.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2013-2023
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.6 shows the cross-border catchment area in the border region based on mobility flows from 2013 to 2023, highlighting estimated cross-border mobility intensity across 3 different quartiles. The first quartile represents the 25% highest mobility intensity shown in dark green, the second quartile represents 25-50% coloured in green-blue, and the third quartile represents 50-75% in light blue.

The intensity of cross-border mobility of people within this cross-border region is variable. The highest mobility intensity is observed in several distinct areas of the region. These include an elongated area around the cities of Stralsund, Świnoujście, and Szczecin, the area surrounding the town of Müncheberg, and the area west of the city of Koszalin. Moderate mobility intensity is further recorded in areas adjacent to the aforementioned high-intensity zones. Low intensity is found around the cities of Waren, Neubrandenburg, and Drawsko Pomorskie.

Figure 2.6: Cross-border mobility intensity



Estimated cross-border mobility intensity (2013-2023)

high
moderate
low

inside / outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Level of detail: 20km aggregated grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2026
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

2.1.2.3 Cross-border travel-time accessibility

Indicator description

The indicator shows the time it takes to travel from any location within a region to the next border crossing, using grid data and subsequent categorisations into accessibility groups of 30, 60 and 90 minutes. It reflects the accessibility in cross-border areas, considering road transport. The indicator can describe the quality and speed of road connections and thus spatial reach of the cross-border services.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Based on the OpenStreetMap road network, the travel time to the border is calculated for a grid of the border are. Based on this, areas are calculated within which border crossings can be reached below thresholds of 30, 60 and 90 minutes. As additional visual element, key services pharmacies, doctors, hospitals and shops (retrieved from the ESPON PROFECY project) are displayed and categorised into the accessibility groups.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025 (first quarter, for accessibility data), 2021 (for service facility data)
- **Unit**: Minutes

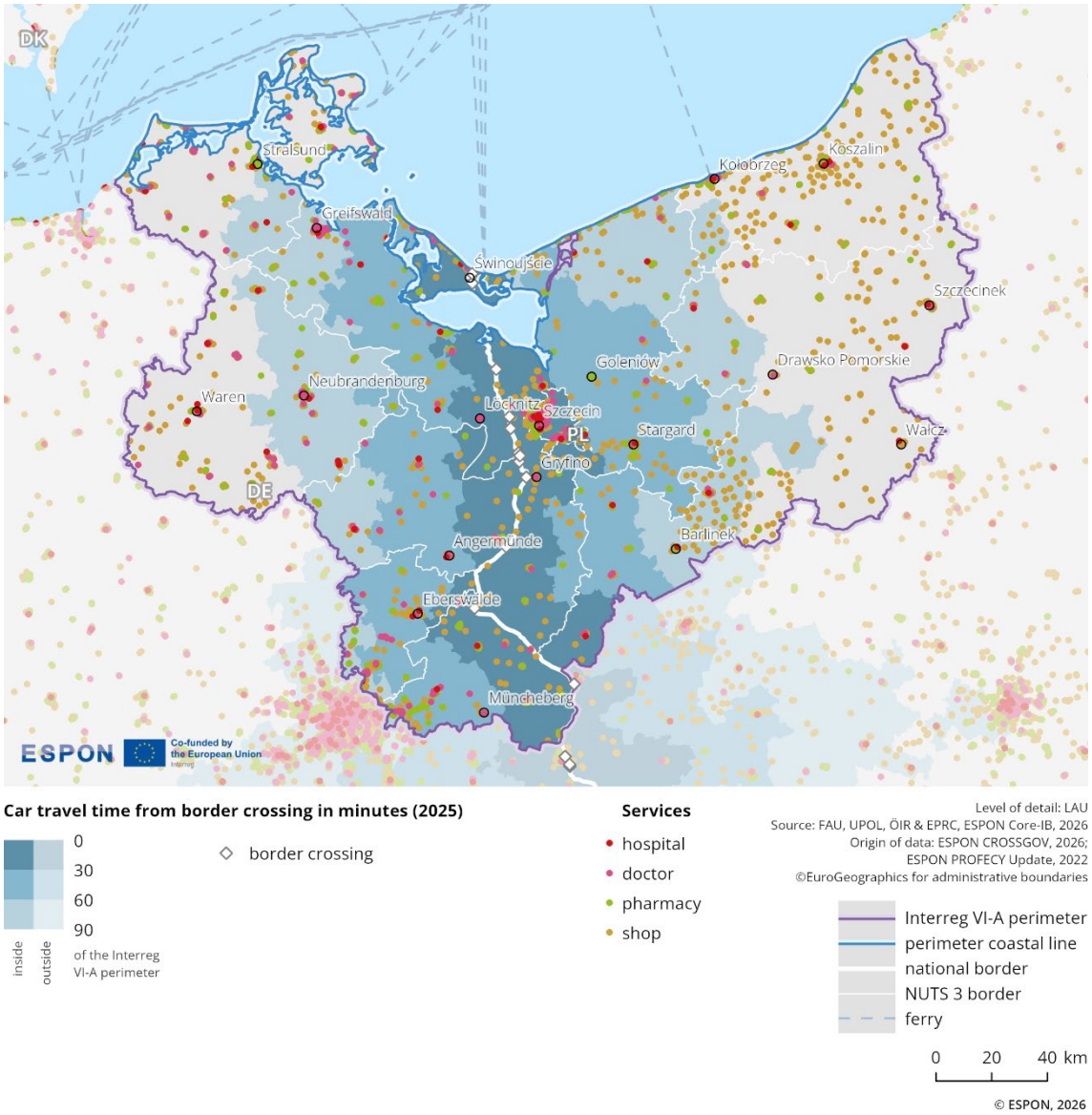
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.7 illustrates cross-border travel time accessibility in the Interreg area, showing the time distance from the national border in 2025. The legend indicates 3 travel time categories in minutes (30, 60, 90) represented by different shades of blue. In addition, it marks the location of services, including hospitals, doctors (general practitioners), pharmacies, and shops (supermarkets and conventient stores), with distinct coloured symbols.

The map shows that along the entire cross-border, the travel-time accessibility is under 30 minutes. The areas of travel time accessibility thresholds of 30, 60, and 90 minutes form parallel belts on both sides of the border. Far areas are above 90-minute thresholds on both sides. This indicates a good road network and accessibility in cross-border areas. Only one bottleneck exists on the northern part, where the mainland narrows.

Services like shops, hospitals, doctors and pharmacies are evenly distributed in both countries. Services such as shops, hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies are located in Szczecin, Poland. This town is in 30 minutes travel time category.

Figure 2.7: Travel-time accessibility from border crossings



2.1.3 Key messages on the territorial dimension

The Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland border region is characterised by low population density, demographic decline and uneven spatial development. However, it also offers high accessibility and opportunities for cross-border mobility. With 68 inhabitants per km², population density is significantly below the European average and is concentrated in a few medium-sized towns such as Szczecin, Koszalin, Stralsund, Greifswald, and Neubrandenburg. Much of the territory between these towns is rural and agricultural, with many small villages. This dispersed settlement pattern means that service provision and connectivity are closely tied to the main towns, particularly the dominant centre of Szczecin, which has almost 400,000 inhabitants.

Population change contributes to these structural challenges. Since 2014, the region has experienced a decline of nearly 4% in its population, with the Polish side being particularly affected. Ageing trends are also evident: the working-age population has dropped sharply, while the proportion of people over 65 has increased by almost a third. This shift affects not only the labour market, but also puts pressure on healthcare and service provision, making accessibility increasingly important.

However, settlement areas show dynamic and somewhat uneven growth. Szczecin, Koszalin and the Polish coast have seen significant expansion, while the German side has remained more stable with only modest changes. This reflects demographic trends and patterns of economic development, highlighting the need for coordinated spatial planning that balances residential and environmental interests across the border.

Transport and accessibility partly mitigate demographic and spatial differences. Travel-time accessibility is generally high, with cross-border travel taking less than 30 minutes in most places, supported by a dense road network. Train connections, such as the route between Pasewalk and Szczecin, even outperform car travel, demonstrating the potential for sustainable mobility. The strongest cross-border mobility flows are around Szczecin and Świnoujście, confirming their role as regional hubs.

2.2 Economic dimension

The economic dimension includes analyses of gross domestic product, labour market conditions, competitiveness, and key infrastructure and housing indicators. The aim is to illustrate the impact of the border on economic performance, whether it acts as a barrier or a bridge, and the extent to which integration is supported by labour mobility, remote working, and infrastructure connectivity.

2.2.1 Gross Domestic Product

This sub-dimension illustrates the economic situation of the border region by analysing gross domestic product (GDP). It shows economic development within the border region and how this has changed over time. Comparisons with the respective countries and the EU average provide important context for understanding the region's dynamics.

2.2.1.1 Gross domestic product per capita at current market prices

Indicator description

The indicator shows the regional GDP/capita in current prices and its development over the past years. It highlights structural differences and similarities between the border region and the respective national figures as well as the European average. Furthermore, it highlights patterns within the border region, although has to be interpreted with care in the case of a strong presence of commuters.

- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2010-2023
- **Unit**: Euro per capita

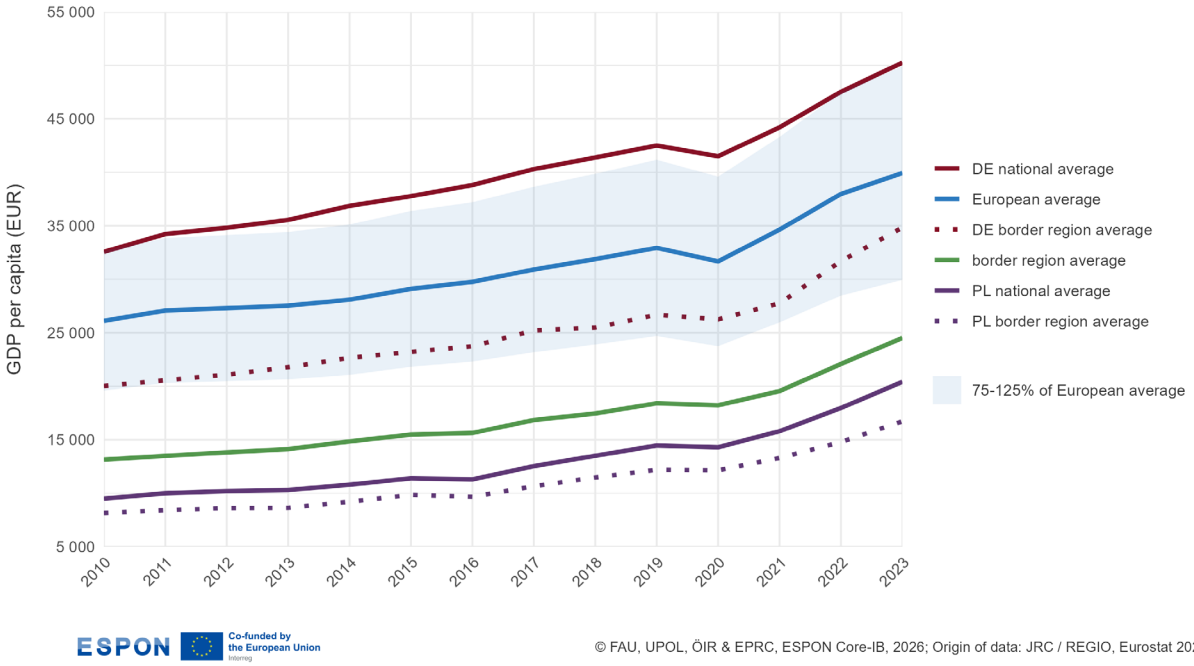
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

In 2022, the border region's GDP per capita was 60.6% of the EU average and 61.6% of the average for other European border regions. Between 2014 and 2022, it grew by 50.5%, 14.8 percentage points more than the EU average and 15.3 percentage points more than the average for European border regions[5].

[5] Percentage changes are calculated using Eurostat data to ensure harmonised statistics from official sources. The latest year for which full coverage of all European regions is available on Eurostat is 2022. For visualisation purposes, ARDECO data has been used to enable longer time series to be visualised by filling the official dataset's existing gaps with model-based estimates. Therefore, slight deviations between the calculation and visualisation are possible.

Germany's national GDP per capita is well above the EU average, but the German border region falls below it. On the Polish side, GDP per capita in the border region is also lower than the national average in both value and growth. Still, GDP per capita in the Polish border region grew at nearly twice the rate of the German border region (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8: Gross domestic product at current market prices (per capita)



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2.2.2 Labour market and commuting

This sub-dimension highlights the existing and potential functional links within the labour market of the border region. It examines the employment situation and commuting patterns, as well as the role of telework agreements, and considers developments over time based on analysed indicators. The analysis identifies factors that facilitate or hamper cross-border labour market integration.[6]

2.2.2.1 Share of employment

Indicator description

This indicator shows the share of employees in the population aged 15 to 64. Although it does not fully capture entrepreneurs, marginal employees, or civil servants, this is an important statistic for understanding general labour market patterns. It covers 2 aspects: first, high values can result from a high proportion of the resident population being employed. Second, high values can result from a high number of incoming commuters (from other NUTS3 regions within the country or from neighbouring countries). The same arguments apply to low values: they may indicate low levels of employment, or they may result from high shares of outgoing commuters. Values of more than 100% are possible, since the number of incoming commuters can exceed the number of inhabitants aged 15 to 64 (including both domestic and cross-border commuters).

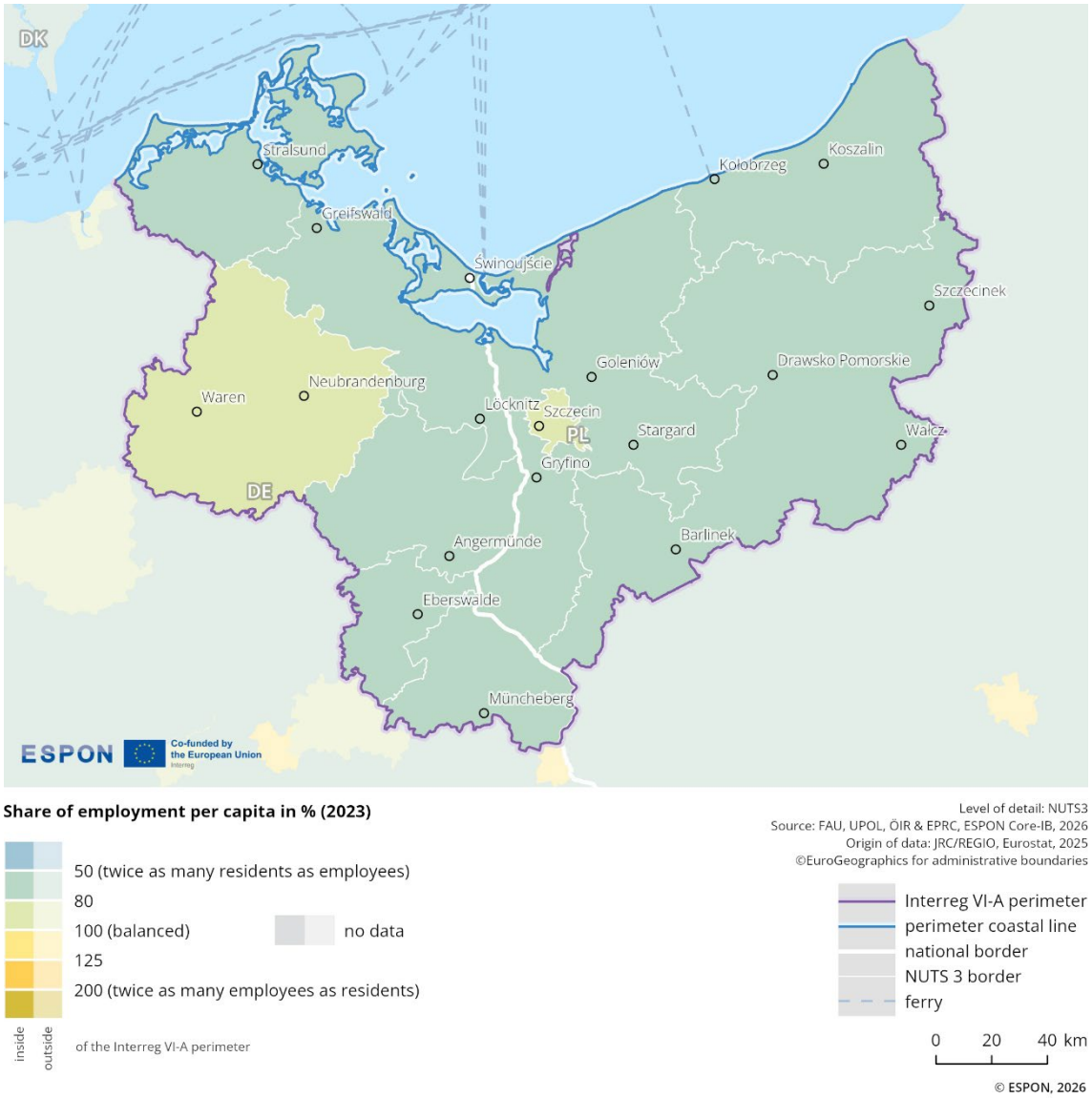
- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2023
- **Unit**: Share in %

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.9 illustrates the share of employment per capita in the polulation aged 15 to 64 in 2023. The data are categorised into ranges from below 50% (twice as many residents aged 15 to 64 as employees) to above 200% (twice as many employees as residents aged 15 to 64), with 100% representing a balanced ratio. Blue or green-coloured regions indicate more residents aged 15 to 64 than employees, while yellow regions indicate more employees than residents aged 15 to 64.

[6] See also: European Commission 2024: Cross-Border Regional Labour Market Analysis, https://op.europa.eu/s/AazM

Figure 2.9: Employment share[7]



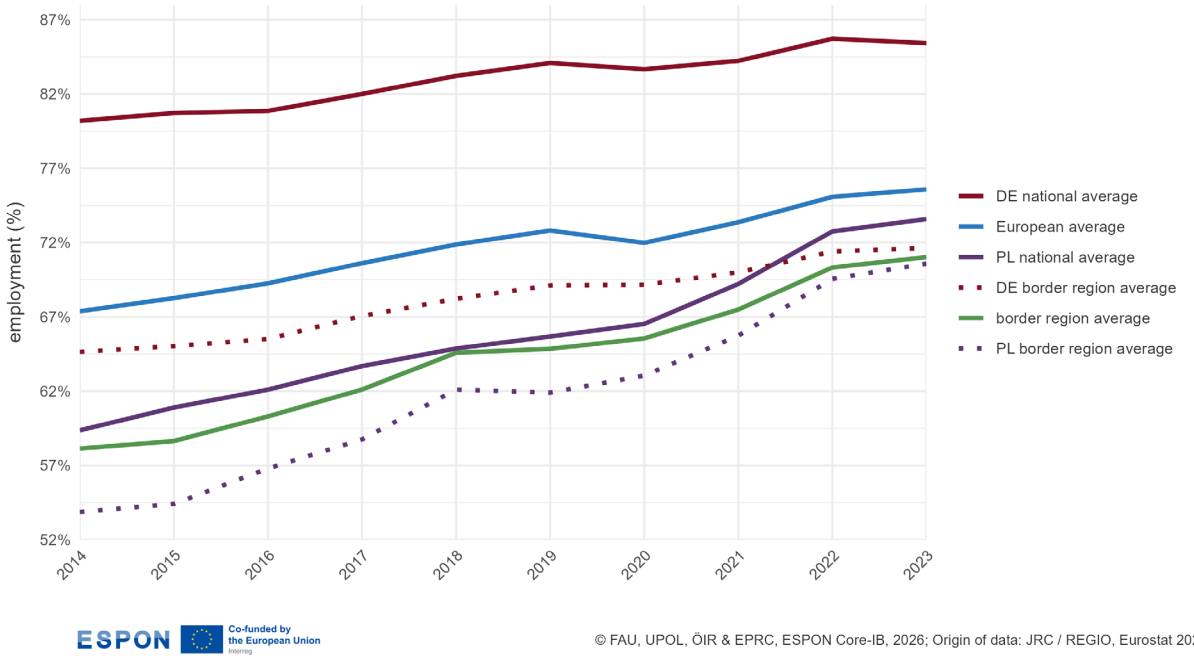
The share of employment in this border region is stable, with the average for the entire region at 71% in 2023, having increased by 12.9 percentage points since 2014. Across much of the region the share of employment values are mostly in the range of 50% to 80%. Only in areas around the cities of Waren, Neubrandenburg, and Szczecin the share of employment ranges from 80% to 100%. When comparing the share of employment in this border region with different averages, the following can be observed (see Figure 2.10):

- Compared to the European average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 4.6 percentage points; in 2014, they were lower by 9.2 percentage points.
- Compared to the Polish average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 2.6 percentage points, while in 2014 they were lower by 1.2 percentage points.
- Compared to the German average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 14.4 percentage points; in 2014, they were lower by 22.1 percentage points.

[7] Note: In this map, 'residents' refers to the population aged 15 to 64.

- The Polish border area has values 3 percentage points lower than the Polish national average, while the German border area has values 13.8 percentage points lower than the German national average.
- Compared to the average of all cross-border regions, values are lower by 3.4 percentage points; in 2014, they were lower by 8.2 percentage points.

Figure 2.10: Employment share over time (comparison)



2.2.2.2 Share of working-age population

Indicator description

This indicator shows the share of people aged 15 to 64 in the total population, reflecting the potential working-age population. The population counted includes all residents who live in the country permanently, excluding foreign students and military personnel. Using the 15–64 age range is a standard European statistical proxy, since differences in retirement age or labour participation across countries cannot be captured systematically. It allows for regional differentiation of potential workforce throughout the border region.

- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2023
- **Unit**: Share in %

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

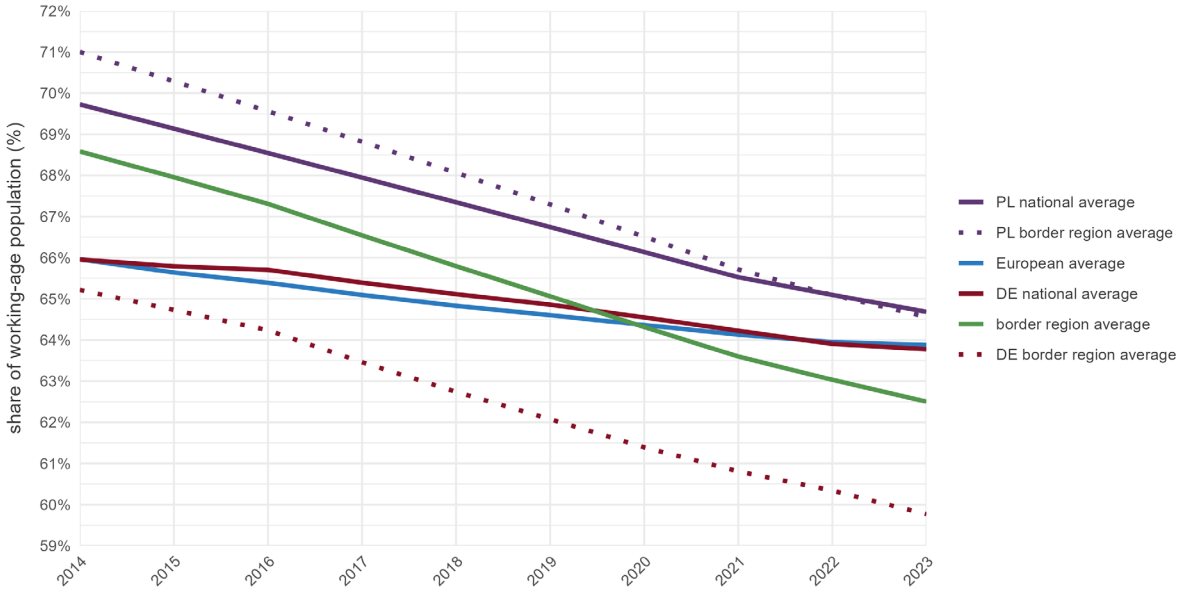
Figure 2.11 illustrates the evolution of the share of the working-age population in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland cross-border region between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the border region shows an average working-age population share of 62.5%, compared to the European average of 63.9%, and 63.7% for the average of all cross-border regions.

The share of the working-age population in the whole cross-border region is moderately lower compared to both the Polish border average (64.6%) and the Polish national average (64.7%). In contrast, it is moderately higher than the German border average (59.8%), but moderately lower than the German national average (63.8%).

The region experienced a substantial 6.1 percentage point decrease in the share of the working-age population between 2014 (68.6%) and 2023 (62.5%). This decline contrasts with the European average, which decreased by 2.1 percentage points during the same period. While all areas in the region show a declining trend, the rate of decline has been more pronounced in the Polish parts (-6.4 percentage points at the border and -5.0 percentage points at the national level) than in the German parts (-5.4 percentage points at the border and -2.2 percentage points at the national level).

The Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland cross-border region recorded a substantial decrease in the working-age population share between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the region remained moderately below both the European and cross-border averages, with declining trends observed on both sides of the border.

Figure 2.11: Share of working-age population over time (comparison)



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2.2.2.3 Employment by sector

Indicator description

The indicator differentiates the number of jobs in a region by sector. This indicator focuses on workplace-based employment, providing insight into the employment landscape of a region. The dataset can be disaggregated according to "10-sector" NACE (Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne) classifications, allowing for detailed analysis of employment distribution across various industries.

- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2023
- **Unit**: Share in %

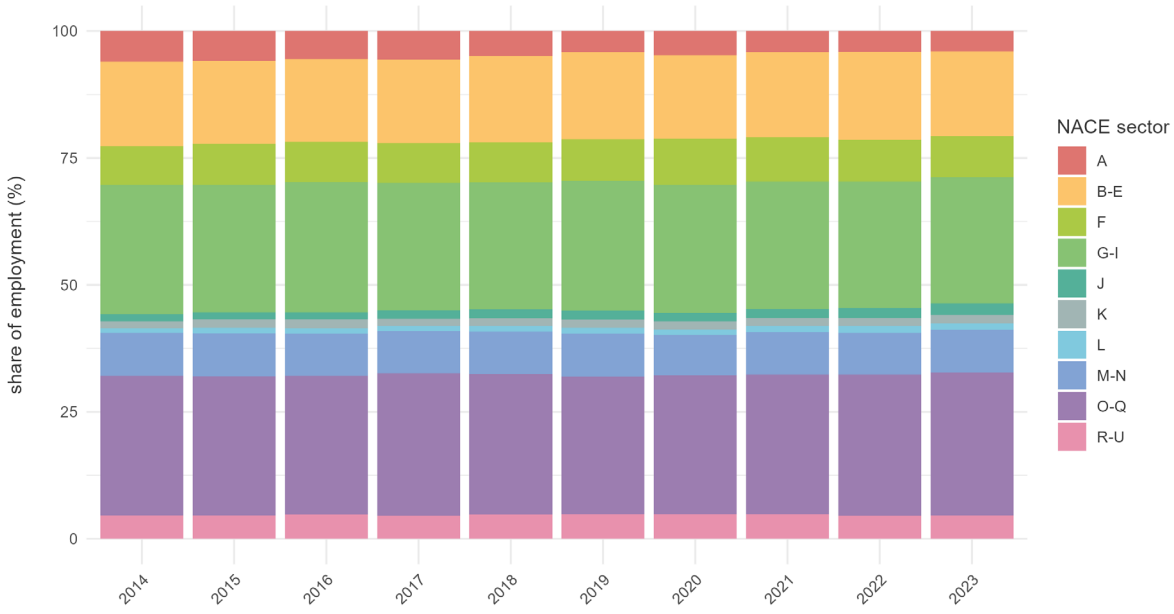
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.12 illustrates the relative number of jobs in the border area differentiated by sectors. It shows where jobs are located (not where employed persons live). This workplace-based indicator offers insight into the employment structure of a region.

The dataset uses a '10-sector' classification based on NACE categories. The sectoral breakdown is as follows:

- A: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- B-E: Mining and quarrying (B), Manufacturing (C), Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D), Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)
- F: Construction
- G-I: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), Accommodation and food service activities (I)
- J: Information and communication
- K: Financial and insurance activities
- L: Real estate activities
- M-N: Professional, scientific and technical activities (M), Administrative and support service activities (N)
- O-Q: Education (O), Human health and social work activities (Q)
- R-U: Arts, entertainment and recreation R), Other service activities (S), Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use (T), Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)

Figure 2.12: Employment by sector (comparison)



A: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
B-E: Mining and quarrying (B), Manufacturing (C), Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D), Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)
F: Construction
G-I: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), Accommodation and food service activities (I)
J: Information and communication
K: Financial and insurance activities
L: Real estate activities
M-N: Professional, scientific and technical activities (M), Administrative and support service activities (N)
O-Q: Education (O), Human health and social work activities (Q)
R-U: Arts, entertainment and recreation (R), Other service activities (S), Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use (T), Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)

Between 2014 and 2023, the relative number of jobs in the different sectors remains fairly stable. There is a slight decline in the share of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing (A), wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), and Accommodation and food service activities (I). Conversely, there is a modest increase in the number of jobs in Mining and quarrying (B), Manufacturing (C), Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D), Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E), Information and Communication (J) and Financial and insurance activities (K).

Over the entire period, the sectors with the highest share of jobs are 'B-E' (mining, quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply, water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities, 'G-I' (wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities) and 'O-Q' (education, human health and social work activities).

2.2.2.4 Outgoing cross-border commuters

Indicator description

The indicator shows outgoing cross-border commuting dynamics at NUTS3 level. Even though no origin-destination information can be provided, it is assumed that commuters primarily travel across the nearest border. Spatial, economic and population arguments are combined to calculate the number of outgoing cross-border commuters.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Eurostat/LFS data on outgoing commuters currently available on NUTS2 level has been regionalised for NUTS3 by means of weighting by border length, NUTS3 population-weighted centroid distance to border, population per NUTS3 region (15–64 years old) and real compensation per employee
- **Temporal coverage**: 2015-2023
- **Unit**: Share in %

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

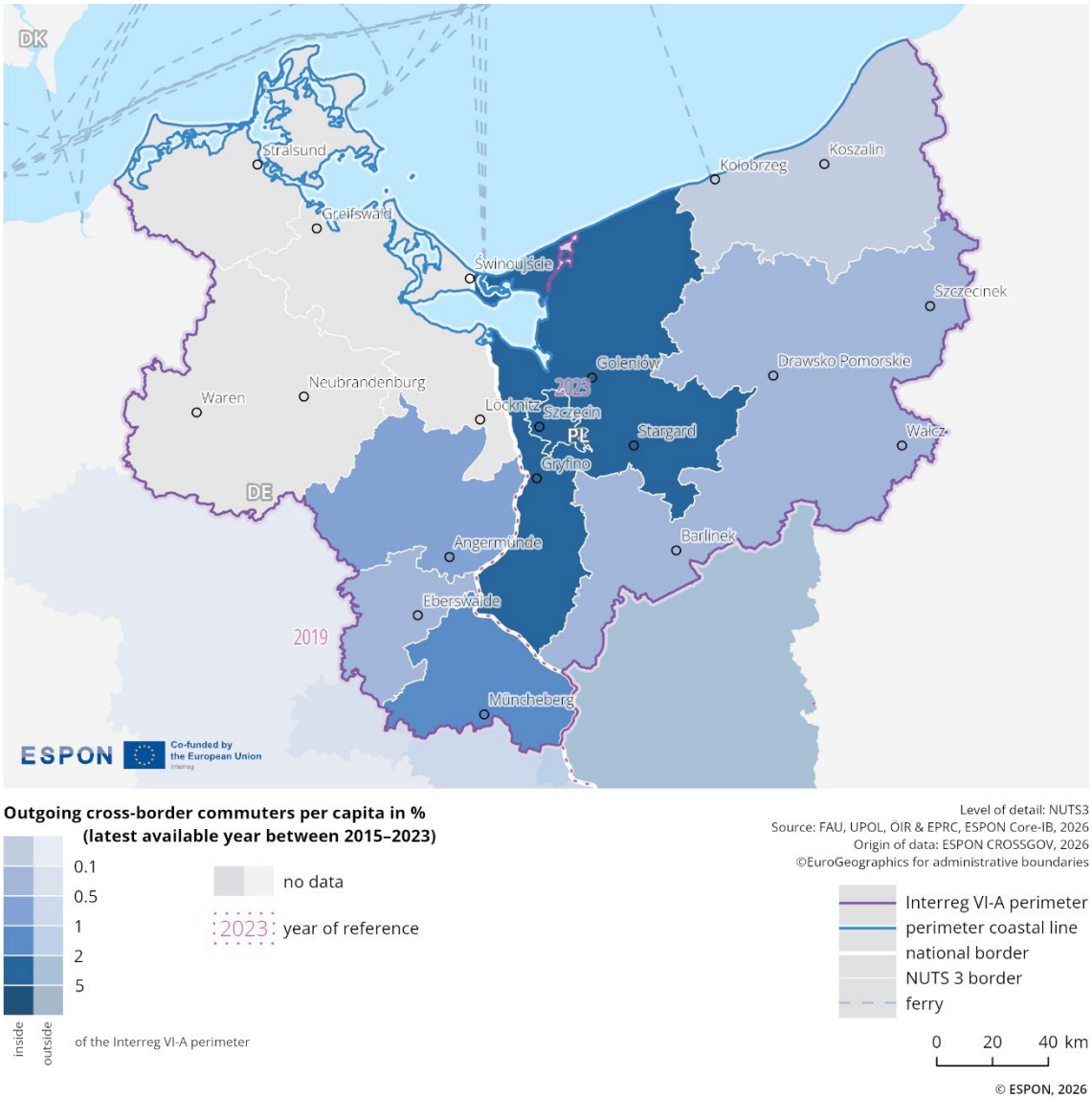
Commuting is one of the most relevant cross-border flows to identify functional linkages. Figure 2.13 illustrates the share of outgoing commuters per capita for each NUTS3 region (more concretely speaking the share of outgoing commuters among the residential population of the age group 15-64 years old, resembling the potential labour force). Origin-destination information cannot be provided, but the share of outgoing commuters in regions close to the border indicates the relevance of commuting. It highlights functional relations in the labour market within the cross-border region.

The map illustrates the share of cross-border commuters, based on the most recent available year of data. It shows relatively strong and somewhat unevenly distributed cross-border commuting activity in areas directly adjacent to the border. For several German regions, there is no data available.

The Polish side stands out in particular, with high levels of outgoing commuters per capita, most likely to Germany, in the regions of Szczeciński and Miasto Szczecin, highlighting the important role of this border area as a commuting corridor[8].

[8] See Eurostat Statistical Atlas for NUTS3 (2021) regions: https://ec.europa.eu/statistical-atlas/viewer/?config=typologies.json&ch=NUTS&mids=BKGCNT,NUTS2021L3,CNTOVL&o=1,1,0.7&center=49.69576,14.3332,4&lcis=NUTS2021L3&

Figure 2.13: Outgoing cross-border commuting patterns



2.2.2.5 Cross-border telework agreements

Indicator description

The indicator shows what kind of legal framework for cross-border telework is enacted.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is based on information about the legal framework for social security regarding cross-border teleworking, categorised by border pair.
- **Temporal coverage**: Status as of March 2025
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

The 2 countries involved in the programme are signatories of the 2023 Framework Agreement on Cross-Border Telework. Under this agreement, cross-border workers can telework from their country of residence for up to 50% of their total working time without affecting their social security affiliation.

2.2.3 Competitiveness

This sub-dimension illustrates the competitiveness of the border region by analysing the main industry sectors that contribute to its economic development. It assesses gross value added (GVA) at basic prices by sector, as well as nominal compensation per hour worked, in order to understand productivity levels and sectoral strengths.

2.2.3.1 Gross value added at basic prices by sector

Indicator description

The indicator shows the gross value added (GVA), which is a measure of the contribution of a country or region to the economy. Regional GVA represents the value generated by all units involved in the production of goods and services within a specific area. This indicator can be disaggregated by industry and service sector, allowing for a detailed analysis of economic contributions across different fields. Additionally, the sum of GVA across all industries or sectors, combined with taxes on products and minus subsidies on products, yields the gross domestic product (GDP) of the region. The dataset is available in "10-sector" NACE classifications, facilitating comprehensive evaluations of the regional economy.

- **Source**: Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2023
- **Unit**: Million purchasing power standards (PPS)

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

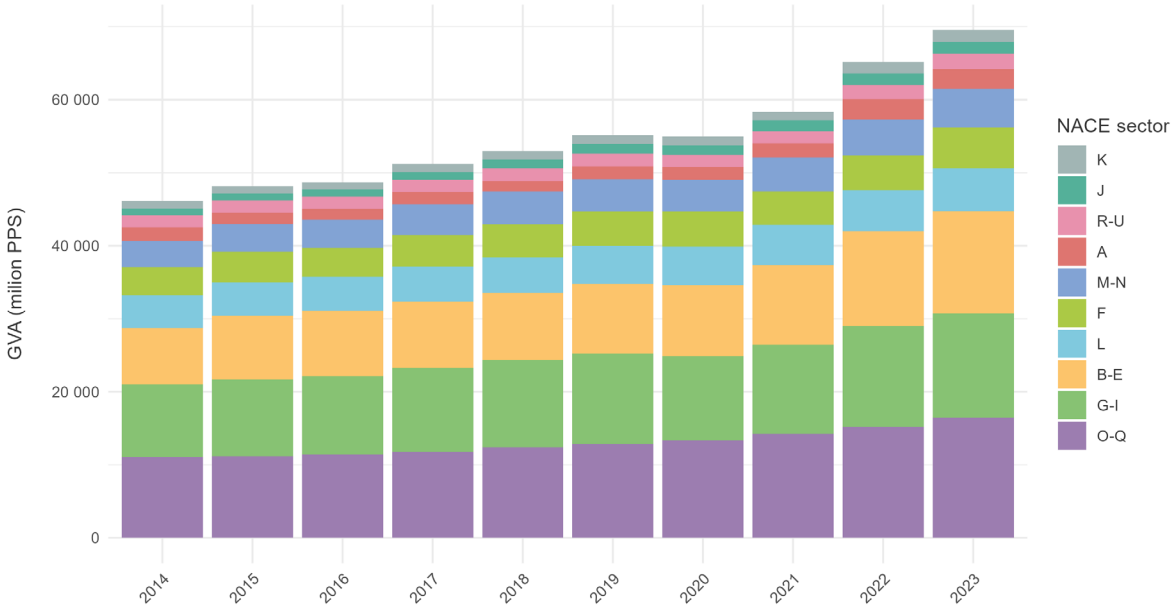
Figure 2.14 visualises gross value added (GVA), which is an important indicator of economic activity. GVA measures the value created by all economic activities involved in producing goods and services in a specific area. It is differentiated by sectors to provide detailed insights into the economic contributions of different fields.

The dataset uses a '10-sector' classification based on NACE categories. The sectoral breakdown is as follows:

- A: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- B-E: Mining and quarrying (B), Manufacturing (C), Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D), Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)
- F: Construction
- G-I: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), Accommodation and food service activities (I)
- J: Information and communication
- K: Financial and insurance activities
- L: Real estate activities
- M-N: Professional, scientific and technical activities (M), Administrative and support service activities (N)
- O-Q: Education (O), Human health and social work activities (Q)
- R-U: Arts, entertainment and recreation R), Other service activities (S), Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use (T), Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)

Between 2014 and 2023, the GVA in the border area of Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland increased from 46,149 million purchasing power standards (PPS) to 69,530 million PPS — a growth of 51%. Sector groups B–E, G–I, and O–Q together make up over half of the total GVA, highlighting their significant contribution to the regional economy within the border area. The sector groups O–Q contributed the largest share, with a total of 16,459 million PPS in 2023. This underlines the significance of sectors such as Education (O), Human health and social work activities (Q) in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland border region.

Figure 2.14: Gross value added at basic prices by sector (comparison)



A: Agriculture, forestry and fishing
B-E: Mining and quarrying (B), Manufacturing (C), Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (D), Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (E)
F: Construction
G-I: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), Accommodation and food service activities (I)
J: Information and communication
K: Financial and insurance activities
L: Real estate activities
M-N: Professional, scientific and technical activities (M), Administrative and support service activities (N)
O-Q: Education (O), Human health and social work activities (Q)
R-U: Arts, entertainment and recreation (R), Other service activities (S), Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use (T), Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U)

2.2.3.2 Nominal compensation per hour worked

Indicator description

The indicator shows the average income paid for each hour worked, known as compensation per hour worked. This measure is calculated by dividing the "compensation of employees at current prices" by the total number of "hours worked (employees)." Employees, in this context, are defined as individuals engaged by contract in productive activities for a resident unit, receiving remuneration irrespective of their place of residence. The total hours worked is considered the most appropriate measure of labour input, representing the aggregate number of hours actually worked by employees. This indicator provides valuable insights into labour productivity and wage dynamics within the economy.

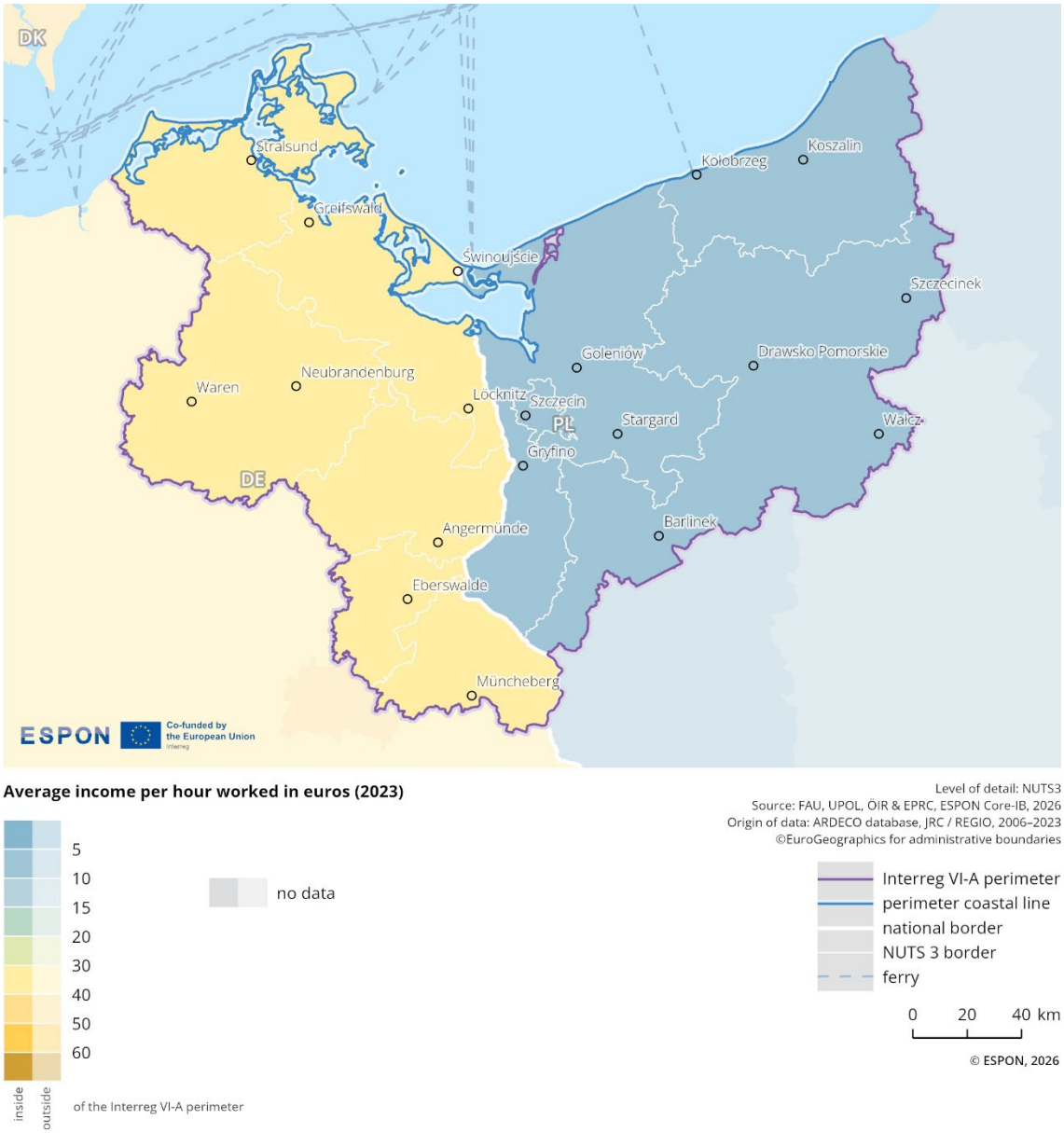
- **Source**: Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2023 (missing data from 2023 in Switzerland were supplemented by values from 2022)
- **Unit**: Euro

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.15 shows the average values for the 'compensation per hour worked'. In 2023, the nominal compensation in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland border region appears to be distributed unevenly. In German areas, the average hourly income ranges between €30 and €40. In Germany, no region reports significant values above the general range. In Polish areas, the average hourly income ranges between €5 and €10 and also no region reports a value above the general range. To contextualize the regional pattern shown in the figure, it is noteworthy that the national average hourly compensation reaches €39.40 in Germany and €9.90 in Poland, which helps situate the border region within national labour productivity context.

