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EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT //

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

Greece-Italy

Border profile

March 2026

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Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

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

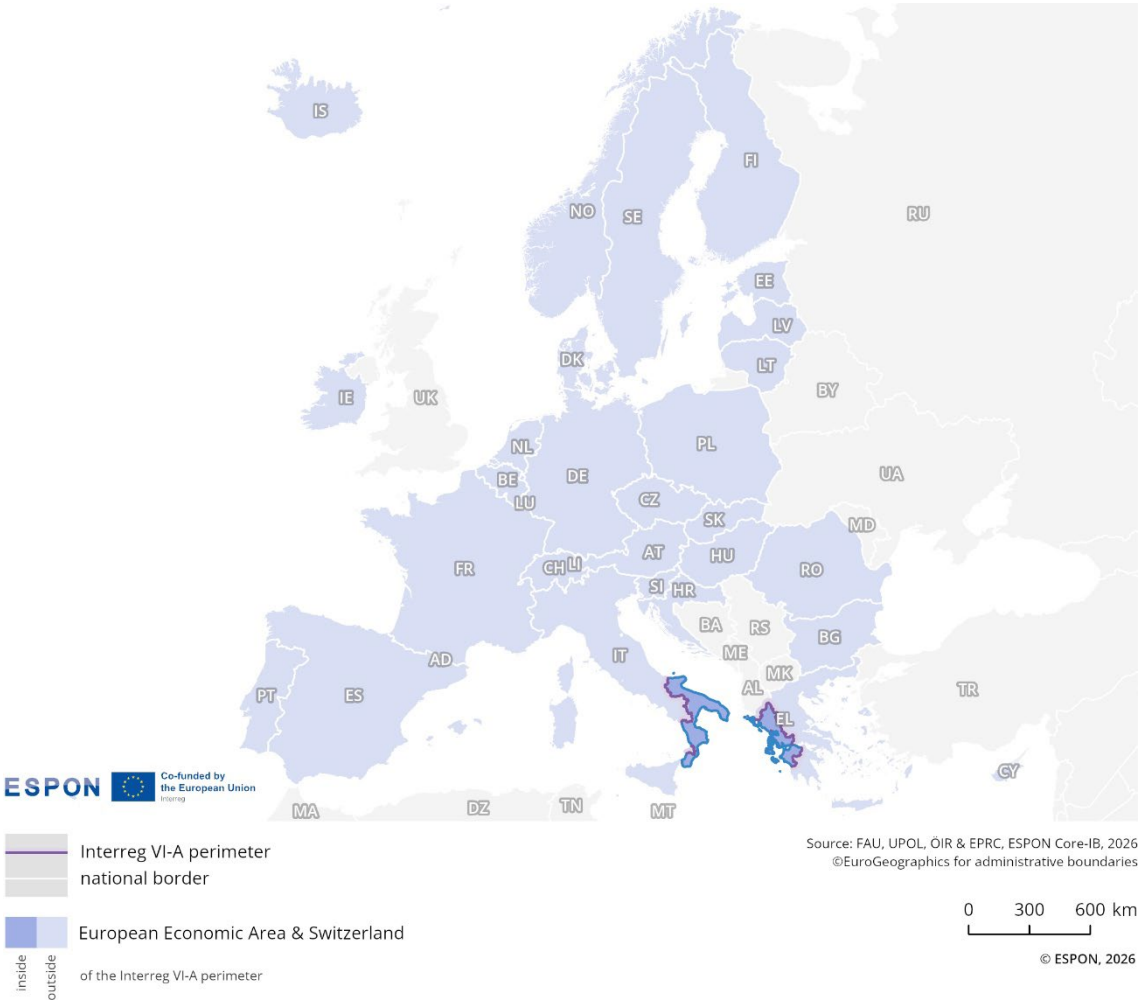
Within the ESPON framework, the CROSSGOV project (Governance mechanisms for cross-border functional areas) has been implemented in parallel to Core-IB. The CROSSGOV hub[2] provides a comprehensive platform for interactive data exploration, and selected data have been incorporated into this study.

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 'Greece–Italy' covers the area between western Greece and south-eastern Italy (see Figure 1.1). In Greece, the programme area includes most of the regions of Western Greece (Aetolia-Acarnania, Achaea, Ilia), Epirus (Arta, Thesprotia, Ioannina, Preveza), and the Ionian Islands (Zakynthos, Corfu, Kefalonia, Ithaka, Lefkada), located in Central and Northern Greece, comprising a total of 10 NUTS3 regions. In Italy, it covers parts of the regions of Apulia (Provinces of Foggia, Bari, Brindisi, Lecce, Barletta-Andria-Trani, Taranto), Basilicata (Province of Matera), and Calabria (Provinces of Catanzaro, Cosenza, Crotone and Reggio Calabria) in southern Italy, encompassing a total of 11 NUTS3 regions.

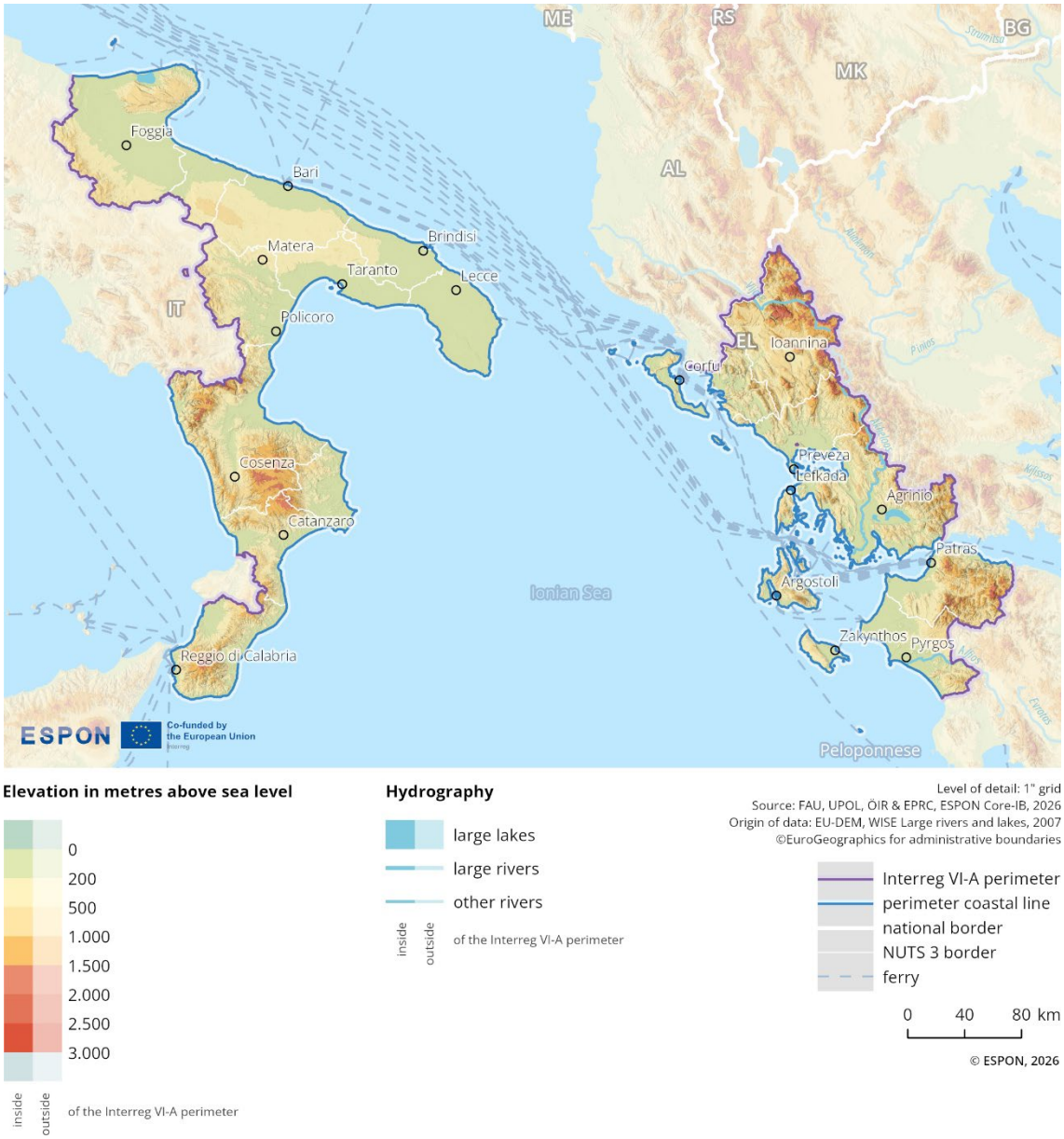
Figure 1.1: Overview map



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

Figure 1.2 illustrates the region's geomorphological features and the perimeter of the Interreg VI-A programme area. Spanning approximately 59,950 km², the border area exhibits a high degree of geographical heterogeneity. The map illustrates the pronounced topographical contrasts that have been shaped by the interplay of coastal, insular and mountainous landscapes.

Figure 1.2: Geographical features and characteristics[3]



The programme area extends along the eastern coast of southern Italy and the western coast of Greece, bordering the Ionian and southern Adriatic seas. The territory comprises coastal plains, steep cliffs, river deltas and karstic coastal zones with lagoon systems. The Salento Peninsula in Italy and the Epirus coast in Greece are particularly rich in such features.

Inland, the area is dominated by 2 major mountain ranges: the Southern Apennines in Italy and the Pindus Mountains in Greece. These ranges are characterised by rugged terrain, steep gradients and narrow valleys. Their proximity to the coast leaves only limited lowland zones between the mountains

[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.

and the sea, resulting in strong topographical compression. Notable peaks in the Apennines exceed 2,000 metres, while the Pindus range features dramatic limestone ridges and deep gorges, including those in the Vikos–Aoös National Park.

Coastal plains, such as the Piana di Sibari in Calabria and the Ambracian Gulf lowlands in Greece, represent areas of sediment accumulation. They have fertile soils, river systems and significant wetland ecosystems. Delta formations, such as those of the Acheron and Arachthos rivers, support marsh landscapes which are often designated as Natura 2000 areas. The programme area also includes several islands, most notably the Ionian Islands in Greece: Kerkyra (Corfu), Lefkada, Kefalonia and Zakynthos. Each of these islands have mountainous terrain and rugged coastlines.

Prominent urban centres within this complex geography include Bari, Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto in Italy and Patras, Igoumenitsa and Preveza in Greece, as well as the island capitals of Corfu and Lefkada. These settlements are often found in the few flat areas near river deltas or natural bays, shaped by the interaction of tectonic activity and coastal processes.

The Ionian and Adriatic Seas are essential geographic features, acting as both a separator and a connector across the region. The marine environment features underwater canyons, seagrass meadows and migratory routes for marine fauna which form part of broader Mediterranean ecological systems. Overall, the diversity of the landscape, coastline, and island environments defines the natural geography of the programme area, forming the basis of the region's ecological diversity and specific landscape.

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

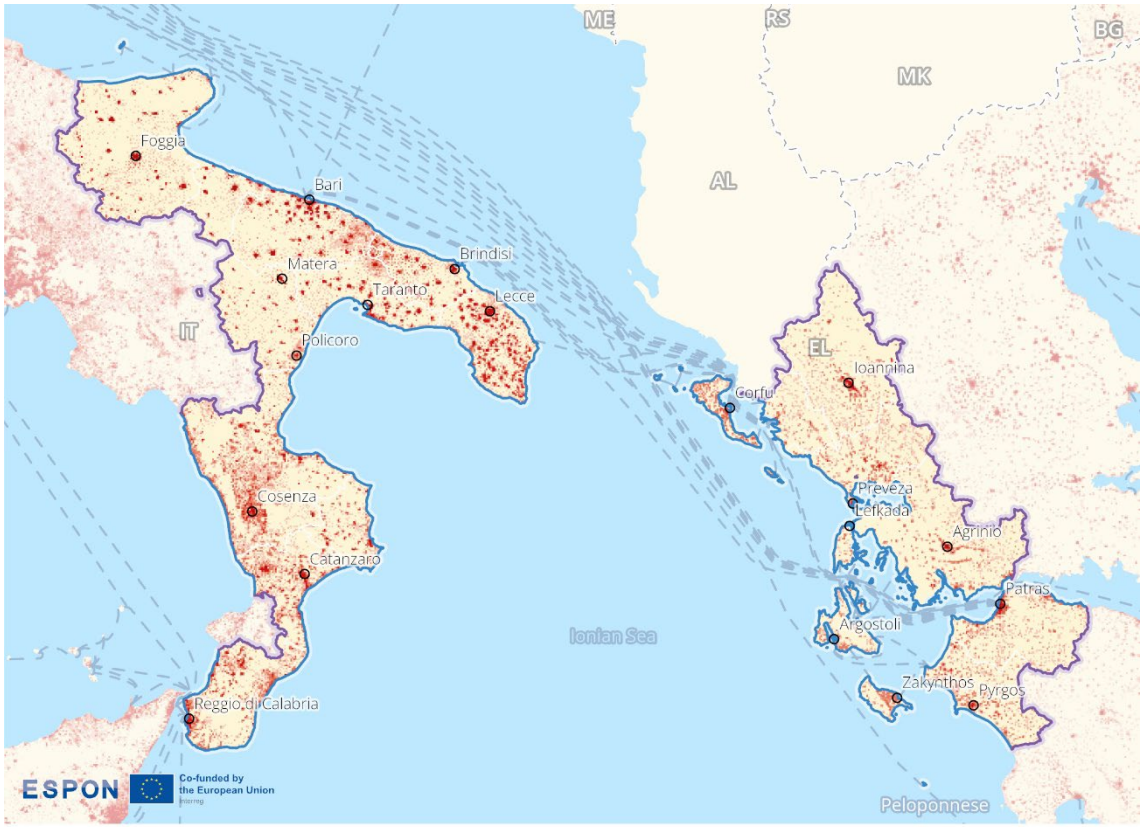
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

The border region includes 16 urban centres with a population of over 30.000 inhabitants. The map in Figure 2.1 indicates that Italy's population is concentrated in small areas surrounding moderately sized cities, with a significant proportion of uninhabited land. The south-eastern and the south-western part of the coast are relatively more densely populated than the northern part of the programme area. The port town of Bari dominates here. Other Italian cities with high population concentrations are Catanzaro and Taranto. A similar settlement pattern around villages, but with lower population density, can be observed in Greece. Here, the most populated areas are around cities such as inland Ioannina. The ports, such as Preveza, Patras, and Pyrgos, as well as the islands of Corfu and Zakynthos, are centres of settlement in Greece.

The population density in this whole border region is 111 inhabitants/km², which is comparable to 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 cross-border region in Italy has an average population density of around 153 inhabitants/km². It is therefore lower than the national average population density in Italy (193 inhabitants/km²). The part of the cross-border region in Greece has an average population density of around 46 inhabitants/km². It is therefore lower than the national average population density in Greece (73 inhabitants/km²).

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 40 80 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 %

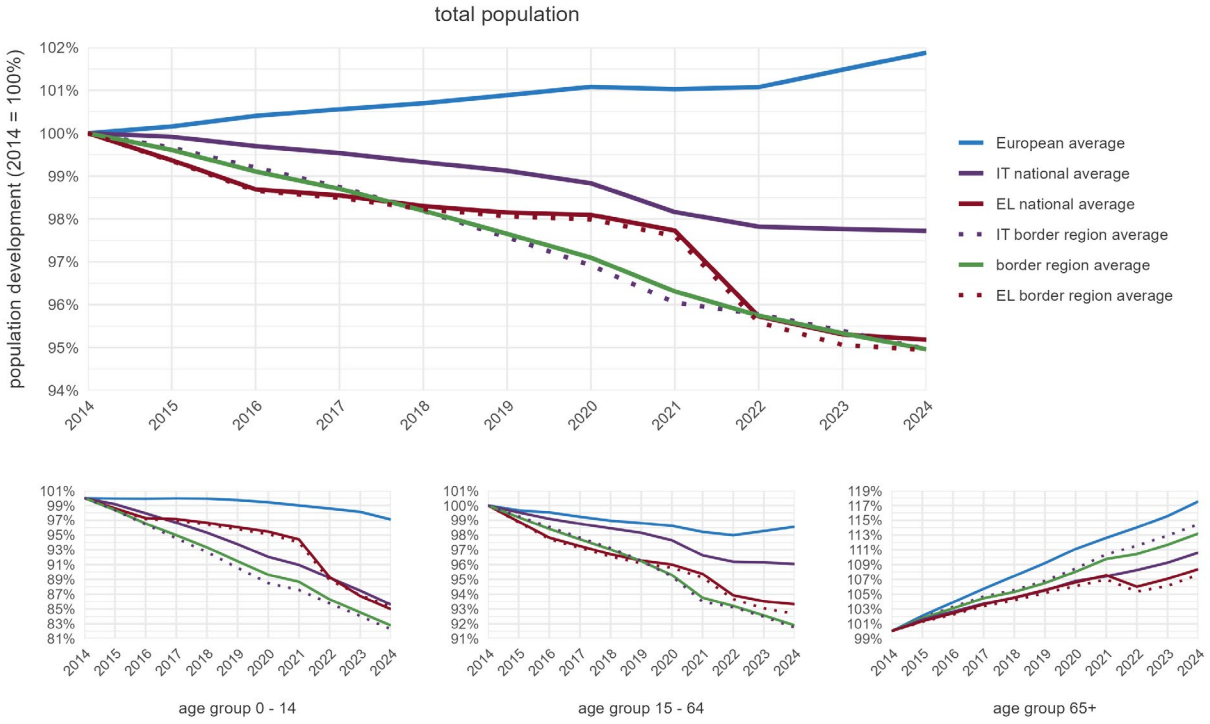
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Population in the Greece–Italy cross-border region in 2024 (Eurostat): 6.9 million inhabitants, of which:

- 16.8% in the Greek border territory (1.2 million inhabitants);
- 83.2% in the Italian border territory (5.8 million inhabitants);
- Region within the border region with the highest population decrease since 2014: Aetolia-Acarnania (EL631) at -10.2%.

Figure 2.2 shows the population change in the Greece–Italy cross-border region between 2014 and 2024. During this period, the cross-border region has experienced moderate decline of -5.0%, with the most pronounced decrease observed on the Greek side.

Figure 2.2: Population development (2014=100)



This decline in population places the border region well below both the European average (-5.0% vs. 1.9%) and the average development in all border regions (-5.0% vs 1.5%). While the Greek border area

shows a similar decline to the national average (-5.1% vs. -4.8%), the Italian border area shows a greater decline than the national average (-5.0% vs. -2.3%).

In terms of the development of individual age groups in the cross-border region, the population aged 0–14 experienced a sharp decrease of -17.2%, while the working-age population (15–64) showed a marked decrease of -8.1%. The population aged 65 and over underwent a notable increase of 13.2%.

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 similar patterns of change in settlement areas on both sides of the Greek-Italian border. Changes are evident in particular around the urban centres of Foggia, Bari, Matera, Taranto and Patras. Catanzaro, Corfu, Ioannina, Preveza, Lefkada, Agrinio, Argostoli, Zakynthos and Pyrgos show no significant changes during the observed time period. High growth in settlement areas is particularly evident around the Italian cities of Bari and Taranto as well as in the valley between the Greek cities of Ioannina and Preveza and around the Ambracian Golf. Settlement area increases mainly around coastal cities both in Italy and Greece. The map also somewhat reflects the topographical characteristics of the border region, with less changes in settlement areas visible in steep, mountainous areas in Greece, except of south of Ionnina, and along the Italian-Mediterranean coast.

