ESPON

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT //

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

Greece-Cyprus

Border profile

March 2026

This European Research Project is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinions of members of the ESPON 2030 Monitoring Committee.

Coordination
Andreea China, Laura Dimitriu, Martin Gauk, Nikos Lampropoulos, Nicolas Rossignol – ESPON EGTC

Lead authors
Tobias Chilla, Dominik Bertram, Elias Günther, Stefan Hippe – Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg
Irene McMaster, Heidi Vironen, Neli Georgieva, Stefan Kah, Virginia Arena – Stichting EPRC Strathclyde University
Roland Gaugitsch, Sabrina Mansutti, Helene Gorny, Michelle Wiest, Erich Dallhammer, Cristian Andronic, Manon Badouix, Chien-Hui Hsiung, Robert Badea – ÖIR GmbH
Vít Pászto, Radek Barvíř, Karel Macků, Jaroslav Burian, Zdena Dobešová, Oldřich Bittner – Palacký University Olomouc

Steering Committee
Jean-Pierre Halkin, Gaëlle Doleans, Simona Pohlová, Maria Sioliou, Robert Spisiak – Unit D2 Interreg, Cross-Border Cooperation, Internal Borders, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission (EC-DG Regio)
Milada Hronkova – Ministry of Regional Development, Department of European Territorial Cooperation (CZ)
Josiane Meier - Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, Division Spatial Planning, Spatial Planning Law and European Spatial Development Policy BMWSB (DE)
Margarita Golovko – Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture (EE)
Olivier Bichel, Sébastien Keiffer– Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning, Department of Spatial Planning (LU)

Acknowledgements
We gratefully acknowledge the support and constructive feedback received during the project implementation, from the ESPON Monitoring Committee members, INTERREG programme Managing Authorities/Joint Secretariats, Ministries and DG Regio desk officers. The insightful comments and recommendations provided have been instrumental in enhancing the quality, coherence, and robustness of the analysis.

Information on ESPON and its projects can be found at www.espon.eu.
The website provides the possibility to download and examine the most recent documents produced by finalised and ongoing ESPON projects.

ISBN: 978-2-919816-91-0

Layout and graphic design by BGRAPHIC, Denmark

Contact: info@espon.eu

ESPON

Co-funded by the European Union
Interreg

EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT //

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

Greece-Cyprus

Border profile

March 2026

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

[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

› Information from recent ESPON Projects (i.e., CROSSGOV, House4All, PROFECY Update, CPS 2.0)

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.

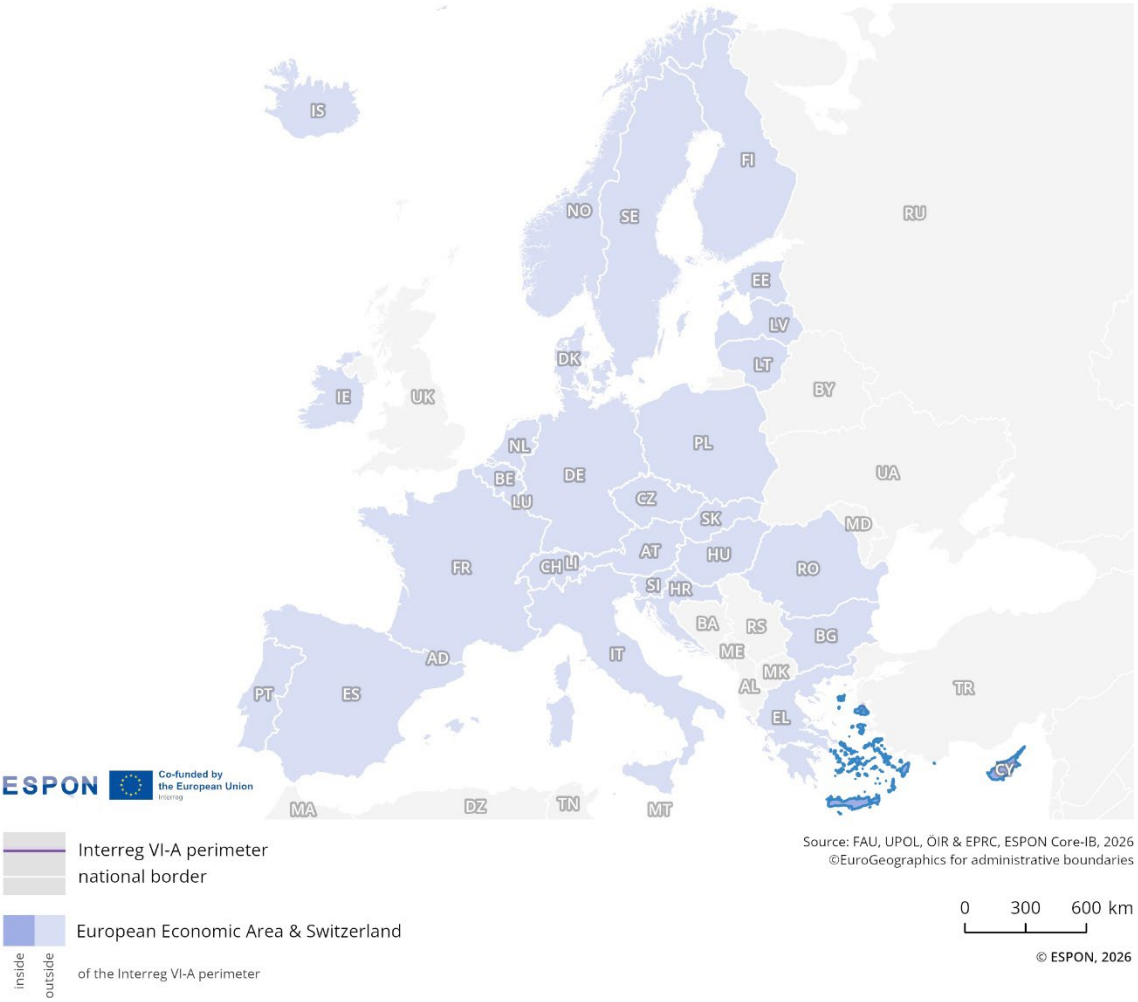
Additional project-related information can be explored separately in the Core-IB **Final Report**. Further technical information on this border profile can be found in a separate **Technical Annex** providing an overview of data and methods.

In the context of this fiche, it is important to note at the outset that the focus is on cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and Greece (Crete, the South and North Aegean regions). The data and accompany text reflect this focus.

1.2 Presentation of the border area

The INTERREG VI-A border region 'Greece-Cyprus' covers the area between southern Greece and Cyprus (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Overview map

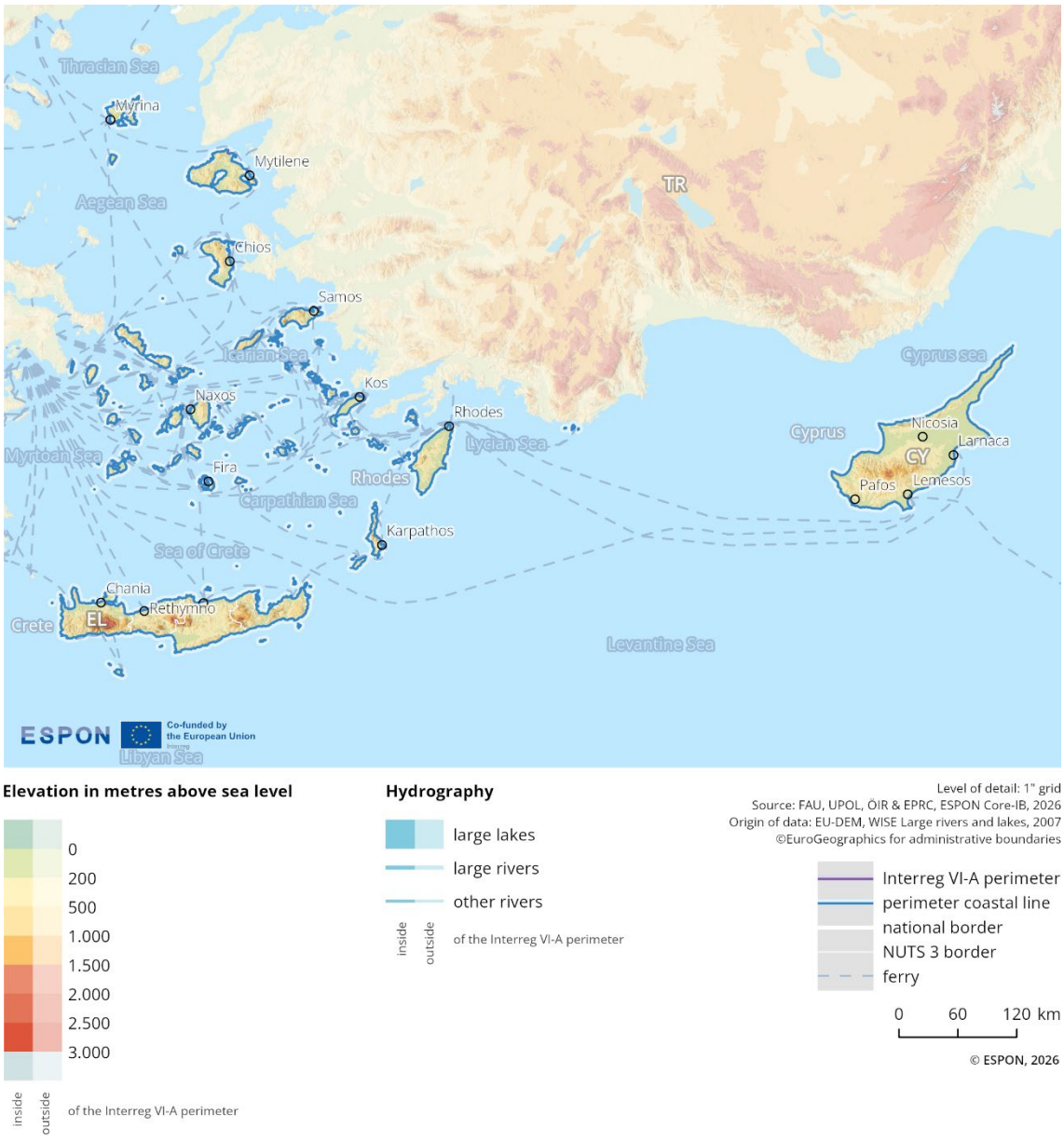


[2] ESPON CROSSGOV Hub: https://gis-portal.espon.eu/arcgis/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=27e3b86ef44441b08793a2239c370607

In Greece, the programme area includes the South Aegean, Crete, and North Aegean regions (Nisia Aigaiou, Kriti), comprising a total of 9 NUTS3 regions. It also covers the whole of Cyprus, which corresponds to all 3 NUTS levels: NUTS1, NUTS2, and NUTS3. While NUTS statistical classifications refer to the territory of the Republic of Cyprus as a whole, the INTERREG programme applies only to the territory under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, in line with the EU acquis.

Figure 1.2 shows the region's geomorphological features and the perimeter of the current INTERREG VI A programme area. The border region extends along the entire 505,572-square-kilometre area of the Greek-Cypriot maritime border in the eastern Mediterranean. This area comprises several Greek islands in the southern Aegean and eastern Mediterranean Sea, including Rhodes, Karpathos, Kassos, and Kastellorizo, as well as the island of Cyprus. The cross-border region has a strategic geographical position being the south-easternmost territorial entity of the European Union with proximity to neighbouring countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East.

Figure 1.2: Geographical features and characteristics[3]



[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.

The programme area's geography is characterised by islands, insularity, mountainous terrain, extensive coastlines and distance from the EU's core economic regions. Both Cyprus and the including Greek islands exhibit complex coastal morphologies featuring bays, capes, and natural harbours. Inland, the terrain is typically rugged and mountainous, especially in central Cyprus (Troodos Mountains) and the Dodecanese islands. Lowland areas are mainly found near the coast and in river valleys, which support agriculture and human settlements.

The programme area covers urban centres such as Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca in Cyprus and Rhodes and Kos in Greece. These urban centres serve as key administrative, economic, and transport hubs in the eastern Mediterranean. The geography, marked by isolation from continental transport corridors, increases the importance of maritime and air connections, which are relevant for mobility, trade, and tourism.

Marine ecosystems are significant, with coastal and underwater habitats, including protected Natura 2000 sites. The maritime environment and shared sea basin create interdependencies in environmental protection, blue economy, and disaster risk management.

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.