Cross-border wage differences can encourage labour migration from lower-wage areas to more economically prosperous neighbouring regions, creating both opportunities and challenges for local labour markets and social systems. At the same time, it can encourage 'service tourism' to the lower-wage border area, possibly resulting in negative effects for the higher-wage area and positive effects for the lower-wage area.

Figure 2.15: Average income per hour



2.2.4 Infrastructure and housing

This sub-dimension shows the impact of the border on infrastructure and housing in the region. It assesses housing prices and average internet speed in order to identify cross-border effects, including potential price spillovers and disparities. The analysis reveals whether infrastructure and housing markets facilitate integration or expose structural challenges that are specific to the border area.

2.2.4.1 Advertised sales prices

Indicator description

The indicator shows the advertised sales price per square meter for houses/appartements as retrieved from commercial real estate websites at national level. In the cross-border region, local differences between average sales prices are highlighted and the "cutting" effect of the border and its influence on price levels is visualised.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processed ESPON House4all data. The original data is collected via web-scraping of national listing websites over a one-year period.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024/2025
- **Unit**: Average price per square meter (€/m^2)

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.16 illustrates the advertised sales price of housing in 2025 across the border region. The data are categorised into ranges of average housing price per square metre, from below 250 €/m² up to more than 8,000 €/m², shown in colours ranging from purple and blue to green, yellow and orange.

Lower prices are found in the eastern part, where values drop below 1,000 €/m². The average advertised sales price in the German part of the border region is around 2,026 €/m², while in the Polish part it is about 1,228 €/m². The overall average for the entire border region is 1,860 €/m², which is similar to the average across all evaluated EU border regions (1,900 €/m²).

Figure 2.16: Advertised housing prices

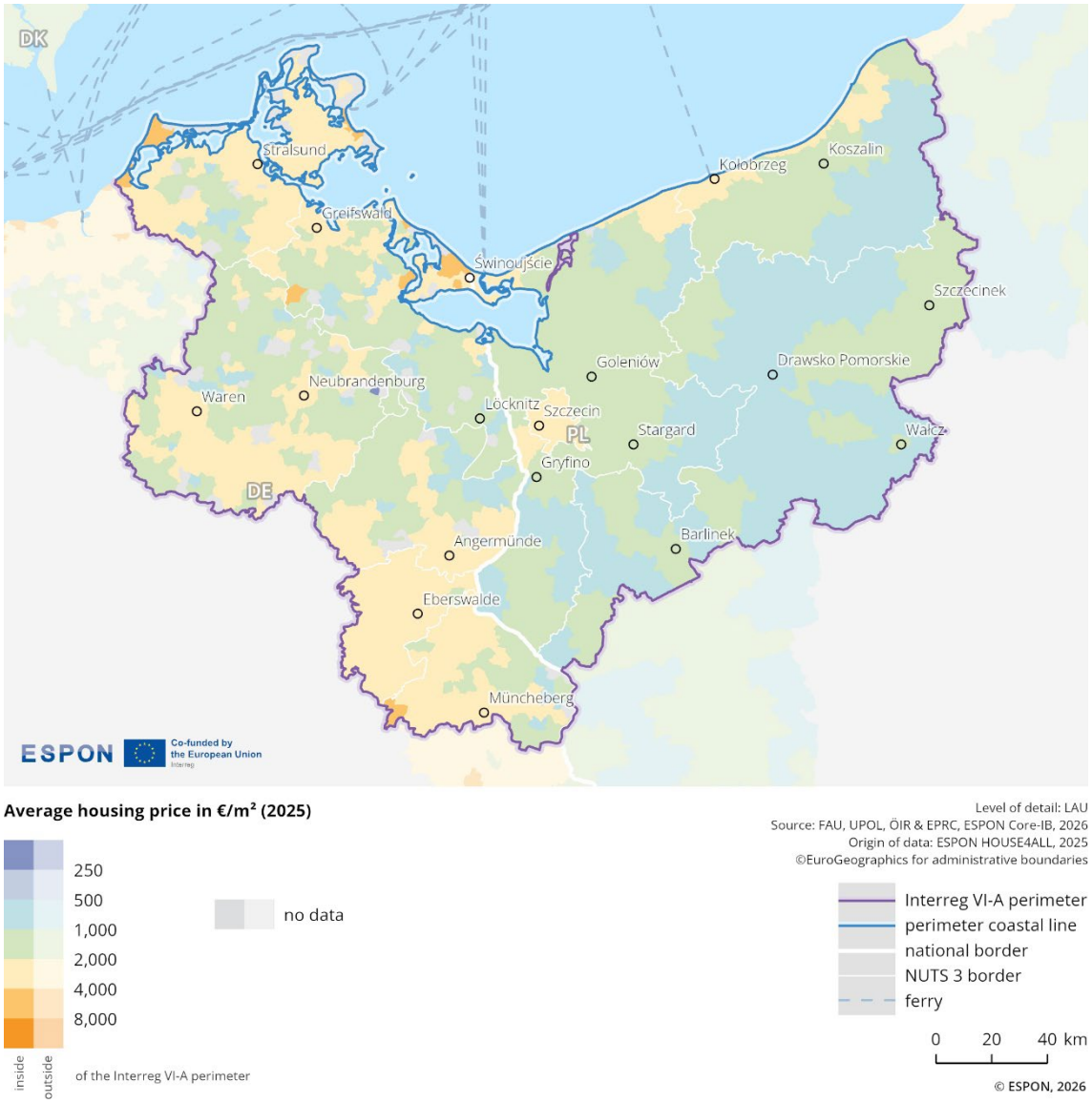
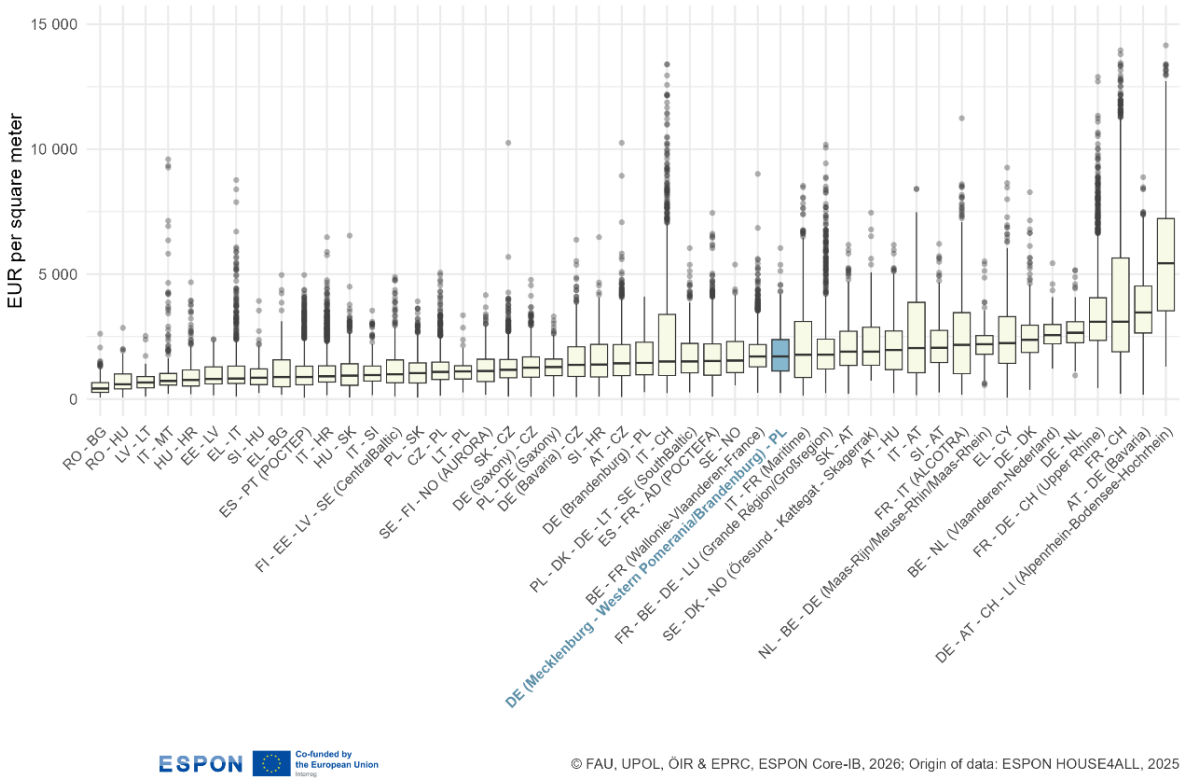


Figure 2.17 illustrates the distribution of sales prices across municipalities within the border area. The medium-sized interquartile range (IQR, represented by the box) indicates variation, highlighting existing spatial disparities in sales prices withing the border area. The boxplot also displays extreme values (shown as individual dots), with some municipalities recording prices of up to 6,000 €/m² which is similar to the European average of 5,600 €/m².

Figure 2.17: Advertised housing prices (comparison)



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2.2.4.2 Average internet speed

Indicator description

The indicator shows the population weighted average internet speed available at municipal level. It highlights differences in the "digital preparedness". In border regions, this indicator is particularly relevant for identifying digital infrastructure gaps that may hamper balanced development and cross-border integration.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing of data provided by Speedtest by Ookla Global Fixed and Mobile Network Performance Maps, based on Ookla's analysis of Speedtest Intelligence data.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: Download speed in Mbps

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

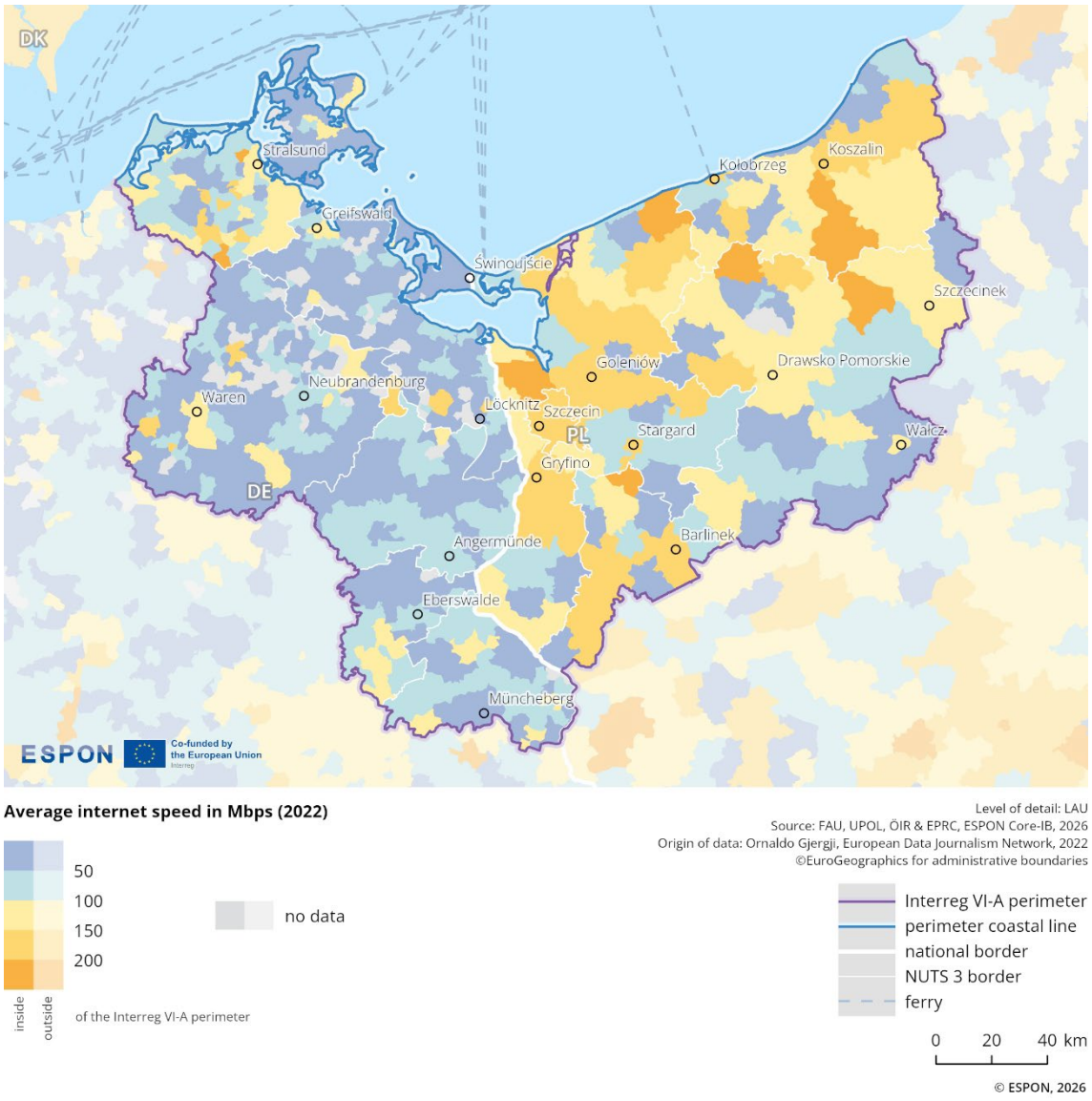
Digitalisation is a highly relevant issue in European border regions, with the overarching objective of ensuring appropriate digital access. It is widely recognised as a key precondition for successful regional and economic development. A major challenge in this process is preventing 'digital divides'— i.e., avoiding significant disparities in economic, social, and spatial terms.

Average internet speed is a telling indicator of such disparities, highlighting differences in 'digital preparedness' at the local level. Figure 2.18 shows the average download speed at the municipality level. The colour scheme ranges from dark blue (very slow speeds) to orange (very fast speeds). The

data, prepared by OBC Transeuropa for EDJNet, is based on Speedtest Intelligence data from Speedtest/Ookla's Global Fixed and Mobile Network Performance Maps for the first quarter of 2022. The average download speeds are expressed in megabits per second (Mbps)—not to be confused with megabytes per second (MBps).

The map reveals significant differences between urban and rural areas, with values ranging from under 50 Mbps to over 200 Mbps. Cities such as Stralsund, Waren, Szczecin, Koszalin, Szczecinek, and Drawsko Pomorskie report relatively high average speeds, while the surrounding areas tend to have significantly lower values. This may be due to the greater return on investment typically associated with digital infrastructure projects in urban areas compared to rural ones. However, not all urban areas in this border region have high download speeds—for example, Neubrandenburg, Müncheberg, Angermünde, and Świnoujście do not stand out in this regard. In Poland, the average internet speed is higher than in Germany. In the case of remote coastal areas, digital disparities need to be understood within the specific context of maritime geography. These territories often face structural disadvantages in connectivity compared to the mainland, resulting from their physical isolation, limited infrastructure, and higher costs of network deployment and maintenance.

Figure 2.18: Average internet download speed



2.2.5 Key messages on the economic dimension

The border region shows a combination of progress and long-standing disparities in its socio-economic profile. A key feature is the below-average economic position of both sides compared to their respective national contexts. Although GDP per capita remains below the EU average, the region has experienced significant growth since 2014, particularly in Poland, where convergence has been more dynamic. This faster growth partly reflects structural changes and catch-up processes, although the German side continues to experience slower growth than other regions within Germany.

The employment share has increased by almost 13 percentage points since 2014, narrowing the gap with the EU averages. The German side continues to record rates below the national average, while the Polish side has narrowed its gap. These labour market dynamics are closely tied to demographic change.[9] The share of the working-age population in this border area has declined considerably, much more steeply than the European average, driven by ageing and outmigration, affecting both sides of the border.

These patterns are further explained by sectoral structures. Employment and gross value added are concentrated in manufacturing, trade, health and education, highlighting the importance of traditional industries as well as welfare-related services. Income differences between the 2 countries remain substantial, with hourly wages in Germany being 3 to 4 times higher than in Poland. This wage gap helps to explain the high levels of cross-border commuting from Poland to Germany, particularly around Szczecin, and highlights the importance of new policy instruments, such as the cross-border telework agreement. At the same time, 'service tourism' to the Polish part of border area may have negative effects on the higher-wage area, here the German side of the border region, and positive effects on the lower-wage area.

Other structural factors contribute to this complex pattern. Housing markets exhibit significant cross-border disparities in prices, while digital infrastructure coverage is uneven, with urban areas generally having better connectivity than rural areas.

2.3 Green dimension

The green dimension highlights the environmental characteristics, vulnerabilities and sustainability-related interactions within the border region. The analysis provides insight into the environmental interdependence of border regions. Additionally, the spatial distribution of renewable and conventional energy infrastructure, alongside indicators of resources and the circular economy, reveals whether the border facilitates collaborative transitions towards sustainability.

2.3.1 Nature protection and pollution

This sub-dimension investigates cross-border functional links in protected areas and areas affected by air and water pollution. It analyses the presence of protected areas in order to identify cross-border ecological links and conservation efforts. It also highlights the extent to which air and water pollution affects people living in border regions.

[9] See also: European Commission 2024: Cross-Border Regional Labour Market Analysis, https://op.europa.eu/s/AazM

2.3.1.1 Protected areas

Indicator description

The indicator shows the presence and territorial coverage of protected areas based on the combination of 3 data sources, i.e., Nationally designated areas, Natura 2000 Network and Emerald Network.

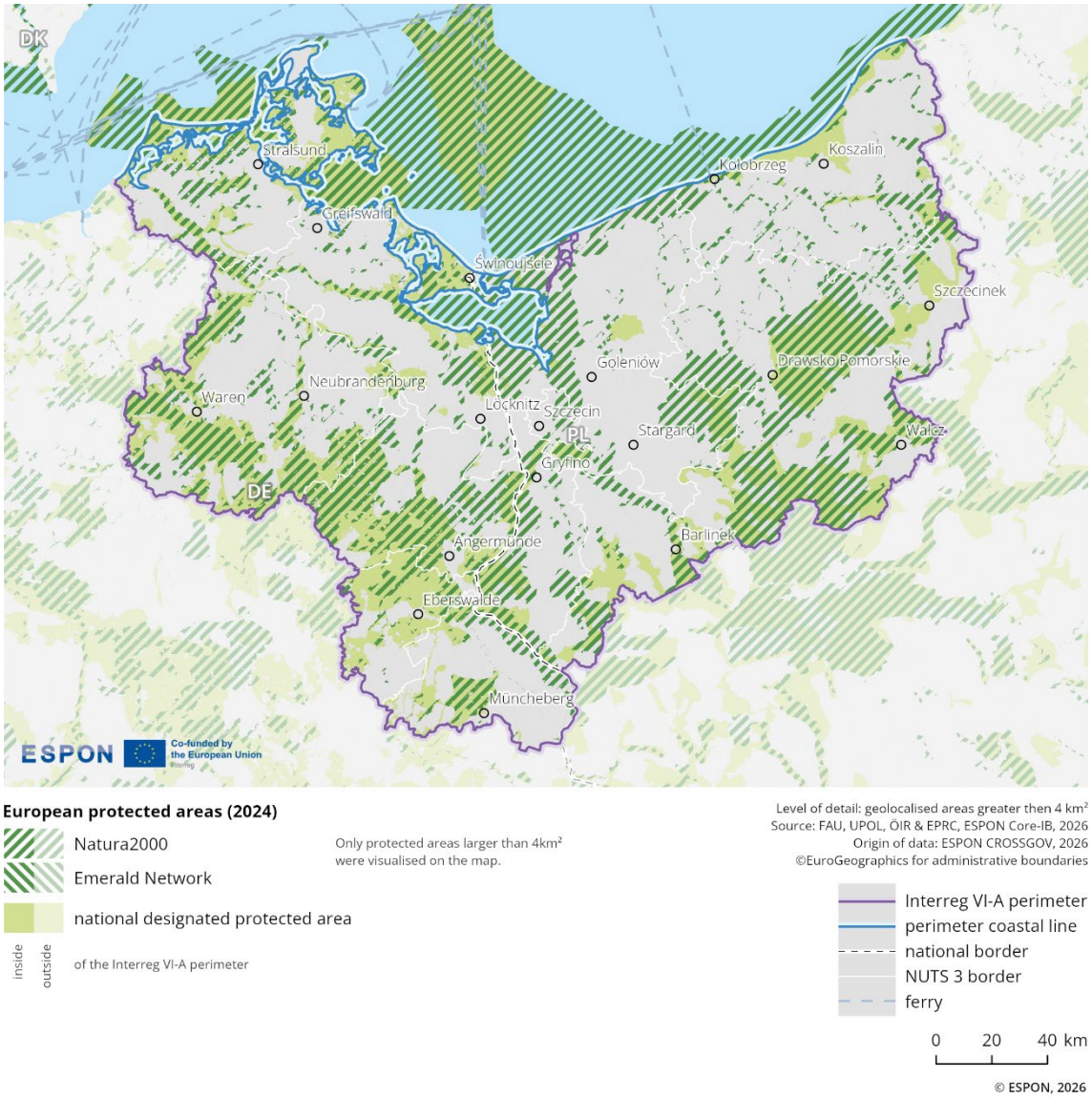
- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator represents a combination of nationally designated areas, Natura 2000 and Emerald network provided by EEA (European Environment Agency) Geospatial data catalogue.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.19 illustrates the distribution of protected areas in 2024 across the border region. The data differentiate between Natura 2000 sites, the Emerald Network, and nationally designated protected areas, with only protected areas larger than 4 km² displayed.

Protected areas within the Interreg region along the Germany–Poland coastal border are dense and cover a large share of the border region, especially along the Baltic Sea coast. The largest contiguous protected areas are found around Stralsund across to Świnoujście, up to Koszalin, with overlaps between Natura 2000 and national designations. These coastal zones form clear cross-border continuities. Further inland, protected areas are also spread widely, with clusters near Angermünde, Drawsko Pomorskie, and Waren, with some cross-border counterparts almost along the whole border region. Moderate coverage continues across the region, with visible gaps particularly in the central and southern parts of the Interreg area.