Figure 2.3: Settlement area dynamics

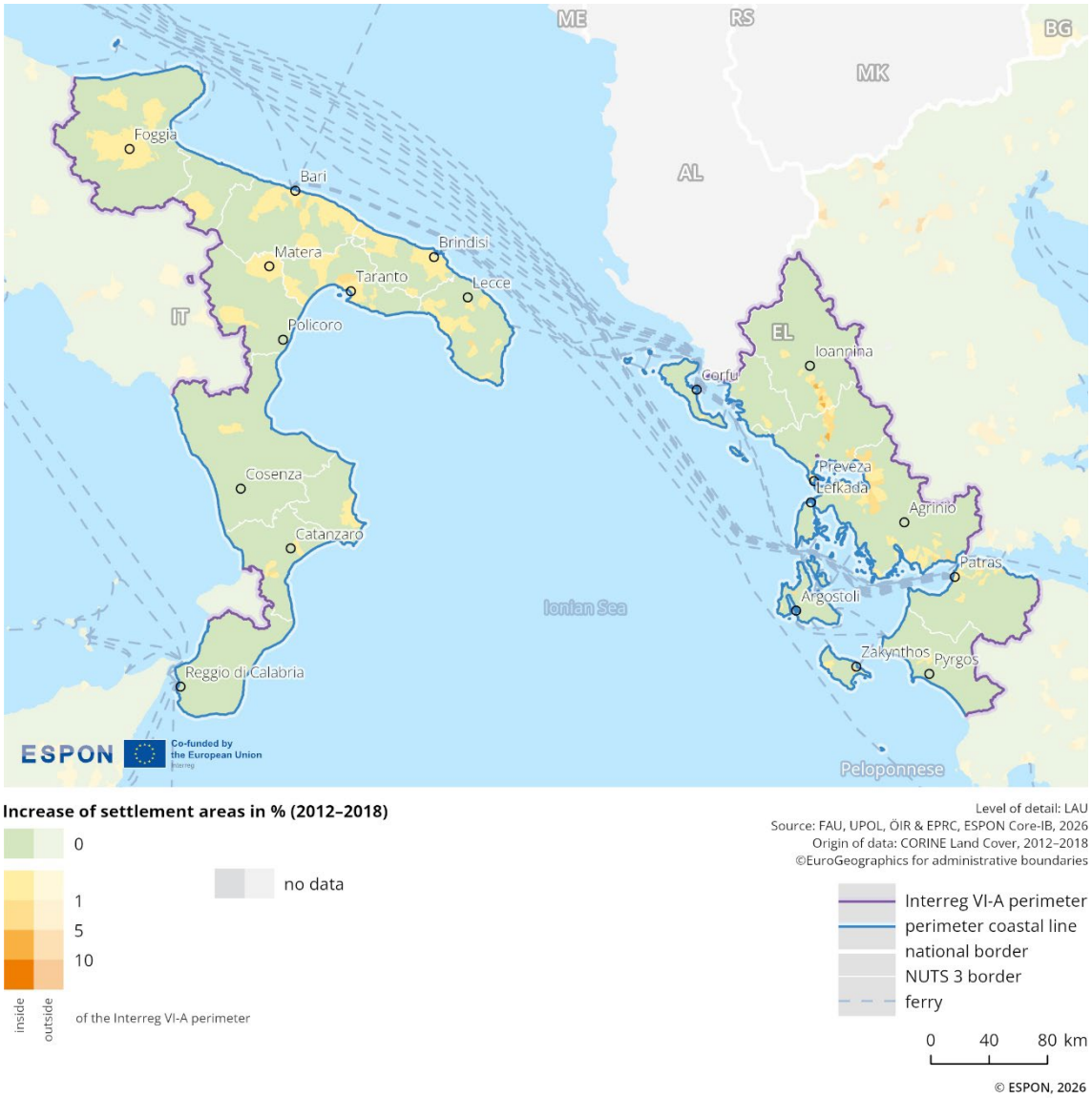
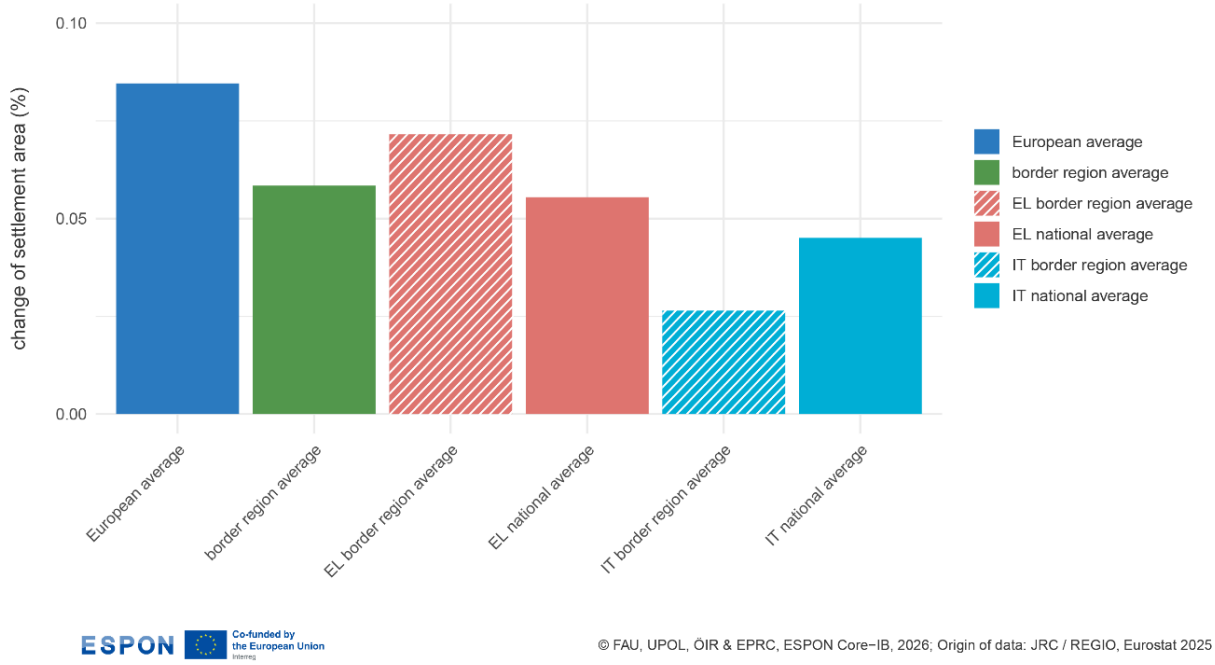


Figure 2.4 presents the change in settlement areas from a comparative perspective. The average for the Greece-Italy programme area is lower than the overall European average (0.058% vs. 0.085%), which includes both EU member states and the EFTA countries Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. The Greek values are higher than the Italian ones, which applies for both, the national average as well as the border regions. The Greece border-regional average is higher than the national Greece average (0.072% vs. 0.055%), whereas the Italian border-regional average is lower than the national Italian average (0.026% vs. 0.045%).

In general, the programme area shows depopulation coupled with slow settlement growth around coastal and urban areas. 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.

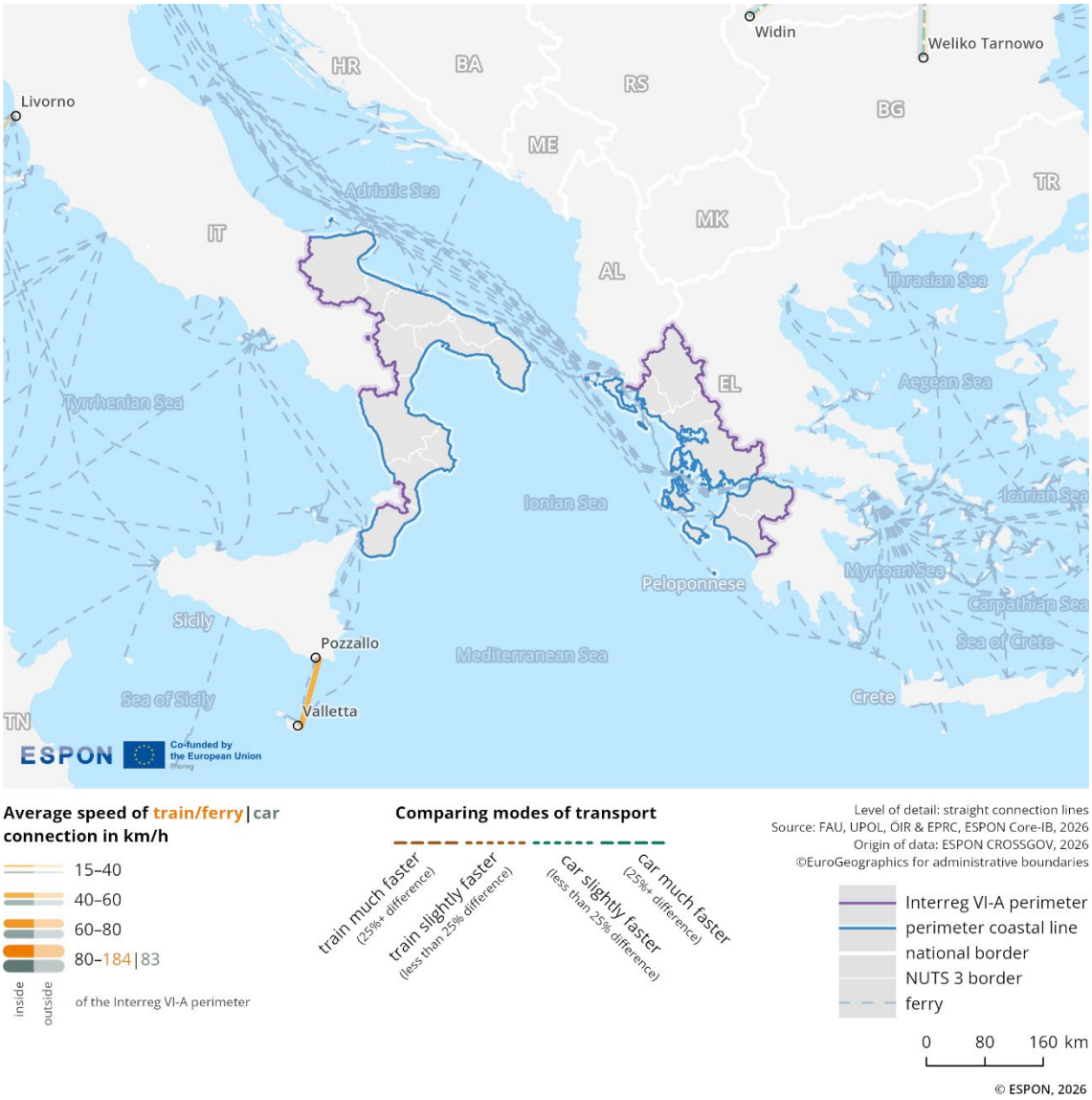
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Average number and speed of rail connections/ferries, average speed of car connections between selected cities and towns in border regions using Rail Travel Sites, Google Maps, luftlinie.org, Direct Ferries, local ferry companies
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025 (first 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 Greece–Italy border region. 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. For this border region, no cross-border car, train, or ferry connections meet the relevant travel time thresholds. Therefore, no space-time-lines are visualised. However, the indicated ferry links provide an overview of the mobility options available in this maritime cross-border area[5].

Figure 2.5: Cross-border transport connections



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

[5] For more information on European ferry routes see this online map: https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/contents/map-week-ferry-routes_en

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.

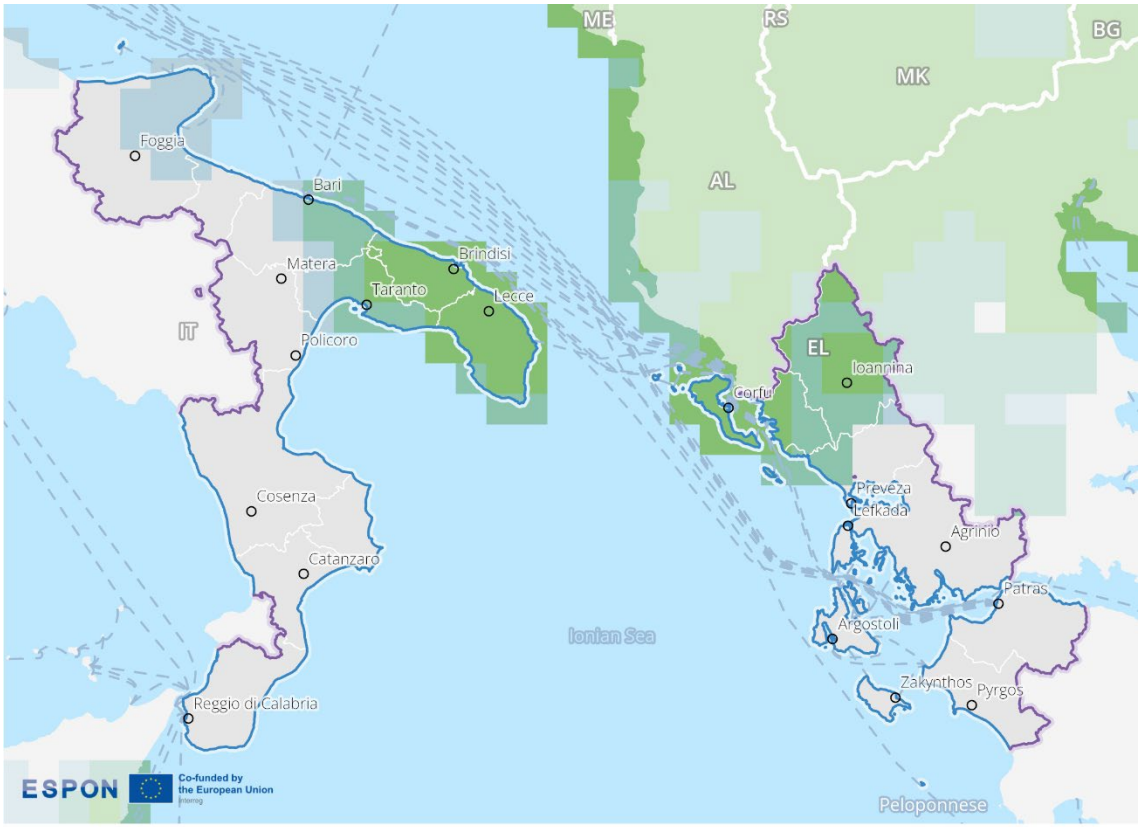
- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is calculated based on Twitter (currently X) data. The digital footprint of individual users provides information about physical mobility flows and is used to calculate cross-border catchment areas of different intensity.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2013-2023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

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.6 shows the cross-border catchment area between Italy and Greece 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, including the northern part of the Greek section around Corfu and Ioannina, and an area east of the city of Taranto. This spatial pattern can be explained by ferry connections between the Italian and Greek coasts. In addition, Ioannina functions as a hub for connections to northern Greece, specifically via the Egnatia Odos. Moderate intensity is recorded around the city of Bari and in Greek areas adjacent to the zones with the highest intensity. Low intensity values are observed near the cities of Foggia and Matera. In the remaining Italian and Greek analysed parts of the cross-border region, no intensity is recorded or data are unavailable.

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 40 80 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 indicates that due to the maritime nature of the cross-border region, the programme area lacks road connections, as the strait is too wide for any bridges or similar infrastructure. Therefore cross-border travel time zones could not be calculated for this region.

In the programme area, services such as shops, hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies are more prevalent in Italy than in Greece. The highest concentration of services is in the area of Bari (Italy). There is a high concentration of services on the island of Corfu, Greece.

Figure 2.7: Travel-time accessibility from border crossings

2.1.3 Key messages on the territorial dimension

The population of the cross-border region has steadily decreased over the last 10 years and is also ageing. In line with this demographic trend, changes in settlement areas remain below the European average, with only slight changes near the urban zones. Settlement patterns and population density largely follow the topography of the programme area: inland mountainous areas of Greece show change concentrated in very specific areas, while expansion occurs more spread along the Italian Adriatic coast. Overall, population density is very low, with concentrations mainly in coastal urban centres.

Transport connectivity is shaped by geography, thus the maritime nature of the area limits direct and regular border crossings. The highest mobility intensity is recorded in the Salento Peninsula, Corfu, and Ioannina. On the Italian side, Bari and Brindisi serve as the principal ports providing cross-border routes within the programme area. Furthermore, international airports in Bari and Brindisi, as well as in Corfu, Ioannina, and Aktion (serving Preveza and Lefkada), strengthen regional connectivity. Cross-border ferry connections are concentrated in summer and generally long in duration. There are no regular flights within the programme area, and only a limited number of charter connections. The

presence of international airports and ports and relatively higher population density helps explain stronger mobility in certain coastal areas, while much of the region shows little or no cross-border movement.

Essential services such as shops, hospitals, doctors, and pharmacies are more easily accessible in Italy than in Greece within the border area. Service provision is most concentrated around Bari and along the south-eastern Italian coast, as well as on the island of Corfu in Greece.

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

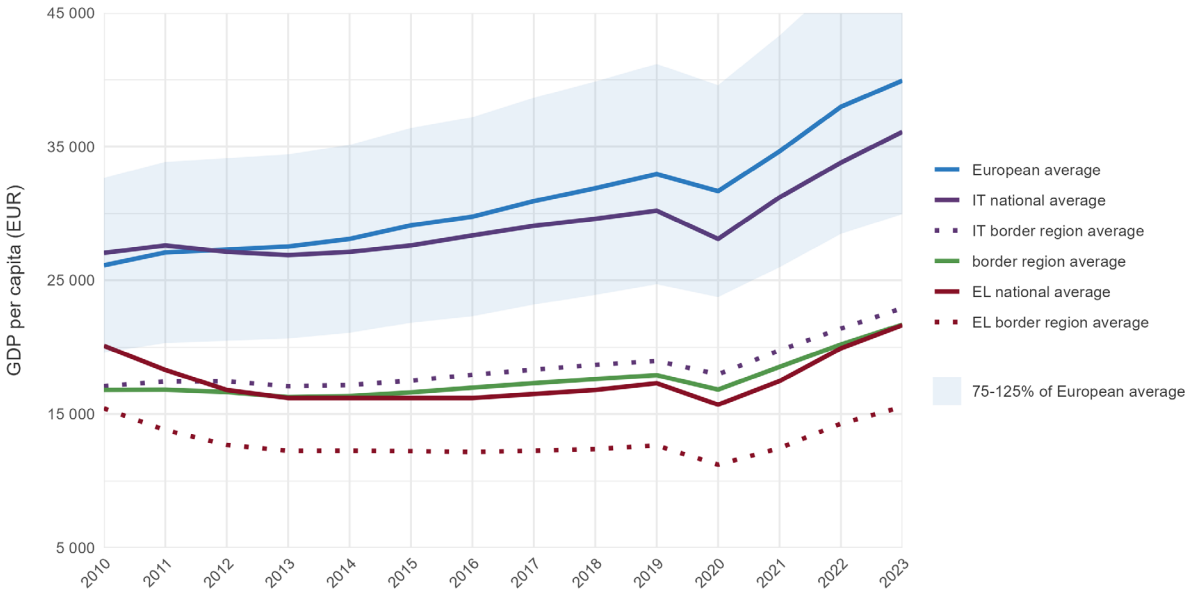
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.8 illustrates the development of GDP per capita in Euros between 2010 and 2023, comparing border regions and national averages of Italy and Greece with the European average. The whole border region shows a GDP/capita value of 55.7% the EU average in 2022 and 56.6% of the average of other European border regions in general. The border region marks a 23.9% increase of GDP per capita between 2014 and 2022[6] . This corresponds to a 11.8 percentage points lower increase of GDP per capita in the border region compared to the EU average. Furthermore, this corresponds to 11.9 percentage points lower increase of GDP per capita in the border region compared to the aggregated average of border regions.

[6] 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.

While the national GDP per capita of Italy is similar to the EU average, the Italian border region displays a GDP per capita of 59.0% compared to the EU average, which is similar to the Greek average. However, the Greek border region also lays significantly below its national average. The GDP per capita in the Greek border region is 71.7% of the Greek average and 39.4% of the EU average. The whole Greek-Italian cross-border region experienced a below average growth in GDP per capita.

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.

2.2.2.1 Share of employment

Indicator description

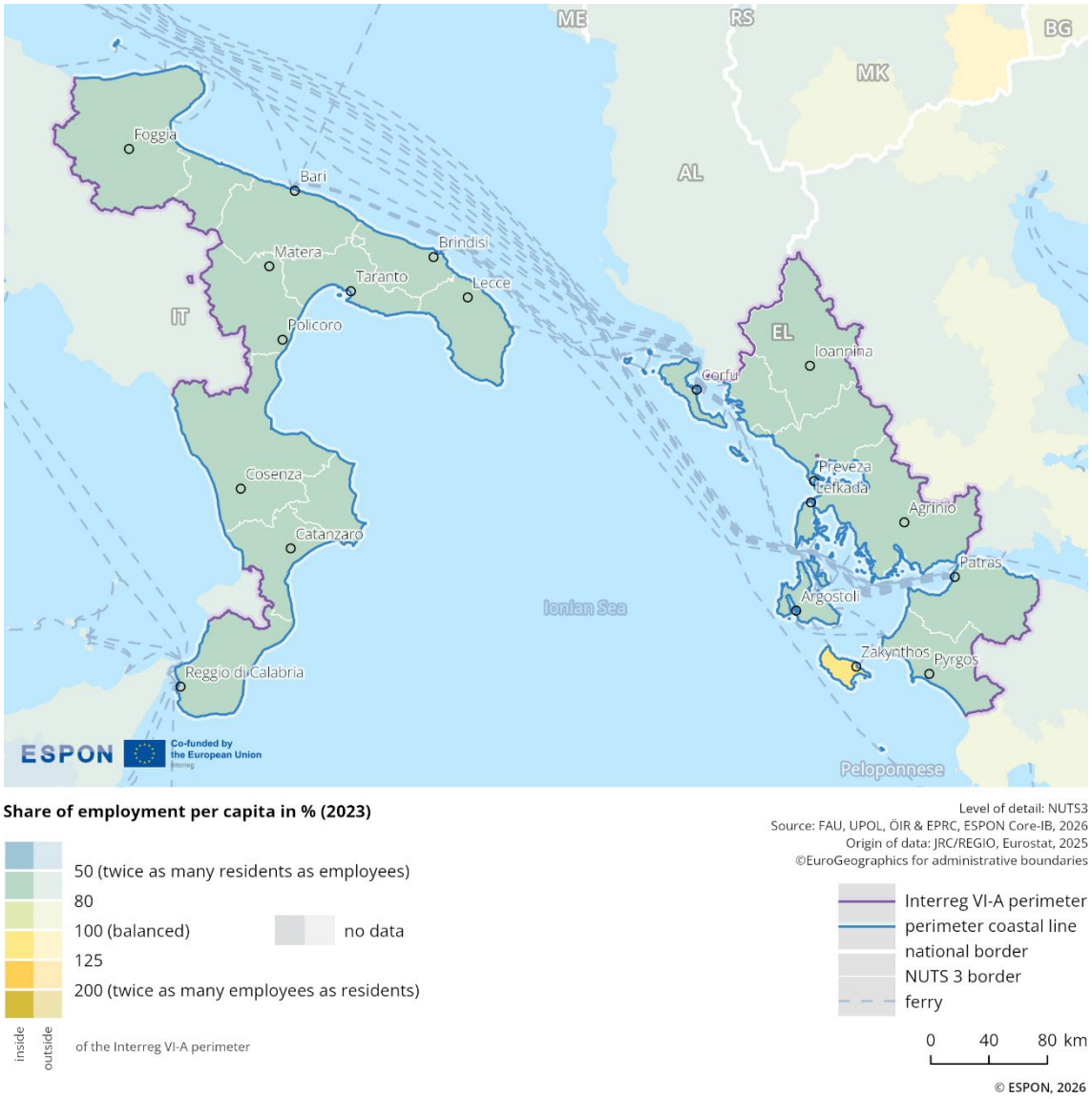
This indicator shows the share of employees in the population aged 15 to 64. Although it does not fully capture entrepreneurs, marginal employees, or civil servants, this is an important statistic for understanding general labour market patterns. It covers 2 aspects: first, high values can result from 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 population 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.