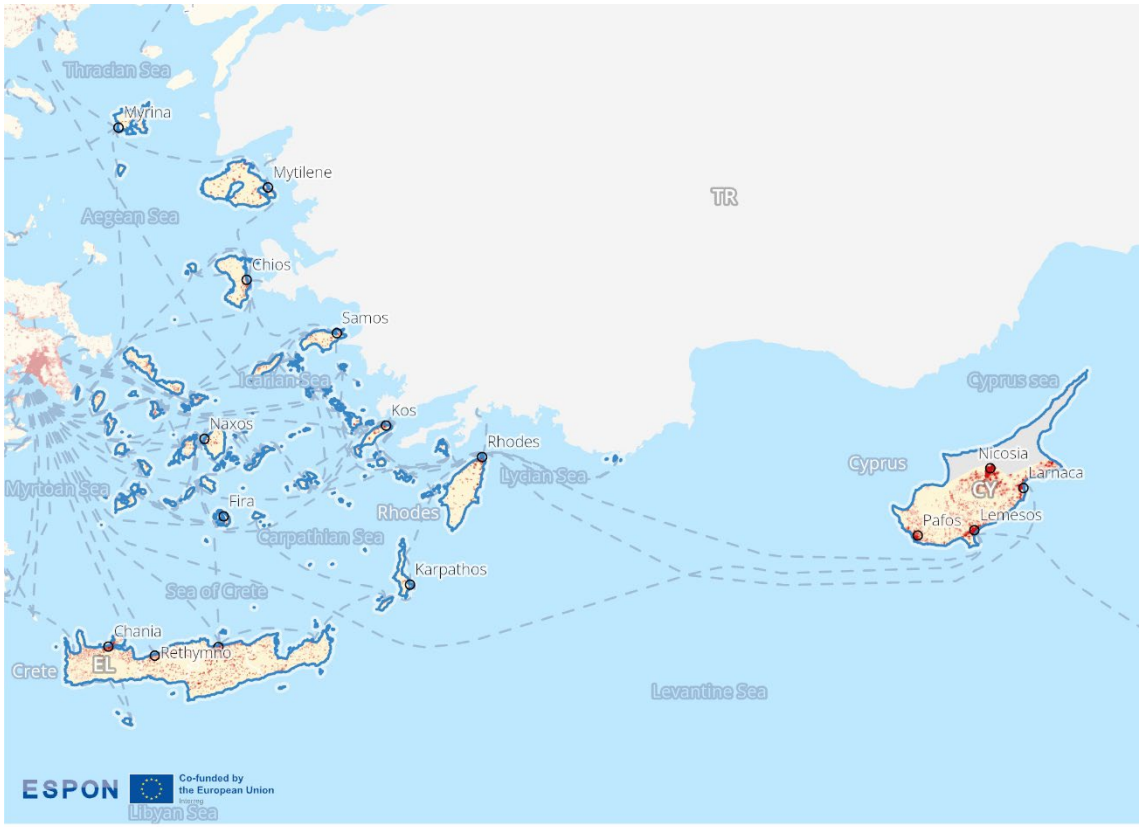
Figure 2.1 shows that this cross-border region has a population distribution that varies considerably. On the Greek islands, the population is concentrated in the main towns of each island. Of the islands, Crete has the highest population density, with the highest number of inhabitants recorded in the 2 port towns of Chania and Rethymno. Other, often rural, settlements attract a smaller number of inhabitants. Overall, the population is very sparsely distributed. In contrast, Cyprus shows a relatively higher population density and a more evenly distributed settlement pattern, with the largest number of inhabitants concentrated in the metropolitan area of Nicosia. Other densely populated Cypriot towns include Paphos and Lemesos. In total, the border region includes 15 urban centres with a population exceeding 30,000 inhabitants.

The population density in the border region is 66 inhabitants/km², which is lower than the EU average of 109 inhabitants/km² (according to Eurostat), and the aggregated average of all EU evaluated border regions, which is 125 inhabitants/km².

The part of the border region in Greece has an average population density of around 53 inhabitants/km². This is lower than the national average population density in Greece (73 inhabitants/km²).

The part of the border region that encompasses Cyprus has an average population density of around 95 inhabitants/km². The national and border averages for Cyprus overlap, as the border region includes the whole national territory. This principle applies to all indicators.

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 60 120 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 %

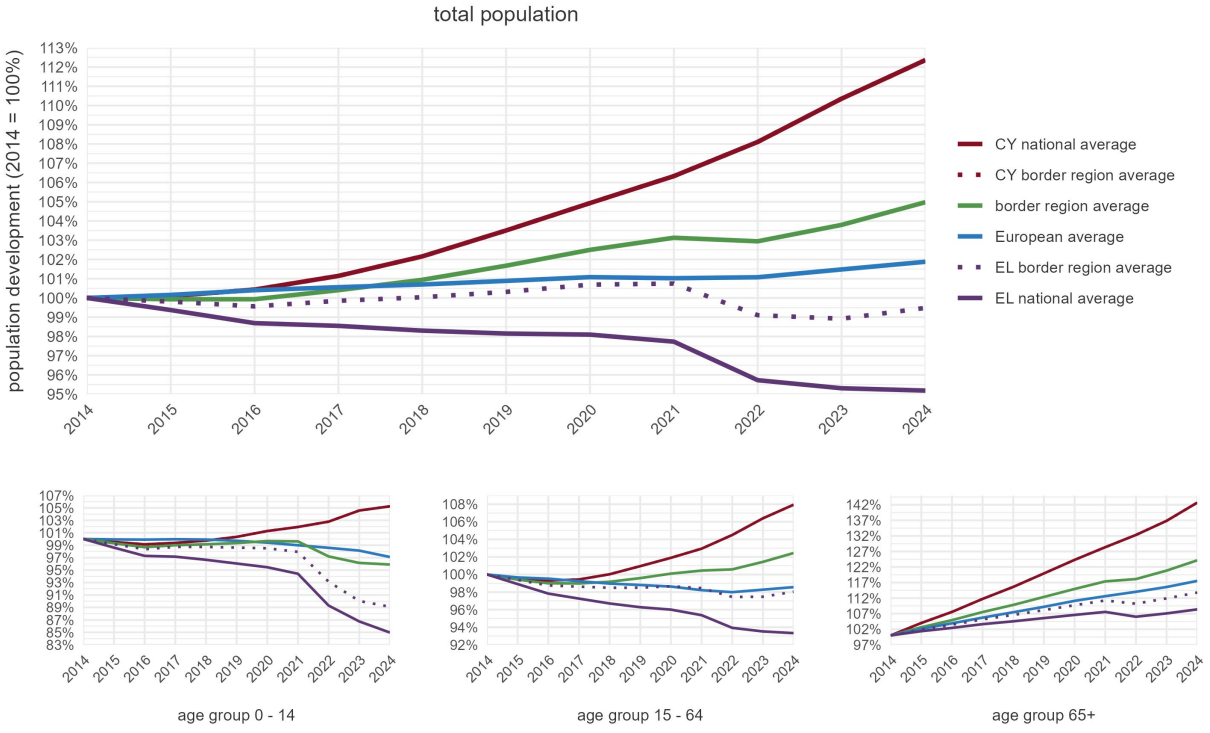
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Population in the Greece–Cyprus region in 2024 (Eurostat): 2.1 million inhabitants, of which:

- 54.4% in the Greek border territory (1.2 million inhabitants).
- 45.6% in the Cypriot border territory (1.0 million inhabitants).
- The region with the highest population increase in the border area since 2014 is Cyprus (CY000) at 12.4%

Figure 2.2 shows the population growth in the Greece–Cyprus region between 2014 and 2024. During this period, the region has experienced moderate growth of 5.0%, with the highest growth rate observed in Cyprus.

Figure 2.2: Population development (2014=100)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union

Population growth across the border region is noticeably above the European average (5.0% vs. 1.9%) and also noticeably above the average development in all border regions (5.0% vs 1.5%). While the Greek

parts show a decline both at the border and national levels (-0.5% vs. -4.8%), the Cypriot border area shows noticeable growth (12.4%).

In terms of the development of individual age groups in the region, the population aged 0–14 experienced a slight decrease of -4.1%, while the working-age population (15–64) showed a slight increase of 2.4%. The population aged 65 and over underwent a substantial increase of 24.2%.

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 shows how settlement areas changed at a municipal level between 2012 and 2018. Across both sides of the Greek–Cypriot border area, the predominant pattern is stability, with most municipalities recording no significant change. Where increases in settlement areas occurred, they are more dispersed on the Greek side and more concentrated around urban centres (Nicosia; Larnaca) on the Cypriot side.

Figure 2.3: Settlement area dynamics

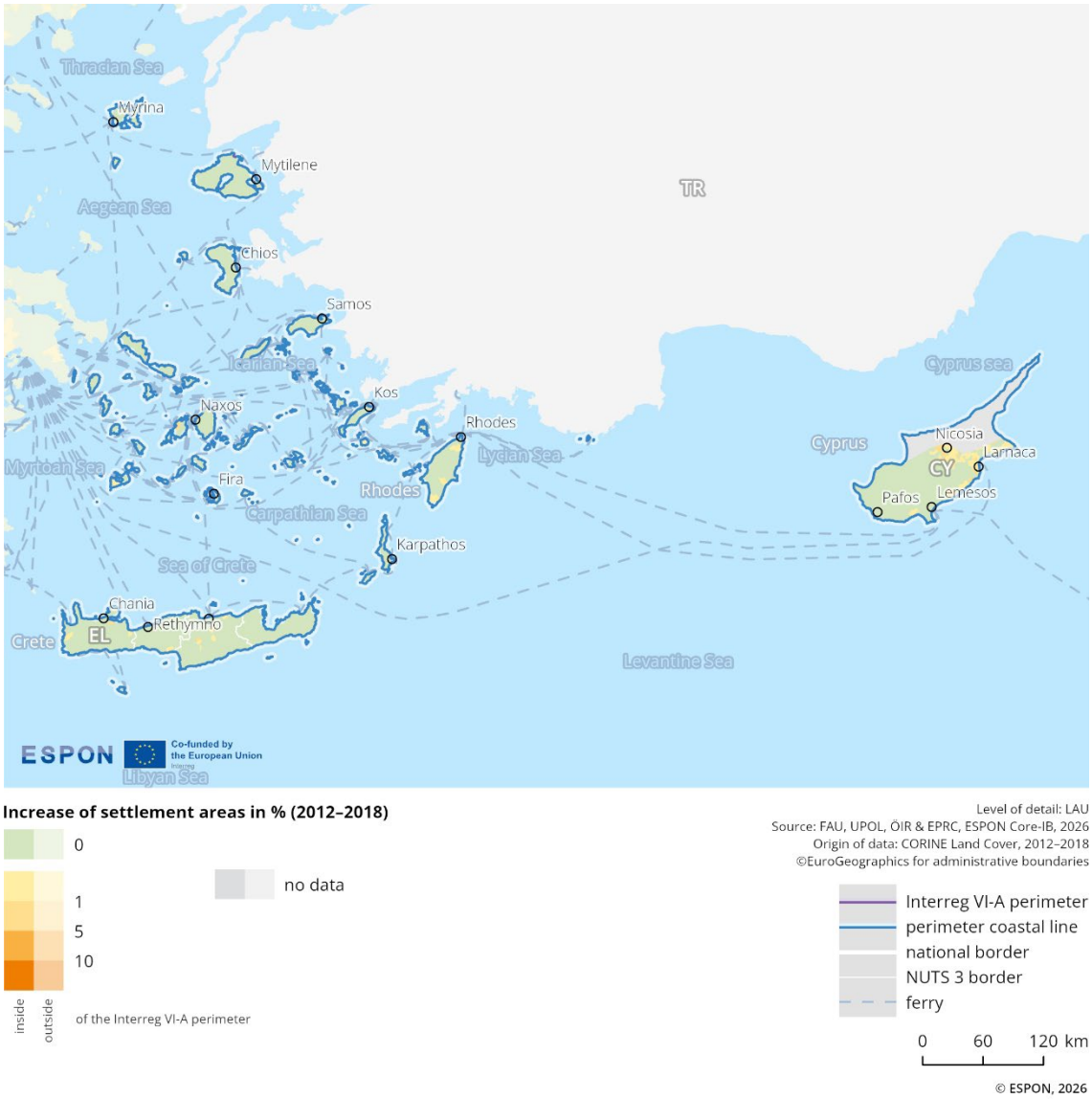
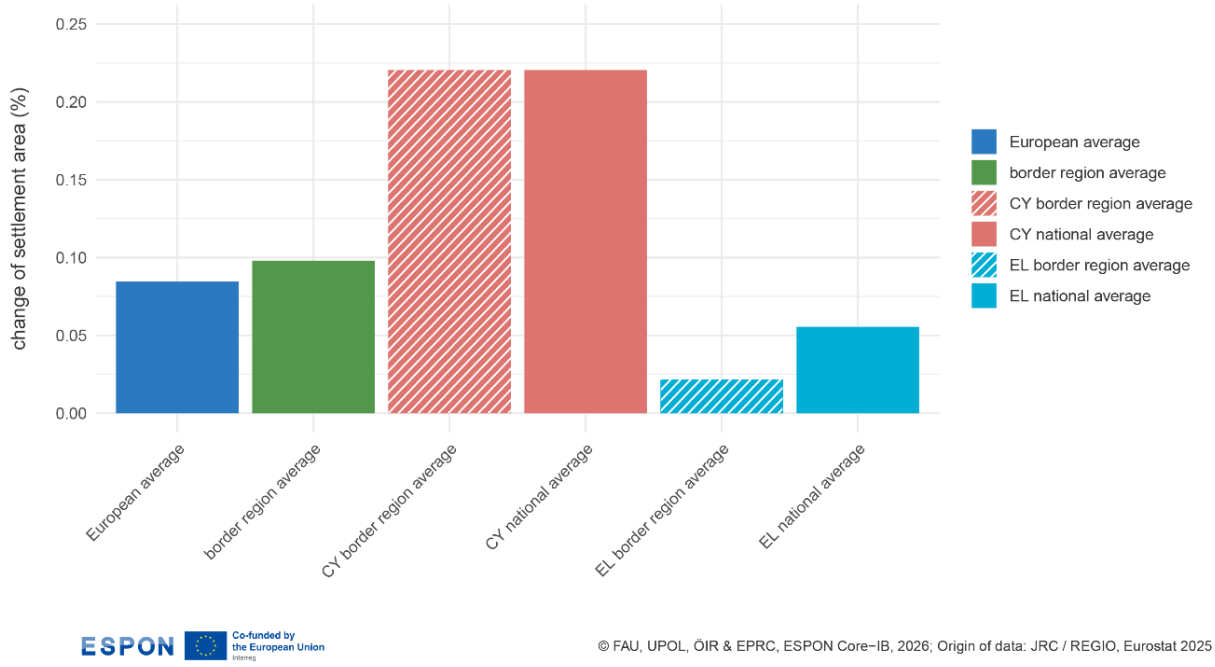


Figure 2.4 shows the change in settlement areas in a comparative context. The average for the Greece-Cyprus programme area is lower than the overall European average, which includes both EU member states and the EFTA countries of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. The Cypriot national value is higher than the Greek national value. The Greek border-regional average is lower than the Cypriot border-regional average. The national and border averages for Cyprus overlap, as the border region includes the whole national territory, whereas the Greek border-regional average is lower than the national Greek average.