Figure 2.19: Nature protected areas



2.3.1.2 Air pollution

Indicator description

The indicator shows the air pollution from fine particulates (PM2.5) at NUTS3 level. The data shows the population-weighted average air pollution level (µg/m³), providing an indication of the extent to which the regional population is affected by air pollution.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis of European Environment Agency data
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: Population weighted average of µg/m³

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

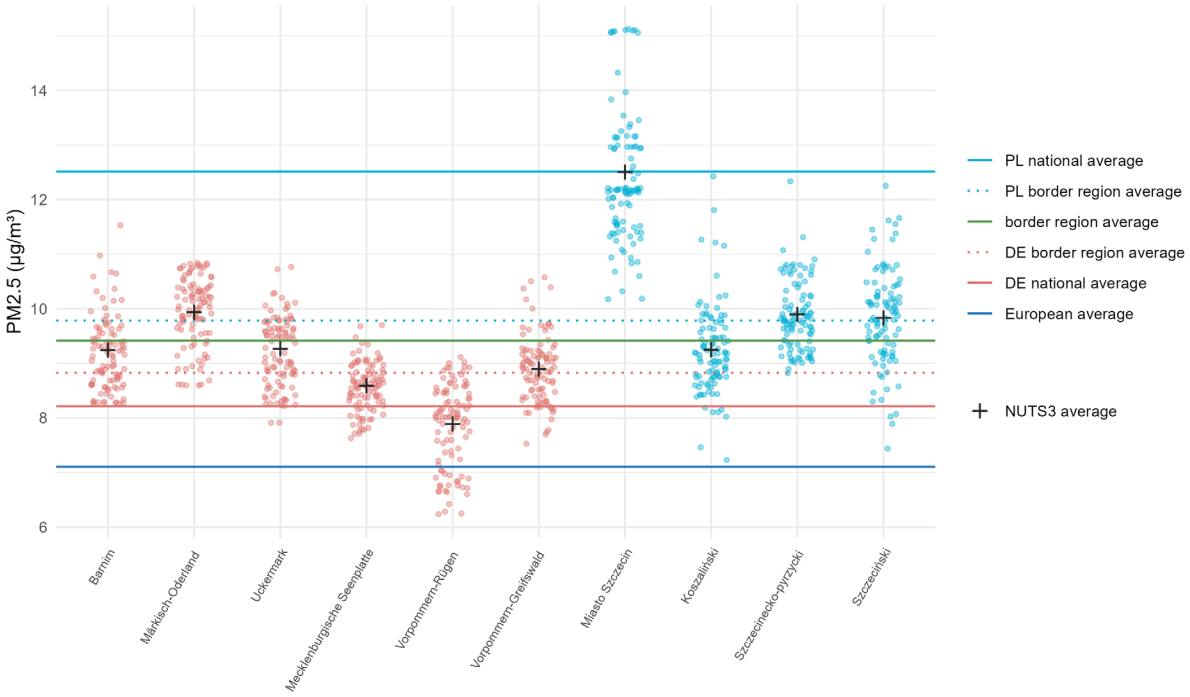
Figure 2.20 illustrates PM2.5 concentrations (in µg/m³) across NUTS3 regions in Germany (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg) and Poland. Each small dot represents an individual measurement, while the black crosses indicate the average PM2.5 concentration for each NUTS3 region[10]. The regions are aligned along the x-axis, with German regions on the left (in red) and Polish regions on the right (in blue).

Overall, PM2.5 levels in Polish regions are higher and more spread out than in German regions, where values are more concentrated and in general below 12.5 µg/m³.

The national average in Poland is higher than the average in the Polish border region. In contrast, the German border region average is higher than the German national average.

For both countries, the national and border region averages are significantly above the European average. The cross-border PM2.5 average lies between the 2 border region averages – higher than the German values, but lower than the Polish values.

Figure 2.20: Air pollution



[10] See Eurostat Statistical Atlas for NUTS3 (2021) regions: https://ec.europa.eu/statistical-atlas/viewer/?config=typologies.json&ch=NUTS&mids=BKGCNT,NUTS2021L3,CNTOVL&o=1,1,0.7&center=49.69576,14.3332,4&lcis=NUTS2021L3&

2.3.1.3 Water pollution

Indicator description

The indicator shows the ecological status or potential for coastal and river water bodies. It is based on an assessment of biological, hydro-morphological, chemical and physico-chemical quality elements.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis of European Environment Agency data
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022 (supplemented by 2016 data)
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

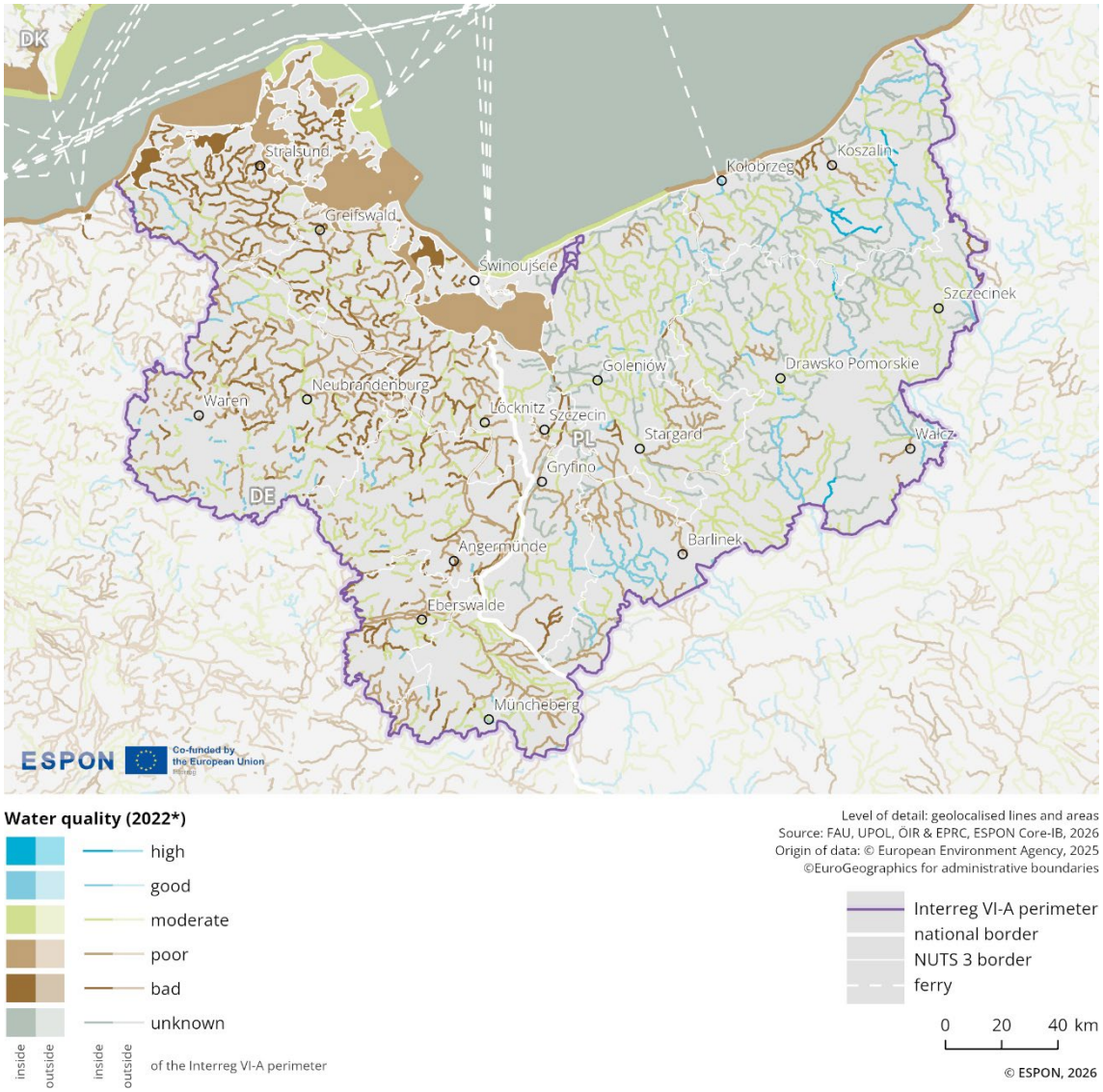
Figure 2.21 illustrates water pollution levels in the Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania–Poland Interreg region in 2022. Water quality is represented using 6 colour-coded categories, ranging from "bad" to "high", including an "unknown" category[11].

In the German part of the Interreg region, many water bodies are classified as “poor” and “bad”, particularly near Stralsund and around the Baltic coast. Only a small number of stretches are classified as “moderate” or "good".

In contrast the Polish part of the Interreg region has a higher number of waterbodies rated as “moderate” and “good” but also rivers that are classified as "unknown", which limits the reliability of the data due to missing information.

[11] For more information see the Water Framework Directive Reporting Guidance (2022): https://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/help/WFD/WFD_715_2022

Figure 2.21: Water quality patterns



2.3.2 Climate risks and resilience

This sub-dimension examines cross-border functional links relating to climate risks and resilience. It analyses exposure to natural hazards such as landslides, earthquakes, droughts and floods in order to identify vulnerabilities and risks.[12]

2.3.2.1 Natural hazard risks

Indicator description

The indicator shows the risk the border region is facing in relation to natural hazards (floods, droughts, landslides and earthquakes). The map highlights potential cross-border affectedness and allows to judge the relative relevance of each risk for the cross-border region.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is based on geodata from the Disaster Management Risk Knowledge Centre/JRC. It provides the likelihood of specific natural hazard events at grid level.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024
- **Unit**: n/a

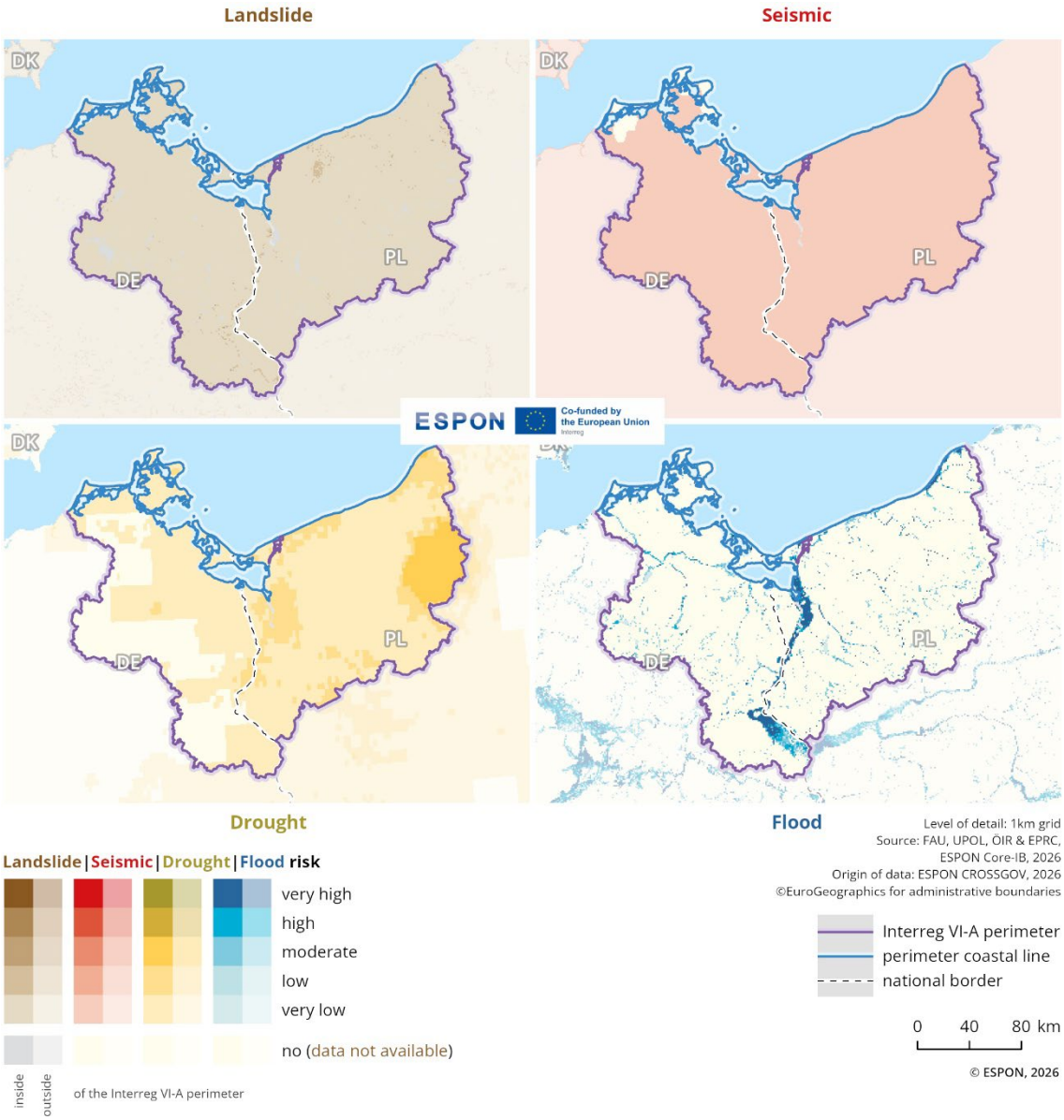
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.22 illustrates the spatial distribution of natural hazards in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland region, highlighting areas where risks are shared across national boundaries and where risks are not necessarily cross-border relevant.

The Oder River functions as the natural border between Germany and Poland and is at the same time the main risk for flooding. The risk is especially prevalent in the southern parts of the border region as well as before the Oder flows into the Szczecin Lagoon. In the very east of the region, not close to the border, there is a moderate risk of droughts. Landslides and seismic activities are very uncommon in all parts of the region.

[12] See also: European Commission 2024: Strengthening the Resilience of EU Border Regions, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/studies/KN-02-24-586-2A-N.pdf

Figure 2.22: Natural hazard risks



2.3.3 (Renewable) Energy and energy infrastructure

This sub-dimension assesses cross-border functional links in energy supply and infrastructure, focusing on existing connections and missing links. The distribution of power lines, energy infrastructure and power stations is analysed to identify supply patterns and potential integration gaps. The analysis reveals whether the border facilitates energy cooperation and connectivity, or if infrastructural differences create barriers.[13]

2.3.3.1 Power lines and energy infrastructure

Indicator description

The indicator shows the distribution of power lines and energy infrastructures in the cross-border region. The geodata highlights the existing links and gaps in the cross-border interconnections of the energy transmission network.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Geodata on high-voltage energy infrastructure (100 kV and above) has been collected and processed from OpenStreetMap.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025
- **Unit**: kV

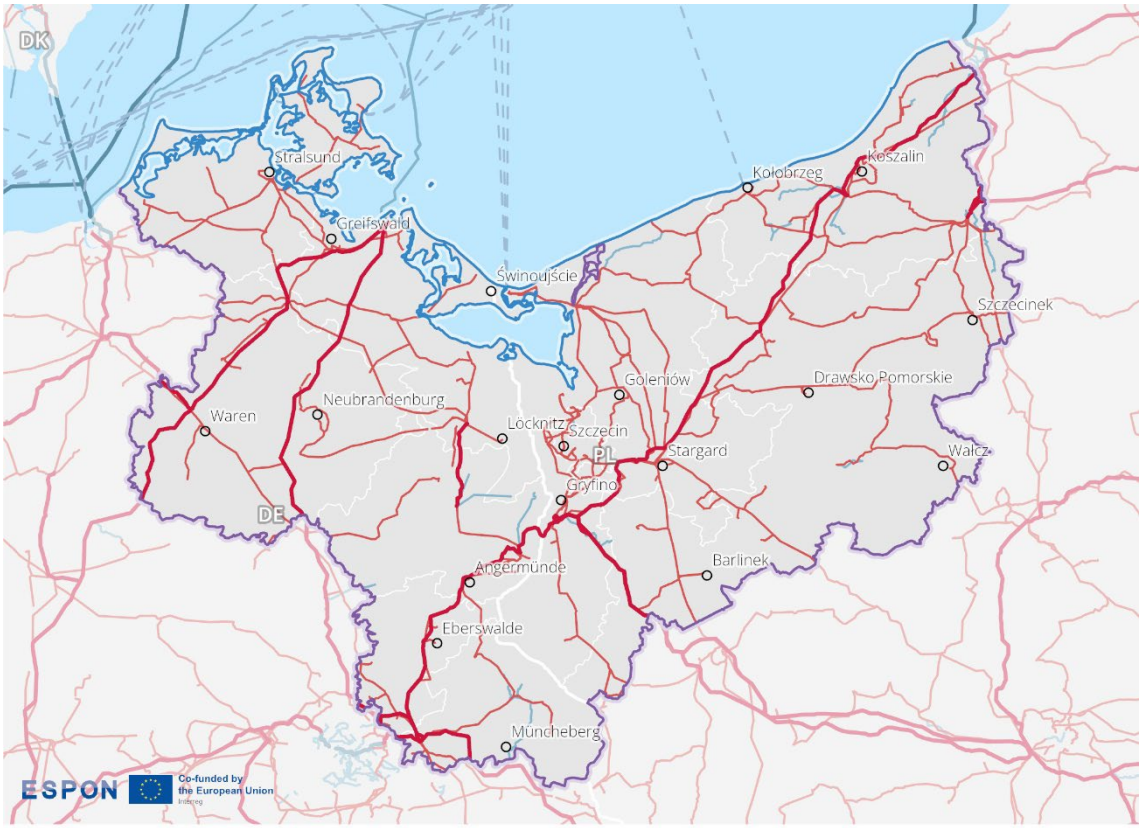
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.23 illustrates the distribution of power lines and cables in 2025 across the border region. The data distinguish between overhead and underground power lies, further classified into high-voltage (100-230 kV), extra high-voltage (230-1,000 kV), and ultra-high voltage (above 1,000 kV).

The cross-border region Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland features relatively dense high- and extra high-voltage energy infrastructure. A direct extra high-voltage power line connection between the 2 countries is located roughly halfway along the common state border (south of Szczecin). It is precisely across this border that a very long line of extra high-voltage power lines runs diagonally northeastward through the entire cross-border region. In the northwestern part of the cross-border region, on the German side, 2 extra high-voltage lines run to a location on the Baltic Sea coast, from where the connection continues northward via an undersea cable. High-voltage lines on both sides of the border considerably complement the higher level of electrical infrastructure in the rest of the cross-border region.

[13] See also: European Commission 2025: Handbook on Cross-border Energy Communities, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/studies/2025/Handbook_on_Cross-border_Energy_Communities.pdf

Figure 2.23: High-voltage transmission infrastructure



Overhead power lines (2025)

- High Voltage (100–230 kV)
- Extra High Voltage (230–1.000 kV)
- Ultra High Voltage (1.000 kV+)

Underground power cables (2025)

- High Voltage (100–230 kV)
- Extra High Voltage (230–1.000 kV)
- Ultra High Voltage (1.000 kV+)

inside / outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

ANSI Standard C84.1 was used for classification of power lines.

Level of detail: geolocated lines
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2026
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

- Interreg VI-A perimeter
- perimeter coastal line
- national border
- NUTS 3 border
- ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

2.3.3.2 Power stations

Indicator description

The indicator shows the location of power stations by type and energy production levels (coal, gas and oil, nuclear, hydro). It can indicate differences and complementarities in the national energy supply systems as well as highlight potential supply-demand links when viewed in conjunction with power lines infrastructure.

- **Source**: OpenStreetMap, Global Energy Monitor, JRC Hydro-power plants database
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025
- **Unit**: MW

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

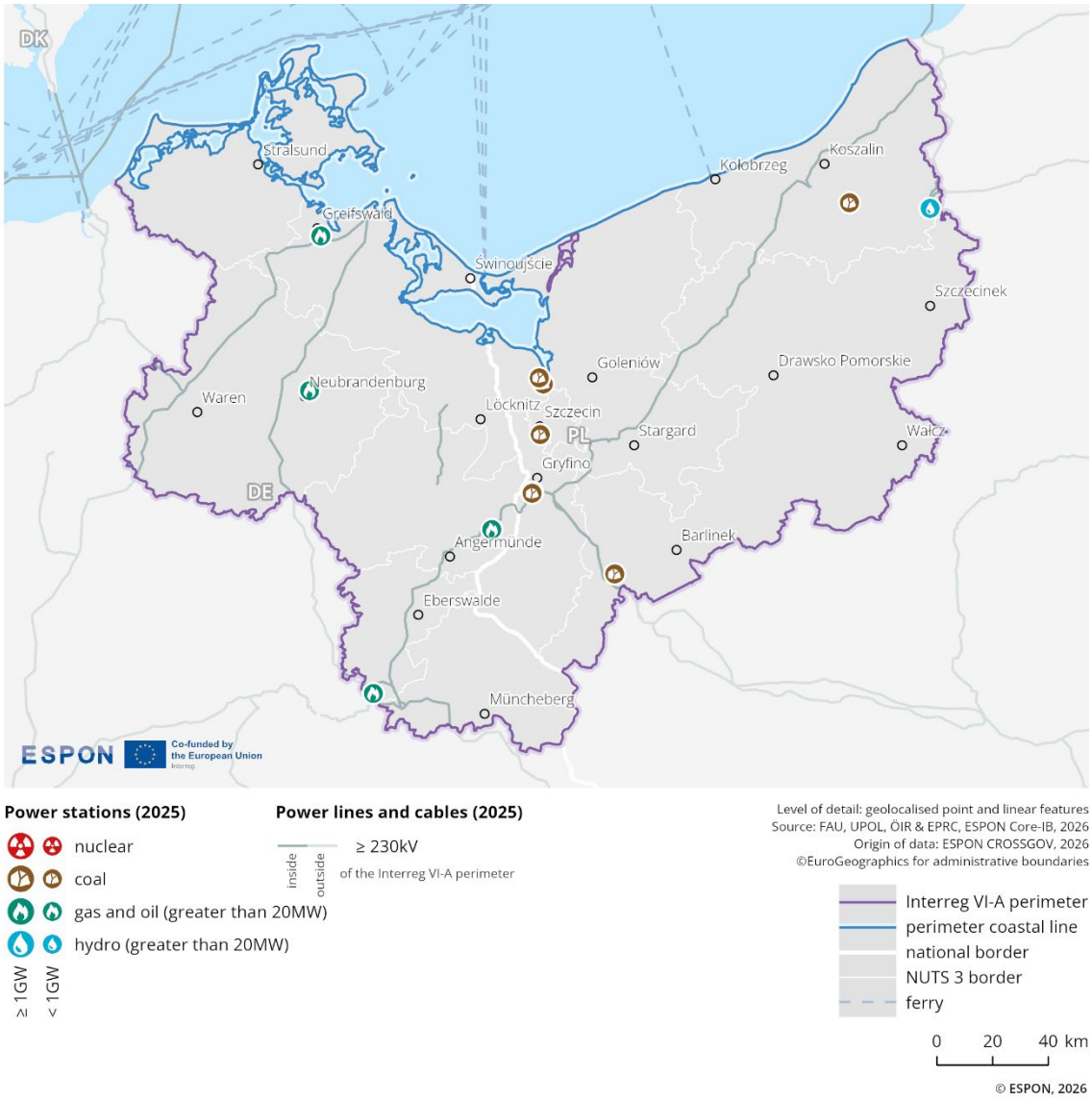
In the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland cross-border region, in total, there are 12 power station locations (see Table 1), while the most common is represented by coal power stations, which are exclusively located in Poland (see Figure 2.24).