Figure 2.9: Employment share[7]

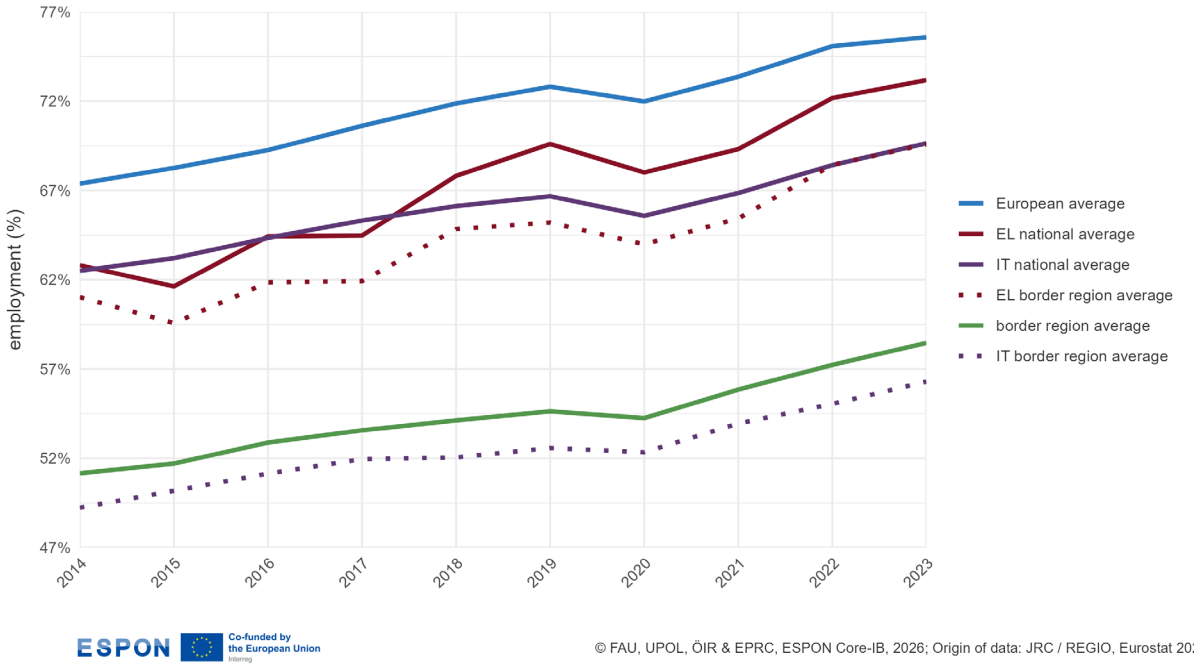


The share of employment in this border region is stable, with the average for the whole cross-border region reaching 80% in 2023, which represents an increase of 6.6 percentage points since 2014. In most parts of the border region, indicator values range between 50% and 80%. Only on the island of Zakynthos do values fall within the 100% to 125% range. According to Figure 2.10, a comparison of the share of employment in this border region shows the following:

- Compared to the European average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 17.1percentage points in 2023; in 2014, the difference was 16.2percentage points.
- Compared to the Italian average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 11.2percentage points; in 2014, they were lower by 11.3percentage points.
- Compared to the Greek average, values in the cross-border region are lower by 14.7percentage points; in 2014, they were lower by 11.7percentage points.
- The Greek border area has values 3.6percentage points lower than the Greek national average, while the Italian border area is 13.6percentage points lower than the Italian national average.
- Compared to the average of all cross-border regions, values are lower by 16 percentage points, whereas in 2014 they were lower by 15.1 percentage points.

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

Figure 2.10: Employment share over time (comparison)



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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 shows the evolution of the share of the working-age population in the Greece–Italy cross-border region between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the cross-border region shows an average working-age population share of 63.5%, compared to the European average of 63.9%and 63.7% for the average of all cross-border regions.

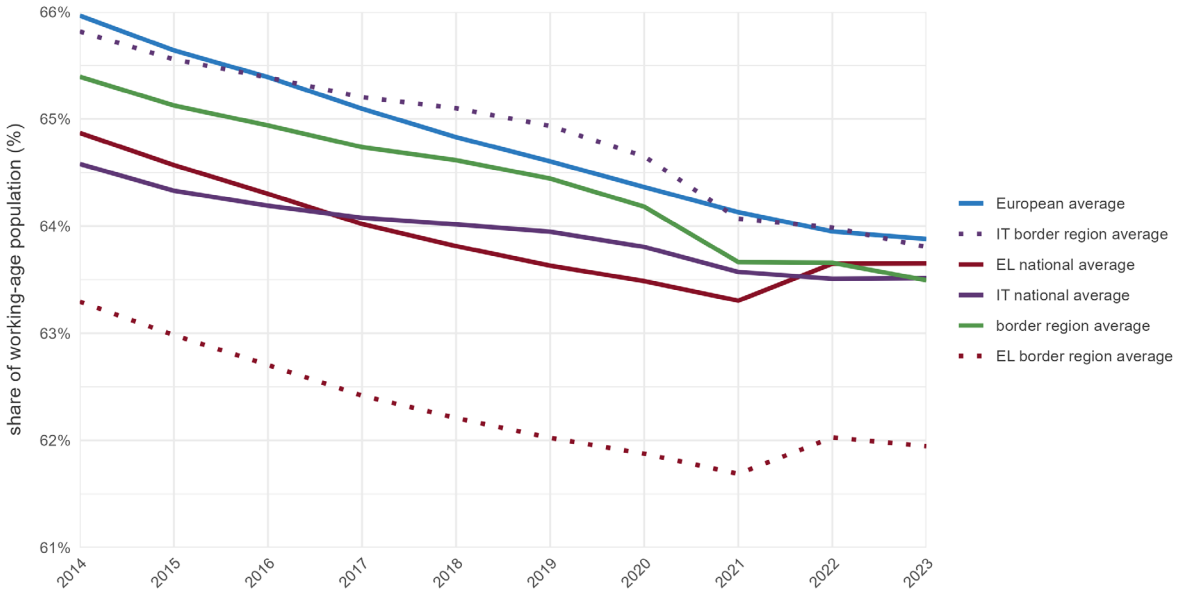
The share of the working-age population in the whole cross-border region is very similar to both the Italian border average (63.8%) and the Italian national average (63.5%), as well as the Greek national average (63.7%). In contrast, it is moderately higher than the Greek border average (61.9%).

The programme area experienced a moderate -1.9 percentage point decrease in the share of working-age population between 2014 (65.4%) and 2023 (63.5%). This decline is similar to the European average, which dropped by -2.1percentage points in the same period. All parts of the programme are show a

declining trend, with the decrease being more pronounced in the Italian parts (-2.0percentage points at the border and -1.1 percentage points at the national level) than in the Greek parts (-1.4 percentage points at the border and -1.2 percentage points at the national level).

The Greece–Italy cross-border region experienced a moderate overall decline in the share of the working-age population between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the cross-border region as a whole remained slightly below the European average, with balanced levels on both sides of the national 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 %

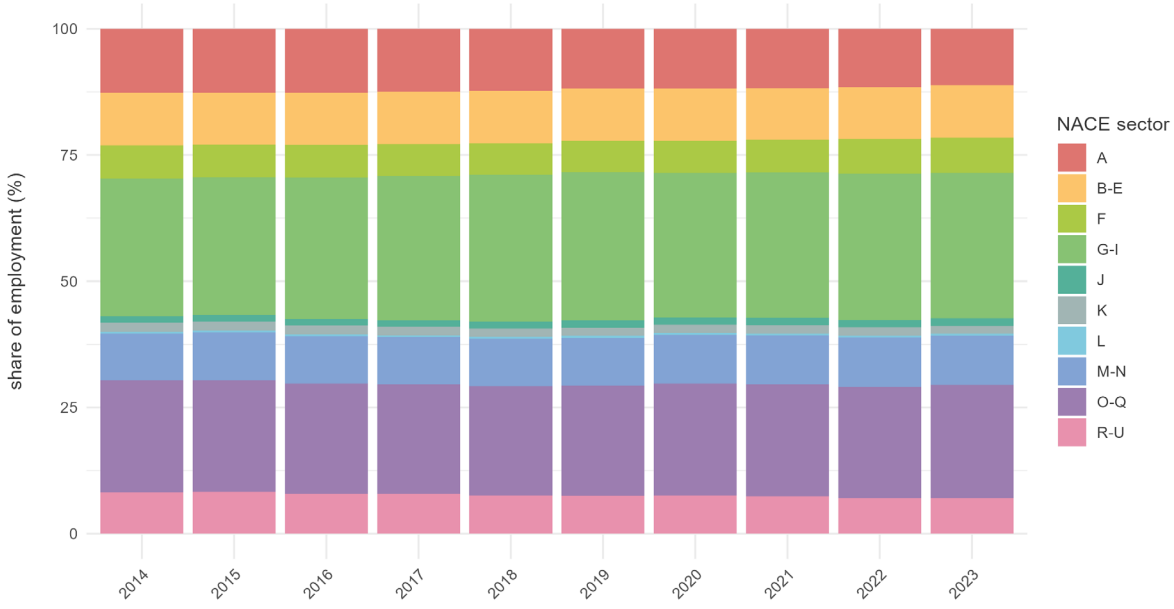
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

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) and 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) and Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies (U). Conversely, there is a modest increase in the number of jobs in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H) and Accommodation and food service activities (I).

Over the entire period, the sectors with the highest share of available 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). Furthermore, the relatively high proportion of jobs in the fishing sector (A) in this area, compared to other European border areas, highlights its specific maritime character.

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.

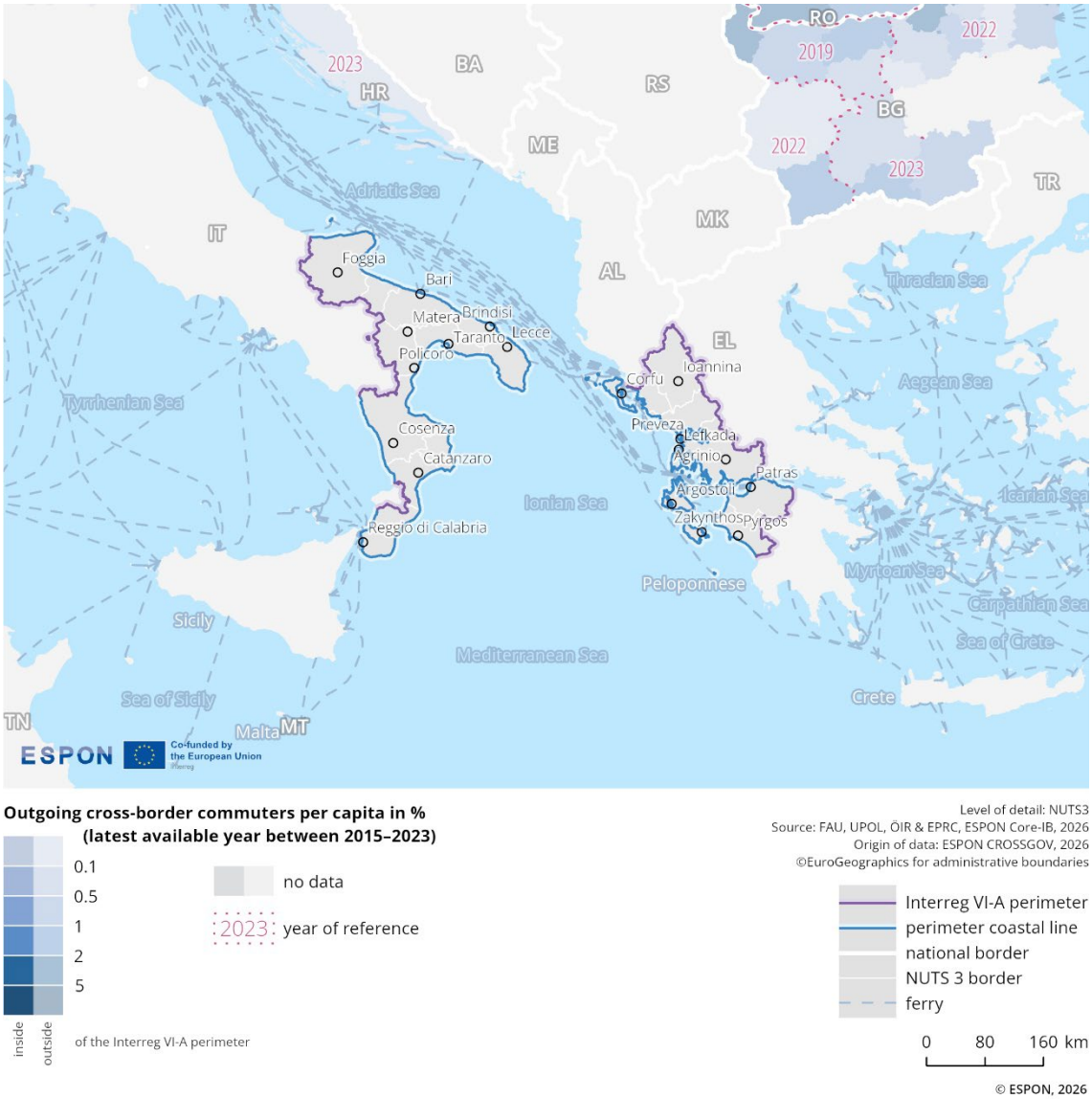
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Eurostat/LFS data on outgoing commuters currently available on NUTS2 level has been regionalised for NUTS3 by means of weighting by border length, NUTS3 population-weighted centroid distance to border, population per NUTS3 region (15–64 years old) and real compensation 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 types of cross-border flows for identifying functional linkages between neighbouring regions. It reflects potential or actual labour market integration within cross-border areas and provides insight into the extent of daily mobility across national borders. Figure 2.13 presents a partial European overview of the share of outgoing commuters per capita. However, for this particular maritime border region, no data at the NUTS3 level is available to calculate the share of outgoing cross-border commuters. Given the maritime character of the cross-border region, commuting dynamics are likely to be limited. However, the indicated ferry links provide an overview of the available mobility options[8].

[8] For more information on European ferry routes see this online map: https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/contents/map-week-ferry-routes_en

Figure 2.13: Cross-border commuting



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.

Greece is not a signatory state of the 2023 Framework Agreement on Cross-Border Telework. Therefore, the 2 countries apply the standard rules under Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004. This means that cross-border telework is generally limited to 25% of the total working time, beyond which social security affiliation may shift to the country of residence.

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.

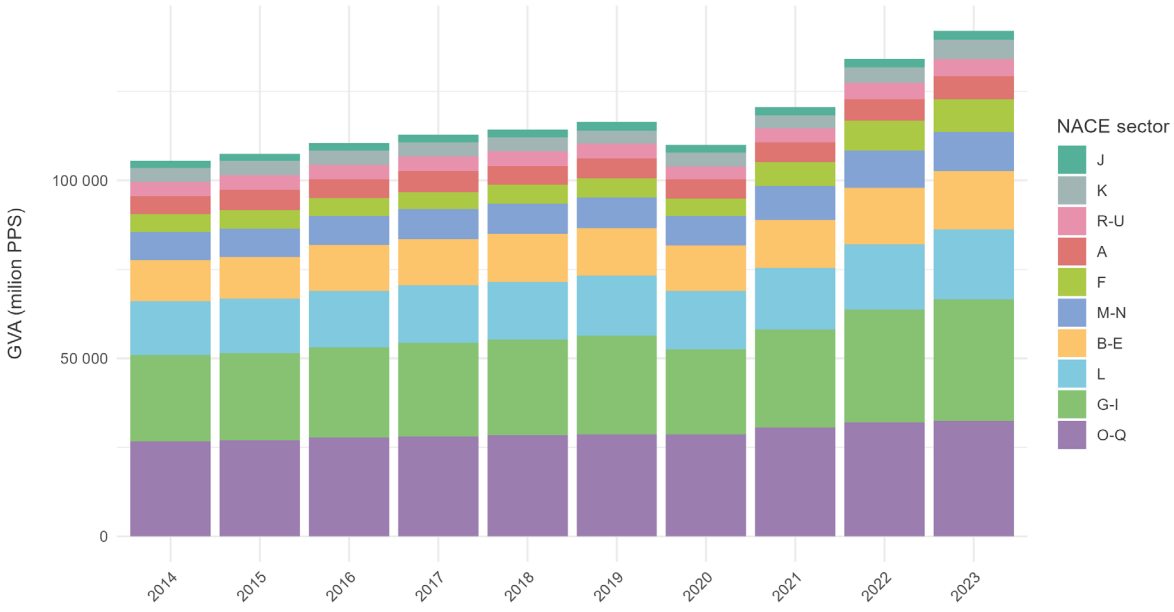
The dataset uses a '10-sector' classification based on NACE categories. The sectoral breakdown is as follows:

- 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 cross-border area of Greece-Italy increased from 105,490 million purchasing power standards (PPS) to 142,010 million PPS — a growth of 35%. Sector groups G–I, L and O–Q together make up over half of the total GVA, highlighting their significant contribution to the regional, also green and blue, economy within the border area. The sector groups G–I contributed the largest share, with a total of 34,092 million PPS in 2023. This underlines the significance of sectors such as Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G), Transportation and storage (H), Accommodation and food service activities (I) in the Greece-Italy cross-border region. The comparatively small share of Information and communication (J) highlights the relevance of digital growth within the green and blue economies in this maritime border area. Agriculture, forestry and fishing (A) has a similar share in GVA over the period under review, pointing to specific activities in the fishing sector in this spatial context. The constantly growing and substantial share of real estate activities (L) can also be attributed to maritime tourism.

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)
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K: Financial and insurance activities
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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)

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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.

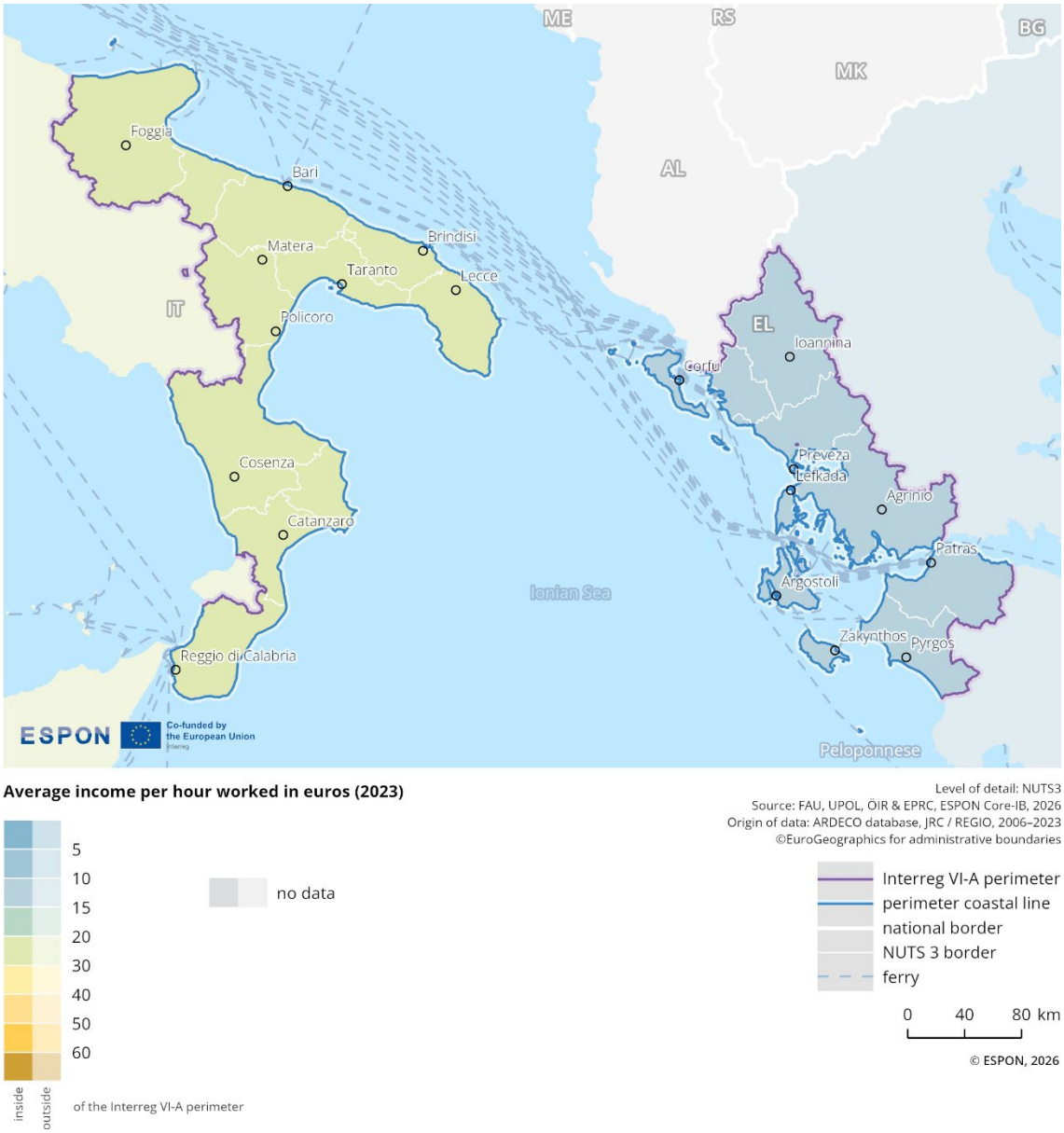
Figure 2.15 shows the average values for the 'compensation per hour worked'. This indicator is calculated by dividing the total compensation of employees (at current prices) by the total number of hours worked by those employees. In this context, 'employees' are defined as individuals engaged by contract in productive activities. The data is available for the place of work, regardless of the place of residence. Total hours worked represent the actual number of hours worked by employees and are considered the most accurate measure of labour input.

In 2023, nominal compensation per hour worked averages €11.60 in Greece, while in Italy it is more than twice as high at €24.70. Accordingly, the map of the average wage rates in the Greece–Italy border region appears also to be quite unevenly distributed. In the Italian areas, the average hourly income ranges between €20 and €30, with no region reporting values significantly below or above this range. In the Greek parts of this cross-border area, the average hourly income ranges between €10 and €15.[9]

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. Nevertheless, due to the maritime nature of the border and the absence of direct road connections between the 2 countries, cross-border commuting on a daily basis in this programme area is unlikely.

[9] 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 2.15: 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.