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



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.

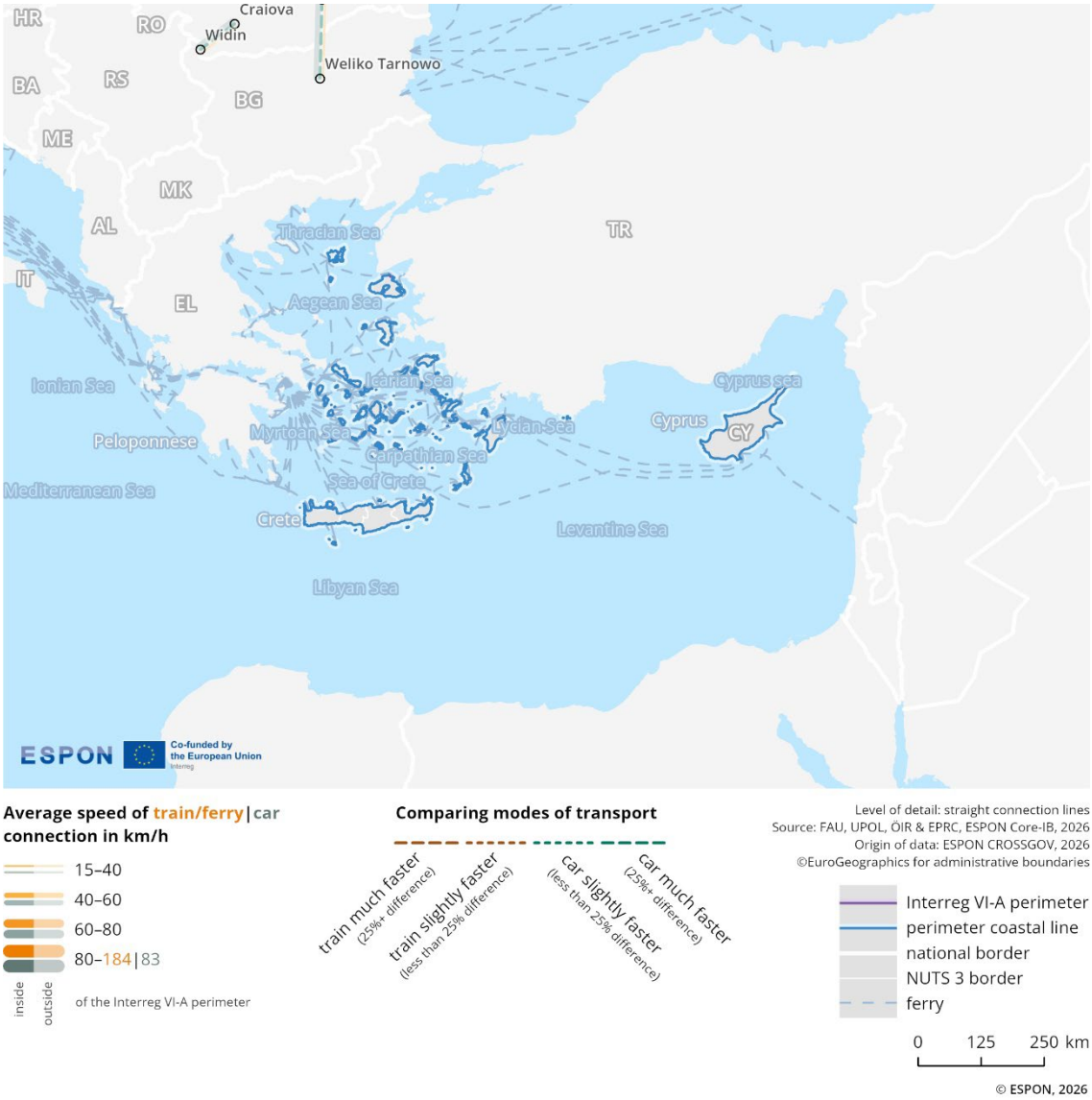
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Average number and speed of rail connections/ferries, average speed of car connections between selected cities and towns in border regions using Rail Travel Sites, Google Maps, luftlinie.org, Direct Ferries, local ferry companies
- **Temporal coverage**: 2025 (first 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–Cyprus 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/345c978adf784adfac30c16b90219d35?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 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

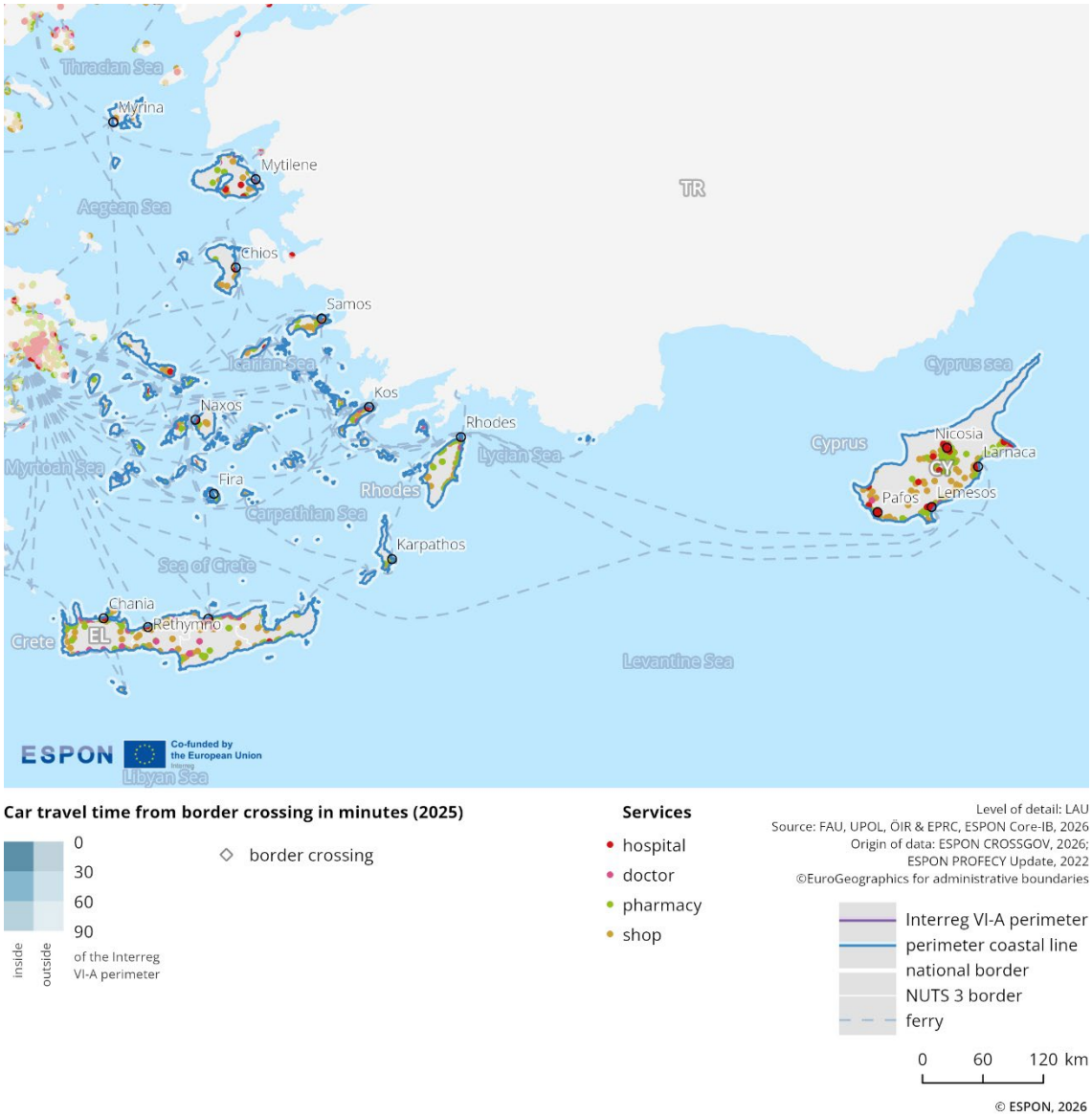
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.6 illustrates cross-border travel time accessibility in the programme 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.

This indicator is most directly applicable in land-border settings. Given the maritime configuration of the Greece-Cyprus cross-border region the indicator cannot be applied in its conventional road-based form. The analysis therefore highlights ferry connections as a functional proxy for cross-border accessibility. Ferry services from Limassol and Larnaca connect Cyprus with Greece, where the domestic ferry network enables further access to the Greek islands and the mainland.

On the Greek side, services such as shops, hospitals, doctors' offices, and pharmacies are primarily located on the island of Crete, while in Cyprus, there is a notable concentration around major coastal towns and the capital, Nicosia.

Figure 2.6: Travel-time accessibility from border crossings



2.1.3 Key messages on the territorial dimension

The Greece–Cyprus cross-border region is a clearly maritime and insular area, which is also characterised by mountainous interiors and coastal lowlands. These features shape settlement patterns, mobility, and service provision. The population is concentrated in 15 urban centres with over 30,000 inhabitants, while large rural areas on both sides remain sparsely populated. Although population density is higher and more even in Cyprus, the border region as a whole falls below the EU average, highlighting the challenges of balanced territorial development.

Demographic dynamics show modest growth above the EU average, with a higher increase registered in Cyprus. However, the ageing population is growing faster, as indicated by the share of people aged 65+ increasing by 24.2%. This could put pressure on health and care services. In terms of spatial changes, only minor shifts in settlement are visible, primarily around Nicosia in Cyprus.

Due to the maritime configuration of the programme area, cross-border connectivity relies on ferry and air transport rather than road connections. This constrains cross-border access to basic services. Across the region, pharmacies and shops are more widely available than doctors' surgeries and hospitals.

The territorial characteristics of the region, particularly the double insularity faced by the islands, the concentration of development along the coast and the sparsely populated rural hinterlands, impact on other dimensions including economic, environmental and social development opportunities and challenges.

2.2 Economic dimension

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

2.2.1 Gross Domestic Product

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

2.2.1.1 Gross domestic product per capita at current market prices

Indicator description

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

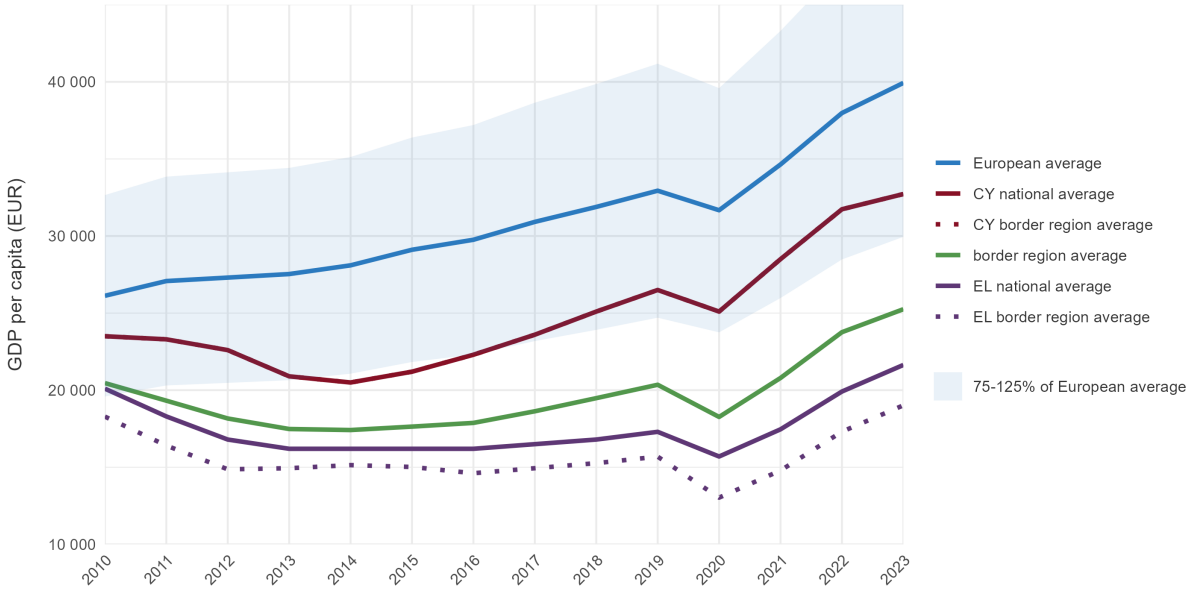
- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2010-2023
- **Unit**: Euro per capita

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

In 2022, the region's GDP/capita value was 66.3% of the EU average and 67.3% of the average in European border regions in general. The region saw a 38.7% increase in GDP per capita in the border region between 2014 and 2022[6]. This is 3.1 percentage points higher increase than the EU average. Furthermore, this is 3.5 percentage points higher than the average increase in GDP per capita in European border regions. As the whole island of Cyprus is part of the border region, the national average and regional averages are identical. The Greek GDP per capita – both in the border region as well as nationally – stagnated since 2014. Cyprus also experienced moderate growth, with GDP per capita increasing dynamically during the last couple of years. The GDP per capita of the Greek border region is significantly lower than in Cyprus, growing only 15.0% percent, compared to Cyprus's growth of 59.6%.