Table 1: Number and type of power stations

Power stations/plants	Less than 1GW	1GW and up
Nuclear	/	/
Coal	6	/
Gas and oil	5	/
Hydro	1	/

On the other hand, in the case of gas and oil power stations, locations in Germany dominate, with only one power station located on the Polish side of the region south of Szczecin. There is only one hydroelectric power station in the entire region, located on its eastern edge in Poland, far from the common state border. No nuclear power plant is present in the whole region.

Figure 2.24: Power stations infrastructure



2.3.4 Resources and circular economy

This sub-dimension focuses on resource use patterns in the border region and their implications for circular economy practices. It analyses resource productivity and waste generation in order to evaluate the efficiency and sustainability of resource utilisation across the border.

2.3.4.1 Resource productivity

Indicator description

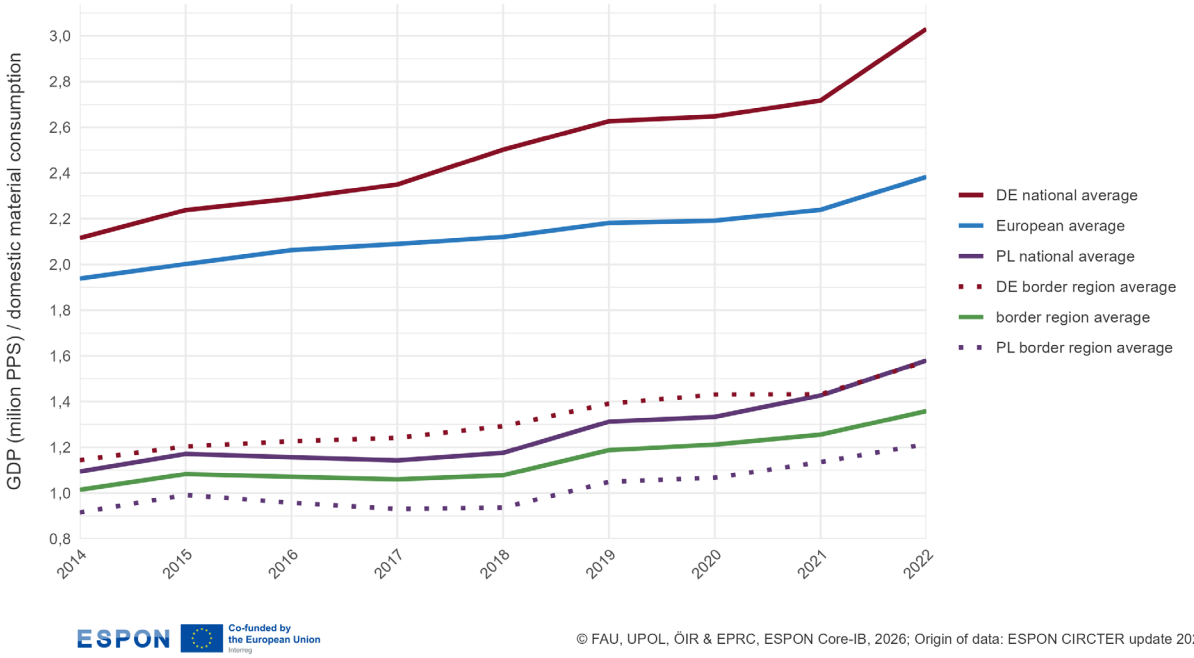
The indicator shows the economic value generated per unit of material consumed for each region within the cross-border area. Developments over time provide insights if the decoupling of productivity from resource use is progressing on regional level.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing of Eurostat and ESPON CIRCTER (Circular Economy and Territorial Consequences) Update data
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2022
- **Unit**: PPS/tons

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.25 illustrates the development of GDP per unit of domestic material consumption in million PPS/DMC (purchasing power standards per domestic material consumption) between 2014 and 2022. The data compare the national averages, the averages of their respective border regions, and the overall border regional average with the European average.

Figure 2.25: Resource productivity



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

The German national average of resource productivity is represented by the highest line in the graph, showing an increase over the period from approximately 2.1 in 2014 to over 3.0 million PPS/DMC in 2022. The German border region average follows a similar trend but remains significantly lower, reaching around 1.6 million PPS/DMC in 2022. The Polish national average also shows an upward trend

over the observed period, but remains significantly below both the German national average and the European average, while still being slightly higher than the border region average. The Polish border region average follows a similar pattern, but at lower levels.

The European average lies notably below the German national average, but is higher than the German border region average and the Polish values. The border region average represents the combined average of the higher German border region values and the lower Polish border region values, reaching approximately 1.4 million PPS/DMC in 2022. However, notable disparities exist within the border region itself.

2.3.4.2 Generation of waste per GDP

Indicator description

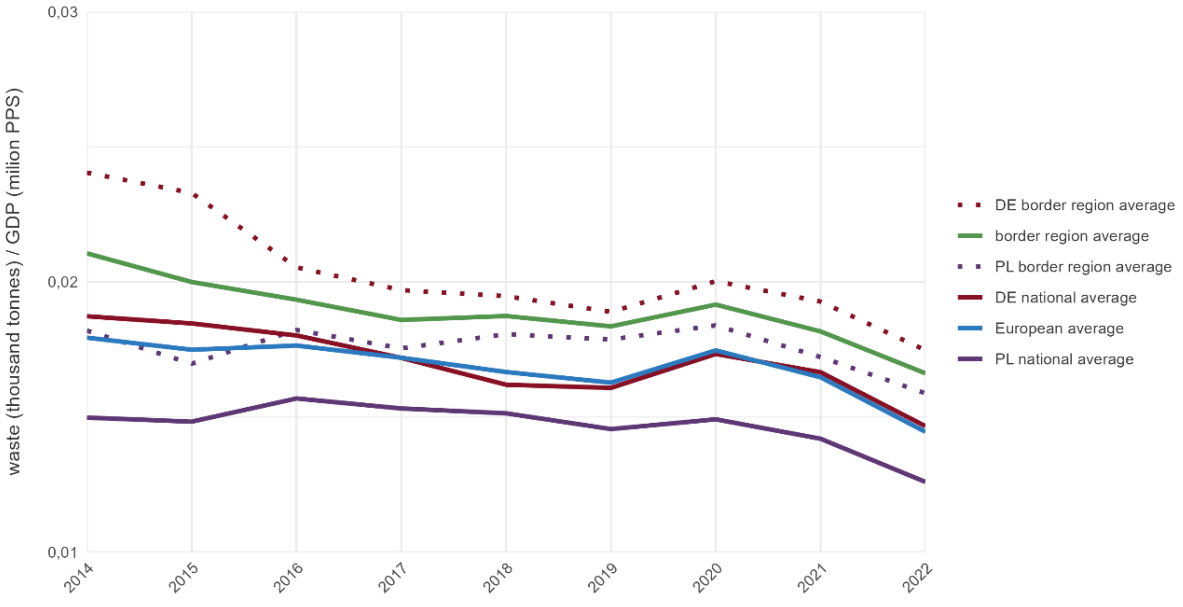
The indicator shows the regional distribution of waste creation in relation to the GDP development. Comparing waste generated to GDP reflects the waste intensity of the economy and provides a measure of "eco-efficiency". Observation of its change from year to year permits to assess whether the economy is able to produce more wealth while at same time generating less waste.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing of Eurostat and ESPON CIRCTER Update data
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2022
- **Unit**: Tons/PPS

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.26 illustrates the trend in waste generation relative to economic output, measured in tonnes of waste per million PPS (purchasing power standards) of GDP from 2014 to 2022 in Germany (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg), Poland and their Interreg border region.

Figure 2.26: Waste generation per GDP



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

The German national and border region averages show a gradual downward trend over the entire period. The average for the German border region is consistently higher than the German national average. The Polish national average represents the lowest line on the graph throughout the period and also shows a slight downward trend. The average for the Polish border region is significantly higher than the Polish national average but remains lower than the German border region average.

The European average gradually decreases from around 0.018 in 2014 to approximately 0.015 tonnes of waste per million PPS in 2022. The cross-border regional average remains consistently above the European average and lies between the higher values of the German border region and the lower values of the Polish border region.

Throughout the entire period, it is also higher than both national averages. In 2022, it reaches a value of approximately 0.017 tonnes of waste per million PPS.

2.3.5 Key messages on the green dimension

The border region is characterised by natural assets, visible environmental pressures and differing patterns of resource use on either side of the border. A notable feature is the extensive network of protected areas, particularly along the Baltic Sea coast, where Natura 2000 sites and national designations overlap. These create clear ecological continuity across the border, whereas inland protection is more scattered, with visible gaps in the central and southern parts of the border area. This highlights both the region's common natural heritage and the necessity for a joint management of ecosystems.

Air pollution levels (PM2.5 in µg/m³) are generally higher in Poland than in Germany, though both exceed the European average. Interestingly, the German border region shows higher air pollution than the German national average, while the opposite is true for Poland. This suggests structural differences in industrial activity and energy use. Natural hazard risks, especially flooding along the Oder River, highlight the need for joint, cross-border responses, given that water systems do not respect national borders.

Energy infrastructure adds another level of interconnectedness. High- and extra-high-voltage power lines cross-borders, creating technical linkages, while generation capacity is divided. Poland relies more on coal, whereas Germany has gas and oil stations. This mix helps to explain some of the pollution patterns and also influences the region’s potential for an energy transition.

Resource productivity and waste generation also reflect these structural contrasts. German regions are quite resource-efficient, although the German border area lags significantly behind the national average. Polish regions remain at lower productivity levels, though there has been gradual improvement. Waste generation per unit of GDP has decreased on both sides of the border, yet the overall level remains above the European average.

2.4 Socio-economic dimension

The socio-economic dimension examines patterns of social integration, tourism, and access to public services in the border region. It identifies how socio-cultural links, visitor flows and essential services influence development in the cross-border area. By examining interpersonal interactions via social media, language similarities, tourism intensity, and the accessibility of facilities such as secondary schools, grocery shops, hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and cinemas this dimension highlights both functional integration and potential socio-spatial differences.

2.4.1 Social integration

This sub-dimension evaluates the level of social integration in the border region by identifying areas with low or high cross-border interactions. It analyses social interactions and language similarities across and along national borders to evaluate the potential for cultural and social integration.

2.4.1.1 Cross-border connectivity in social media

Indicator description

The indicator refers to the existing connections between users of META social media (in particular Facebook) across the border. It aims at giving an overview of the degree of personal connectivity between inhabitants of the border area. Even though not all these internet connections will relate to real communication exchanges but sometimes just "following" content from other users, they give an overview of interpersonal and cultural knowledge of the social media landscape from across the border.

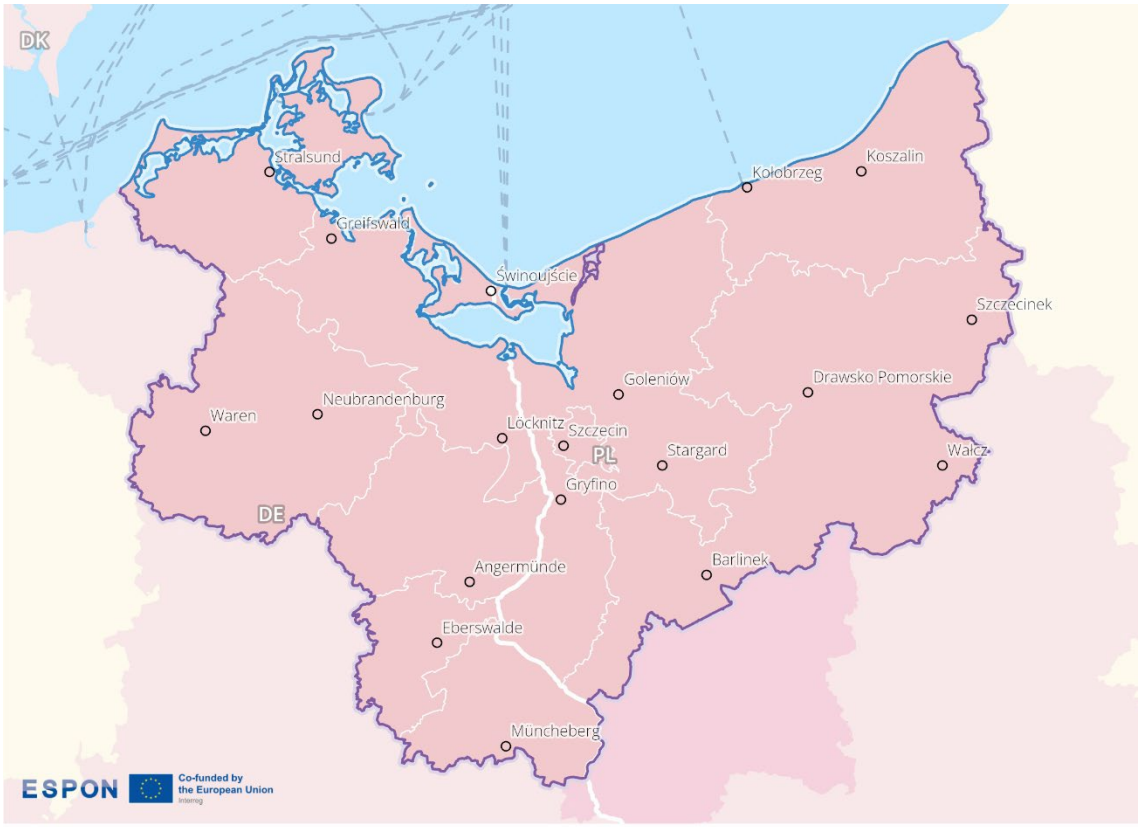
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing Facebook data on existing connections across the border (data for Good Meta)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2021
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.27 illustrates the spatial distribution of cross-border connectivity based on Facebook information in the border area. The different shades of pink indicate varying intensities of connectivity, ranging form low to high, with darker tones representing stronger intensity of cross-border connectivity in social media

The intensity of cross-border connectivity among residents of this border region is constant; therefore, due to similar connectivity levels on both sides of the border, no differences between the countries are evident. In this region, cross-border connectivity in social media is low across all NUTS3 units (including cities such as Waren, Stralsund, Neubrandenburg, Świnoujście, Szczecin, Drawsko Pomorskie, and Koszalin).

Figure 2.27: Cross-border connectivity in social media



Intensity of cross-border connectivity based on META data (2021)

- high
- moderate
- low
- none
- no data

inside / outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Level of detail: NUTS3
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2026
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

- Interreg VI-A perimeter
- perimeter coastal line
- national border
- NUTS 3 border
- ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

2.4.1.2 Language similarities along national borders

Indicator description

The indicator specifies whether the language is the same across the border, whether the respective national languages have commonalities, whether while different, there are local linguistic commonalities, and whether the language is different.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: ESPON cross-border public services (CPS) 2.0 database along border segments
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

2 different languages characterise the border region, with no similarities and no widespread knowledge of the neighbouring regions language recorded.

2.4.2 Tourism

This sub-dimension identifies key tourism hotspots in the border region to highlight tourism dynamics. It analyses the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in order to evaluate the attractiveness of, and developments in, the tourism sector. Comparisons with the respective countries and the EU average provide context for understanding the region's dynamics.

2.4.2.1 Nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments

Indicator description

The indicator shows the number of nights a guest or tourist actually spends in a tourist accommodation establishment or non-rented accommodation (overnight stays). This may reveal the tourism attractiveness of a region and shed light on the role of tourism in the local economy, i.e., tourists/guests staying overnight may spend more in the region than one-day visitors.

- **Source**: Eurostat
- **Temporal coverage**: 2020-2023
- **Unit**: Nights per capita

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

The spatial distribution of overnight stays highlights the importance of key tourist destinations in border areas. Tourism contributes significantly to regional income, infrastructure development and employment, and thereby supports regional prosperity. At the same time, it affects environmental and living conditions, which may reduce local acceptance despite its economic benefits. This is in particular the case in places of overtourism, seasonal pressures, and increasing land-use conflicts.

Figure 2.28 shows the number of overnight stays per capita at tourist accommodation establishments in 2023. It includes hotels, holiday and other short-stay accommodation, as well as campsites, caravan and trailer parks. The map uses a colour gradient, with darker shades indicating a higher number of nights spent per capita in 2023. It also shows the cumulative number of overnight stays from 2020 to 2023.

A particularly high intensity of overnight stays is evident on both sides of the border. Several coastal NUTS3 regions exceed 20 nights per capita in 2023, including Vorpommern-Rügen, Vorpommern-Greifswald, Koszaliński, Szczeciński and Mecklenburgische Seenplatte[14]. In the more inland regions, the per capita figures are somewhat lower.

In terms of total overnight stays over the 3-year period, the leading tourism regions are located in Vorpommern-Rügen (approx. 9.6 million), Koszaliński (approx. 8.9 million), Vorpommern-Greifswald (approx. 5.9 million), Szczeciński (approx. 5.2 million) and Mecklenburgische Seenplatte (approx. 3.5 million).

Figure 2.28: Overnight stays in tourism

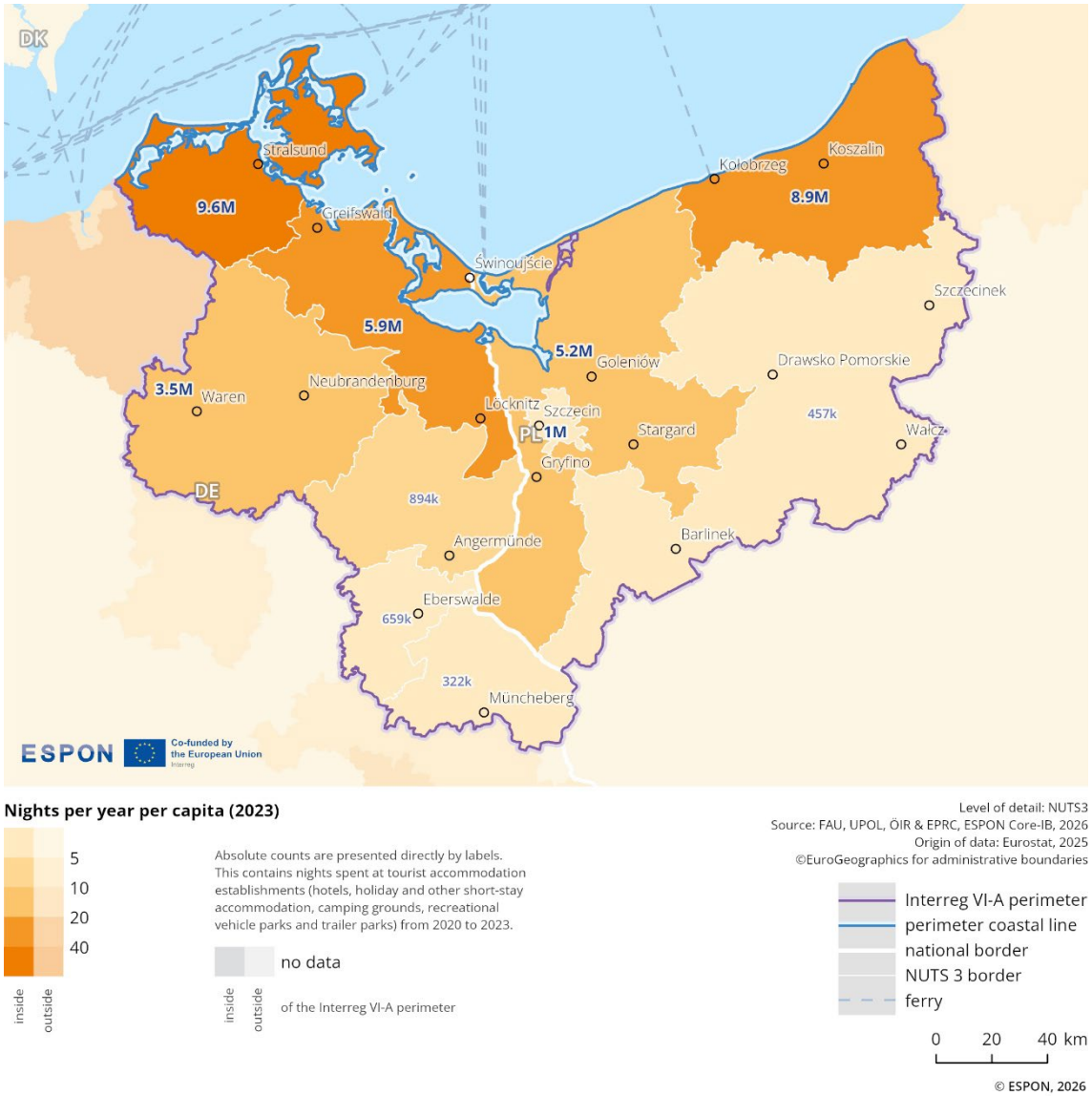


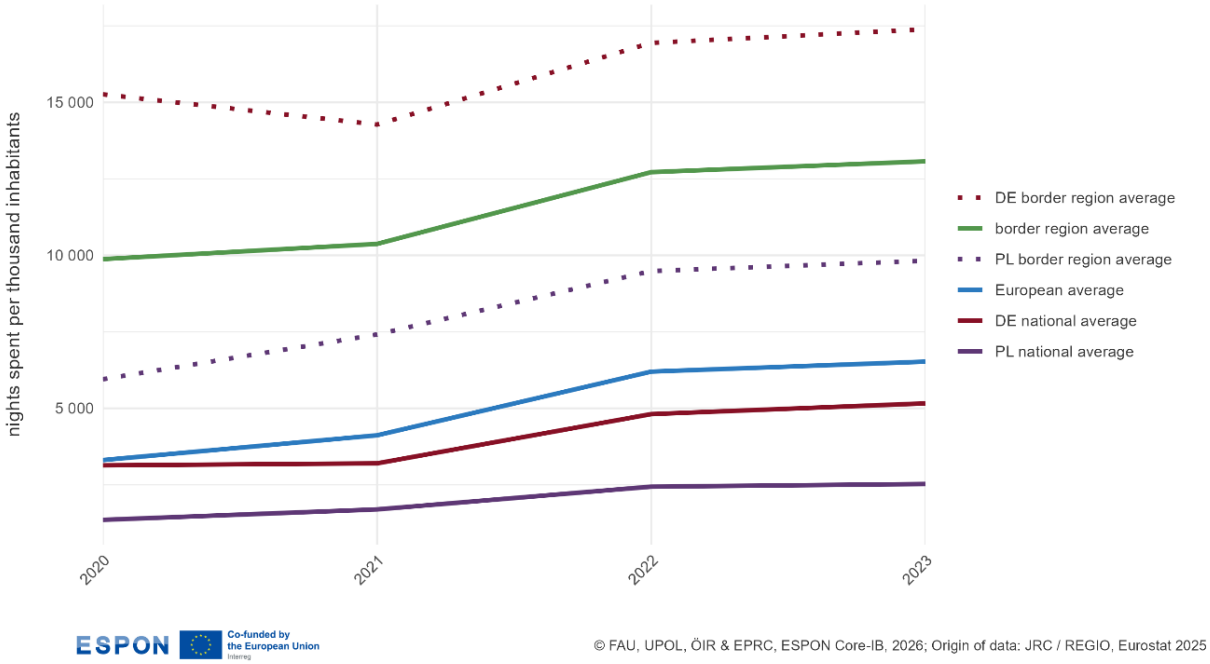
Figure 2.29 illustrates the development of nights spent at tourist establishments per thousand inhabitants from 2020 to 2023. Over the entire period, the average for the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland programme area is significantly higher than the overall European average, which includes EU member states and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway. In all 4 years, the border regional averages of both countries are higher than

[14] See Eurostat Statistical Atlas for NUTS3 (2021) regions: https://ec.europa.eu/statistical-atlas/viewer/?config=typologies.json&ch=NUTS&mids=BKGCNT,NUTS2021L3,CNTOVL&o=1,1,0.7&center=49.69576,14.3332,4&lcis=NUTS2021L3&

their respective national averages. Additionally, the regional average for the German border area is higher than that for the Polish throughout the given period.