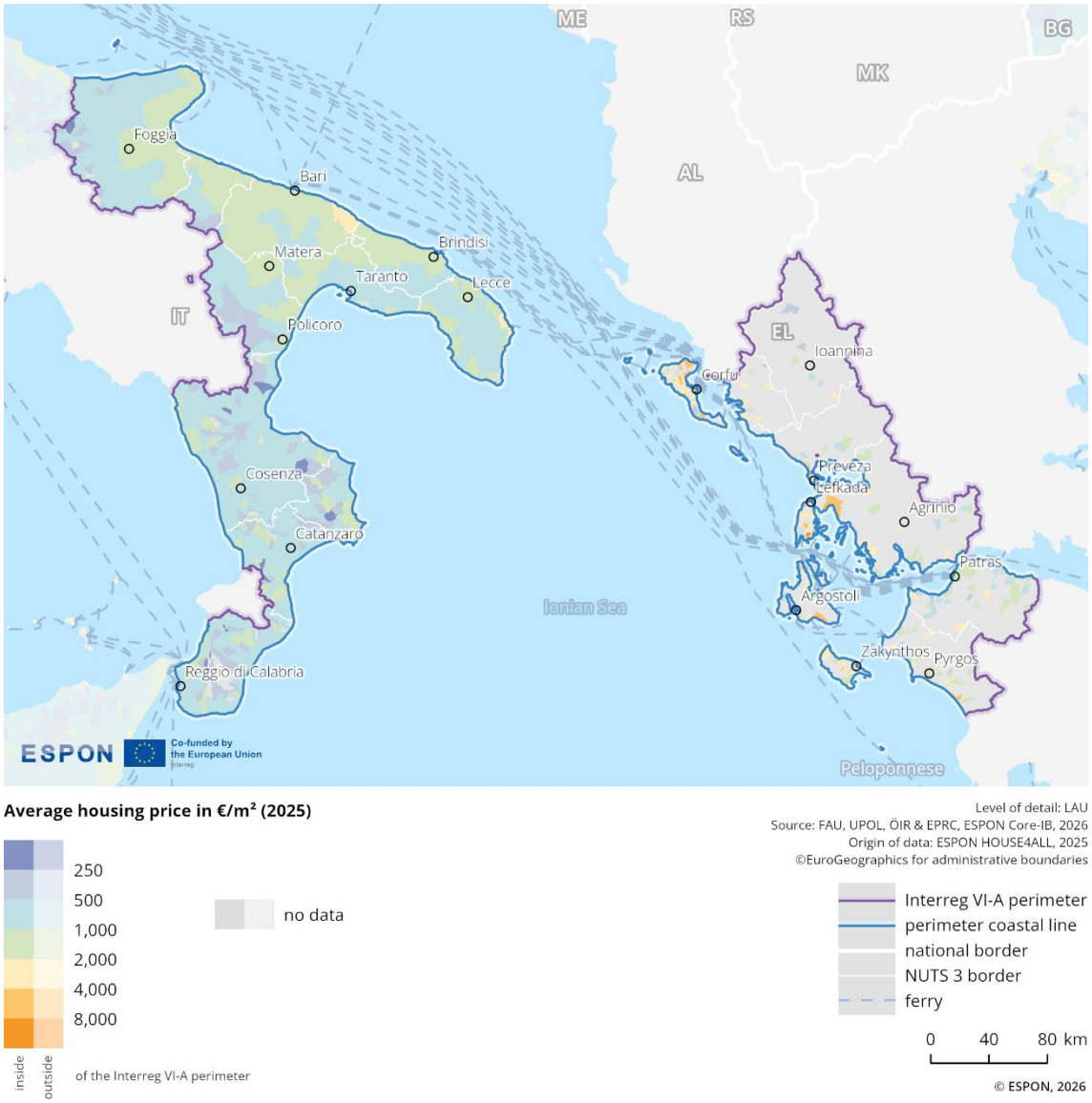
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processed ESPON House4all data. The original data is collected via web-scraping of national listing websites over a one-year period.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024/2025
- **Unit**: Average price per square meter (€/m^2)

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.16 illustrates the advertised sales price of housing in 2025 in the cross-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.

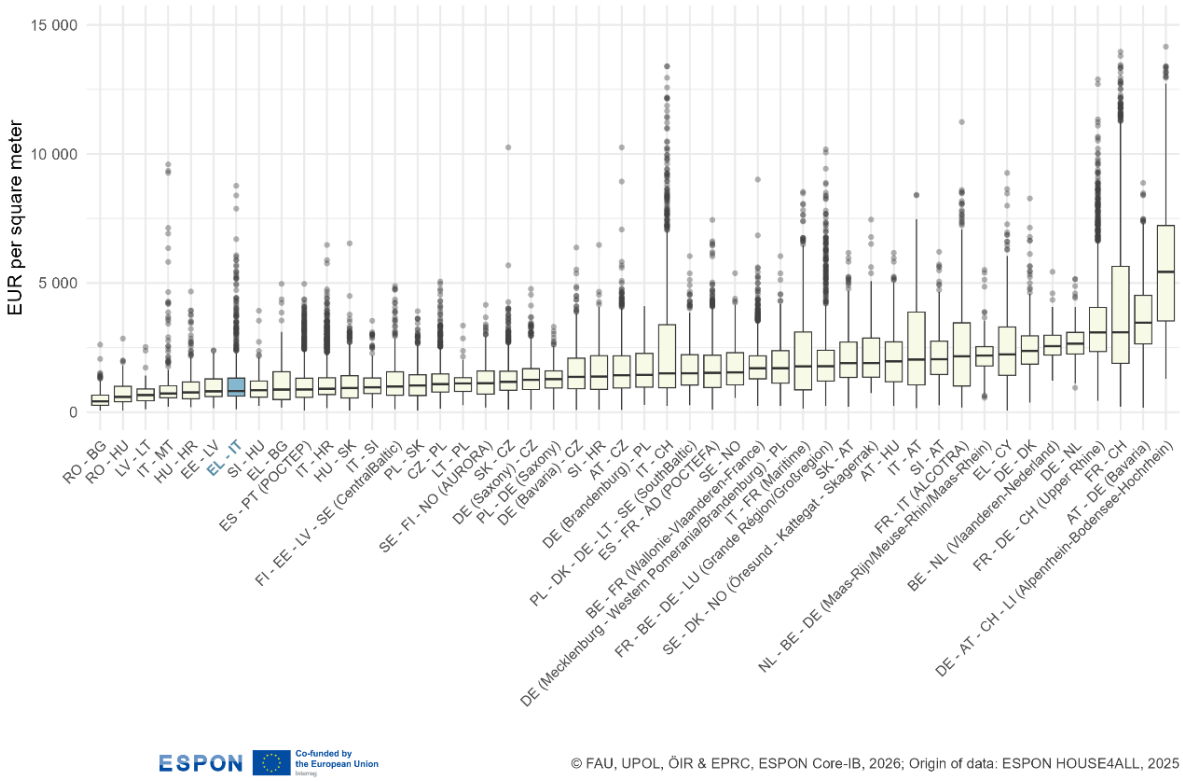
The map shows that the average prices range from 56 to a maximum of 2,000 €/m² in the Italian part of the cross-border area. An exception is a small part of the coastline with higher prices. In the Greek part, the highest prices are found in seaside resorts and on the Ionian Islands, where they range from 4,000 to 8,000€/m². In contrast, prices in the interior reach around 1,000 €/m². Additionally, the recorded prices cover only small areas in Greece due to the extensive uninhabited areas in the interior. Due to those differences, the 2 parts of the cross-border are not comparable in terms of advertised average sales prices per square meter.

Figure 2.16: Housing prices



The Italian part of the border region records an average advertised residential sales price of approximately €803 per square metre, while the Greek part shows a substantially higher average price of about €2,449 per square metre. According to Figure 2.17, the average advertised sales price across the entire cross-border region is estimated at €1,212 per square metre. This value is below the average for all EU-evaluated border regions (€1,900 per square metre) and remains well below the European average of approximately €5,600 per square metre.

Figure 2.17: Advertised housing prices (comparison)



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.

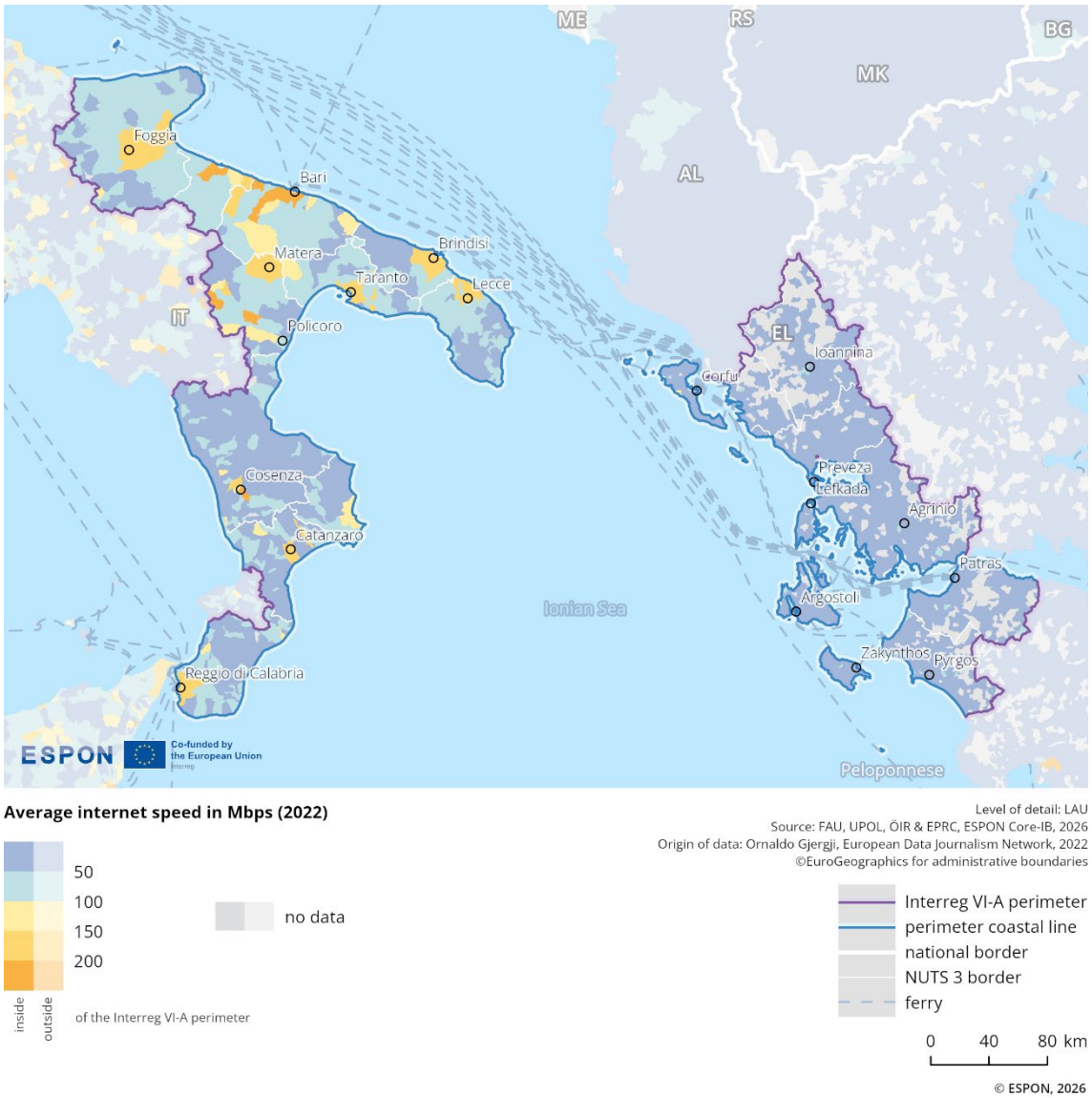
Digitalisation is a highly relevant issue in European border regions, with the overarching objective of ensuring appropriate digital access. It is widely recognised as a key precondition for successful regional and economic development. A major challenge in this process is preventing 'digital divides', 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 Foggia, Bari, Matera, Taranto, and Catanzaro report relatively high average speeds, while 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 cross-border region have high download speeds, the Greek cities do not stand out in this regard. The average internet speed in Italy is significantly higher than in Greece, where it is below 50 Mbps. Mountainous terrain in both countries clearly poses a challenge to providing high-speed internet. In the case of islands and 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 GDP per capita of the border region is considerably lower and less dynamic than the European average. The share of employment varies between 50% and 80% across the border region, with the island of Zakynthos in Greece standing out with higher values. The share of working-age people has continuously decreased, a trend particularly pronounced in the Italian areas of the programme region.

The main sectors driving the economy are education, health and social work, wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, transportation and storage, as well as accommodation and food services. Due to the maritime location of the cross-border region, special economic activities such as fishing and maritime tourism are also central to the GVA. Although the regional GVA dropped sharply in 2020, the economy recovered within the following 2 years. Salaries remain uneven, with significantly higher wages in the Italian border regions.

While wage differences could act as an incentive, geographic barriers, low employment rates, and significant language obstacles indicate a very low potential for work-related mobility across the programme region. However, no data is available on cross-border commuting to confirm this.

Although the Italian part of the cross-border region has a higher average salary, this is not reflected in the average housing prices: the average housing prices on the Greek side of the border region are more than twice as high as on the Italian side, at over €2,000.

Access to the internet is overall poor across the programme area, with relatively better connectivity only in the Italian northern part of the programme area around urban centres and in a few mountainous villages such as Accettura, Craco, and Consenza.

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.

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

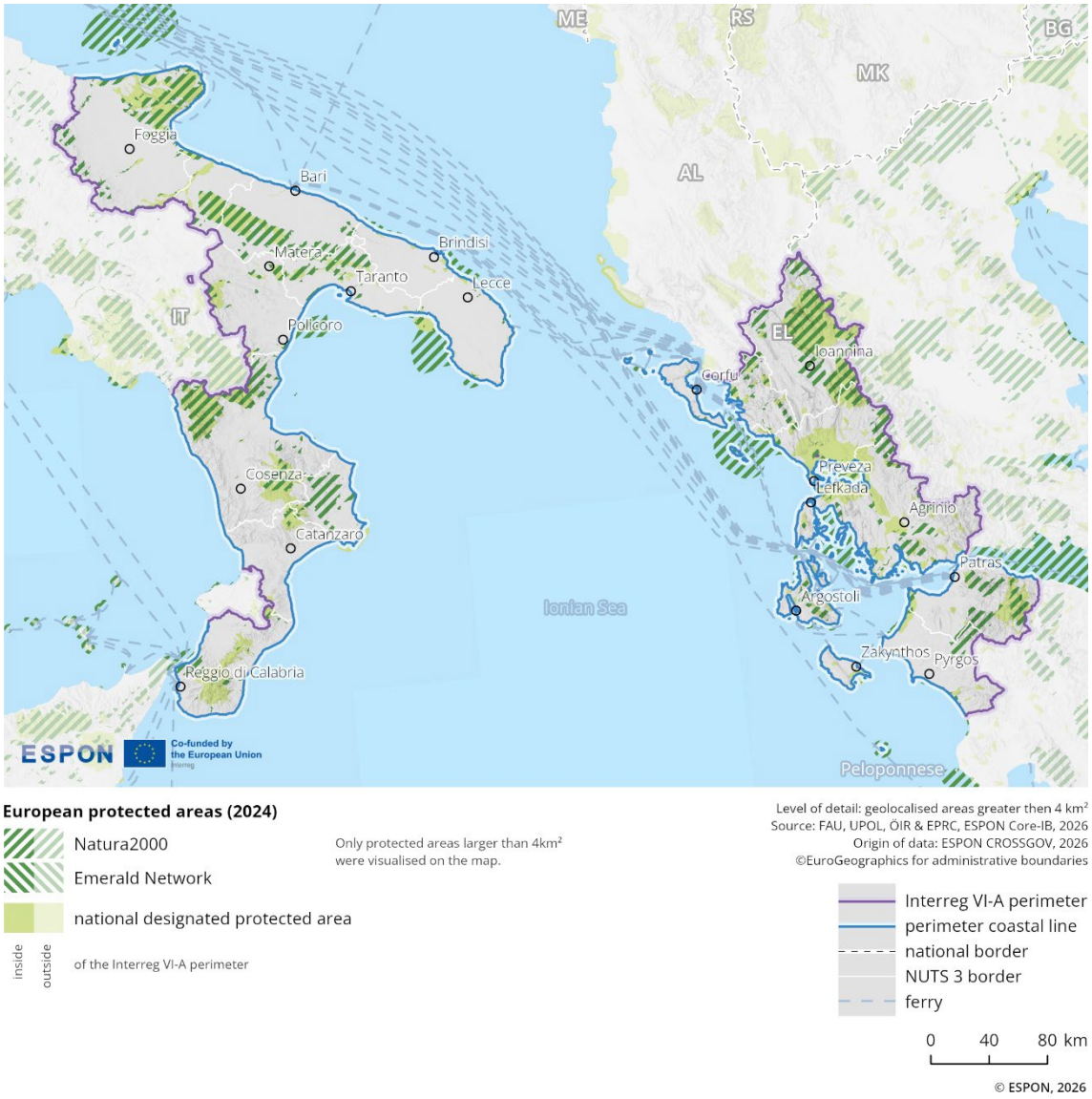
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.19 illustrates the distribution of protected areas in 2024 across the Greece-Italy programme area. 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 cross-border region are concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of both programme areas. On the Italian side, clusters appear near Foggia, Matera, and Catanzaro, with overlaps between Natura 2000 and national designations. In Greece, dense protected zones are visible around Agrinio, Patras, and around the south of Corfu located islands, including coastal and marine sites. Central parts of the cross-border region show significant gaps, especially inland areas in southern Italy and western Greece.

Cross-border counterparts are not present between the Italian and Greek sections due to the maritime separation. However, internal continuity is notable within each part of the cross-border region, especially in the Greek programme area, where protected areas form extended, interconnected networks. Both regions also share Mediterranean forest ecosystems that are highly susceptible to fire risk. These circumstances highlight the importance of cooperation within the cross-border region and joint Interreg projects on this issue.

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.

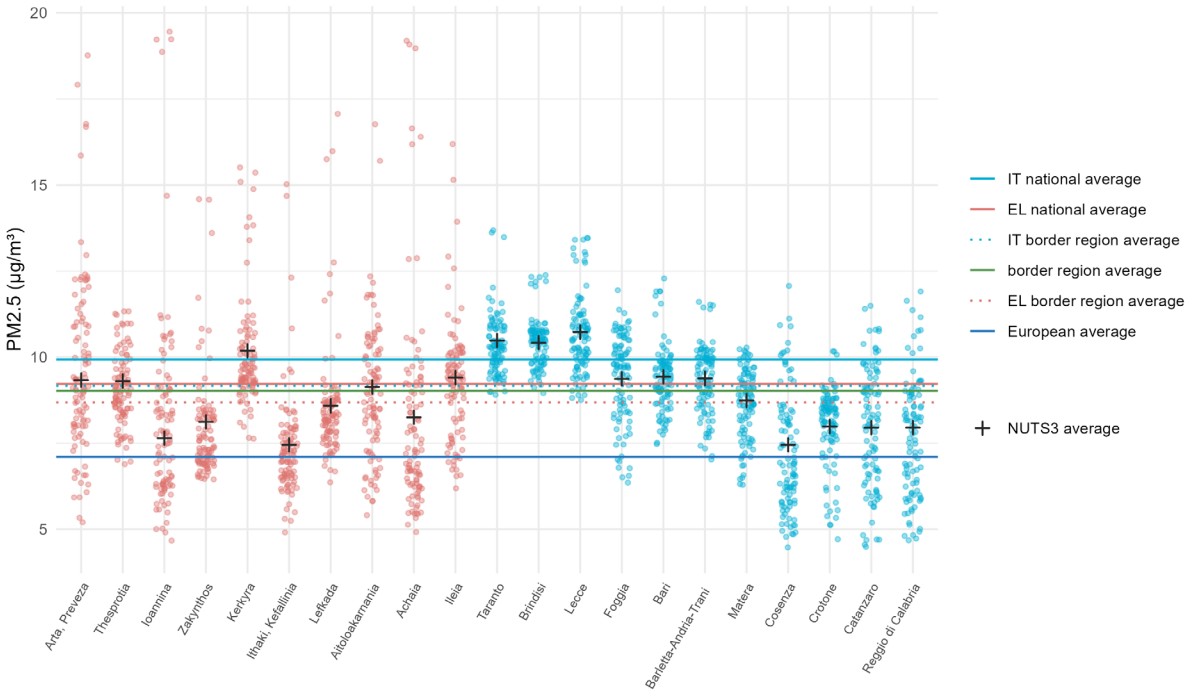
The graph shown in Figure 2.20 illustrates PM2.5 concentrations (in µg/m³) across analysed NUTS3 regions in Greece and Italy. Each small dot represents an individual measurement, while the black crosses indicate the average PM2.5 concentration for each NUTS3 region[10]. The regions are aligned along the x-axis, with Greek regions on the left (in red) and Italian regions on the right (in blue).

PM2.5 measurements in the Greek region show a wider range compared to those in the Italian regions, where values are more concentrated and rarely exceed 12,5 µg/m³. However, Italy shows a higher national average PM2.5 level than Greece.

The Italian border region average lies below both the Italian national average. A similar pattern is seen in the Greek national and border region averages, although the difference is less pronounced.

The average PM2.5 level in Europe is lower than both the national and border region averages of the 2 countries. It is also noticeably below the cross-border region average. The cross-border average falls between the Greek and Italian border region averages, with all 3 values are closely aligned.

Figure 2.20: Air pollution



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

[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.

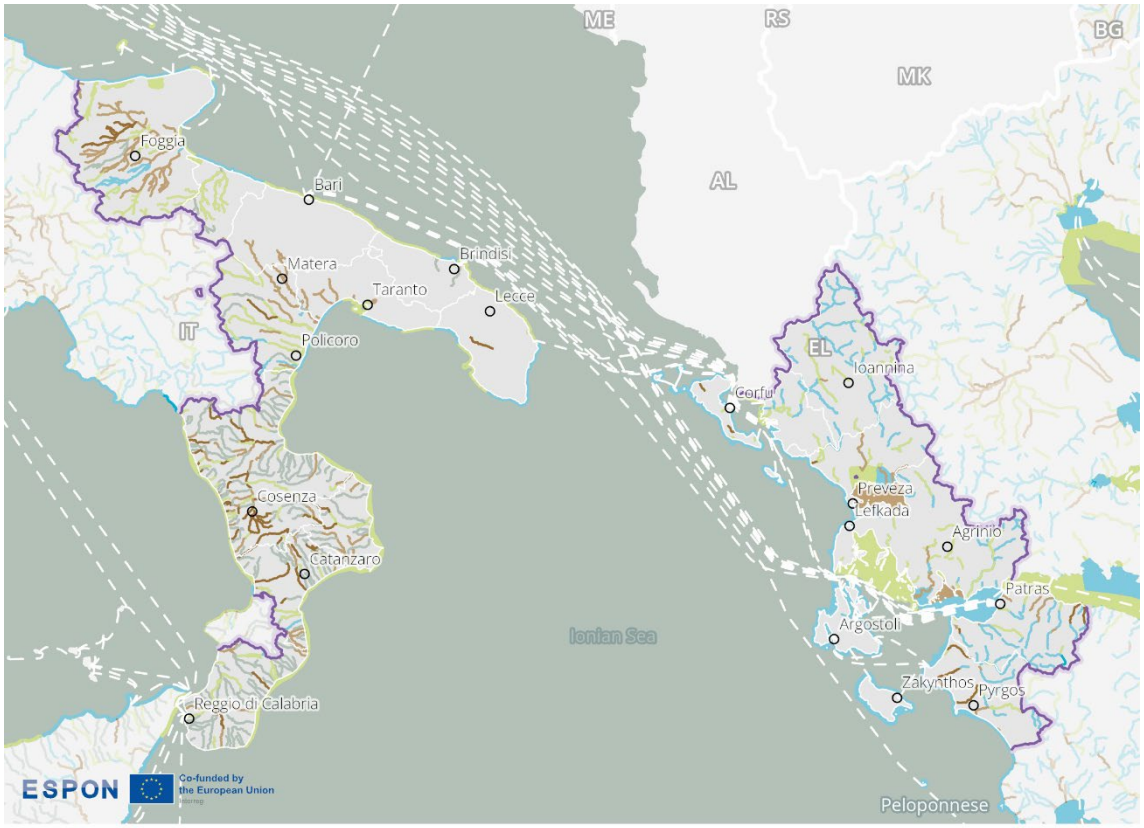
Figure 2.21 illustrates water pollution levels in Italy and Greece within their cross-border region in 2022. Water quality is represented using 6 colour-coded categories, ranging from bad to high, including an 'unknown' category[11].