[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.

Figure 2.7: Gross domestic product at current market prices (per capita)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

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.[7]

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).

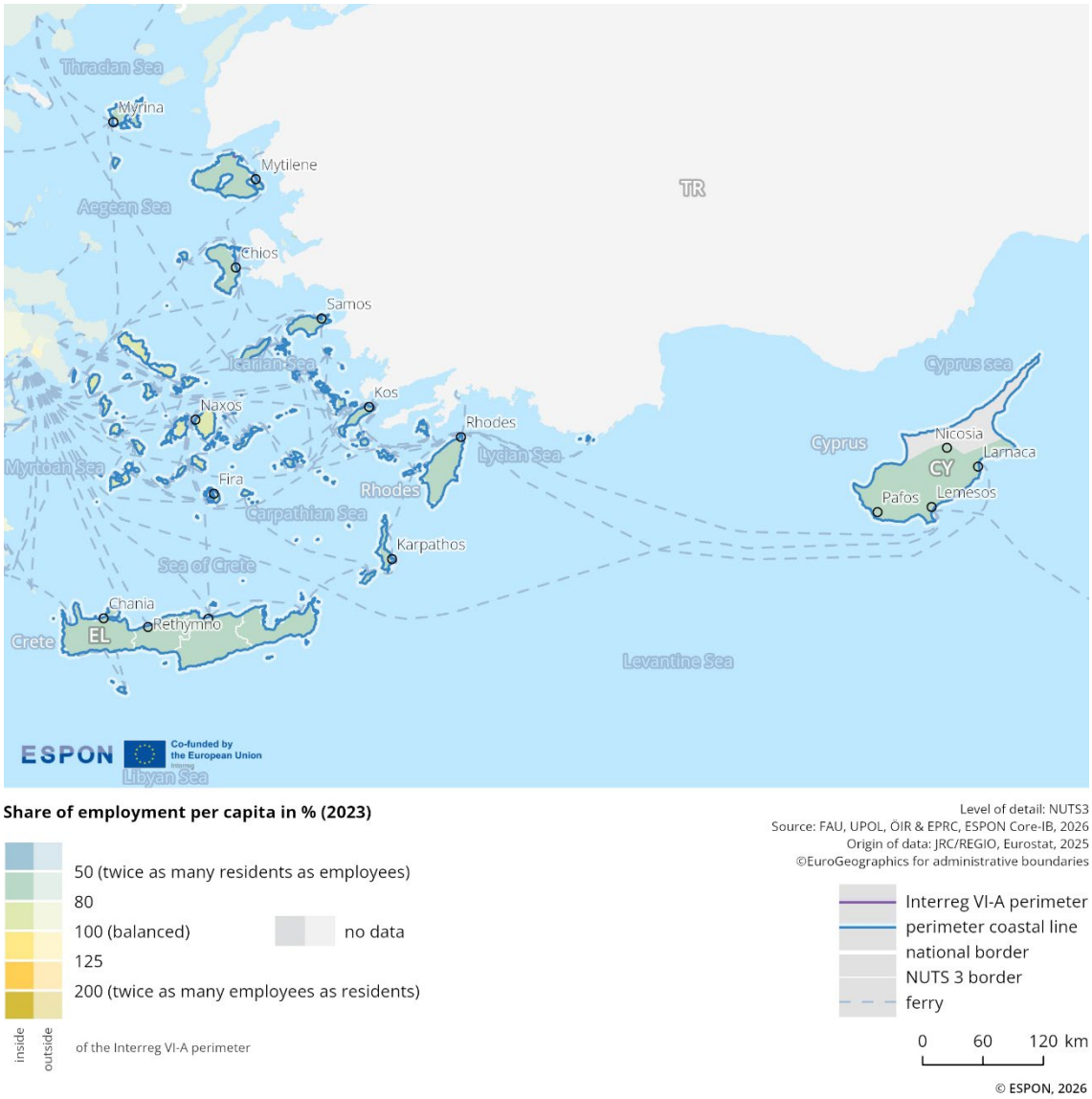
- **Source**: Eurostat, Annual Regional Database of the European Commission (ARDECO)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2014-2023
- **Unit**: Share in %

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.8 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.

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

Figure 2.8: Employment share[8]



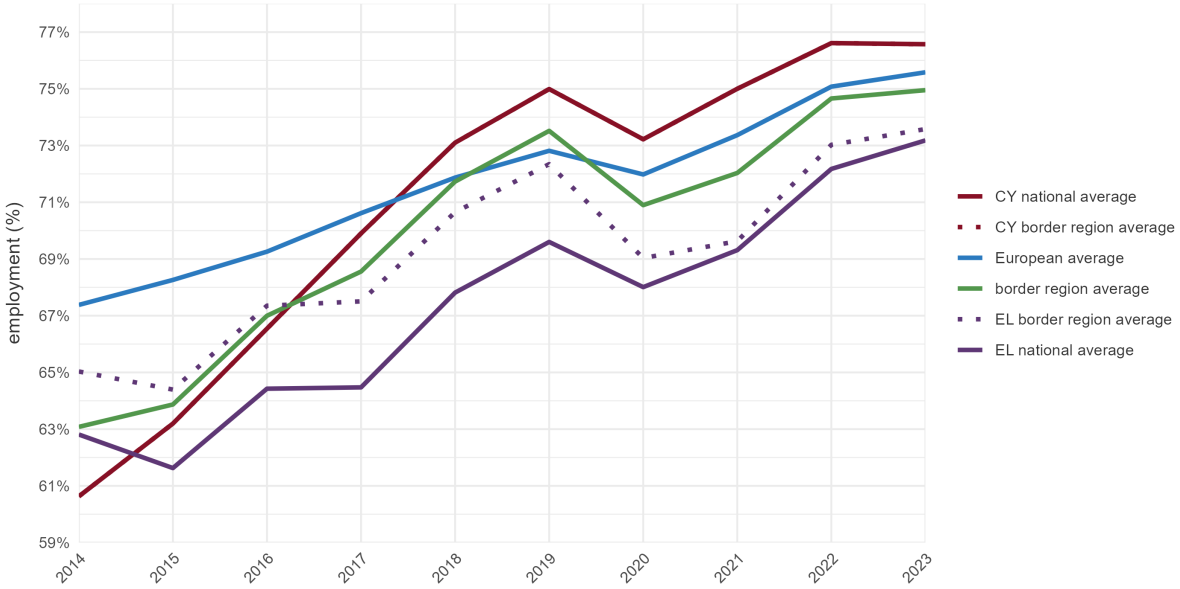
The share of employment in this border region has remained stable, with the regional average reaching 75% in 2023, representing an increase of 11.9 percentage points since 2014. Across all areas of the region, indicator values range between 50% and 80%. When comparing the share of employment in this border region with different averages, the following can be observed (see Figure 2.9):

- Compared to the European average, the values in the cross-border region are 0.6 percentage points lower; in 2014, the difference was 4.3 percentage points.
- Compared to the national average of Greece, the cross-border region is 1.8 percentage points higher; in 2014, the difference was 0.3 percentage points higher.
- Compared to the national average of Cyprus, the values are 1.6 percentage points lower; in 2014, they were 2.5 percentage points higher.
- The Greek part of the border region records values 0.4 percentage points above the Greek national average.

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

› Compared to the average of all cross-border regions, the region's share of employment is approximately 0.5 percentage points higher; in 2014, the difference was 3.2 percentage points lower.

Figure 2.9: Employment share over time (comparison)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

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 2.10 illustrates the evolution of the share of the working-age population in the Greece–Cyprus cross-border region between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the region had an average working-age population share of 65.3%, compared to the European and cross-border region averaged of 63.9% and 63.7%, respectively.

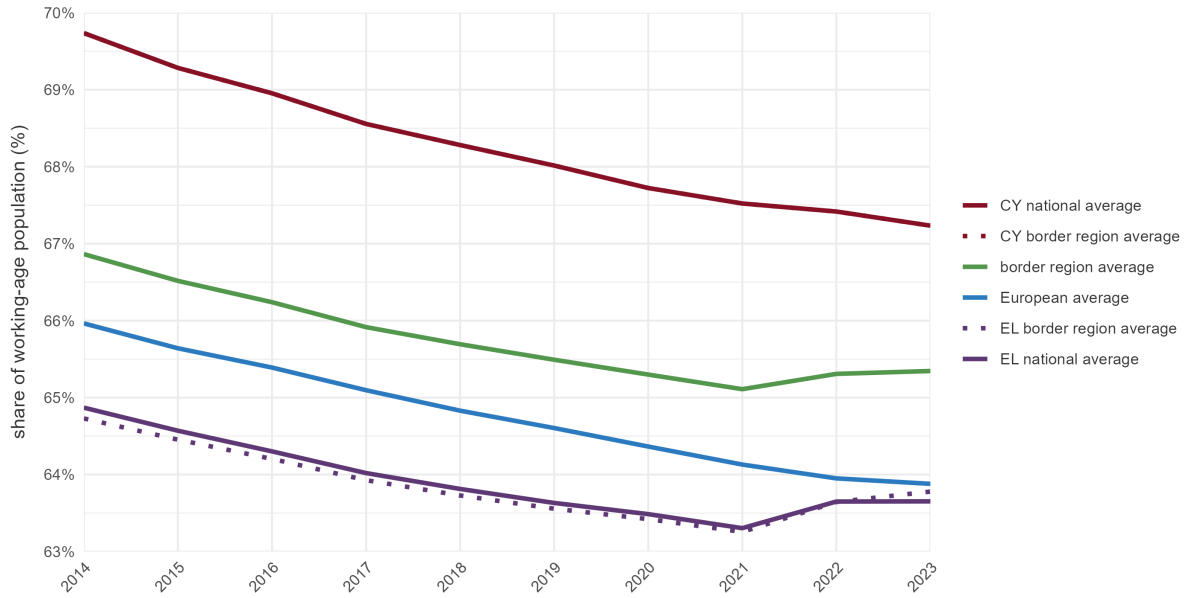
The share of the working-age population in the entire cross-border region is moderately higher than the Greek border average (63.8%) and moderately lower than the Cypriot average (67.2%). Compared

to national averages, the regional value is moderately higher than the Greek national average (63.7%) and moderately lower than the Cypriot average (67.2%).

The region experienced a slight 1.6 percentage point decrease in the share of working-age population between 2014 (66.9%) and 2023 (65.3%). This decline was somewhat slower than the European average, which fell by 2.1 percentage points over the same period. Both countries recorded a downward trend, with Cyprus experiencing a more significant decline (-2.5 percentage points) compared to the Greek side, where the decrease was minimal (-0.9 percentage points at the border and -1.2 percentage points nationally).

The Greece–Cyprus cross-border region experienced a slight overall decline in the share of the working-age population between 2014 and 2023. In 2023, the region remained slightly above the EU and cross-border averages, with a more visible decrease on the Cypriot side.

Figure 2.10: Share of working-age population over time (comparison)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

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 %

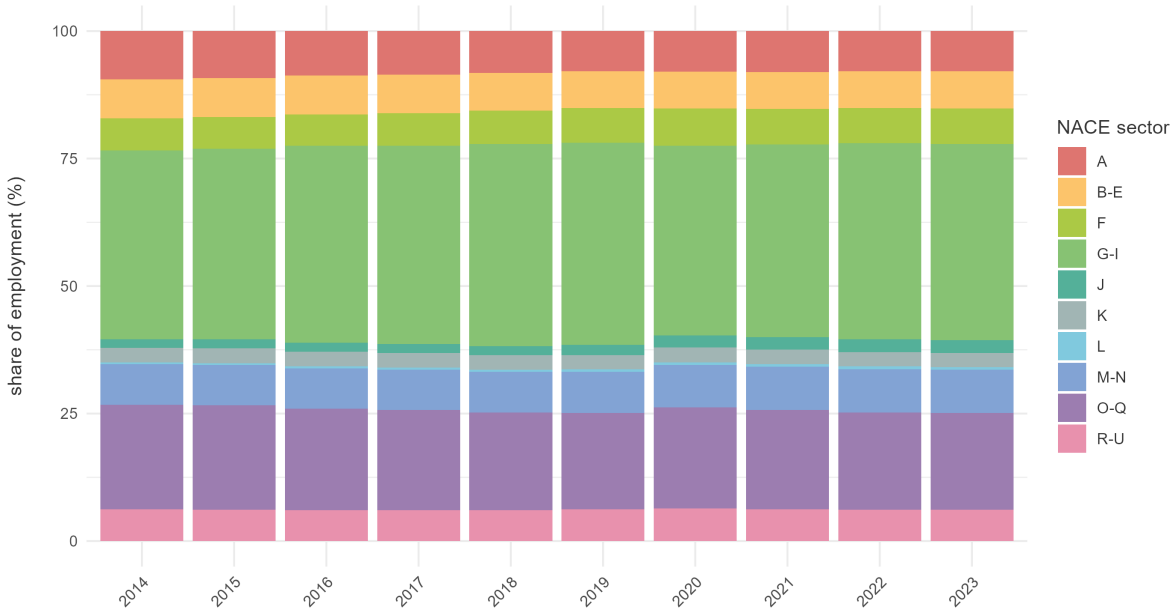
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.11 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 2.11: 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 remained fairly stable. There was a slight decline in the share of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing (A), Education (O) and Human health and social work activities (Q). Conversely, there was 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).