Touristic patterns have a series of implications for spatial development on either side of the border. Transport infrastructure has to consider peak volumes and balancing recreating activities with socio-cultural as well as environmental heritage can be a challenge.

Figure 2.29: Overnights stays in tourism (comparison)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union

2.4.3 Services of general interest

This sub-dimension looks at how accessible services of general interest (SGIs) are in the border region, identifying areas that are well-served and those that are more difficult to access. It analyses access to essential services such as secondary schools, grocery shops, hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and cinemas.

2.4.3.1 Accessibility to services of general interest

Indicator description

The indicator shows, for the below listed facilities and services, the average driving time to the nearest facility of a series of services of general interest.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis of standardised travel-time accessibility to secondary schools, grocery shops, hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and cinemas available in the ESPON PROFECY Update (2022)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2021
- **Unit**: Minutes (in 2.5 x 2.5 km grid)

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figures 2.30 to 2.35 visualise average car travel times to services of general interest within the programme area. The maps display accessibility to:

- Secondary schools (Figure 2.30)
- Grocery shops (Figure 2.31)
- Hospitals (Figure 2.32)
- Doctors (Figure 2.33)
- Pharmacies (Figure 2.34)
- Cinemas (Figure 2.35)

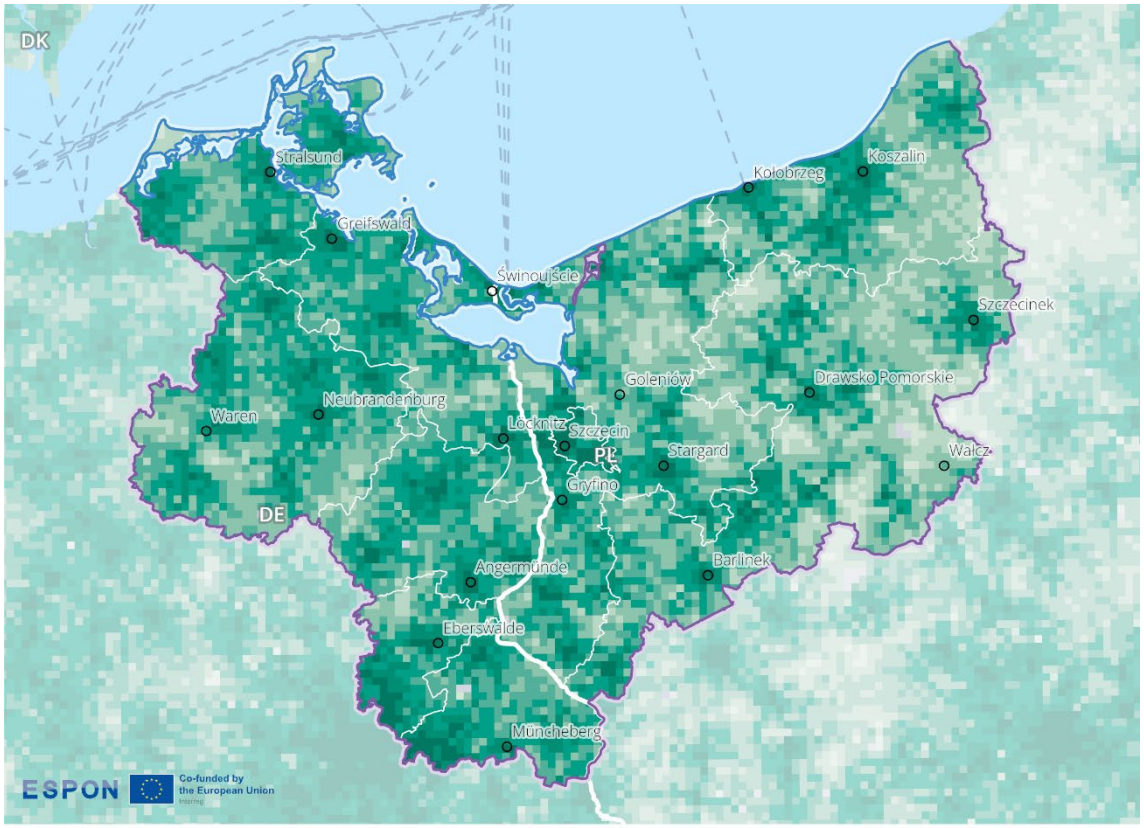
These indicators show how long, on average, it takes to reach the nearest facility by car. The data comes from the ESPON PROFECY Update project (2022) and is visualised based on a 2.5-kilometer grid.

In the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland border area, essential services such as schools and grocery shops are mostly evenly distributed across both countries. However, hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies are less evenly distributed, resulting in longer travel times in Poland. In some areas, travel times to these 3 services exceed one hour.

Near the national border, travel times to hospitals and doctors tend to be somewhat longer in the southern Polish regions compared to the German side.

As a medical service, hospitals are mainly located in cities and more densely populated areas. This creates an urban–rural gradient, with shorter travel times in and near urban centres and longer travel times in rural or remote regions. The same applies to cinemas as a cultural service.

Figure 2.30: Travel time to secondary schools



Car travel time to the nearest secondary school (2021)

5min
10min
15min
20min
30min
45min
1h
2h
3h
4h
6h
12h

inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

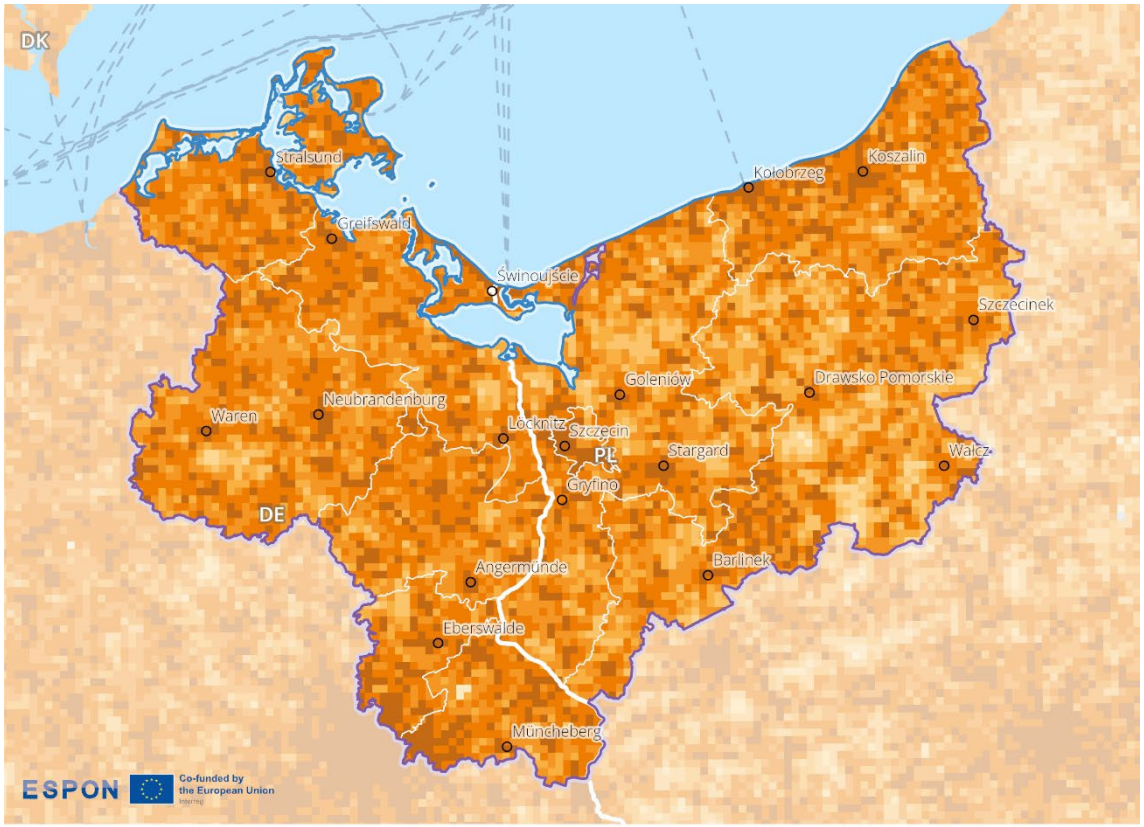
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.31: Travel time to grocery shops



Car travel time to the nearest shop (2021)

5min
10min
15min
20min
30min
45min
1h
2h
3h
4h
6h
12h

inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

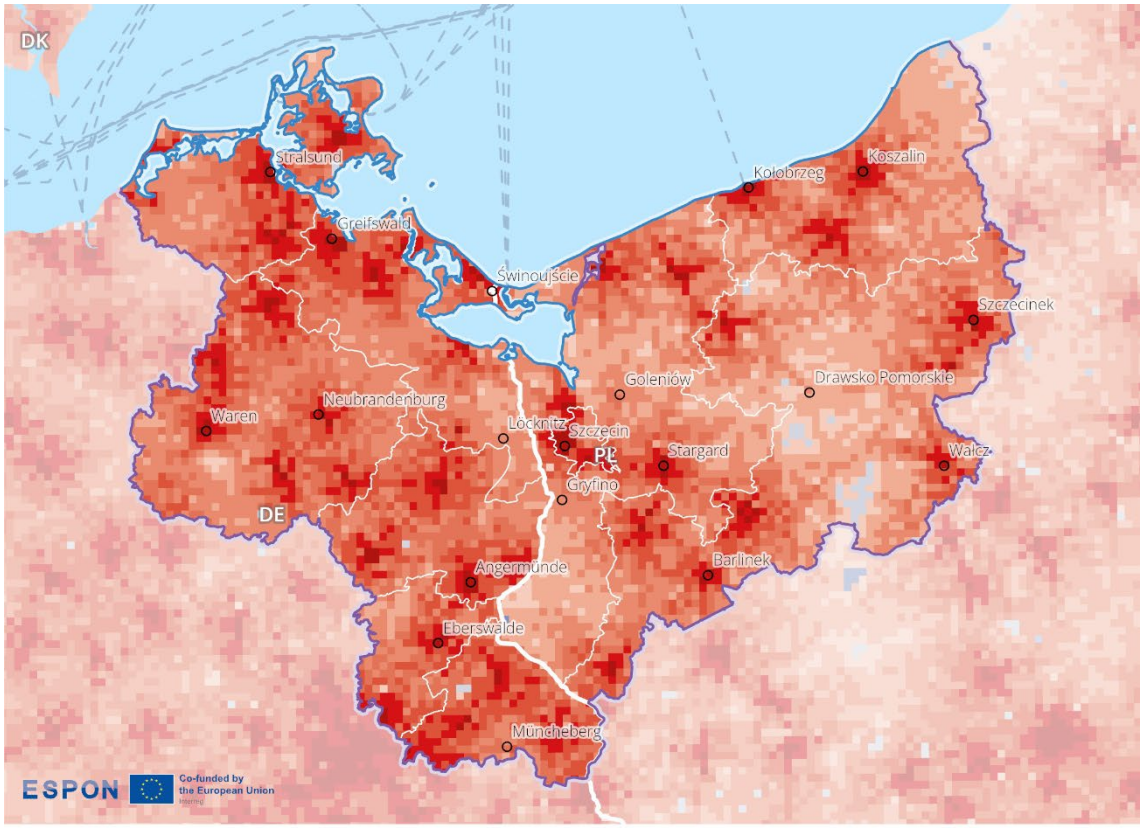
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.32: Travel time to hospitals



Car travel time to the nearest hospital (2021)

5min
10min
15min
20min
30min
45min
1h
2h
3h
4h
6h
12h

inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

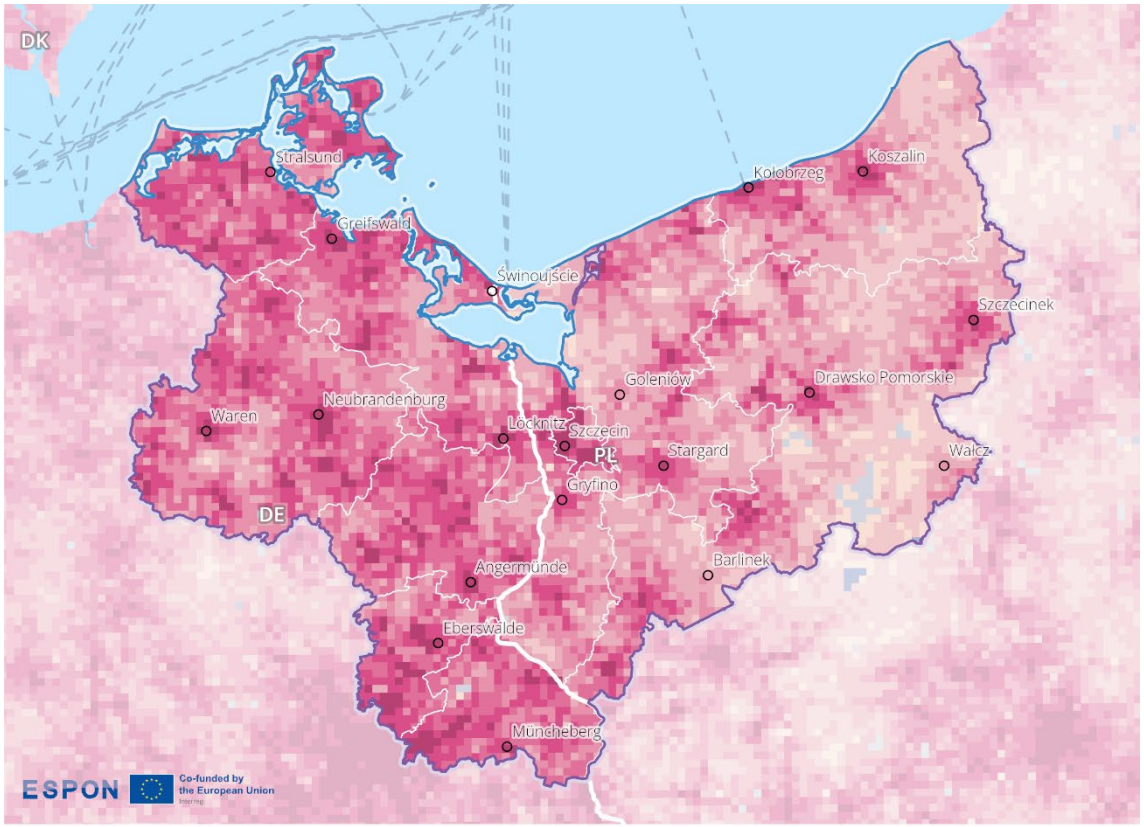
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.33: Travel time to doctors



Car travel time to the nearest doctor (2021)

5min
10min
15min
20min
30min
45min
1h
2h
3h
4h
6h
12h

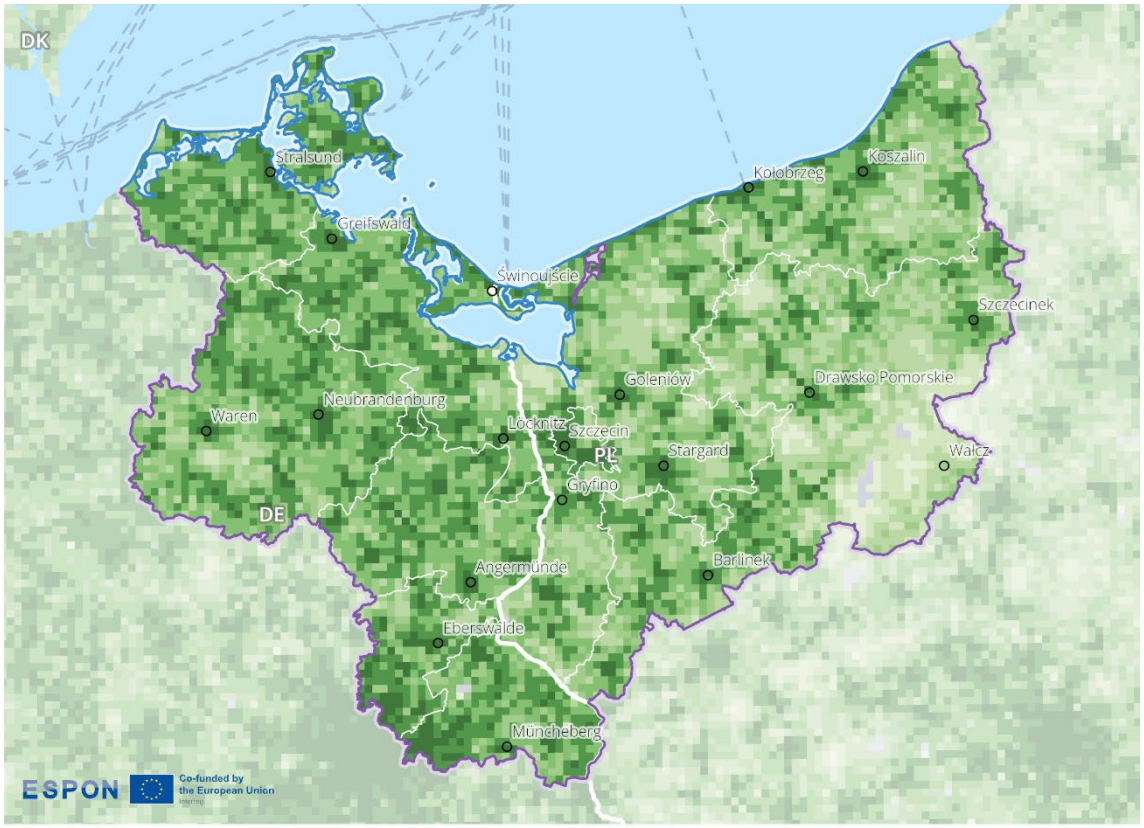
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

Figure 2.34: Travel time to pharmacies



Car travel time to the nearest pharmacy (2021)

5min
10min
15min
20min
30min
45min
1h
2h
3h
4h
6h
12h

inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

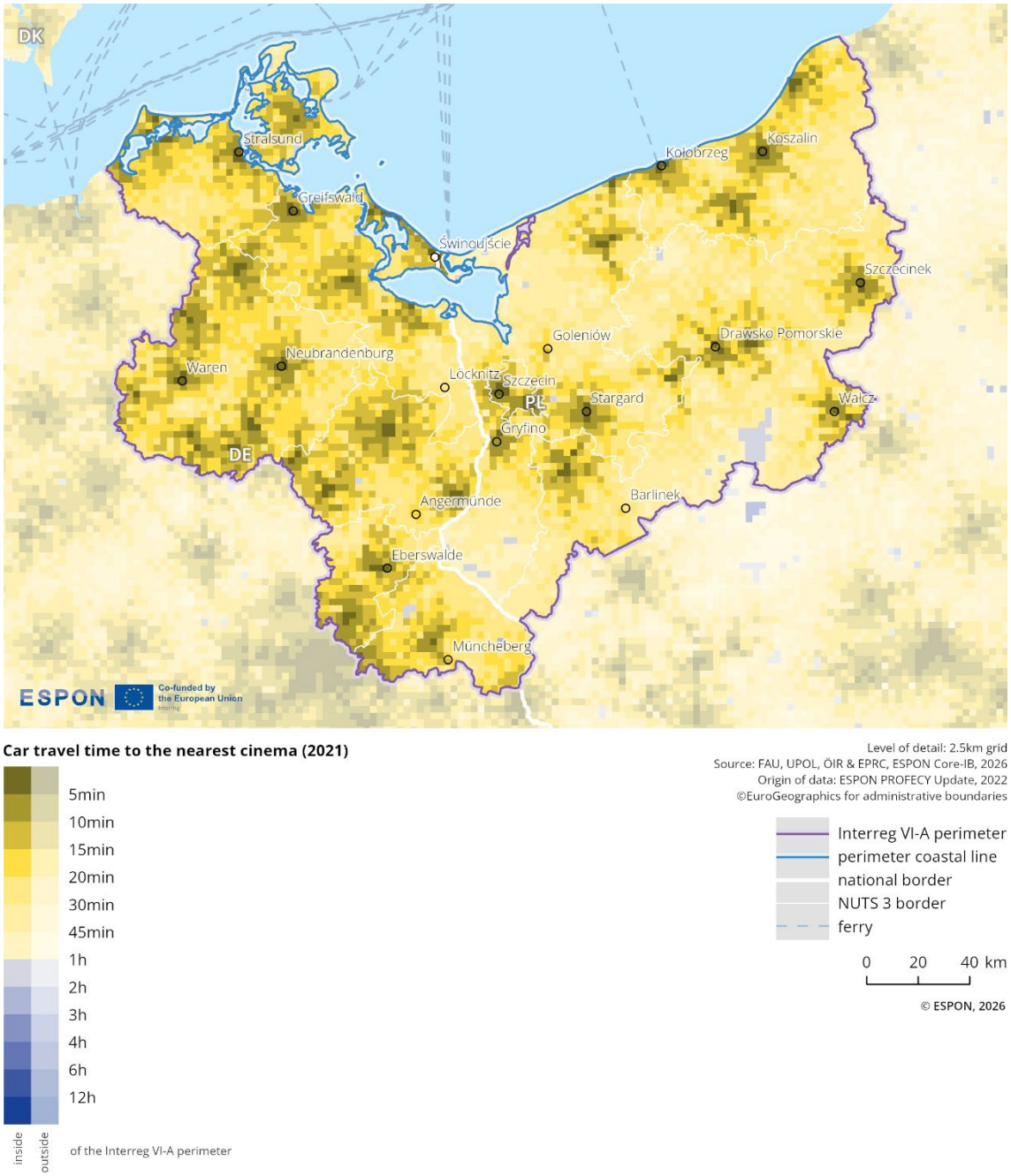
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Interreg VI-A perimeter
perimeter coastal line
national border
NUTS 3 border
ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.35: Travel time to cinemas



2.4.4 Key messages on the socio-economic dimension

The border region is characterised by socio-economic contrasts: high levels of tourist activity; relatively low everyday cross-border social ties; and heterogeneous access to services. A notable feature of the area is its popularity as a tourist destination. Coastal and lake districts on both sides attract large numbers of visitors, generating income, jobs and infrastructure improvements. Regional averages of overnight stays consistently exceed national and even European averages. However, this spatial pattern might also impacted the area in other sectoral fields. Seasonal peaks might put pressure on housing markets, transport infrastructure and local acceptance, particularly in areas affected by overtourism. Thus, tourism is both an economic strength and a driver of social conflicts.