In the Italian part of the cross-border region, water quality tends to be rated as moderate to poor or bad. Only a few rivers are rated as having good or high water quality, especially around the city of Foggia in the northern part of the border region. In contrast, the Italian coastal areas are consistently rated as having moderate to good or high water quality. However, in the southern Italian part of the cross-border region, many rivers are classified as 'unknown', which limits the reliability of the data due to missing information.

In the Greek part of the cross-border region, most rivers in coastal areas are rated as having moderate to high water quality, with only a few areas showing poor to bad water conditions. For coastal waters themselves in particular, the areas around the islands are rated as having good or high water quality.

[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



Water quality (2022*)

- high
- good
- moderate
- poor
- bad
- unknown

inside outside inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

Level of detail: geolocalised lines and areas
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: © European Environment Agency, 2025
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 40 80 km

© ESPON, 2026

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.

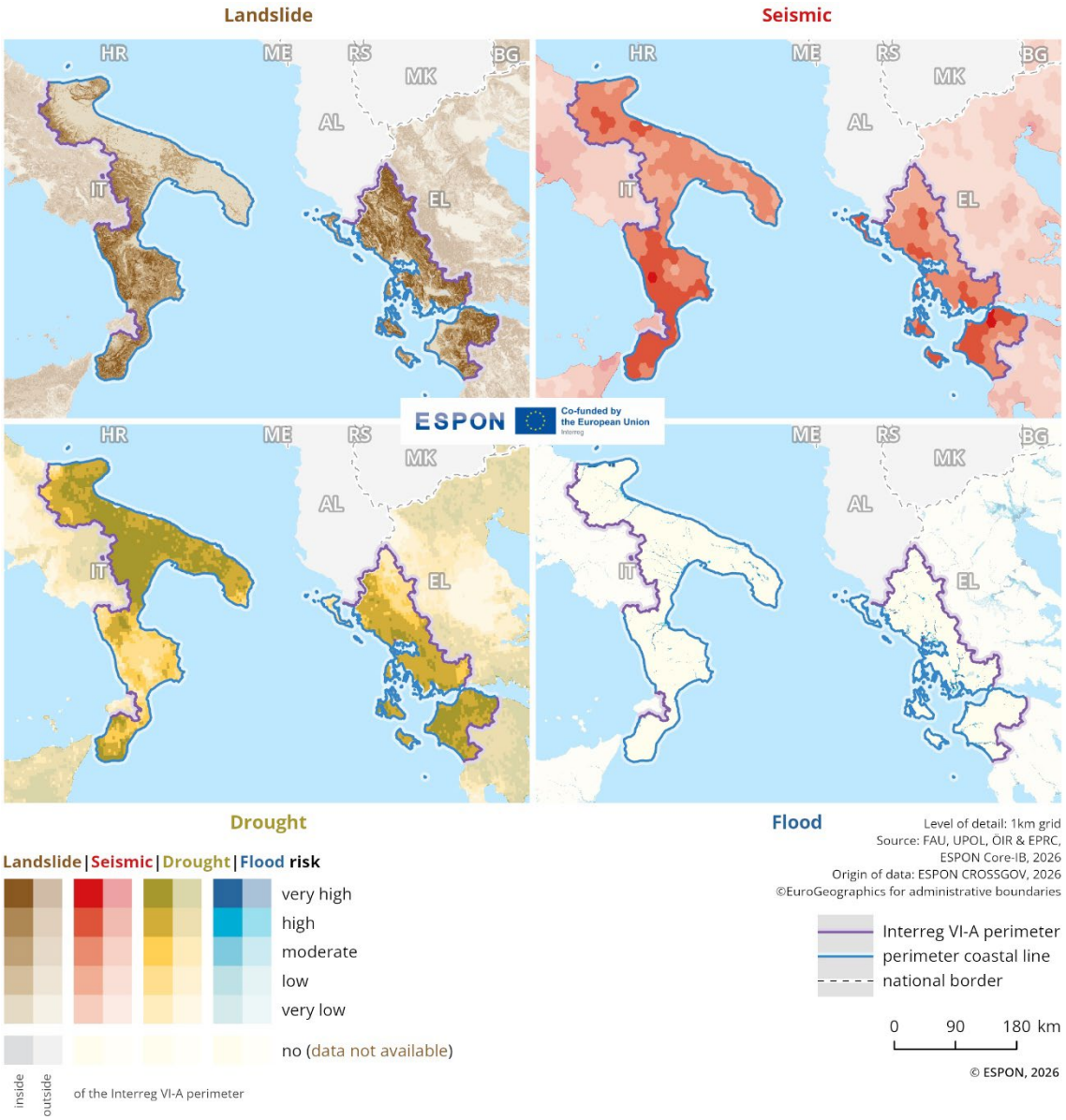
The maps in Figure 2.22 illustrate the spatial distribution of natural hazards in the Greece-Italy region, highlighting areas where risks are shared across national boundaries and where risks are not necessarily cross-border relevant.

The highest risk of natural disasters in the region stems from droughts. Being both very high in Apulia (Italy) and the south of the Greek part of the region. It should be noted that in this indicator on natural hazard risk, wildfires/fire risk are not taken into account. However, they represent a fundamental threat in the Greece–Italy Interreg area due to heat, drought, and the vulnerability of Mediterranean forest ecosystems. Furthermore, floodings only play a very minor role.

The risk of earthquakes is highest at the very southern tip of Italy as well as the Gulf of Patras in eastern Greek part. With the 2 most active areas being located around 500 km from each other, the cross-border relevance is low. The risk of landslides is high in the southernmost part of Italy as well as in most of Greece. The risk increases further inland, with the Pindus Mountains being a main source for risk.

[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

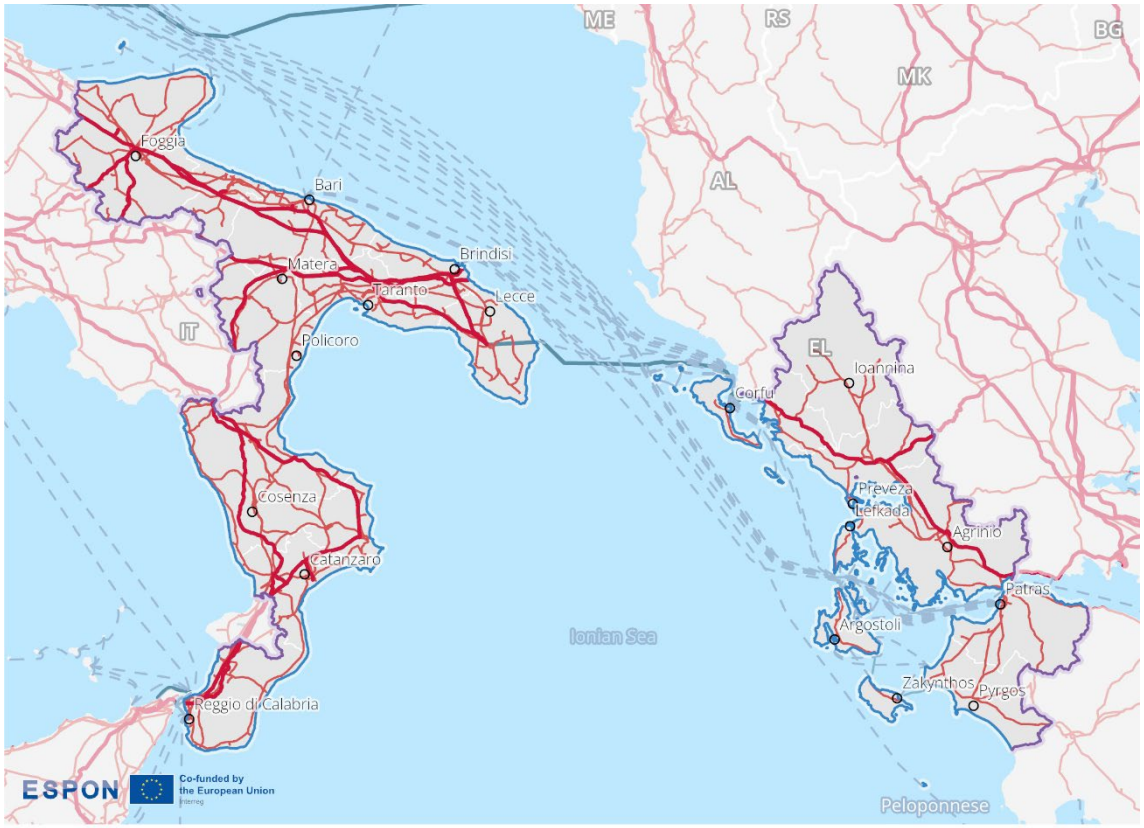
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.23 illustrates the distribution of power lines and cables in 2025 across the Greece-Italy cross-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 of Greece-Italy shows relatively extensive high- and extra high-voltage transmission in each country. Italy has a denser network of extra high-voltage lines, which is also due to the size of the area, with one of them on the Salento peninsula connecting directly to Greece via an undersea cable. On the Greek side, the extra high-voltage line continues south-east and branches into 2 lines, which continue further inland. In both countries, these major lines are supplemented by high-voltage grids.

[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 40 80 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.

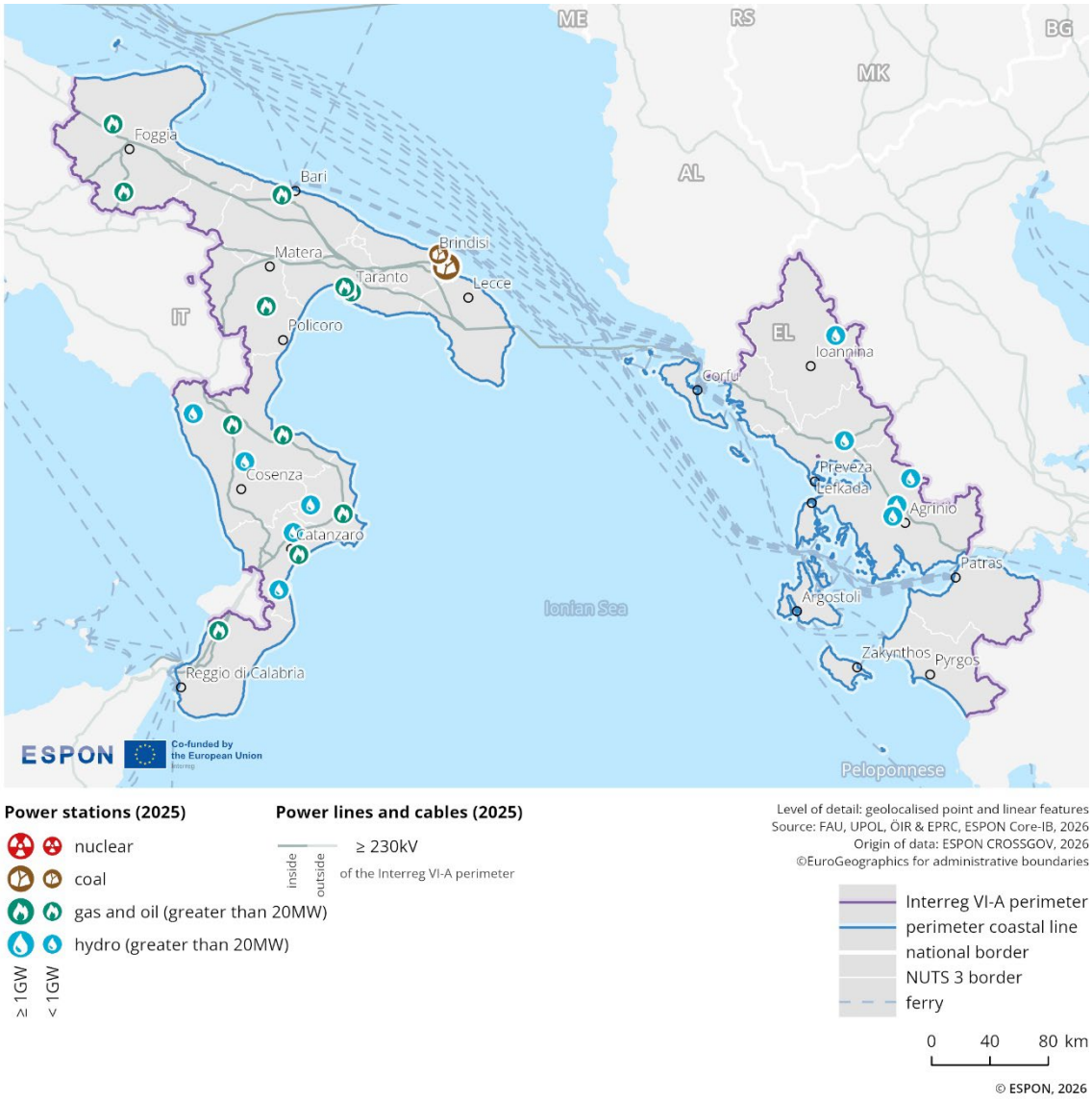
As shown in Table 1, in the Greece-Italy cross-border region, there are a total of 25 power station locations, with almost equal number of gas and oil stations (12 in total) and hydroelectric ones (11 in total).

Table 1: Number and type of power stations

Power stations/plants	Less than 1GW	1GW and up
Nuclear	/	/
Coal	1	1
Gas and oil	12	/
Hydro	11	/

According to Figure 2.24, all of 12 oil and gas power station locations are situated in Italy, with some of them running multiple operations (15 in total). 5 of the hydroelectric power stations are located in Greece mainland, while the remaining 6 are in Italy, all of them in Calabria. There are 2 locations adjacent to each other operating coal-fired power stations in Italy, one of which is high-power. 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

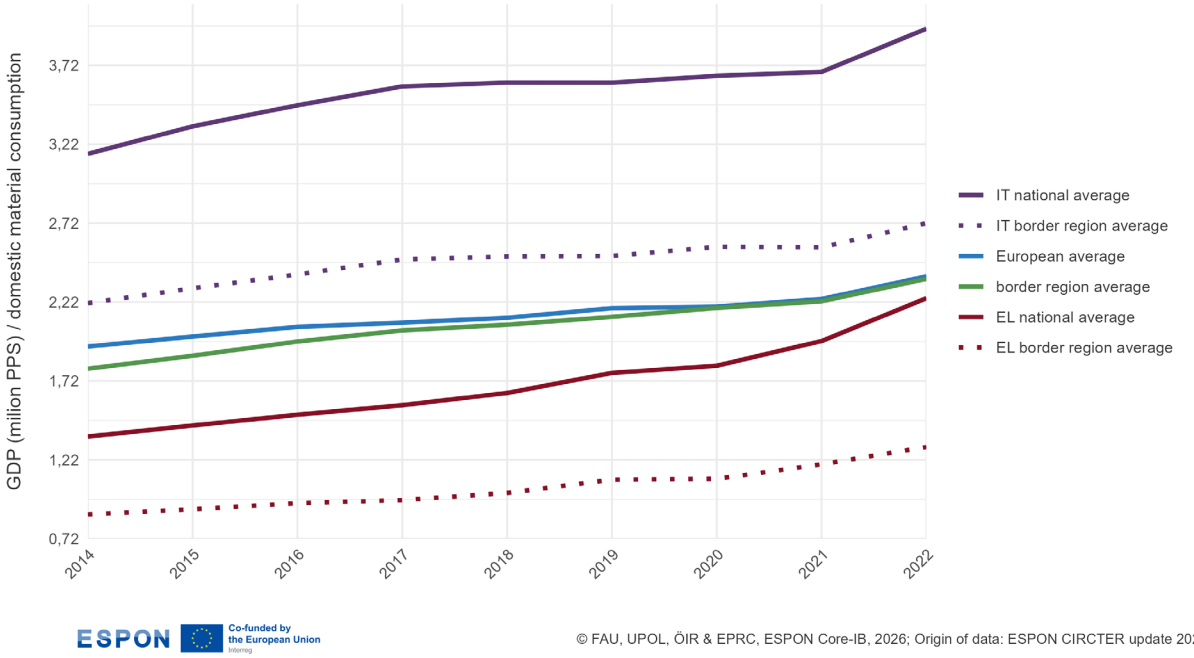
The indicator shows the economic value generated per unit of material consumed for each region within the cross-border area. Developments over time provide insights if the decoupling of productivity from resource use is progressing on regional level.

- **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 Italian and Greece national averages, the averages of their respective border regions, and the overall border regional average with the European average.

Figure 2.25: Resource productivity



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The Italian national average of resource productivity is represented by the highest line in the graph, showing an increase over the period from around 3.22 in 2014 to over 3.72 million PPS/DMC in 2022. The Italian border region average follows a similar trend but remains clearly lower.

The Greece national average also shows an upward trend during the observed period but on a significantly lower level compared to the Italian values and the European average. The Greece border region average follows a similar pattern, but at notably lower level than the Greece national average.

The European average lies significantly below the Italian values, but is closely aligned with the border regional average. This border region average represents a combination of the lower values from the Greece border region and the higher values from the Italian border region, reaching around 2.42 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

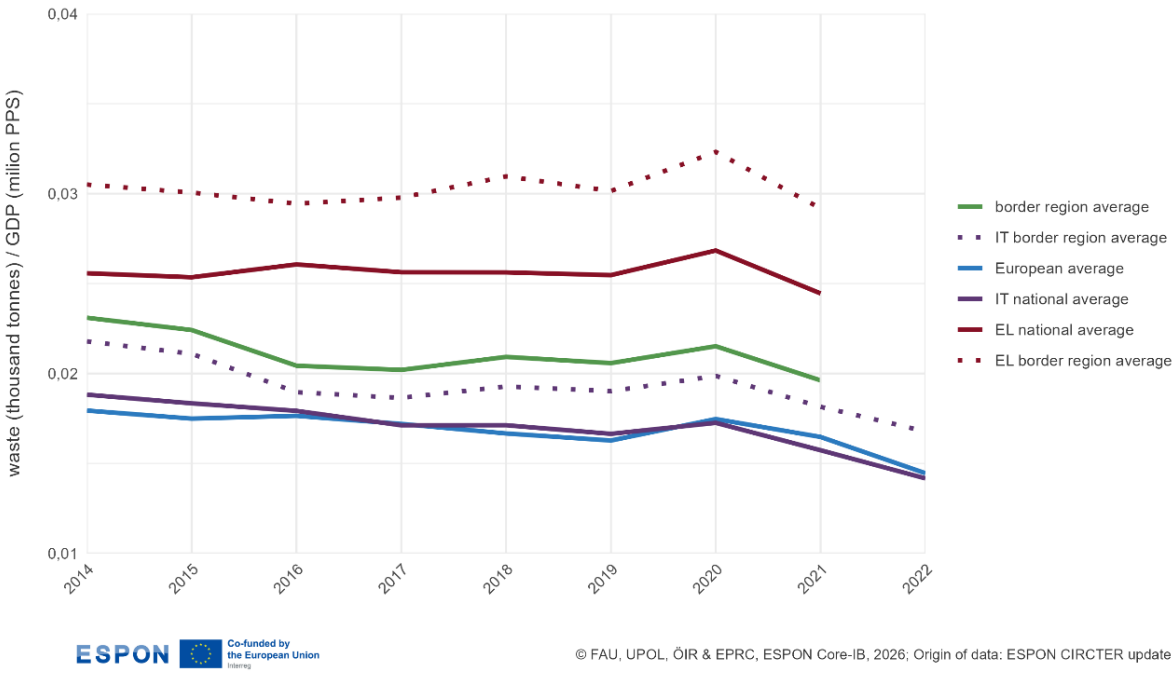
The indicator shows the regional distribution of waste creation in relation to the GDP development. Comparing waste generated to GDP reflects the waste intensity of the economy and provides a measure of "eco-efficiency". Observation of its change from year to year permits to assess whether the economy 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 Standard) of GDP from 2014 to 2022 in Greece, Italy and their Interreg border region.

Figure 2.26: Waste generation per GDP



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Greece's national average remains almost constant over the observed period, at a level of approximately 0.025 thousand tonnes of waste per million PPS, with a slight increase in 2020, followed by a decline. A similar trend is observed in the Greek border region, though the values are significantly higher than the national average, reaching around 0.03 thousand tonnes of waste per million PPS. Both the Italian national and border region values show a slight downward trend, with the national average reaching approximately 0.017 thousand tonnes of waste per million PPS in 2022.

The European average gradually decreases from around 0.018 in 2014 to approximately 0.015 thousand tonnes of waste per million PPS in 2022, closely aligning with the Italian national average. The cross-border regional average consistently remains above the European average and lies between the higher values of the Greek border region and the slightly lower values of the Italian border region. In 2022, it reaches approximately 0.017 thousand tonnes of waste per million PPS.

2.3.5 Key messages on the green dimension

The Greece-Italy border region is characterised by nationally designated protected areas mostly overlapping with Natura2000 areas, partially concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of the cross-border region. Although these areas do not form a continuous network, they address similar environmental challenges, as both sides of the cross-border area share comparable landscapes, including maritime, coastal, and mountainous ecosystems. Mediterranean forests, highly susceptible to fire, are particularly vulnerable.

Air pollution levels in the programme region are above the European average, likely influenced by the recurrent forest fires affecting the region. The highest risk of natural disasters stems from droughts, while landslides and seismic activity represent relevant threats in mountainous areas. Flooding plays only a minor role.

Water quality is generally better along the coast than inland, with Greek coastal areas showing higher quality overall. On the Italian side, data gaps are prevalent and do not allow for a detailed assessment.

Energy production is based in part on hydropower from the mountainous regions, but the Italian side shows a more diversified mix, including gas, oil, and coal power plants (some of which are located near protected areas). Electricity transmission infrastructure is extensive in both countries, with Italy hosting a denser extra high-voltage grid due to the size of the territory. A key feature is the under-sea extra high-voltage cable linking the Salento peninsula directly to Greece.