Throughout the entire period, the sectors with the highest share of jobs were ´G-I´ (Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, Transportation and storage, Accommodation and food service activities), ´M-N´ (Professional, scientific and technical activities, Administrative and support 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 highlights its specific maritime character compared to other European border areas.

This shift towards increased employment in sectors like transportation, accommodation, and food service activities (G-I) could reflect the growing importance of blue growth in the region, particularly in coastal tourism and marine transport. These industries are crucial to the sustainable use of marine resources, aligning with the principles of blue growth. Furthermore, the relatively high proportion of jobs in the fishing sector (A) in this area, compared to other European border areas, highlights its distinct 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 %

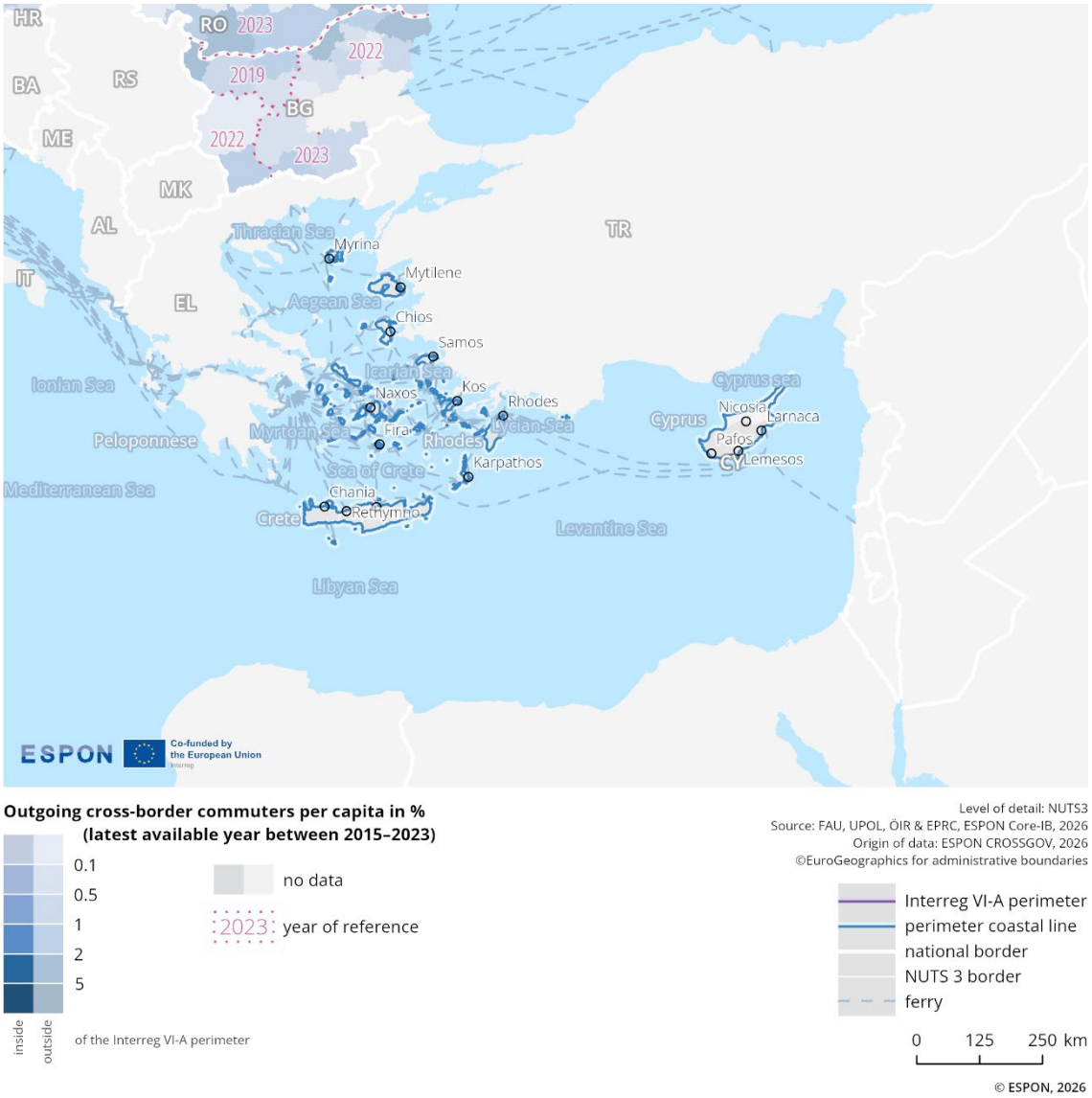
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

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 2.12 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[9].

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

Figure 2.12: 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.

Neither country has signed the 2023 Framework Agreement on Cross-Border Telework at the time of data retrieval (March 2025). Consequently, they apply the standard rules set out in 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 2.13 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.

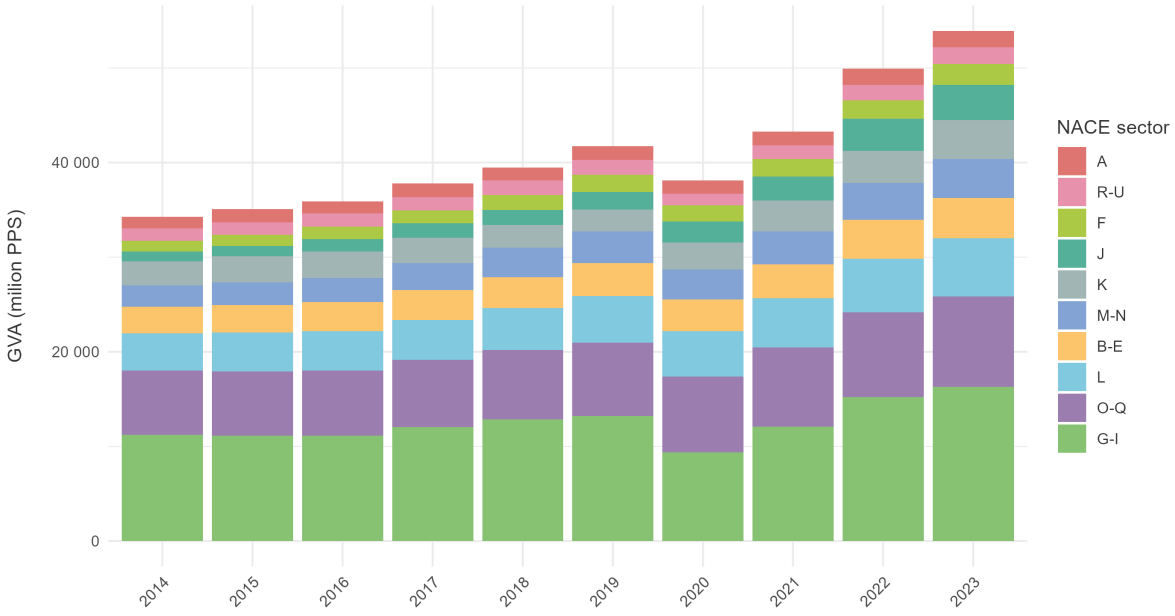
The dataset uses a '10-sector' classification based on NACE categories. The sectoral breakdown is as follows:

- 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 ser vice 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 Greece-Cyprus border area increased from 34,280 million purchasing power standards (PPS) to 53,903 million PPS — a growth of 57%. Together, sector groups G–I (including trade, transport, accommodation, and food services), L (real estate activities) and O–Q (education, health and social work) make up over half of the total GVA. This highlights their significant contribution to the regional economy, including the green and blue economies, within the border area. Sector groups G–I contributed the largest share, with a total of 16,317 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-Cyprus border region. The comparatively large share of the Information and communication sector (J) highlights the relevance of digital growth within the blue economies in this maritime border region. The substantial and constantly growing share of real estate activities (L) can also be attributed to maritime tourism.

Figure 2.13: Gross value added at basic prices by sector (comparison)



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

ESPON Co-funded by the European Union

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.

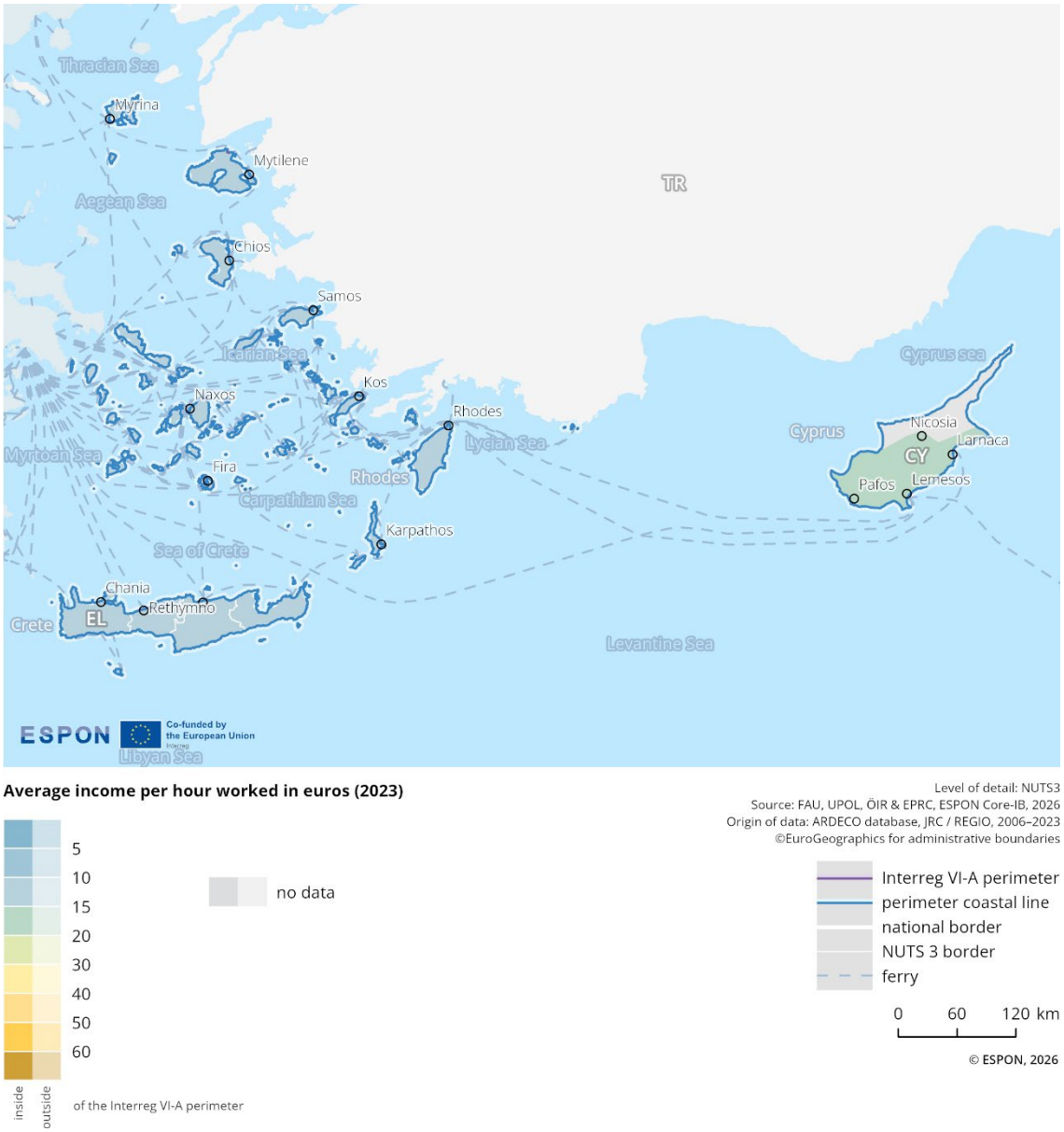
Figure 2.14 shows the average values for the 'compensation per hour worked'. This indicator is calculated by dividing the total compensation of employees (at current prices) by the total number of hours worked by those employees. In this context, 'employees' are defined as individuals engaged by contract 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, the distribution of nominal compensation per hour worked in the Greece–Cyprus border region appeared to be somewhat uneven. In the Greek areas of this cross-border region, the average hourly income ranged between €10 and €15.[10]. In Cyprus, the general range is €15 to €20. National averages of nominal compensation per hour worked in 2023 were €17.5 in Cyprus and €11.60 in Greece, reflecting a similar pattern of higher rates in Cyprus.

Differences in wages across borders can encourage labour migration from lower-wage areas to neighbouring regions that are more economically prosperous. This creates both opportunities and challenges for local labour markets and social system.

[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&

Figure 2.14: 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.