Social contact based on social media analysis is generally low across all parts of the border, and language differences act as an additional obstacle. Unlike in some other European border regions

where bilingualism or cultural proximity fosters strong ties, the lack of a shared language here hampers opportunities for deeper social and cultural exchange. This partly explains why cross-border tourism mainly thrives in economic terms, rather than leading to more intensive day-to-day social integration.

Access to public services further influences the quality of life in the region. While schools and grocery shops are equally distributed, access to hospitals, doctors and pharmacies is less balanced, particularly on the Polish side. In some rural areas, travel times exceed one hour, highlighting a clear urban-rural divide. These service gaps contrast with the region's role as a tourist hub, highlighting potential spatial development.

2.5 Border security and safety

This dimension shows the security and safety conditions in border regions. It analyses the number of days on which border control is temporarily reintroduced at internal borders, using this as an indicator of security concerns and restrictions on cross-border movement.

2.5.1 Temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal borders

Indicator description

The indicator shows the number of days of temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders, including the official reasons behind. The reintroduction of border control at the internal borders must be applied as a last resort measure, in exceptional situations, and must respect the principle of proportionality. The scope and duration of reintroduced border control should be restricted to the bare minimum needed to respond to the threat in question.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis data of European Commission information pursuant to Article 25 and 28 et seq. of the Schengen Borders Code
- **Temporal coverage**: 2006-2025 (cut-off: 08 May 2025, in order to allow data treatment before work package completion)
- **Unit**: Days per year

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

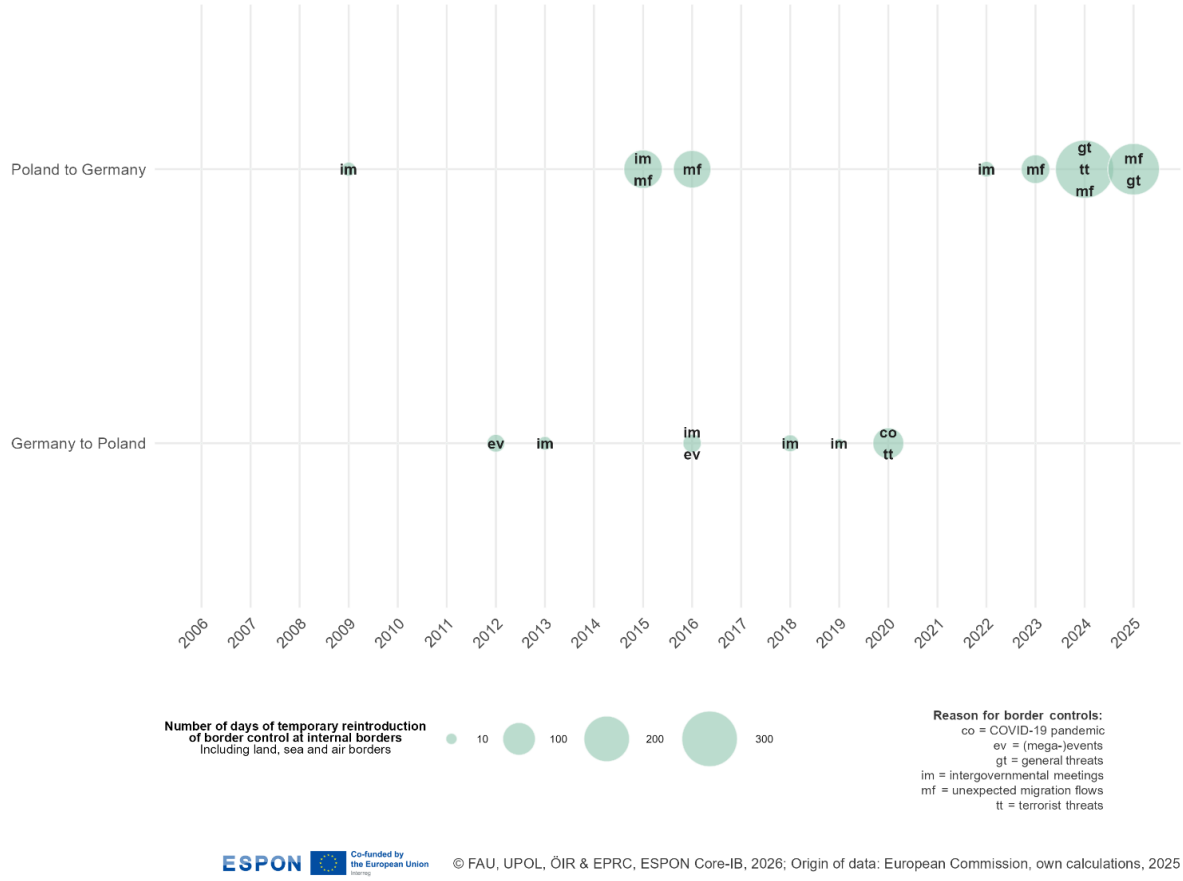
Figure 2.36 illustrates the number of days during which temporary border controls were reintroduced at internal borders within the Schengen Area. Each bubble represents a specific year with bubble sizes indicating the number of days the respective border was under control. The categories of reasons for reintroducing controls include:

- co – COVID-19 pandemic
- ev – (Mega-)events
- gt – General threats
- im – Intergovernmental meetings
- mf – Unexpected migration flows
- tt – Terrorist threats

The data spans from 2006 to 2025 (cut-off: 08 May 2025) and is based on notifications from the European Commission information pursuant to Article 25 and 28 et seq. of the Schengen Borders Code. In line with Schengen rules, the reintroduction of controls is to be used only as a last resort, for exceptional circumstances, and with strict adherence to the principle of proportionality—both in duration and scope.

Germany had already been part of the Schengen Area by 2006, while Poland joined in 2007.

Figure 2.36: Temporary reintroduction of border controls



The Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg–Poland border area is characterised by an asymmetric pattern:

- Crossing the border from Poland to Germany: Temporary border control occurred in 7 out of 20 years, mainly driven by intergovernmental meetings like G7/G8 summits (2015, 2022) and unexpected migration flows (2015-2025) but also by threats such as Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine or human smuggling (2023-2025).
- Crossing the border from Germany to Poland: Temporary border controls occurred in 6 out of 20 years, most of them due to intergovernmental meetings such as the NATO summit (2016).

From a comparative perspective, Germany has implemented controls for significantly more days than Poland, indicating an unequal impact on cross-border movement in one direction.

These controls tend to have a tangible effect on the smooth functioning of cross-border flows, especially commuting and logistics, as they introduce delays and unpredictability.

2.5.2 Key messages on the border security dimension

The Germany–Poland border within the Schengen Area demonstrates how temporary border controls can disrupt cross-border life, despite the principle of free movement. Between 2006 and 2025, controls were reintroduced at various times, though unevenly. Germany applied controls for significantly more days than Poland, creating an asymmetric pattern of impact.

Examining the reasons behind these controls more closely reveals that they reflect broader European challenges. Short-term controls were implemented in response to intergovernmental meetings such as G7, G8 or NATO summits, demonstrating the impact of global political events on regional

borderlands. Unexpected migration flows, especially since 2015, have also been a key reason for controls, highlighting the role of this border in wider European migration management. More recently, concerns around public security and human smuggling have led to more frequent reintroductions. By contrast, Poland's use of border controls has been more limited, mainly occurring during major events or in response to specific security concerns.

These dynamics directly affect the main characteristics of the border region. On the one hand, the Schengen framework provides a foundation for cross-border commuting, trade and everyday interaction. However, the repeated reintroduction of controls undermines predictability for residents and businesses. Even temporary checks can delay logistics chains, complicate daily commuting and reduce trust in the stability of open borders.

2.6 Governance dimension

The cross-border area has a well-established tradition of cooperation. At the national level, the German-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation provides the main institutional framework, bringing together representatives of national and regional governments from both countries. Its work is supported by thematic committees, including one on spatial planning that contributed to the 2030 Common Future Vision for the German–Polish interaction area. Within the programme area, Euroregion Pomerania plays a key role in structuring collaboration across different levels of administration and facilitating project-based cooperation. The Szczecin Metropolitan Region forms the central urban hub and is functionally connected to Berlin. On the German side, the development of this cross-border metropolitan region is advanced by the establishment of the Office for the Szczecin Metropolitan Region, a joint organisation of the Federal States of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Cooperation also extends to civil society actors, whose involvement is expected to grow under future funding frameworks. Crisis response has improved through bilateral agreements and joint rescue services, including post-COVID crisis management units. The informal Oder Partnership complements cooperation efforts by fostering project-oriented cooperation among a broader network of regional stakeholders. Nonetheless, challenges remain, including limited interpersonal contact beyond immediate border zones, legal-administrative differences, and the need to build trust and improve joint spatial planning.

2.6.1 Cross-border cooperation

This sub-dimension identifies the extent of cross-border cooperation in the border region. It illustrates areas of high cooperation intensity and identifies functional links in governance structures across borders. It also identifies areas with high awareness of obstacles and the willingness and support services to overcome them, as well as areas where Interreg cooperation intensity is already strong.

2.6.1.1 Cross-border governance structures

Indicator description

The indicator shows active institutionalised cooperation that act as cross-border entities. It includes cooperation formats such as Eurocities, Euroregions, EGTC, cross-border associations, cross-border councils, etc.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Localisation and categorising of cross-border cooperation formats (Eurocities, Euroregions, EGTC, cross-border associations, cross-border councils, conferences, working communities), based on desktop research.
- **Temporal coverage**: Status as of October 2025
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.37 shows the different types of institutionalised cooperation. These governance structures either function as cross-border entities or bring together stakeholders from the cross-border region around shared topics. The governance structures covered include Eurocities, Euroregions, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), cross-border associations and councils. Project-based cooperation is not included.

The coloured markings on the map indicate different types of institutionalisation: EGTCs are shown in red, Eurocities in yellow, Euroregions/Euregios/Europaregions/Eurodistricts in blue, and other formats in grey.

The multi-level governance structure in this programme area displays broad spatial coverage along the borders. Overall, the region demonstrates a high level of institutionalised cross-border cooperation. The most prevalent formats are those at the Euroregional level. The Euroregion Pomerania is set to transform into an EGTC soon.[15]

[15] See homepage Euroregion Pomerania: Mitgliederversammlung stimmt EVTZ-Beitritt zu – Kommunalgemeinschaft Europaregion POMERANIA e.V.

Figure 2.37: Cross-border governance structures

2.6.1.2 Cross-border public services

Indicator description

The indicator shows different services specialised on cross-border challenges and development potential, including their domain of operation. As a specific form of services of general interest, cross-border public services (CPS) address joint problems or development potentials of border regions that are located on different sides of one or more national borders.

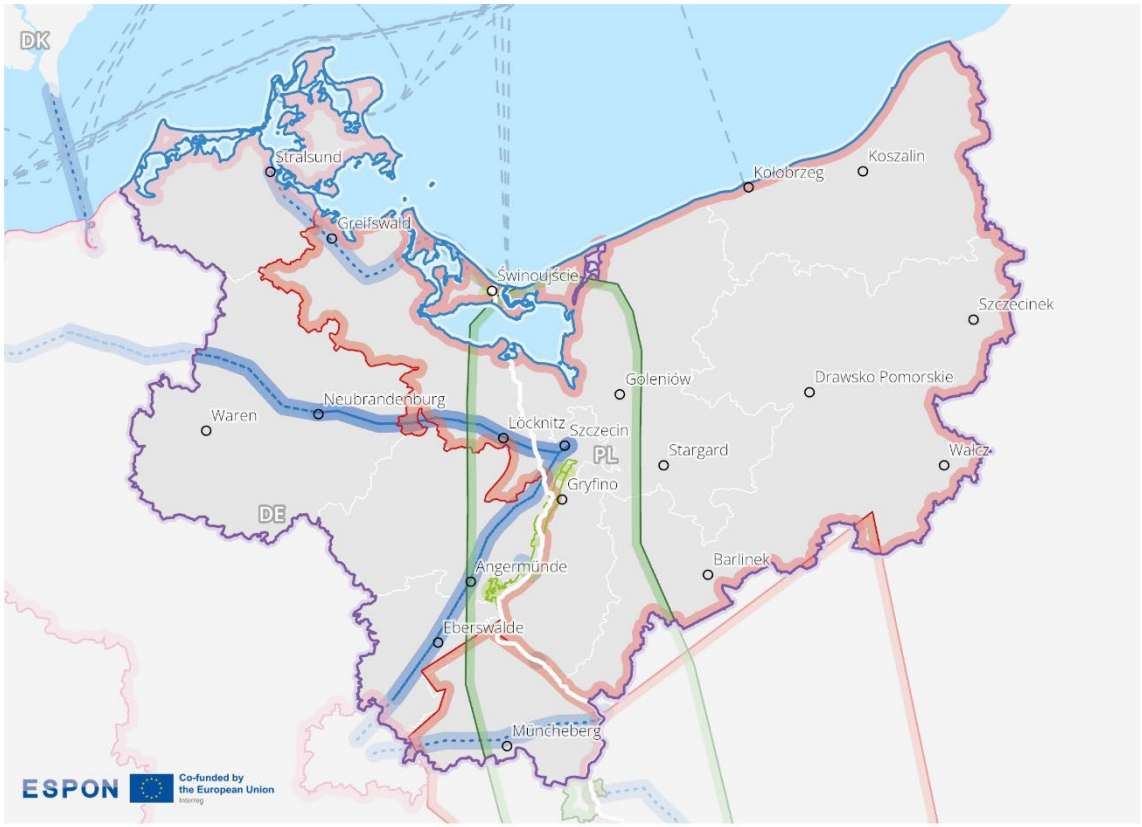
- **Source**: ESPON cross-border public services (CPS) 2.0 database
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.38 depicts the geographical extent of cross-border public services in the border area in 2022. Different thematic areas are represented by distinct symbols and colours, indicating services such as disaster management, health care, transportation, education, environment, energy, job placement, and culture. The visualisation highlights where these services operate across the national boundary.

Cross-border public services in the Germany–Poland Baltic Sea region are concentrated along the coastline and extend inland through strategic corridors. Disaster management and health care services dominate the central and northern coastal areas from Stralsund to Świnoujście and into Koszalin, with additional inland coverage south of Neubrandenburg and Angermünde. Transportation links form a prominent east–west axis connecting Stralsund and Świnoujście, as well as Neubrandenburg and Szczecin and further inland, extending across the Oder river corridor. Tourism & information services cluster around Müncheberg and continue south eastward up to Świnoujście. Environment & Water services cluster in a corridor stretching from Angermünde to Szczecin.

Figure 2.38: Cross-border public services



Geographical extent of cross-border public service themes (2022)

areal linear character of the service

- Disaster management
- Health care
- Transportation
- Tourism & information
- Education & research
- Environment & water
- Heating & energy
- Job placement
- Culture

inside outside inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Cross-border public services covering more than one theme have been assigned only to one. Furthermore, some polygons have been excluded because they were only approximately and not accurately spatially defined.

Level of detail: geolocalised lines and areas
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON CPS, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

- Interreg VI-A perimeter
- perimeter coastal line
- national border
- NUTS 3 border
- ferry

0 20 40 km

© ESPON, 2026

2.6.1.3 Perceived cross-border obstacles in b-solutions

Indicator description

The indicator shows cases of legal or administrative obstacles selected in the framework of the b-solutions initiative. This indicator lists the number, location and nature of suggested solution of cases in the b-solutions initiative, including the topic and parties involved.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis of the b-solutions initiative data
- **Temporal coverage**: 2018-2025 (first quarter)
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

The b-solutions initiative is a European Union project that supports the resolution of legal, operational and administrative cross-border obstacles. It offers funding for pilot actions and legal expert advice in border regions. A high level of cross-border integration often reveals strong barriers of cross-border functioning. In order to exploit the cross-border potentials, these obstacles have to be overcome or at least addressed. Both the number of reported obstacles and the general interest in solutions serve as important indicators of cross-border interaction.

As part of the ESPON CROSSGOV project, all b-solutions initiatives were analysed to deepen the understanding of the thematic focus of the perceived cross-border obstacles across different border regions and the suggested solution. For the case of the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland programme area, no participation in b-solutions projects has been reported yet.

2.6.1.4 Institutionalised advice centres for cross-border issues

Indicator description

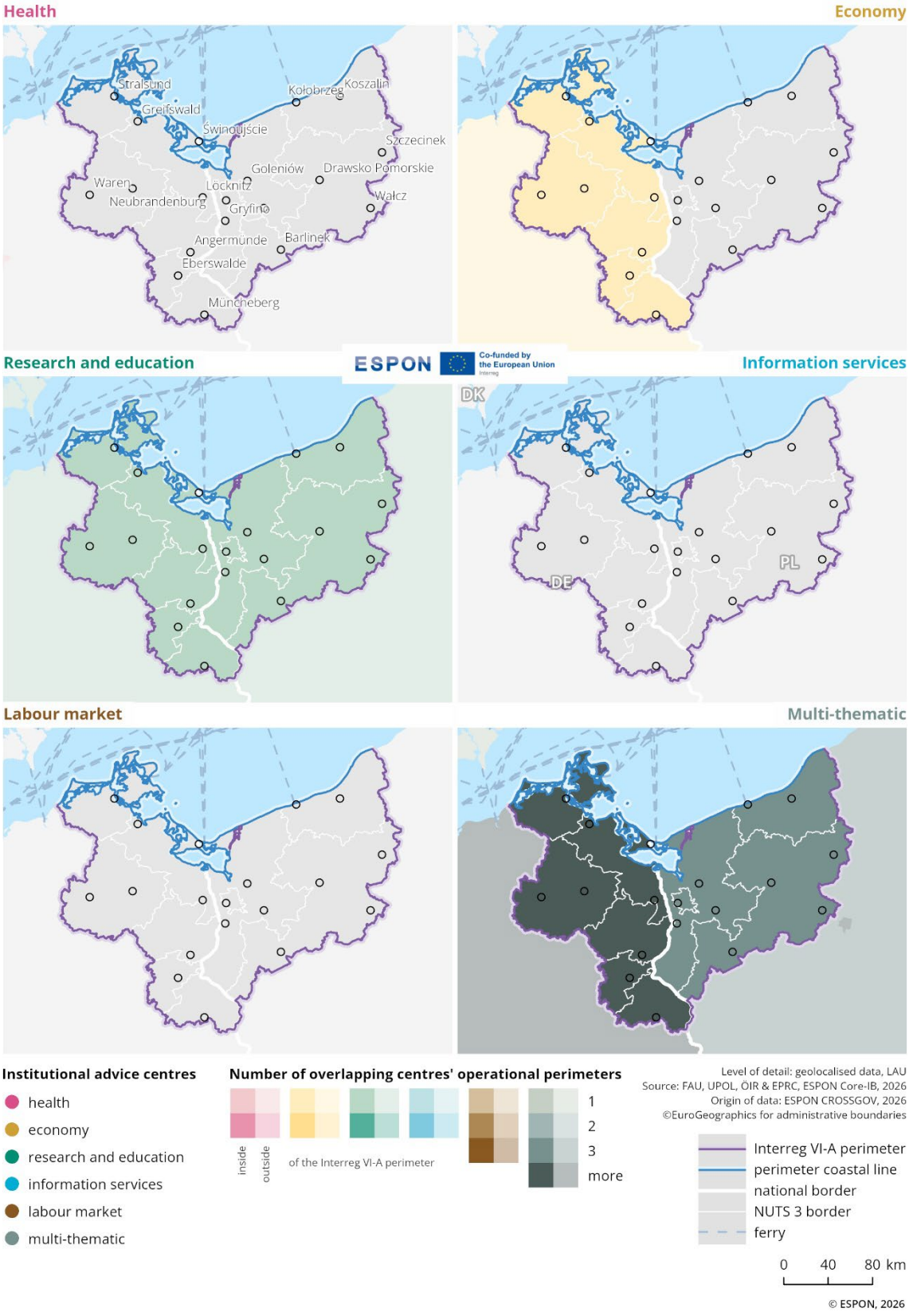
The indicator shows where institutionalised advice centres on cross-border issues are located, including their thematic focus and geographical perimeter.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Localisation and thematic focus of advice centres for cross-border issues are identified via desktop research.
- **Temporal coverage**: Status as of February 2025
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.39 shows the locations and types of institutionalised advice centres, along with their operational domains, in the cross-border Interreg region between Poland and Germany (Mecklenburg-Western Pomeranian/Brandenburg). These centres throughout Europe provide support in various fields such as health, economy, research & education, information services, the labour market, and multi-thematic issues. The operational domains of these centres are also indicated by coloured shading on the map. The more intense the colour, the stronger the influence of that specific domain in the corresponding area.