Environmental resource use also shows cross-border disparities. The Italian side demonstrates higher resource productivity than the EU average, while Greek border regions performance is lower than the European average. Waste generation per unit of GDP follows a stable downward trend on both sides, though values remain consistently higher in Greece.

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 cross-border connectivity in social media 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.

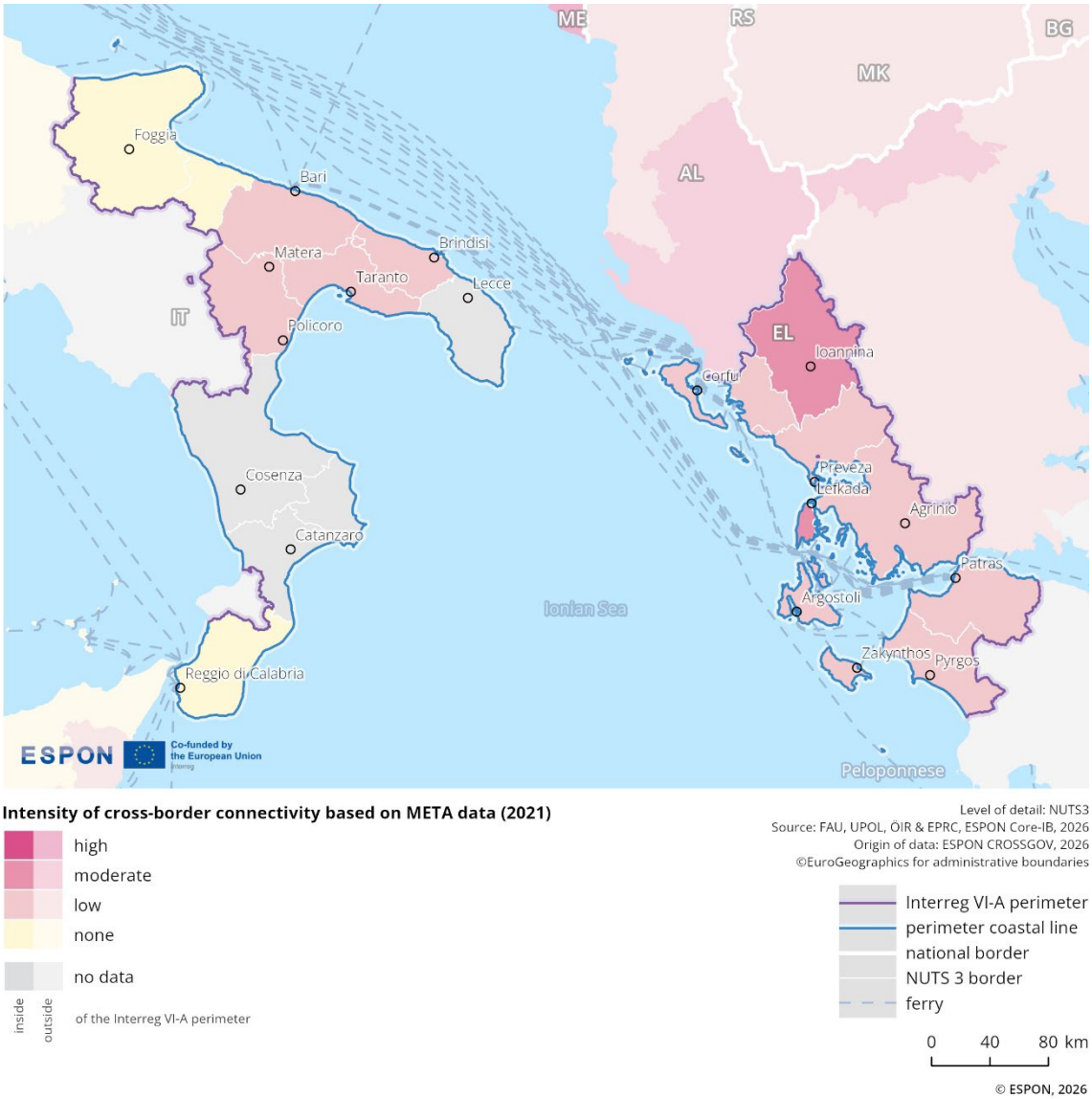
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing Facebook data on existing connections across the border (data for Good Meta)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2021
- **Unit**: n/a

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 highly heterogeneous. In the Italian areas including Bari, Matera, and Taranto, cross-border connectivity in social media is low, while in other Italian areas in the north (around Foggia) and south (south of Catanzaro) no connectivity is recorded. Data are unavailable for the remaining Italian areas (around Catanzaro and the eastern protrusion east of Taranto). In most Greek areas, cross-border connectivity is low (around Corfu, Preveza, Agrinio, Argostoli, Zakynthos, Patras, and Pyrgos), with moderate values observed around Ioannina and Lefkada.

Figure 2.27: Cross-border connectivity in social media



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. As a minority language, the Greek dialect 'Grekanika' is spoken in some Italian parts of the programme area, namely Calabria and Apulia albeit by a low number of native speakers today. This dialect is considered a remnant of ancient Greek communities that settled in this Italian region centuries ago and connects the history and culture of these areas. More broadly, both sides of the border region have strong Hellenic roots, evident in common traditions. Furthermore, there are initiatives such as the 'Area Grecanica' local action group in Calabria, where dialogue is fostered and projects to valorise these roots are developed, as well as numerous town-twinning schemes, providing a solid foundation for further cross-border cooperation.

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.

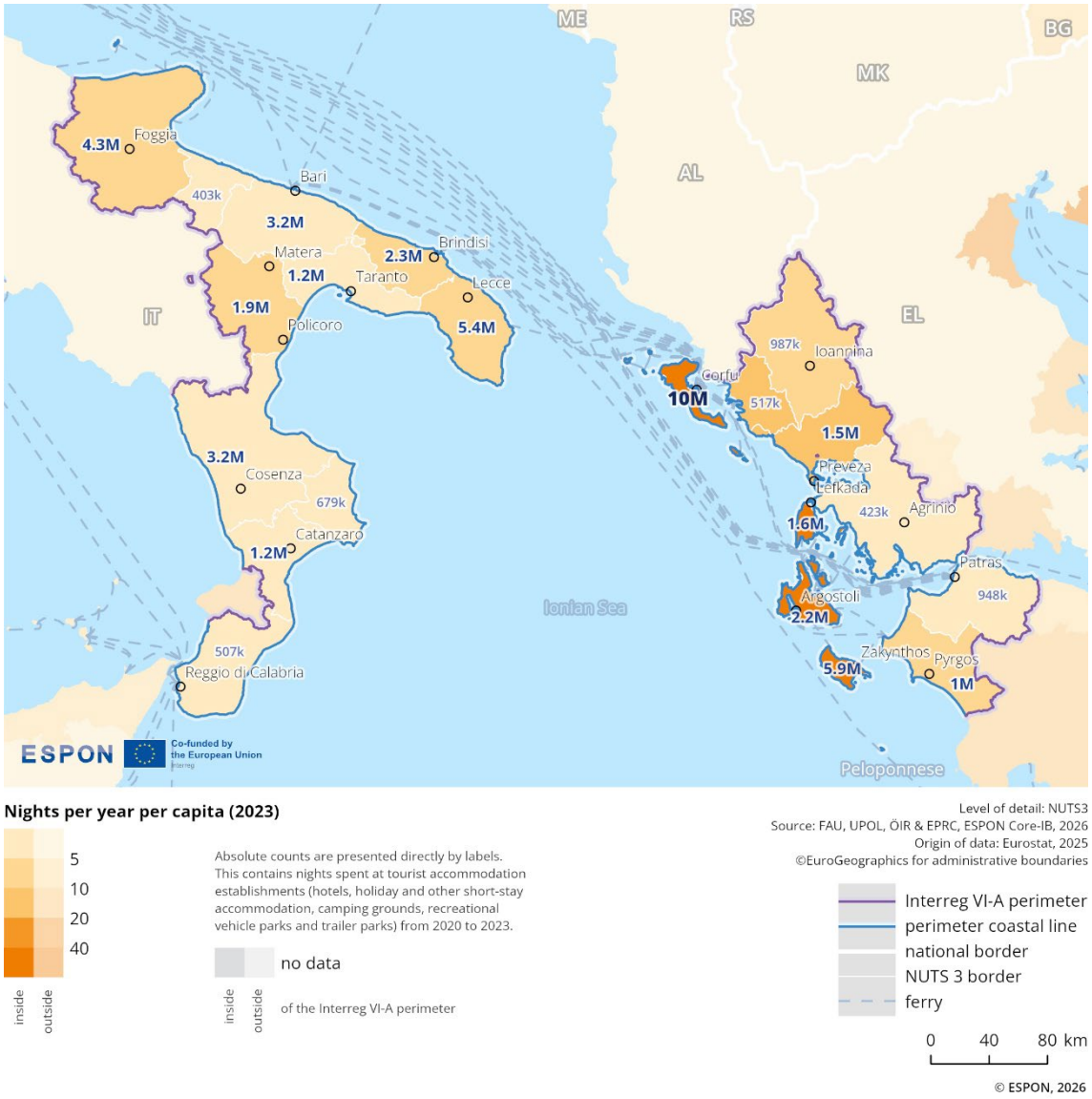
- **Source**: Eurostat
- **Temporal coverage**: 2020-2023
- **Unit**: Nights per capita

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.

Figure 2.28: Overnight stays in tourism



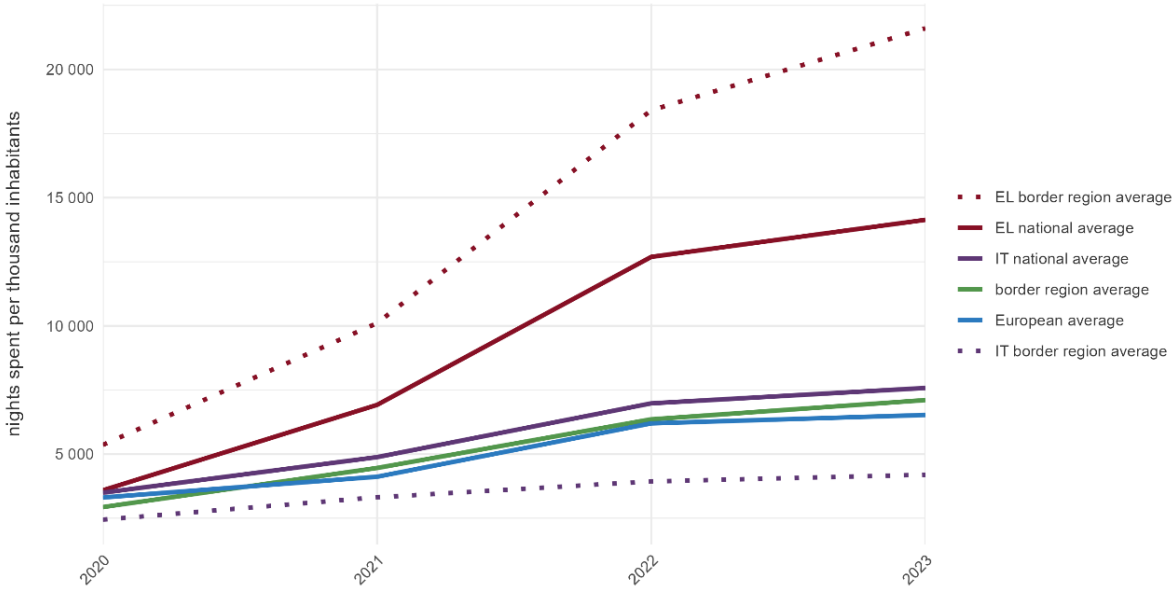
In 2023, several NUTS3 regions in this programme area exceed 40 nights per capita, including Kerkyra, Lefkada, Ithaki, Kefallinia and Zakynthos[14]. Here, some popular UNESCO cultural and natural heritage sites are located, such as the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Zagori region and the old town of Corfu. In comparison, the Italian per capita figures are somewhat lower. In terms of total overnight stays over the 3-year period, the leading tourism NUTS 3 regions are located in both countries: Kerkyra (approx. 10 million), Zakynthos (approx. 5.9 million), Lecce (approx. 5.4 million), Foggia (approx. 4.3 million) and Cosenza (approx. 3.2 million).

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 Greece-Italy programme area is quite similar to the overall European average, which includes EU member states and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway. While the border regional average in Greece is higher than the national average for all 4 years, the Italian border regional average is lower than the national average. Additionally, the regional average for the Greece border area is significantly higher than that for the Italian throughout the given period.

[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&

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: Overnight stays in tourism (comparison)



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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:

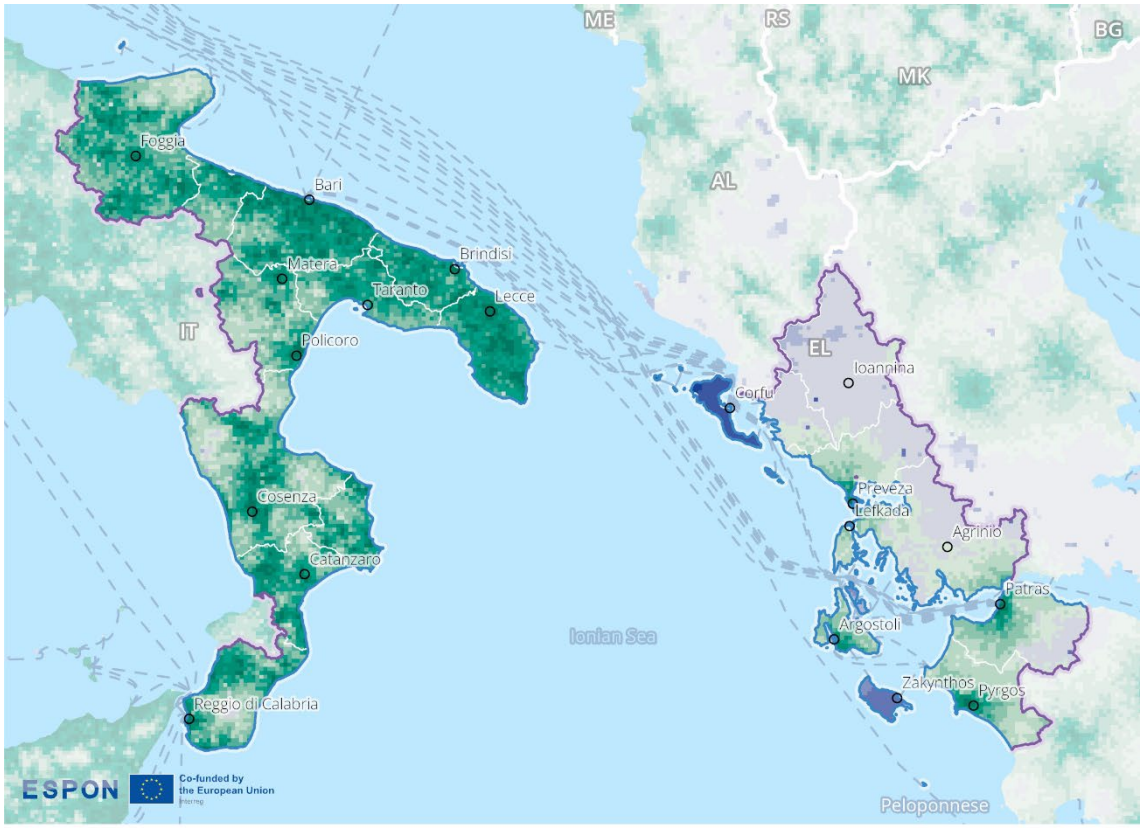
- Secondary schools (Figure 2.30)
- Grocery shops (Figure 2.31)
- Hospitals (Figure 2.32)
- Doctors (Figure 2.33)
- Pharmacies (Figure 2.34)
- Cinemas (Figure 2.35)

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 Greece–Italy border area, essential services such as hospitals, doctors, pharmacies, schools, and grocery shops are not evenly distributed across most areas in either country. In Italy, the shortest travel times are found in the northern part of the programme area, while in Greece, most services are concentrated around the cities. As a result, travel times exceed one hour in some analysed southern parts of Italy and in certain areas of Greece. Accessibility to services of general interest is especially low on the Greek islands. Travel times in general tend to be generally longer in Greece.

Hospitals are mainly located in cities and more densely populated areas. This common challenge in Greek and Italian border areas creates an urban–rural gradient. Travel times are shorter in and near urban centres and longer in rural or remote regions. The same applies to cinemas as a cultural service, whereby it should be noted that the collected data do not include summer open-air cinemas, a seasonal and regionally specific feature that is particularly popular in Greece.

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

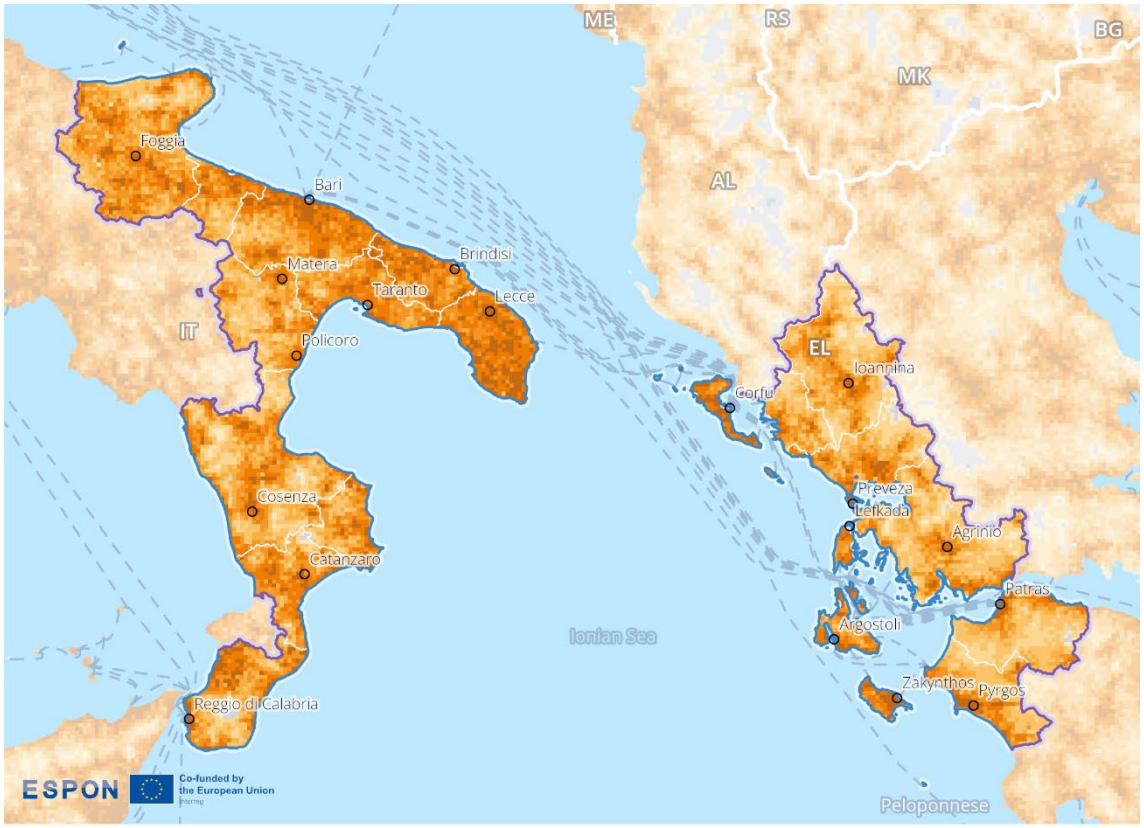
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 40 80 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

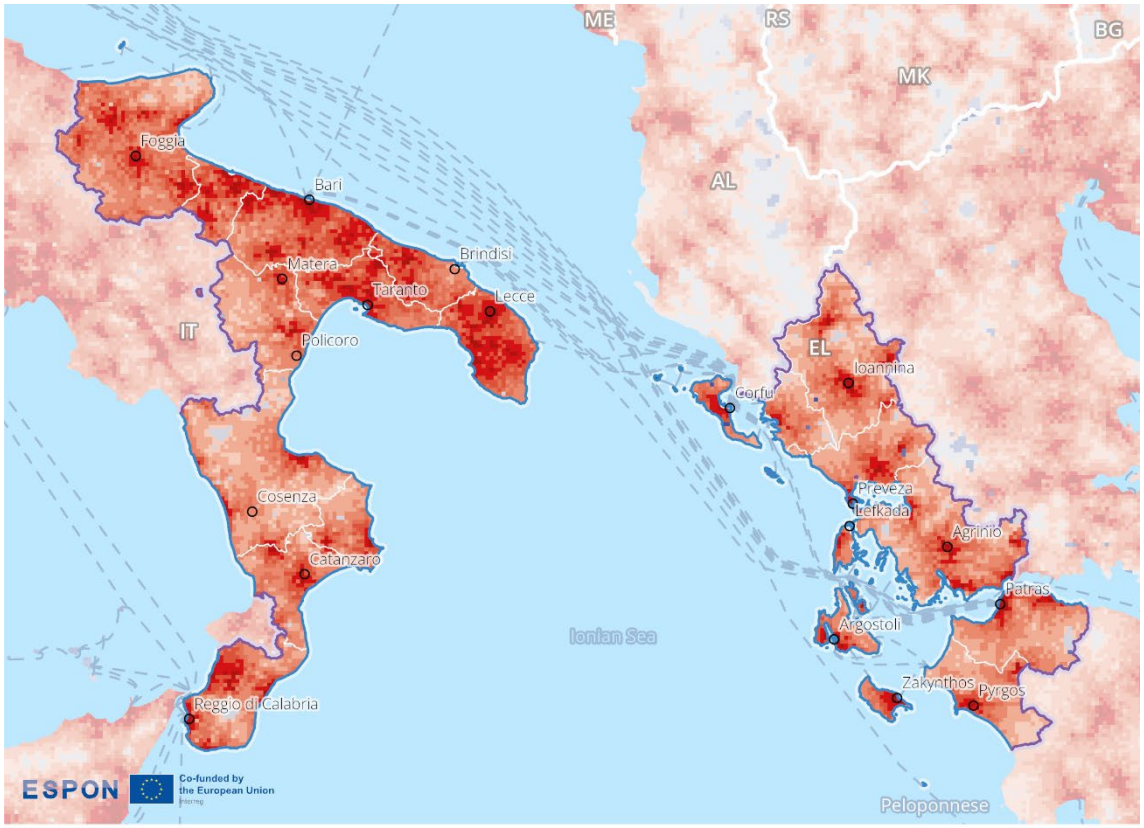
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 40 80 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