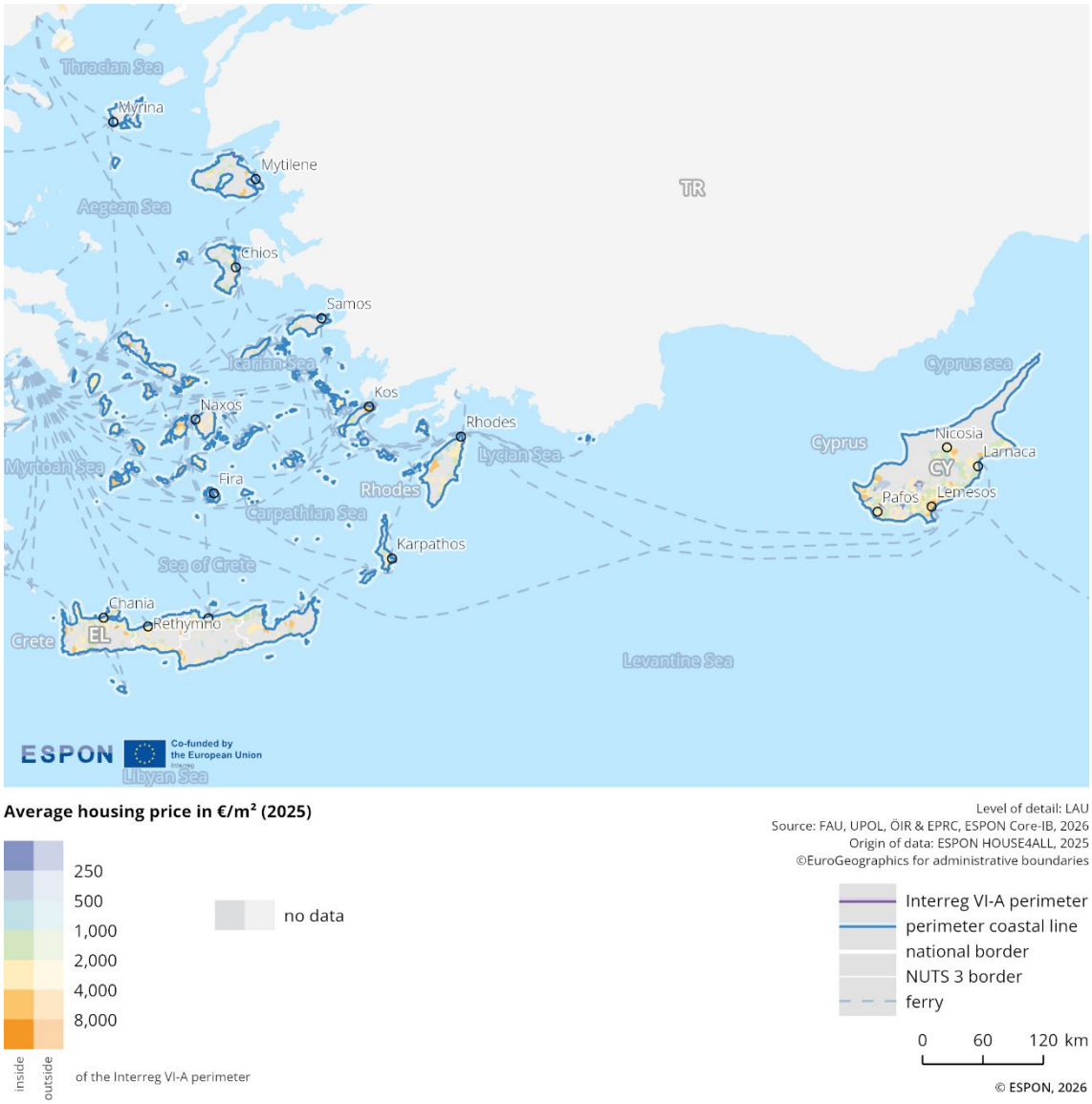
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processed ESPON House4all data. The original data is collected via web-scraping of national listing websites over a one-year period.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024/2025
- **Unit**: Average price per square meter (€/m^2)

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.15 illustrates the advertised sales price of housing in 2025 across the border region. The data are categorised into ranges of average housing price per square metre, from below 250 €/m^2 up to more than 8,000 €/m^2, shown in colours ranging from purple and blue to green, yellow and orange.

The map shows that the housing prices in both border territories follow a similar pattern. Prices vary, averaging between 1,000 €/m^2 and 8,000 €/m^2. Location plays an important role: housing prices in some parts of the islands, often inland, are very low (below €250/m^2), whereas some coastal areas have significantly higher prices, ranging from 2,000 €/m^2 to 4,000 €/m^2 or even 8,000 €/m^2. The highest prices are found in some larger towns such as Kos in Greece and Nicosia in Cyprus, and in well-established seaside resort areas such as Crete and Rhodes.

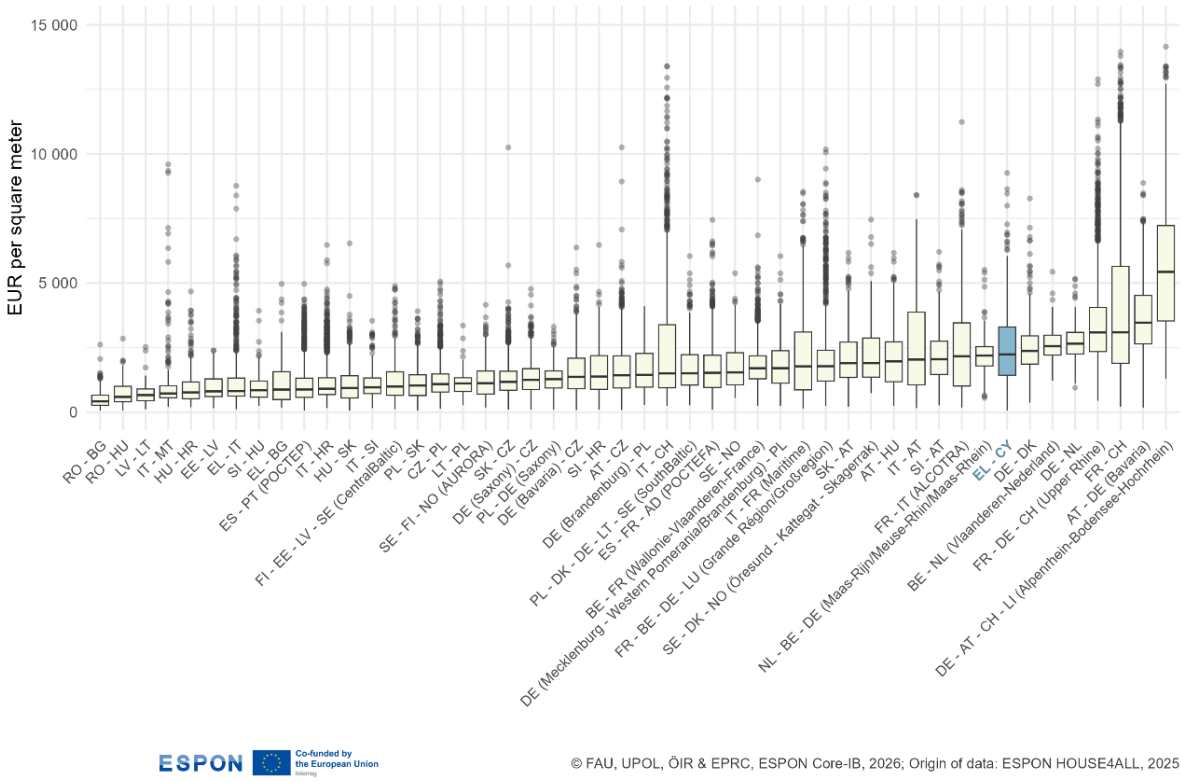
Figure 2.15: Advertised housing prices



When comparing the border territories of the 2 countries, the average advertised sales price is similar, although it is slightly higher in Greece (2,695 €/m²) than in Cyprus (around 2,285 €/m²).

The average advertised sales price across the entire border region is €2,513/m², exceeding the average for all EU border regions, which stands at 1,900 €/m². However, the prices are below the European average of 5,600 €/m².

Figure 2.16: 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.

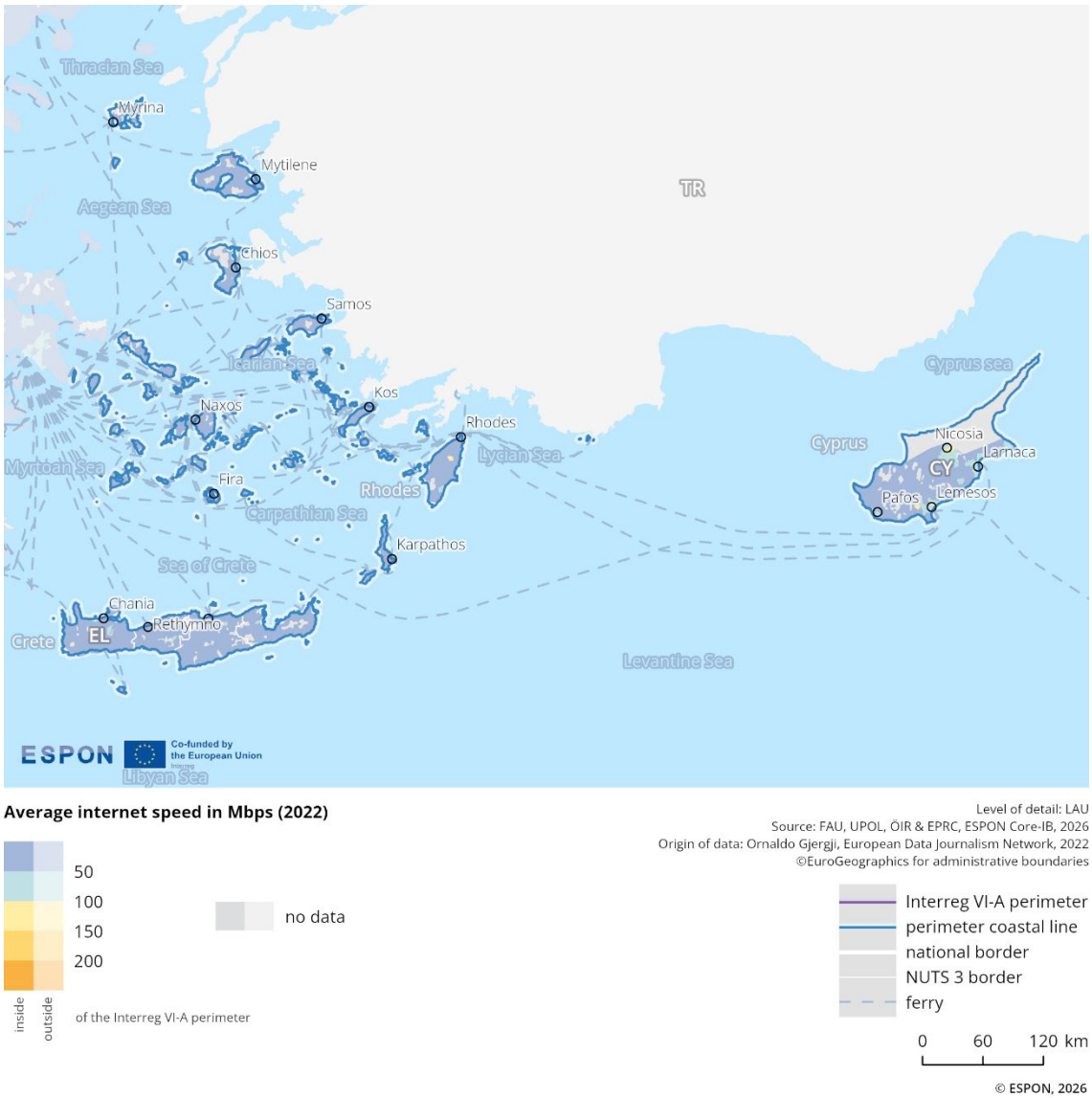
Digitalisation is a highly relevant issue in European border regions, with the overarching objective of ensuring appropriate digital access. It is widely recognised as a key precondition for successful regional and economic development. A major challenge in this process is preventing 'digital divides'— 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 2.17 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).

Figure 2.17 shows that there are hardly any differences between urban and rural areas. Values range from under 50 Mbps to 150 Mbps. Greece and Cyprus generally have low average internet speeds across the programme area. Even urban centres, which typically have higher speeds, show relatively low values here. This could be due to the challenges posed by Greece's coastal region and its many islands and by Cyprus's mountainous terrain, in providing high-speed internet. Only Nicosia reports a relatively high average speed, while surrounding areas tend to have significantly lower values. This may be because the return on investment for digital infrastructure is typically greater in densely populated urban areas than in rural ones. In the case of islands and remote coastal areas, digital disparities must be understood in the specific context of maritime geography. These territories often face structural disadvantages in connectivity compared to the mainland due to their physical isolation, limited infrastructure, and the higher costs of network deployment and maintenance.

Figure 2.17: Average internet download speed



2.2.5 Key messages on the economic dimension

GDP per capita trends within the border region (2010–2023) indicate gradual convergence with the EU, although the gap with the European average remains. Growth has been more dynamic on the Cypriot side, while the Greek side experienced prolonged stagnation, particularly between 2014 and 2019. These dynamics also shape labour markets: employment rates are slightly higher in Cyprus, with more dynamic growth until 2019. Meanwhile, in Greece, the gap between national and border-area levels has gradually narrowed. The share of working-age population in the Greece–Cyprus border region remains above the EU average, though it has fallen since 2014. This decline has been more pronounced in Cyprus than in Greece.