Figure 2.39: Institutionalised cross-border advice centres



Based on this indicator, there are no institutionalised advice centres in the Interreg region. Centres with multi-thematic, as well as research and education operational perimeters, are represented in both countries within the Interreg area, but they are more pronounced in the German part of the Interreg

region. Institutionalised advice centres with economic operational perimeters are also present in the German part.

Beyond institutionalized advice centres, the border area also features the "Informations- und Beratungsnetzwerk" cooperation project (running from 2023 to 2027), facilitated by the Euroregion Pomerania, with advice centers currently located in Löcknitz (DE), Szczecin (PL), Greifswald (DE), Schwedt/Oder (DE), Neubrandenburg (DE), Strausberg (DE), Koszalin (PL), Świnoujście (PL), and Przelewice (PL).[16]

2.6.2 Outline of Interreg activities

The following section outlines the key Interreg activities in the 2021-2027 programming period. The aspects included concern the development opportunities and challenges identified (see Table 2), the budget available and split of allocation (Figure 2.40), overlapping Interreg programmes and the key aspects drawn from the programme.

Table 2: Interreg VI (2021-2027): Opportunities and challenges

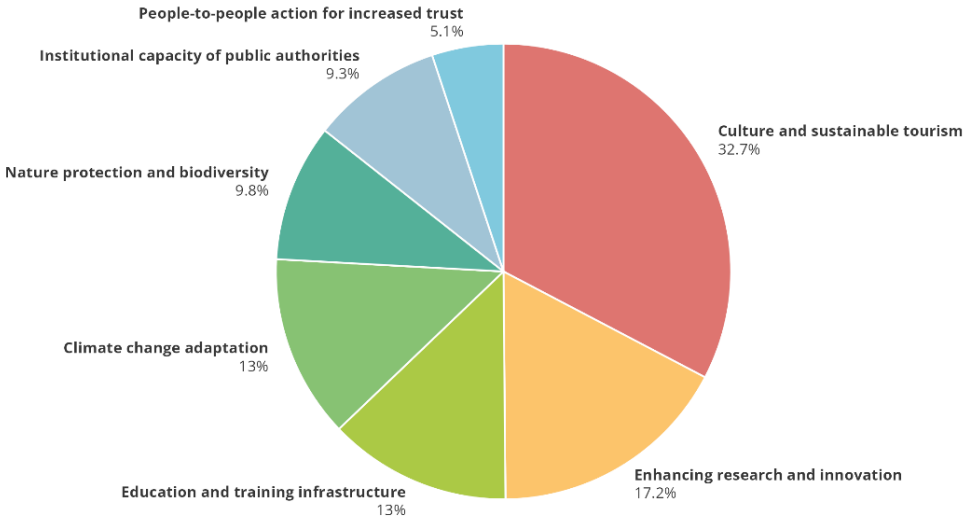
Topic	Key development opportunities and challenges identified for Interreg 2021-27
Economy and innovation	▪ Maritime economy, tourism, logistics, and agri-food sectors are established pillars of the regional economy. ▪ The area also shares emerging priorities in innovation, particularly in life sciences, information technologies, and renewable energy. ▪ Opportunities in existing innovation infrastructure, such as universities and research centres. ▪ Challenges and gaps in renewable energy use and innovation uptake. ▪ Cross-border cooperation needs include business networking, joint R&D, and stronger joint participation in EU research programmes.
Employment, education and language	▪ Cross-Border Labour Market Cooperation Needs relate to creating perspectives for young people through training and education opportunities; promoting mutual recognition of professional qualifications; encouraging cross-border labour mobility and inclusive workplace culture; improving access to employment counselling, job search services, and vocational training across borders.

[16] IBN-SID - Informations- und Beratungsnetzwerk - Start

Topic	Key development opportunities and challenges identified for Interreg 2021-27
Environment and climate	▪ The region includes ecologically valuable, protected cross-border landscapes, but faces shared climate risks such as sea level rise, land sealing, extreme weather, and wildfires. ▪ Coastal zones and transboundary water bodies require joint management to address biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. ▪ There is a need for coordinated climate adaptation strategies, including shared monitoring, disaster risk planning, and knowledge exchange. ▪ Raising public awareness and implementing joint projects - such as water quality improvement and sustainable land use - can strengthen environmental resilience across the border.
Culture and tourism	▪ Tourism potential remains underused outside the Baltic coast, particularly in rural areas and niche segments like health, active, and senior tourism. ▪ There is a need to improve cross-border access to cultural and tourism offers and promote shared cultural heritage narratives. ▪ Stronger institutional cooperation is needed in arts, heritage, and joint marketing, including coordinated tourism routes and regional branding. ▪ Enhancing cross-border training, language skills, and knowledge exchange can boost quality and integration in the tourism sector.
Transport and mobility	▪ The programme area connects key TEN-T corridors, offering strategic potential for cross-border transport links. ▪ Needs relate to expanding cross-border public transport offers, especially in rural areas; developing/improving integrated ticketing and information systems; creating a cross-border network of attractive routes and improving transfer options.
Digitalisation	▪ Gaps in broadband infrastructure remain in rural areas. ▪ Need to widen digital communication channels. ▪ Shared digital platforms can support joint work and emergencies.

Total Budget: EUR 155,725,001

Figure 2.40: Split of Interreg allocation



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union

Table 3 shows the number of Interreg 2021-2027 cross-border and transnational programmes which share at least one NUTS3 region with the border area. Each programme has its own distinct rationale, value and territorial focus. However, for the purposes of, for example, planning and capitalisation activities it is potentially helpful for programmes and programme stakeholders to be aware of and connected to other Interreg programmes with which they share a direct territorial link.[17] The 4 Interreg C programmes Interreg ESPON, Interact, Interreg Europe and URBACT (Urban Action) cover the whole EU territory and provide a range of joint services and initiatives.

Table 3: Shared geographies with other cross-border and transnational programmes

Interreg A (cross-border)	Interreg B (transnational)
2	2

Key aspects

- Interreg cooperation in 2021-2027 places a strong emphasis on culture, tourism, and education. The largest share of funding is allocated to cross-border cultural heritage and sustainable tourism, followed by investment in education and training infrastructure. Significant resources are also directed toward environmental priorities, including nature protection, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and disaster prevention.
- Additional support is dedicated to strengthening institutional capacity and fostering people-to-people cooperation to build trust and deepen cross-border ties. More targeted funding is reserved for enhancing research and innovation, helping to anchor knowledge and technology transfer among universities, research institutions and companies.
- Potential for synergies across programmes, particularly through the Interreg B programmes.

[17] It is noted that synergies and links with a wide range of other territorial cooperation and sectoral programmes and initiatives are also valuable and this is reflected in the wider analyses presented in this border profile, but not specifically covered in this table.

- Single NUTS3 regions from the programme area are part of the 2021-2027 Interreg VI-A Germany/Brandenburg-Poland and Interreg Poland-Denmark-Germany-Lithuania-Sweden (South Baltic).
- All 7 NUTS3 regions from the programme area are part of the 2021-2027 Interreg VI-B Central Europe and 2021-2027 Interreg VI-B Baltic Sea Region.

2.6.2.1 Interreg cooperation

Indicator description

Based on the keep.eu database, this indicator illustrates the network density of Interreg V-A (2014–2020). It is derived from the geographical location of all partners within a project consortium and reflects the intensity of cooperation between them. For the analysis, project networks were visualised by drawing lines between the locations of partners within a consortium. These connections were subsequently aggregated and spatially abstracted by calculating line density using GIS software. Dark red areas indicate a high density of connections between project partners, while yellow areas represent a lower density of cooperation links.

An additional element in this section is the development of project partner numbers between Interreg IV-A (2007–2013) and Interreg V-A (2014–2020), based on data from the keep.eu database. The datasets were cleaned to remove duplicates, using the partner names as reported in keep.eu. For both programming periods, keep.eu indicates a high level of data completeness[18]. Nevertheless, this development should be interpreted as indicative, as variations in partner name reporting and general limitations regarding the representativeness of the dataset affect the robustness of the results.

- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing and analysis of the keep.eu database
- **Temporal coverage**: 2007-2013 (Interreg IV-A), 2014-2020 (Interreg V-A)
- **Unit**: n/a

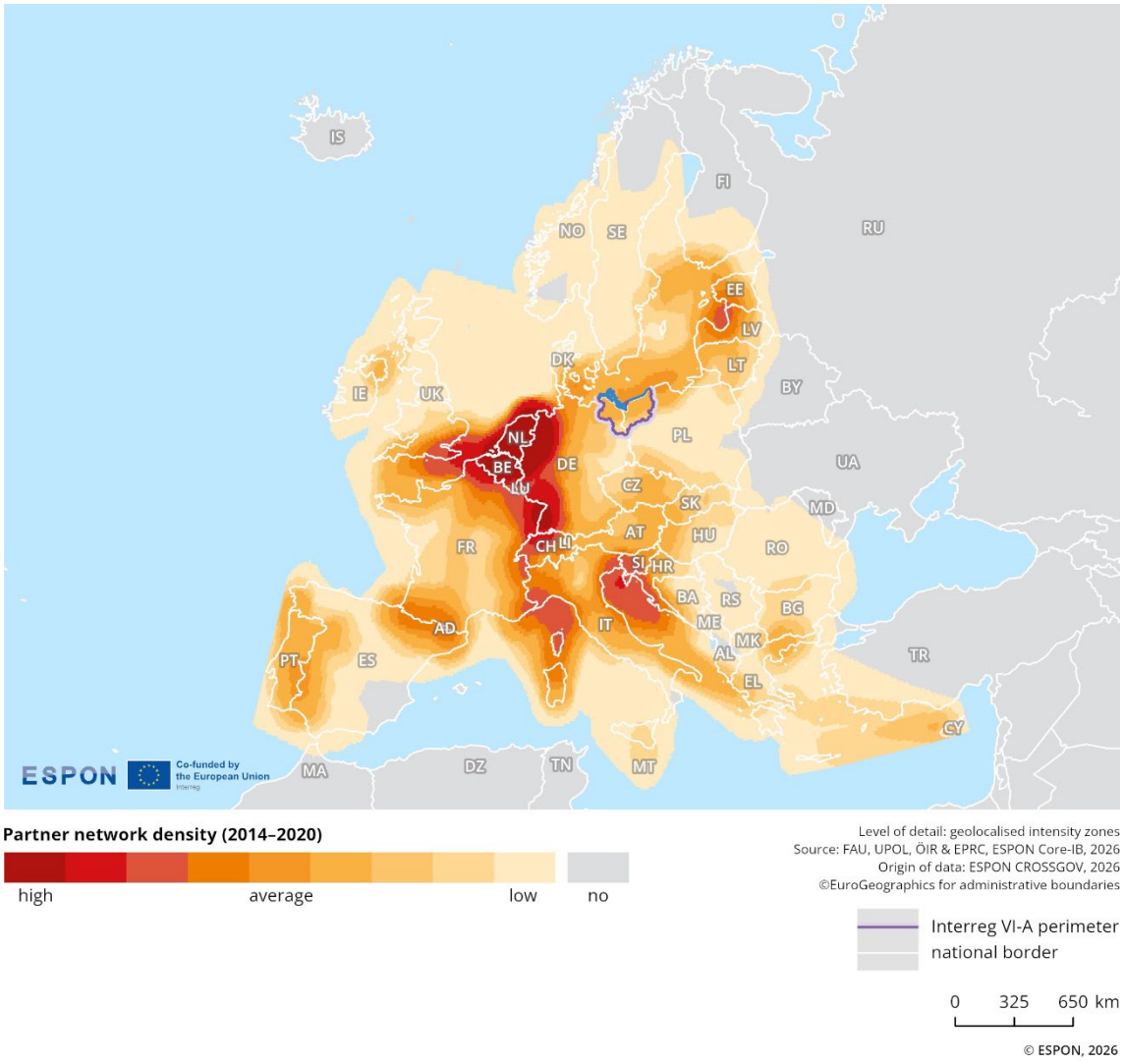
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Cooperation activities and networks are among the most meaningful types of information for delineating cross-border functional areas. As such, the indicator on cooperation through Interreg can help to identify networks among cross-border actors and highlight the density of cooperation in specific border segments.

Figure 2.41 shows the density of Interreg V A (2014–2020) partner networks. The indicator includes the location of, and links between, Interreg project partners within a project consortium. From a European perspective, partner network density in the Germany/Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Brandenburg-Poland border area appears quite evenly spread. The northern segments within the programme area show a slightly higher network level than the southern ones. Overall, the partner network density in this border area is close to the European average. Based on the keep.eu database and excluding duplicates, the number of project partners decreased from 135 in Interreg IV-A (2007–2013) to 89 in Interreg V-A (2014–2020), a decrease of about 34%. It is important that these changes are considered in the context of factors such as change in programme budgets between 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, emphasis on targeting impact, and numbers of strategic projects.

[18] see Keep.eu representativeness: Interreg, Interreg-IPA and ENI cross-border

Figure 2.41: Interreg V-A partner network density



2.6.3 Key messages on the governance dimension

The border region along the Baltic Sea has a long-standing tradition of cooperation and a well-established network of governance structures. Institutional frameworks such as the Euroregion Pomerania and the Szczecin Metropolitan Region provide stable platforms for dialogue and cross-border spatial development. These are complemented by more flexible partnerships, such as the Oder Partnership, which facilitate project-based initiatives and wider stakeholder involvement. Together, these structures reflect a high level of institutionalisation, ensuring that cross-border collaboration is embedded in everyday governance.

A key characteristic of this cross-border region is the scope of cooperation across sectors. Cross-border public services such as disaster management, healthcare, transport, tourism and environmental management are organised across borders, particularly along the coastline and around urban centres such as Szczecin. However, service provision and advice centres remain unevenly distributed, with a stronger institutional presence on the German side.

EU programmes, particularly Interreg, play a pivotal role in sustaining and expanding cooperation. The funding priorities for the period 2021–2027 focus strongly on culture, tourism, education and the environment, while also investing in research, innovation and institutional capacity. Although Interreg

has helped to build networks of actors across the region, the number of project partners has declined in recent years, highlighting the challenge of maintaining high levels of engagement.

3 Summary and key observations

To support the strategic dialogue on cross-border cooperation beyond 2027, this territorial analysis provides harmonised and comparable information. Its data-driven evidence helps to inform the future direction of cross-border cooperation by facilitating alignment with EU priorities and the evolving regulatory framework. The Core-IB border profiles adopt a harmonised methodology and provide programme areas with access to recent European data. As this approach comes along with limitations, member states may hold additional or more detailed data which can further enrich or contextualise the findings beyond the Core-IB project (see final report and technical annex of this project). These national sources are essential for refining and validating territorial evidence in policymaking processes, including: a) regional, fine-scale data and b) insights from political processes related to prioritisation and objective setting. The study's findings are analytical and are intended to support reflection and discussion. They do not create regulatory or policy obligations for Member States, the European Commission, or programme authorities.

Table 4 provides 2 types of information. Firstly, it summarises the key analytical findings for the border region, as discussed earlier in this profile. Secondly, it suggests policy options based on the analytical findings. These options are intended to provide a practical and informative basis for the strategic dialogue among programme bodies, managing authorities and the European Commission.

Generally speaking, the aim of cohesion policy is to promote harmonious territorial development (also) across borders. The objective is to mitigate the impact of borders and achieve 360° functionality, thereby enhancing the quality of life and fostering prosperous development on both sides of the border. The upcoming Interreg period offers an opportunity to address these objectives and potentials through targeted cooperation projects.

Table 4: Evidence-based conclusions

Territorial dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The region faces demographic decline, ageing, and low population density, with settlement concentrated in a few medium-sized towns, especially Szczecin as the dominant centre; • Settlement expansion is dynamic but uneven, with growth mainly around Polish towns and coasts, underlining the need for coordinated cross-border spatial planning; • Despite demographic challenges, strong accessibility and mobility, particularly around Szczecin and Świnoujście, offer opportunities for cohesion and joint development.

Territorial dimension	
Policy options	**Population and settlement related aspects** • A focus could be on stabilising service provision in the context of low population density, population ageing and strong settlement concentration in a limited number of medium-sized towns, particularly around Szczecin; • Cross-border land-use development frameworks could strategically address the housing demand, transport infrastructure development and environmental protection in dynamically growing Polish towns and coastal areas, while reducing the risk of uncoordinated urban sprawl across the border region. **Accessibility related aspect** • Cooperation projects could build on the high accessibility of the Szczecin and Świnoujście area by exploring transport coordination and shared mobility services, supporting everyday cross-border integration and opening up joint development opportunities. **Cross-cutting aspects** • Focusing on cross-border approaches that jointly address the demographic decline, economic growth and environmental protection by linking spatial development, labour markets, mobility systems and ecosystem management; • The differences in demographic trends, economic performance, environmental pressures and institutional capacities could be leveraged as a common development potential, using asymmetries as entry points to strengthen resilience, territorial cohesion and long-term development across the border region.

Economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The region exhibits below-average economic performance with strong growth since 2014, particularly on the Polish side, though significant income and employment disparities remain between Germany and Poland; • Demographic change, including ageing and outmigration, drives labour market pressures, while sectoral structures remain concentrated in manufacturing, trade, health, and education; • Persistent contrasts in wages, housing, and digital infrastructure shape cross-border commuting patterns and highlight both challenges and opportunities for regional integration.
Policy options	**Labour market related aspect** • Cross-border labour market strategies could combine skills development, workforce retention and coordinated employment policies to address the labour market vulnerabilities linked to the population decline and ageing, despite relatively strong economic growth on both sides of the border. **Competetiveness related aspects** • A focus could be on sectoral diversification strategies, particularly in service activities, to transform the existing structural economic asymmetries into complementarities and support more balanced regional development; • Cooperation projects could focus on reducing disparities in wages, housing affordability and digital infrastructure, using joint initiatives and policy alignment to enhance economic integration, competitiveness and more equitable development outcomes.

Green dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The region has rich natural assets and dense protected areas along the Baltic coast, but inland ecological continuity is fragmented, highlighting the need for coordinated cross-border ecosystem management; • Environmental pressures differ across the border: air pollution is higher in Poland, flooding risks along the Oder require joint action, and energy infrastructure reflects divergent resource use (coal in Poland, gas/oil in Germany); • Resource productivity and waste generation show structural contrasts, with German border areas more efficient than Polish ones, underlining the importance of cross-border cooperation for sustainability and energy transition.
Policy options	**Climate risks and resilience related aspects** • The development of cross-border ecological corridors to address fragmented habitats, with particular attention to existing gaps in the central and southern parts of the border area, while strengthening the coordinated management of protected areas and Natura 2000 sites as shared ecological assets; • Cross-border risk management, monitoring and mitigation strategies could be implemented to address the flood risks along the Oder river and to improve the air quality in industrial and energy-intensive areas, thereby enhancing overall regional climate resilience. **Energy related aspects** • Joint initiatives could explore approaches to accelerate the transition away from coal and resource-intensive industries towards cleaner energy sources, while improving the cross-border energy infrastructure and resource efficiency; • Energy communities could be supported as practical instruments to coordinate and promote the clean energy transition as a shared priority across the border region. Energy communities are groups of citizens, businesses, or local authorities that jointly produce, store, share, or consume renewable energy in order to achieve environmental, economic, or social benefits.[19]

[19] See https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/studies/2025/handbook-on-cross-border-energy-communities_en

Socio-economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The cross-border region is a major tourism hub, with coastal and lake areas attracting high visitor numbers, generating income and jobs, but also creating seasonal pressures on housing, transport, and local acceptance; • Everyday cross-border social interaction is limited, with language barriers reducing deeper cultural and social integration despite strong tourism-driven economic ties; • Access to essential services is uneven, particularly healthcare in rural areas, highlighting urban–rural divides and persistent spatial inequalities alongside economic vitality.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • A focus could be on strengthening social integration by addressing the persistent language barriers and promoting community engagement and people-to-people cooperation; • Cooperation projects could address coordinated cross-border tourism approaches to enhance economic benefits, ensure a more balanced territorial distribution of tourism-related income and mitigate the pressures on housing markets and the environment; • Cross-border provision of healthcare, education and digital services could be specifically addressed to reduce the disparities in access and strengthen the integration for residents of the border region.

Border security and safety dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The Germany–Poland border operates under Schengen principles, but temporary border controls have been repeatedly reintroduced, revealing the fragility and unevenness of open borders; • Controls are asymmetric: Germany has imposed checks more frequently and for longer periods than Poland, often linked to migration, security, or major political events; • These interruptions disrupt daily cross-border life, affecting commuters, businesses, and logistics, highlighting how national risk perceptions shape the practical experience of openness.

Border security and safety dimension	
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • The impacts of border controls on cross-border commuting and logistics can be mitigated through coordinated and institutionalised cross-border policy dialogue; • The mitigation of border control effects can form part of cross-border cooperation projects in various sectors. Economic networks, transport infrastructure initiatives and tourism-related actions can incorporate considerations related to the impacts of border controls.

Governance dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The border region has a long-standing, highly institutionalised cooperation framework, including the Euroregion Pomerania, intergovernmental commissions, and project-based partnerships; • Cross-border collaboration spans multiple sectors, disaster management, health, transport, tourism, and environment, but service provision and advice centres are unevenly distributed, favoring the German side; • EU support, particularly through Interreg, strengthens networks and funding, yet challenges remain due to legal-administrative differences, declining partner engagement, and persistent asymmetries in everyday integration.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspect** • The existing institutional cross-border frameworks could be used strategically to develop integrated governance solutions that simultaneously address the demographic decline, economic transition and service provision via coordinated development approaches, policy alignment and joint implementation.

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