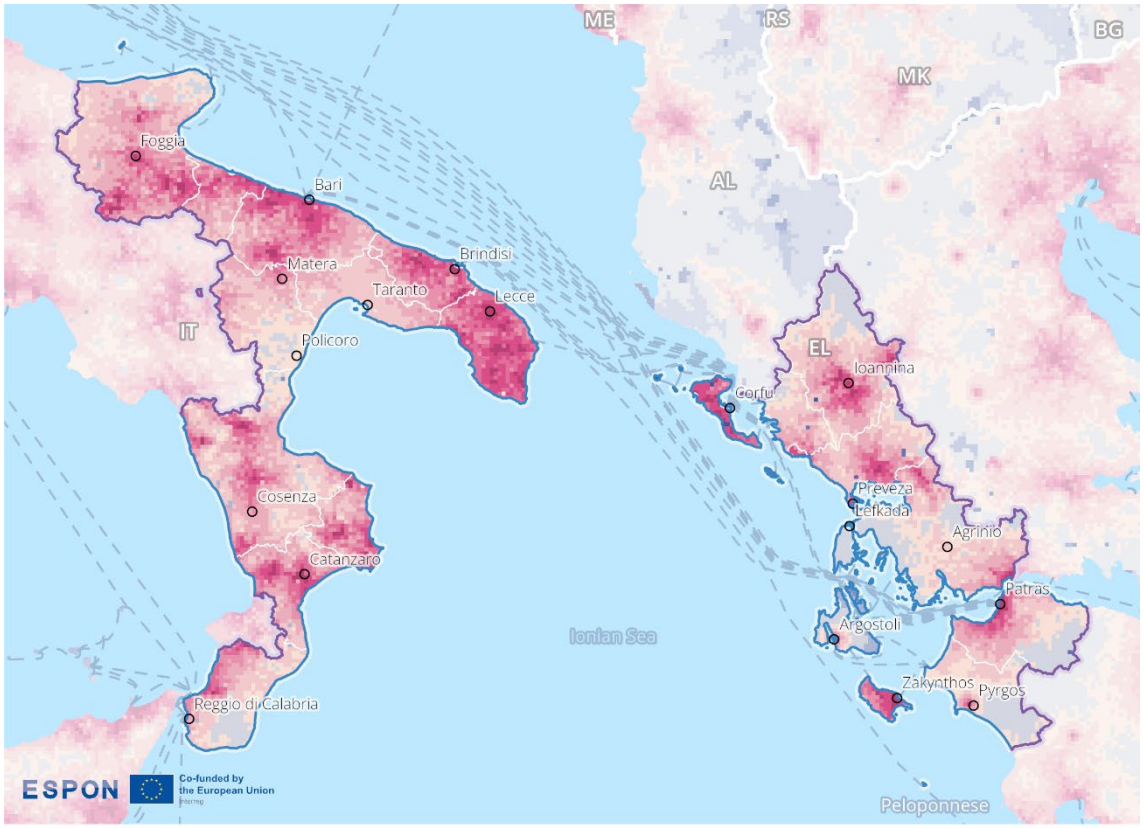
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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 40 80 km

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

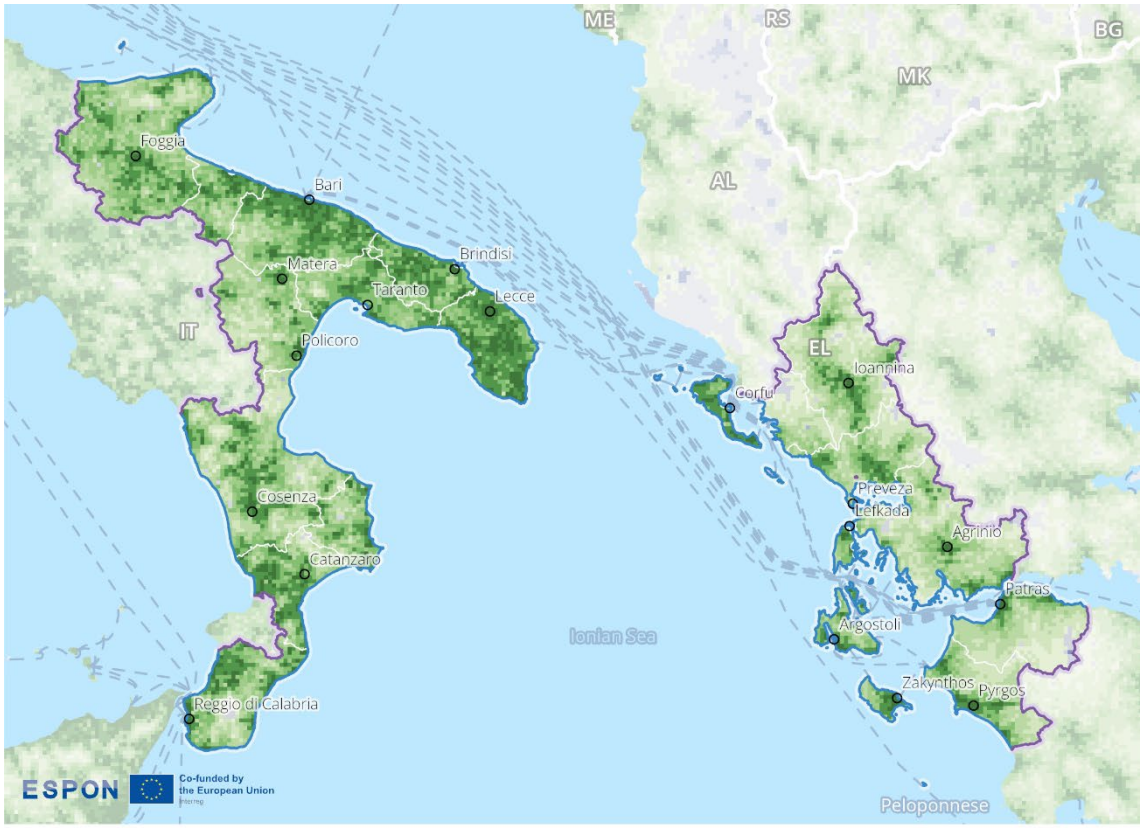
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 40 80 km

© ESPON, 2026

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

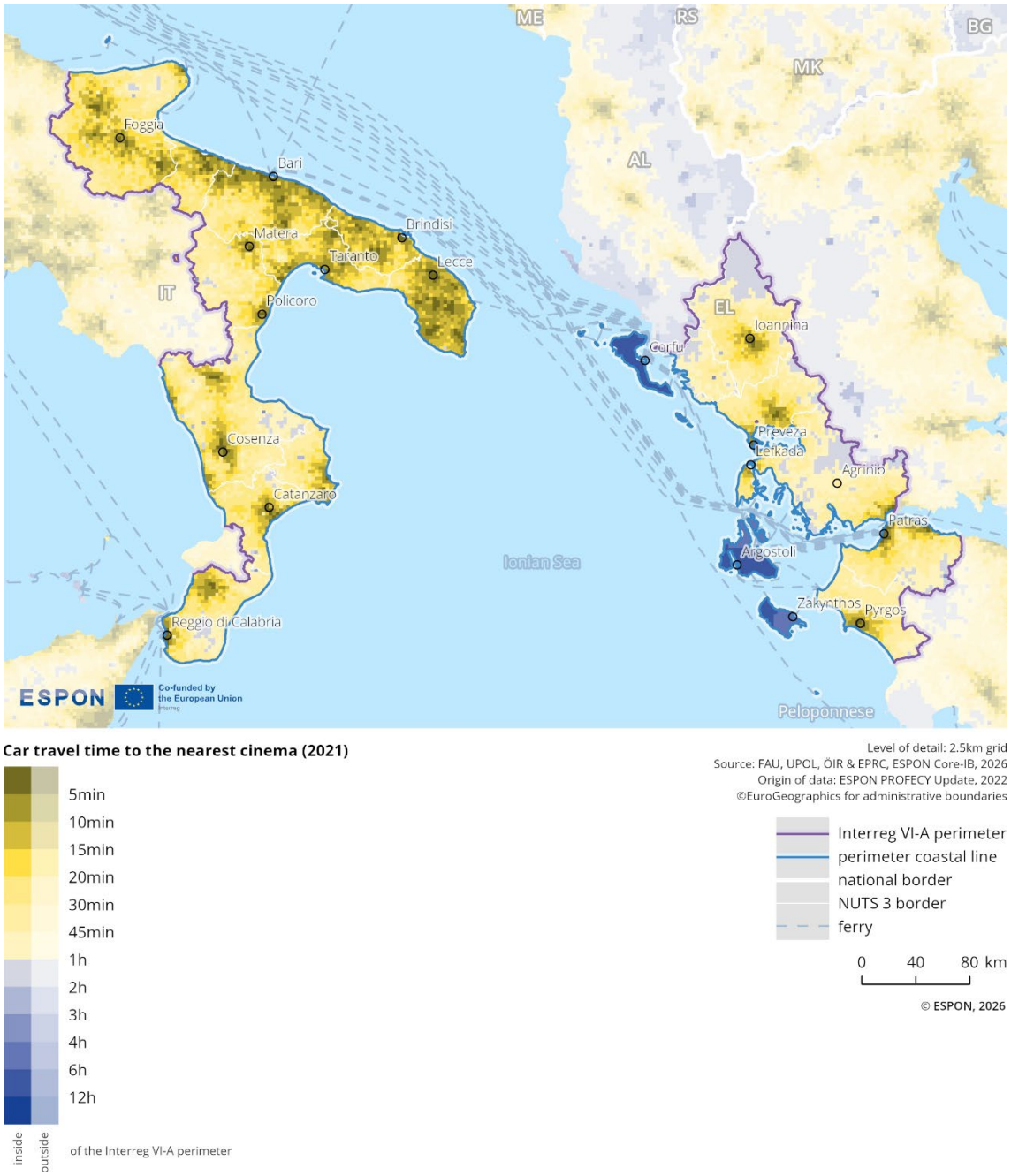
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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 40 80 km

Figure 2.35: Travel time to cinemas



2.4.4 Key messages on the socio-economic dimension

The border region shows asymmetries in social interaction, language, tourism, and access to services. Cross-border connectivity in social media differs along the territory and is mainly concentrated around the Greek city of Ioannina and the island of Lefkada. Although Italian and Greek are linguistically unrelated, some communities in Calabria and Apulia continue to speak a Greek dialect. However, this linguistic heritage does not appear to have a significant impact on present-day social interaction, which remains generally limited.

Tourism is a shared economic asset but reveals distinct regional contrasts. On the Greek side, the number of overnight stays per capita is very high on all the islands within the programme area and moderately high in the Epirus region. In Italy, tourism is mainly concentrated in the provinces of Foggia and Lecce. Between 2020 and 2023, the average number of nights spent in tourist establishments per

thousand inhabitants in the Interreg programme area was in line with the European average, though Greek border regions recorded significantly higher values. Intensive coastal tourism represents an opportunity, particularly for the development of stronger transport connections, integrated tourism packages, and more sustainable coastal models, however is not without environmental and social challenges.

Access to services of general interest also differs between the 2 sides. In Italy, accessibility is relatively good, with most areas able to reach hospitals and doctors within an hour, though mountainous zones experience longer travel times. The Greek part of the border region on the other hand appears to be more oriented towards tourism in its service accessibilities. Especially on islands, shops, pharmacies and hospitals are quite rapidly accessible while doctors, cinemas and secondary schools need longer travel times.

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:

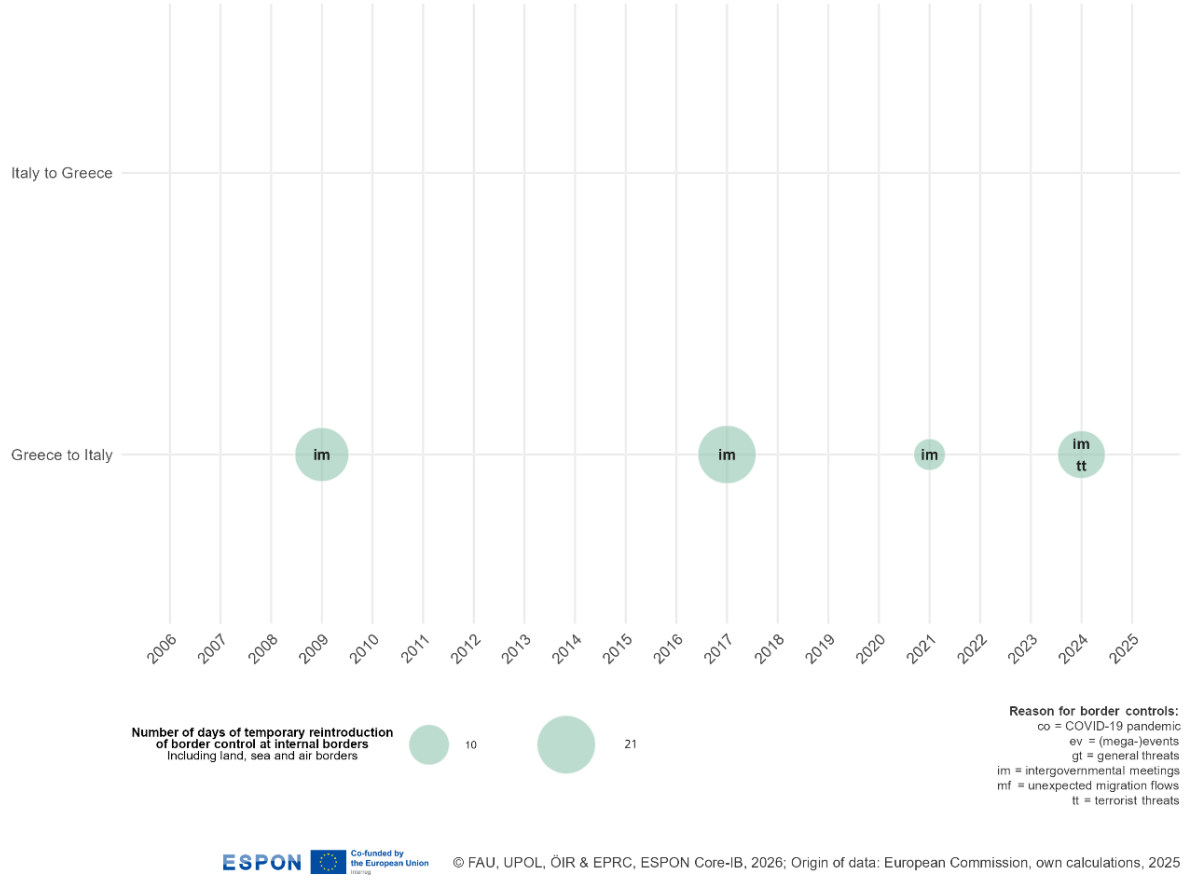
- co – COVID-19 pandemic
- ev – (Mega-)events
- gt – General threats
- im – Intergovernmental meetings
- mf – Unexpected migration flows
- tt – Terrorist threats

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.

Both, Greece and Italy had already been part of the Schengen Area by 2006.

Figure 2.36: Temporary reintroduction of border controls



The Greece-Italy border area is characterised by an asymmetric pattern:

- Crossing the border from Italy to Greece: Between 2006 and 2025, Greece did not reintroduce any temporary border controls to Italy.
- Crossing the border from Greece to Italy: Temporary border control occurred in 4 out of 20 years, driven by intergovernmental meetings like G7/G8 summits (2009, 2017, 2021, 2024).

From a comparative perspective, Italy has implemented controls for significantly more days than Greece, 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 analysis of temporary reintroductions of border controls between Greece and Italy shows that Italy has reintroduce controls at all borders (land, air, and sea) in 4 occasions between 2006 and 2005, on the occasion of important intergovernmental summits like the G7 and G8, alleging for risk of terrorism, violent activity, and threats to public order and security.

This maritime border does not appear to be particularly vulnerable to temporary closures. However, if controls were to become more frequent or prolonged, they could negatively affect socio-economic interaction between the 2 regions, especially during the peak touristic season.

2.6 Governance dimension

This section outlines the cross-border profile of the Greece-Italy cross-border programme area. Over time, cooperation between Italy and Greece has strengthened, particularly through EU-funded cross-border initiatives under Interreg.

The programme area is embedded in wider territorial cooperation frameworks, most notably the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)[15], which provides a macro-regional context for coordinated action in areas such as blue growth, environmental protection, sustainable tourism, connectivity and risk management.

In addition to the cross-border programme itself, cooperation in the Greece–Italy area is supported by broader transnational and macro-regional cooperation formats, including synergies with the Interreg ADRION and MED programmes and other initiatives addressing shared challenges in the Adriatic–Ionian basin. These frameworks contribute to policy alignment and strategic coordination, particularly in fields related to the blue economy, climate adaptation, maritime connectivity and environmental governance.

Cross-border governance in the programme area is characterised by a strong strategic orientation but comparatively limited institutionalisation at local level, reflecting the maritime nature of the border. Cooperation has therefore developed primarily through programme-driven projects and thematic networks rather than through a dense system of EGTCs or cross-border service structures.

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.

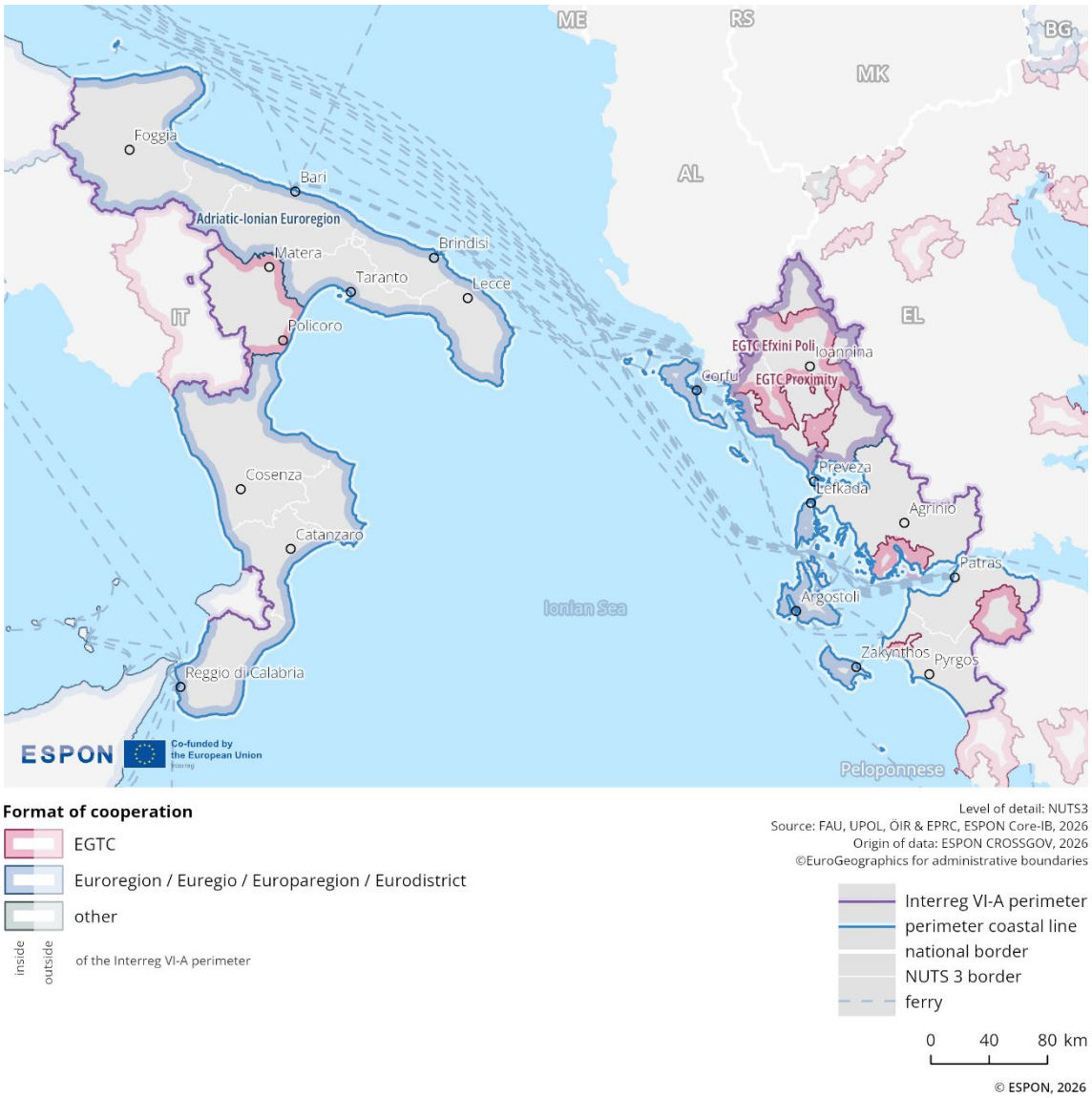
[15] For more information, see the EUSAIR website: https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/

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 institutionalisations: 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 shows broad spatial coverage along the borders. Overall, the region exhibits a high level of institutionalised cooperation along the national border, with relatively large perimeters.

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.