Employment patterns remained broadly stable between 2014 and 2023. A modest contraction in agriculture, education, and health was offset by expansion in trade, transport, and tourism-related services (G–I). Together with real estate (L) and social and public services (O–Q), these sectors contributed more than half of total GVA. Over this period, GVA in the border area increased by 57% (from 34,280 million PPS to 53,903 million PPS), with the largest contribution coming from trade, transport, and accommodation activities. These structural patterns highlight the strong dependence of both sides on services tied to tourism, trade, and mobility. Given the region's marine profile and issues around market access and the scale and size of labour markets, it is likely that these services are connected to blue economy activities, including coastal tourism, marine transport, and (sustainable) fisheries. As the region continues to rely on marine resources for economic growth, the blue economy could play an increasingly important role in driving sustainable development and ensuring the long-term viability of these sectors.

Nominal compensation per hour worked reveals asymmetries: while the Greek border areas report wages between €10 and €15 per hour, Cyprus shows significantly higher levels, averaging between €15–20 per hour. This wage gap may act as a driver for cross-border labour market mobility, although the geographic distance and reliance on air or ferry transport create significant practical barriers. Housing prices are highly variable and location-dependent, with inland areas recording the lowest prices (below €250) and coastal or resort areas reaching €8,000. The highest prices are found in some cities (Kos in Greece and Nicosia in Cyprus) or well-known seaside resort areas (Crete and Rhodes Island etc.).

Linked to physical barriers, digital connectivity represents constraint. Internet speeds across both Greece and Cyprus remain low compared to EU averages (50–150 Mbps), with little difference between urban and rural areas and indicating a more systemic issue. These limits opportunities for telework or digital services. Neither country signed the 2023 Framework Agreement on Cross-Border Telework.

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

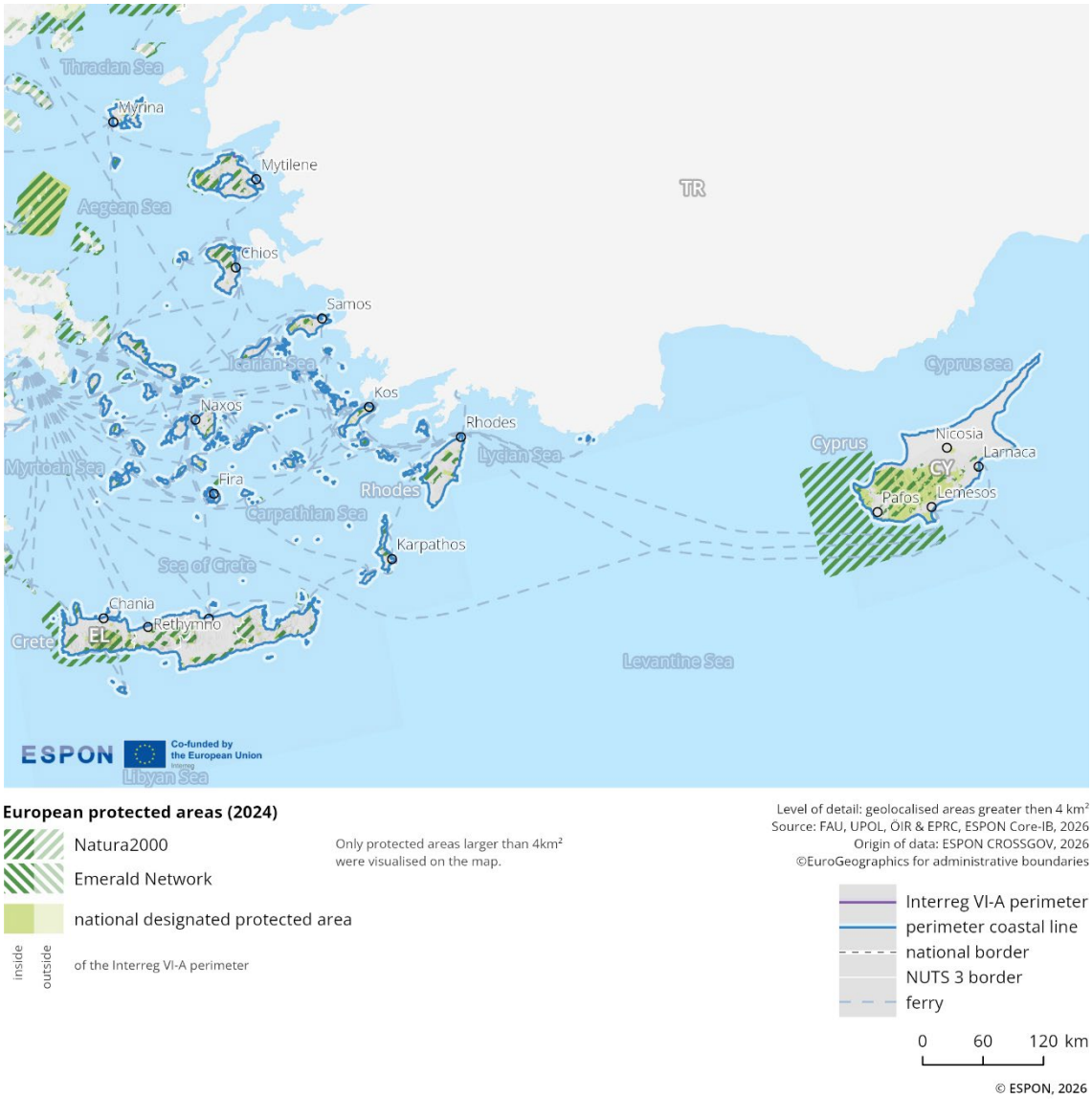
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.18 illustrates the distribution of protected areas across the border region in 2024. The data differentiates between Natura 2000 sites, the Emerald Network, and nationally designated protected areas, with only protected areas larger than 4 km² displayed.

Within the region, protected areas are primarily located along the coastlines and in the mountainous interiors of the Greek islands and Cyprus. Larger, contiguous Natura 2000 and national protected areas are found on Crete, Rhodes, as well as across Cyprus as a whole, with marine sites extending into the surrounding waters. Other islands, such as Kos and Mytilene, have smaller, more isolated protected patches.

Due to the insular geography, there are no direct cross-border counterparts. However, internal continuity is visible within each island, especially on Crete and Cyprus, where networks of protected areas form coherent zones along both the coast and inland.

Figure 2.18: 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.

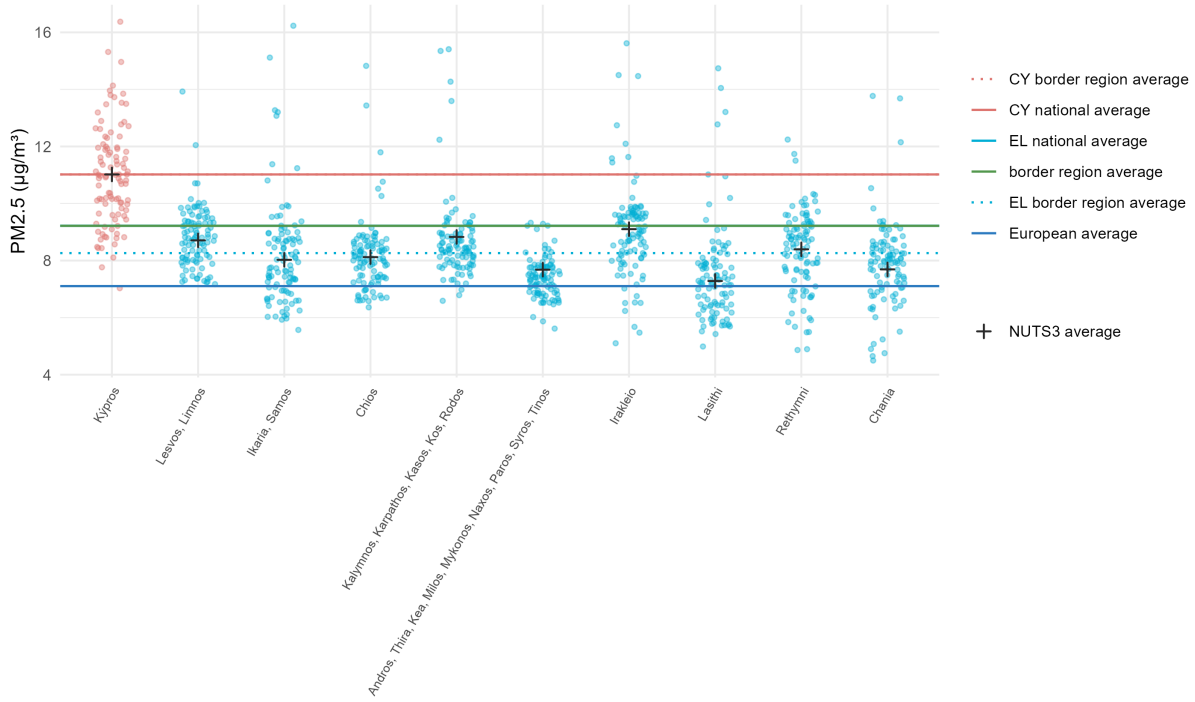
This graph shows the concentrations of PM2.5 (in µg/m³) in NUTS3 regions in Greece and Cyprus. Each small dot represents an individual measurement, while the black crosses indicate the average PM2.5 concentration for each NUTS3 region[11]. The regions are aligned along the x-axis, with the Cypriot region shown in red on the left and the Greek regions shown in blue on the right.

PM2.5 values in both countries span a wide range. Overall, the Cyprus region shows a higher individual peaks in PM2.5 concentrations than Greece. Greek NUTS3 averages cluster below 10 µg/m³.

The national average in Greece is slightly below 10 µg/m³, with the border region average being lower. Cyprus's national average is around 11 µg/m³, which is higher than Greece's.

The European average is around 7 µg/m³, which is lower than the values in Greece and Cyprus. The cross-border average is slightly around 8.5 µg/m³, which is higher than the European average. This cross-border average reflects the higher PM2.5 values in Cyprus and the lower values in Greece's border region.

Figure 2.19: Air pollution



[11] 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.

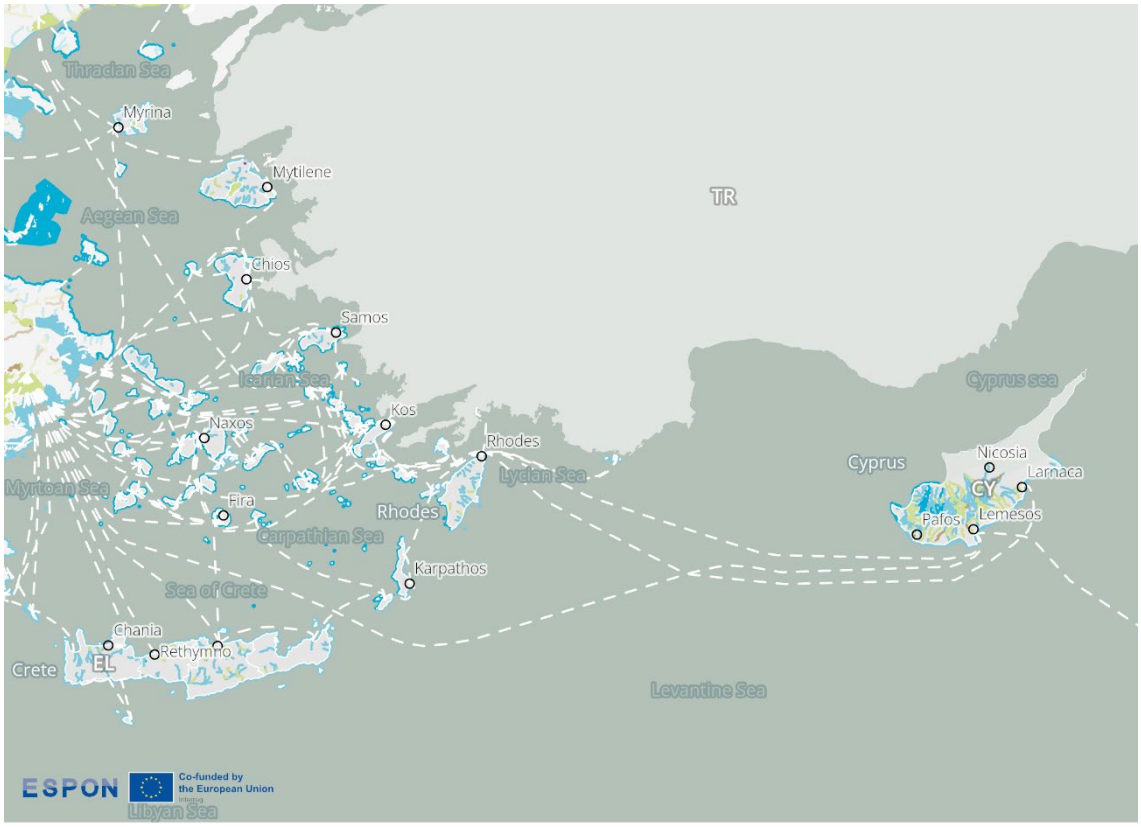
Figure 2.20 illustrates water pollution levels in Cyprus and Greece within their Interreg region in 2022. Water quality is represented using 6 colour-coded categories, ranging from "bad" to "high", including an "unknown" category.[12]

The coastal areas of the Greek islands consistently show "good" or "high" water quality. Only some rivers and areas in the inland regions of Rhodes and Lesbos are rated as "moderate". In the eastern part of the Greek region, water quality is mostly "moderate" or "good"/"high", with only a few isolated rivers classified as "poor" or "bad".