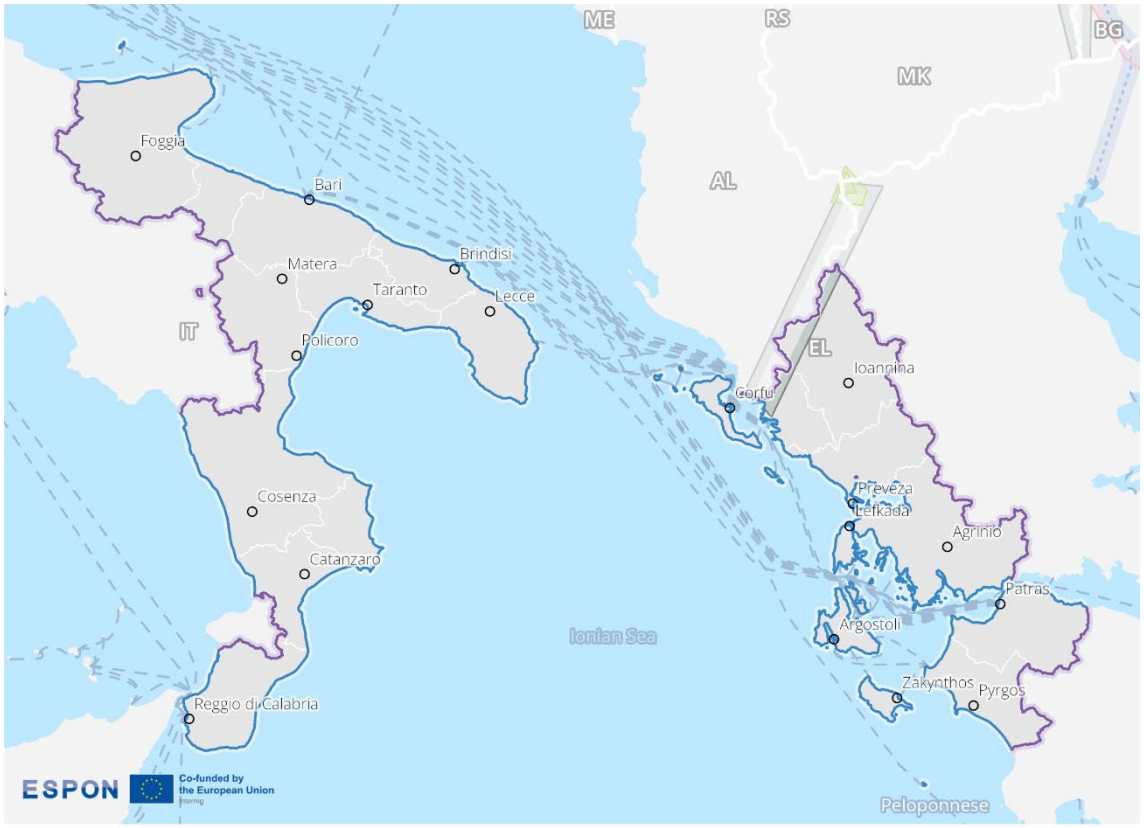
- **Source**: ESPON cross-border public services (CPS) 2.0 database
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.38 depicts the geographical extent of cross-border public services in the area between Italy and Greece 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 southern Adriatic region between Italy and Greece are virtually absent. The map indicates no established services between Apulia and western Greece across the Ionian Sea. A single small-scale of 'other' service is visible along the Albania–Greece border, with no further services present within the depicted territories.

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 40 80 km

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 Greece-Italy 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

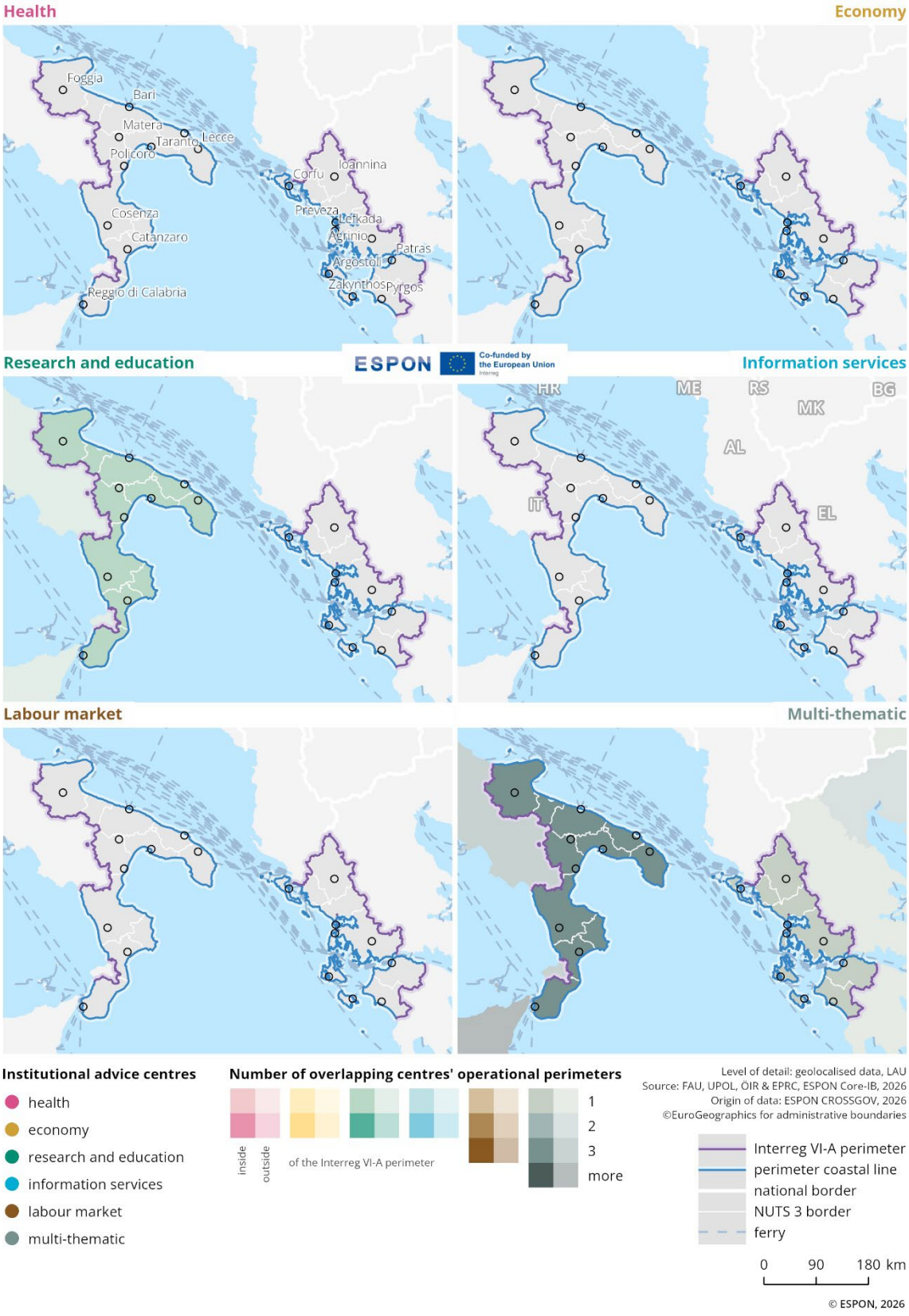
The indicator shows where institutionalised advice centres on cross-border issues are located, including their thematic focus and geographical perimeter.

- **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.

The map shown in Figure 2.39 visualises the locations and types of institutionalised advice centres, along with their operational domains, in the cross-border region between Greece and Italy. 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



There are no institutionalised advice centres in the cross-border region displayed on the map, nor are there any outside the cross-border region.

Centres with multi-thematic operational domains are represented in both countries within the Interreg area, but they are more pronounced in the Italian part of the cross-border region. Additionally, research and education operational domains are also present in the Italian part.

2.6.2 Outline of Interreg activities

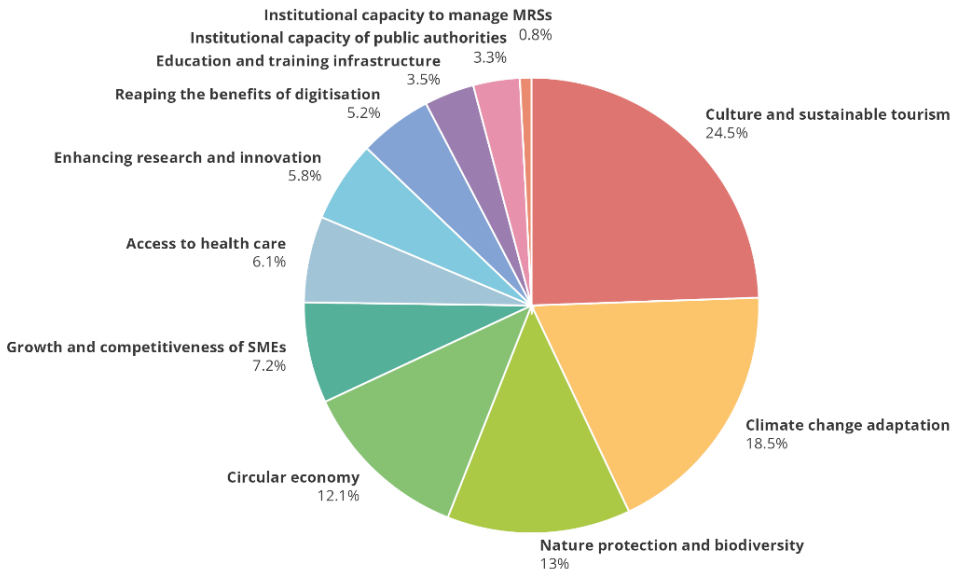
The following section outlines the key Interreg activities in the 2021-2027 programming period. The aspects included concern the development opportunities and challenges identified (see Table 2), the budget available and split of allocation (Figure 2.40), overlapping Interreg programmes and the key aspects 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	▪ Persistent structural weaknesses in economic performance; ▪ Disparities are further exacerbated by low levels of research and development intensity and limited employment opportunities, particularly in innovation-driven sectors;
Green and Low Carbon	▪ Number of interlinked environmental challenges; ▪ Climate change vulnerability is a key concern, particularly for Epirus, Western Greece and the Ionian Islands; ▪ Waste management remains another significant challenge; ▪ Air pollution, particularly from the maritime transport, also presents a major issue.
Tourism, culture and social inclusion	▪ Interrelated challenges across tourism, culture and education and social inclusion: a key weakness lies in the seasonality of tourism, which significantly affects local economies - especially in regions such as the Ionian Islands and Foggia and Lecce provinces; ▪ Lack of sufficient educational infrastructure and opportunities, particularly for adult learning and vocational upskilling. This is compounded by a high proportion of NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) and a large share of the working population with low educational achievement; ▪ Access to healthcare and social services is also a pressing issue with healthy systems often under-resourced. Many locations within the Greece-Italy maritime border region lack access to core services such as hospitals, primary schools and train stations, underscoring the centrality of joint cross-border actions to strengthen health and service provision.
Governance	▪ Variations in the administrative and legal frameworks among the 2 countries, as well as cultural differences (language) and the different level of capacity building and skills including digital skills of public authorities.

Total Budget: EUR 106,110,571.5

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.[16] The 4 Interreg C programmes Interreg ESPON, Interact, Interreg Europe and URBACT 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)
1	3

Key aspects

- Similar challenges concerning economic disparities and unemployment, climate change adaptation and environmental risks, social inclusion and access to services, and the need for governance capacity building have resulted in joint efforts and a similar strategic approach in the EL-IT programme area.
- A specific strategic focus on areas such as the development of blue and circular economy, an emphasis on innovation and the implementation of sustainable tourism is expected to create a more competitive, greener, socially inclusive and well-governed cross-border region.

[16] 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.

- Building on the continuation of the successful practices of the 2014-2020 programme on the areas of innovation, competitiveness, environment, culture and transport.
- Synergies with macro-regional strategies like EUSAIR and other programmes such as Horizon Europe and LIFE.
- Parts of the programme area are also included within the Interreg B programmes of EURO Mediterranean (EURO MED) and NEXT Mediterranean Sea Basin (NEXT MED), as well as in the Interreg A programme Italy-Croatia.

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[17]. 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

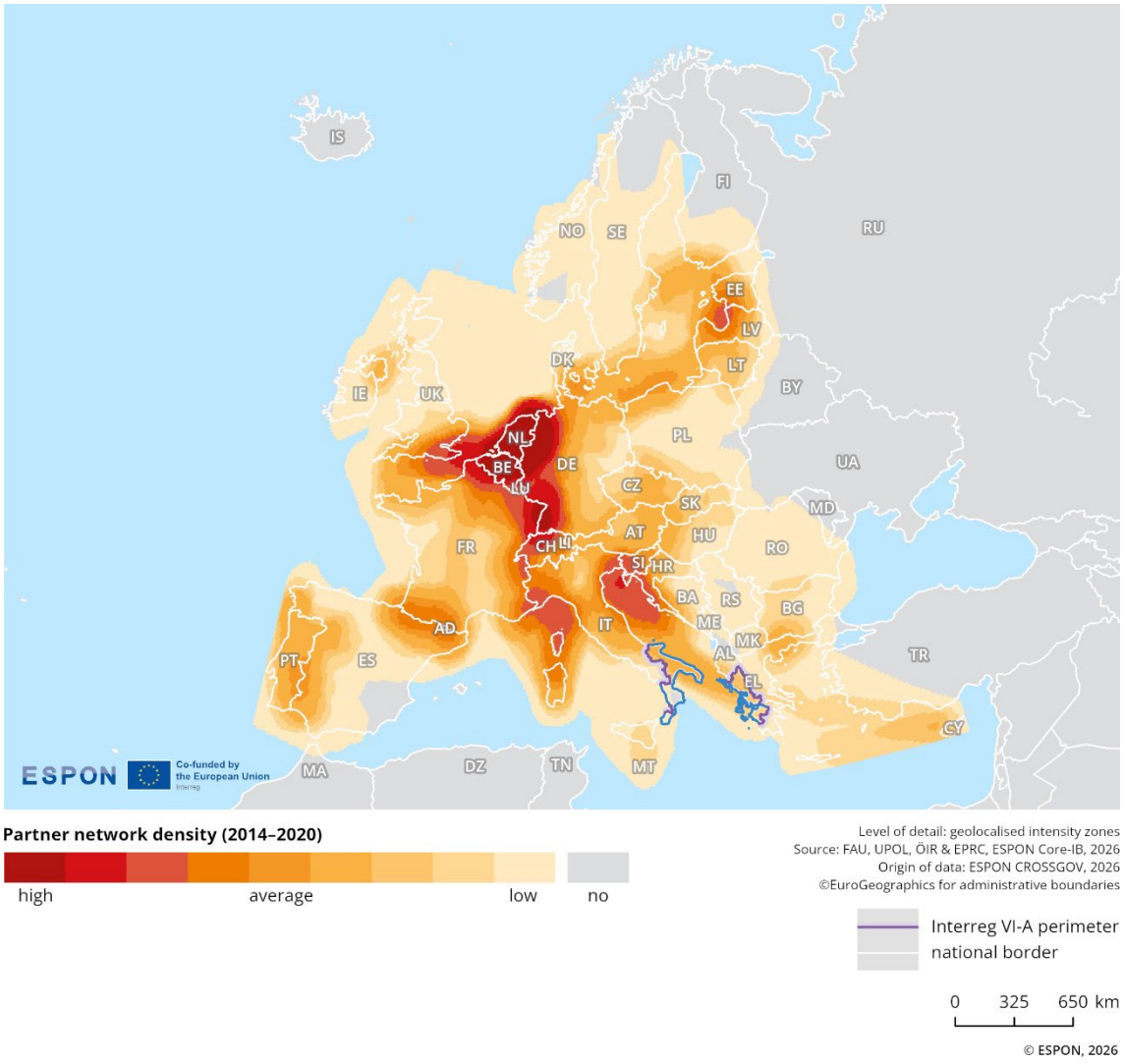
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

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 Greece-Italy border area appears to be somewhat unevenly distributed. The partner network density is slightly higher in the northern parts of the programme area, while regions further south show lower levels of network density. 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 237 in Interreg IV-A (2007–2013) to 183 in Interreg V-A (2014–2020), an decrease of about 23%. 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.

[17] 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 Greece-Italy border regions shows a relatively high degree of institutionalised cross-border cooperation along the national borders, supported among others by the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion. Cross-border public services, however, are absent.

Interreg activities in the region cover a wide range of themes, culture and sustainable tourism, climate change adaptation and nature protection and biodiversity. Partner networks in Interreg cooperation are unevenly distributed: partner network density is slightly higher in the northern parts of the programme area, while southern regions show lower network density of partners within a consortium. Moreover, based on the keep.eu database and excluding duplicates, between Interreg IV-A and Interreg V-A, the number of project partners declined by around 23%.

An area of untapped potential concerns institutionalised advice centres for cross-border issues, which are currently lacking. Centres with multi-thematic operational domains exist in both countries, though they are more prominent in the Italian part of the programme area. Research and education operational domains are also represented only on the Italian side.

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 population of the Interreg Greece–Italy region is steadily declining and ageing, with settlement changes below the European average; density is very low overall, concentrated mainly around urban centres; • Settlement expansion is limited, occurring in specific inland areas of Greece and more widely along the eastern Italian Mediterranean coast; • Transport connectivity is constrained by geography: cross-border movement depends on Bari and Brindisi ports and a few international airports, with long seasonal ferry routes and only limited charter flights; • Essential services are more accessible in Italy than in Greece, concentrated around Bari, the south-eastern Italian coast, and on the Greek island of Corfu.

Territorial dimension	
Policy options	**Population and settlement related aspects** • A relevant policy option is to address demographic change, in particular population ageing, through cross-border strategies with a view to preventing the widening of spatial disparities between dynamic urban areas and shrinking rural regions; • A focus can be on cross-border strategies supporting more balanced spatial development in a context where settlement growth remains concentrated around urban centres such as Bari, Catanzaro, Taranto and Ioannina. **Accessibility related aspects** • The integration of ports, ferry services and airports can form the basis of a more coherent cross-border accessibility strategy extending beyond seasonal tourism flows; • Strengthened cross-border transport strategies may contribute to improved connectivity between inland areas, such as Ioannina and Cosenza, and coastal gateways and ports. **Cross-cutting aspects** • The systematic consideration of demographic decline, low population density and limited cross-border accessibility could support the formulation of coherent territorial development pathways for a maritime border region; • Promoting integrated land–sea spatial planning approaches can be seen as a means to support more sustainable territorial development in a region shaped by strong coastal dynamics and seasonal mobility.

Economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• GDP per capita is considerably below the European average, with employment rates ranging between 50–80%; Zakynthos is the only area with above-average values, while the share of working-age population is steadily declining, especially in Italy; • Key economic sectors include education, health and social work, trade, transport, accommodation, and food services; GVA fell in 2020 but recovered within 2 years; Due to the coastal location of the cross-border region, the blue economy is an important economic focus; • Salaries are uneven, with significantly higher wages in Italy; • Overall internet access in the programme area remains poor, with only a few localised exceptions; • No reliable data exists on commuting, but geographic, demographic, and linguistic barriers point to very low potential for work-related cross-border mobility.
Policy options	**Competitiveness and labour market related aspects** • The strategic use of maritime-specific economic activities, including fishing, ports, coastal tourism and the blue economy, could help strengthen competitiveness on both sides of the border; • Investments in digital infrastructure may serve to support the development of green and blue economy activities in remote coastal and island regions; • A focus could be on coordinated approaches to digital workspaces and shared service platforms that offer potential for fostering remote working and expanding employment opportunities in peripheral and island areas. **Cross-cutting aspect** • Cross-border cooperation can play a role in transforming seasonal tourism connectivity into more stable functional linkages supporting territorial cohesion; • The territorial evidence on demographic decline, limited accessibility and digital constraints could provide a basis for more coherent cross-border economic development strategies.

Green dimension	
Key analytical findings	• Protected areas are mainly located in the northern and eastern parts of the region, covering similar maritime, coastal, and mountainous landscapes; Mediterranean forest ecosystems on both sides are highly vulnerable to fire risk; • Air pollution levels exceed the European average, partly due to recurrent forest fires; droughts are the most significant natural hazard, followed by landslides and seismic activity, while flooding is minor; • Water quality is generally better along the coast than inland, with Greek waters performing better overall; Italian inland water bodies show large data gaps in monitoring; • Energy production relies on hydropower in mountainous areas, while Italy also operates gas, oil, and coal plants; transmission networks are extensive, including an undersea extra high-voltage cable linking Salento to Greece; • Environmental resource use shows disparities: Italy records higher resource productivity near the EU average, while Greece performs below; waste generation is declining on both sides but remains higher in Greece.
Policy options	**Climate risks and resilience related aspects** • Improved responses to natural hazard risks could be achieved through coordinated monitoring systems and enhanced cross-border data exchange; • Joint strategies on water management and ecosystem resilience may contribute to mitigating the impacts of drought, heat stress and land degradation. **Cross-cutting aspect** • Stronger cooperation on coastal and marine resource management can enhance environmental resilience while supporting sustainable blue-economy activities such as fisheries, maritime transport and coastal tourism; • The strategic use of energy interconnections, ports and maritime infrastructure could support the decarbonisation of blue-economy sectors, while safeguarding sensitive coastal and marine ecosystems.

Socio-economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• Cross-border connectivity in social media is limited and concentrated around Ioannina and Lefkada; although Greek dialects survive in Calabria and Apulia, they have little influence on current cross-border interaction; • Tourism is a major shared asset but unevenly distributed: Greek islands record very high overnight stays per capita, while in Italy tourism is concentrated in the provinces of Foggia and Lecce; • Between 2020 and 2023, tourism intensity in the programme area was in line with the EU average, with Greek regions performing significantly above it: this underlines the need for promoting sustainable tourism approaches; • Service accessibility is higher in Italy, with most areas within one hour of hospitals and doctors, while in Greece access is shaped by tourism needs, basic services are available on the islands, but doctors, cinemas, and secondary schools remain more difficult to access.
Policy options	**Socio-economic related aspects** • The mobilisation of shared historical and cultural roots, including the Grekanika linguistic heritage and town-twinning initiatives, could contribute to tourism development, including through joint branding initiatives between Italian and Greek destinations; • Targeted cultural, educational and youth exchange initiatives may help overcome linguistic barriers and increase interaction between Italian and Greek communities; • Joint tourism strategies offer opportunities to address seasonality, manage visitor pressure and extend tourism benefits to inland and less-visited areas. **Cross-cutting aspect** • Common challenges related to ageing, depopulation and service accessibility can be used as a starting point for coordinated cross-border socio-economic strategies.

Border security and safety dimension	
Key analytical findings	• Italy temporarily reintroduced border controls at land, air, and sea borders on 4 occasions between 2006 and 2025, mainly during major intergovernmental summits (G7, G8) citing risks of terrorism and threats to public order; • While the maritime border is generally less vulnerable, frequent or prolonged controls could disrupt socio-economic interaction, particularly during the tourist season.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • The impacts of border controls on cross-border logistics can be mitigated through coordinated and institutionalised cross-border policy dialogue, particularly with regard to seasonal pressures during the touristic period; • 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	• Cross-border cooperation is relatively well institutionalised, framed by the Adriatic–Ionian Euroregion, but cross-border public services are absent; • Interreg activities focus on culture, sustainable tourism, climate change adaptation, and biodiversity; cooperation density is higher in the north and lower in southern areas; • Institutionalised advice centres are missing; centres with multi-thematic operational domains exist in both countries but are more pronounced in Italy, which also hosts research and education-related domains.

Governance dimension	
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • Existing institutionalised cooperation frameworks could be further utilised to strengthen functional cross-border integration in a predominantly maritime context; • Targeted pilot actions may allow for experimentation with new forms of cross-border service provision, including in maritime transport and environmental management; • Improved governance coordination can support better alignment between economic development, environmental protection and social inclusion strategies across the Greece–Italy maritime border.

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