In Cyprus, the available water quality data is concentrated in the south of the island. Here, the water quality is mixed, but predominantly "moderate" or "good"/"high", with only a few rivers showing "poor" water quality.

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

Figure 2.20: 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 60 120 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.

2.3.2.1 Natural hazard risks

Indicator description

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

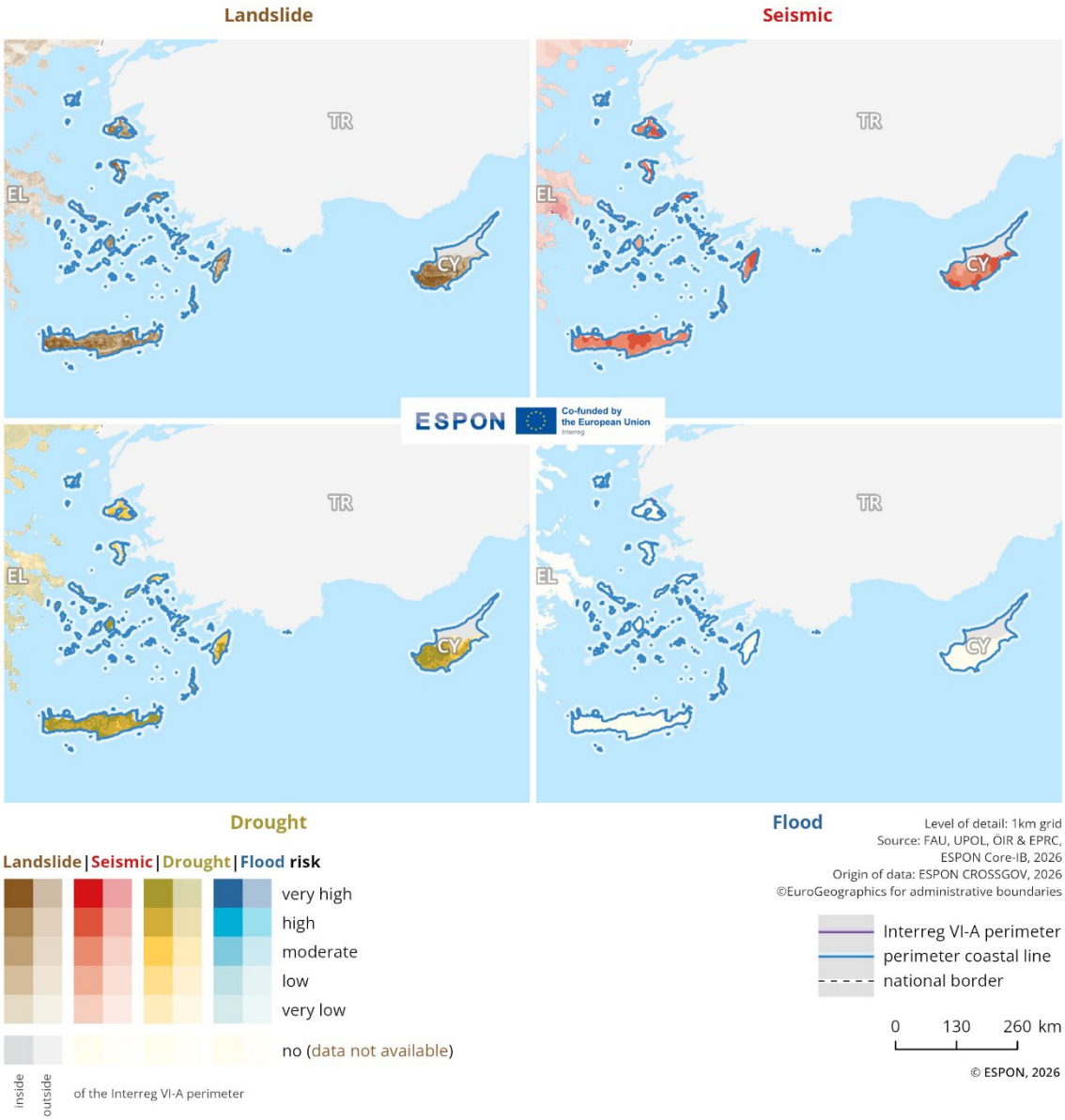
- **Source/method of retrieval**: The indicator is based on geodata from the Disaster Management Risk Knowledge Centre/JRC. It provides the likelihood of specific natural hazard events at grid level.
- **Temporal coverage**: 2024
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.21 illustrate the spatial distribution of natural hazards in the Greece-Cyprus region, highlighting areas where risks are shared across national boundaries and where risks are not necessarily cross-border relevant.

Landslides pose a moderate to very high risk across most of the region's islands. Similarly, seismic activity is widespread, with central Crete being one of the focal points. The risk of drought is low to moderate. Flooding risks can be described as very low.

Figure 2.21: 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

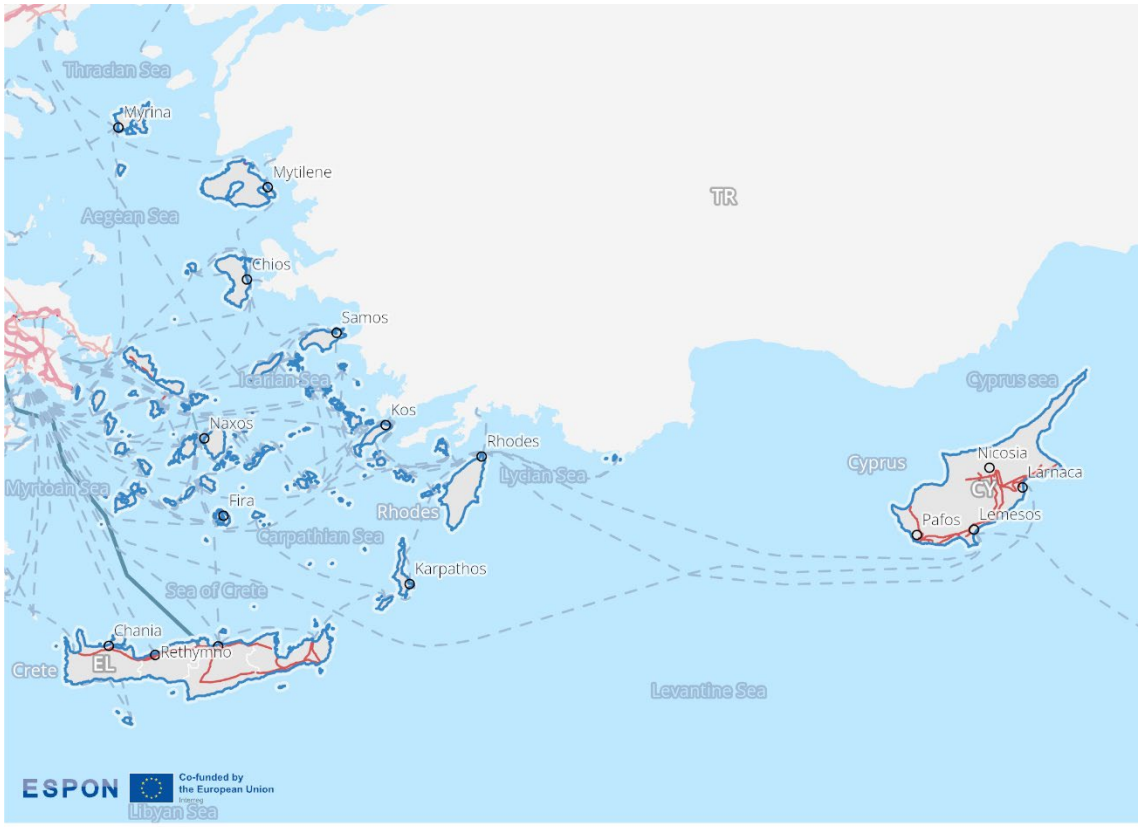
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.22 illustrates the distribution of power lines and cables in 2025 across the border region. The data distinguish between overhead and underground power lies, further classified into high-voltage (100-230 kV), extra high-voltage (230-1,000 kV), and ultra-high voltage (above 1,000 kV).

The Greece-Cyprus cross-border region has satisfactory energy infrastructure, primarily at a lower high-voltage level (not shown on the figure at this scale for most of islands). The key element is the extra-high-voltage submarine cable connecting Crete to the Greek mainland. Other high-voltage submarine cables connect some of the other Greek islands, such as Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Tinos, Andros and others. As can be seen on the figure, Cyprus is not directly connected to any other country or island. Its distribution network connects the main population centres on land.

[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 2.22: 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 60 120 km

2.3.3.2 Power stations

Indicator description

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

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

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

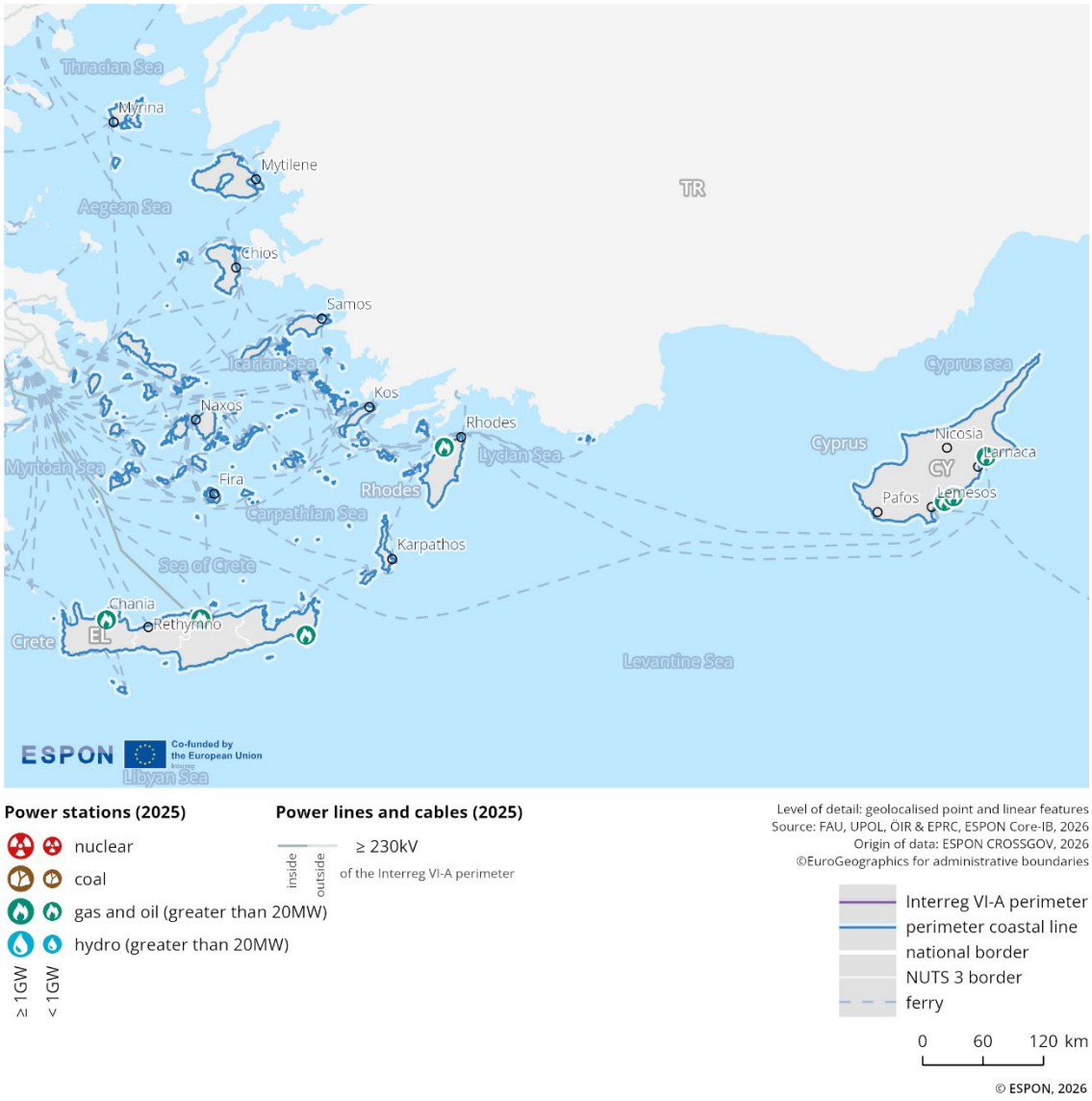
In the Greece-Cyprus cross-border region, there are a total of 7 power stations, all of which are gas or oil-powered (see Table 1). These stations are relatively evenly distributed on both sides of the border.

Table 1: Number and type of power stations

Power stations/plants	Less than 1GW	1GW and up
Nuclear	/	/
Coal	/	/
Gas and oil	7	/
Hydro	/	/

On the Greek side, 4 stations are distributed across Crete and Rhodes, while 3 are located on the Cypriot side (see Figure 2.24). However, it should be noted that there are more than 20 parallel operations at these sites. No other type of power station or plant is present in the region.

Figure 2.23: 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

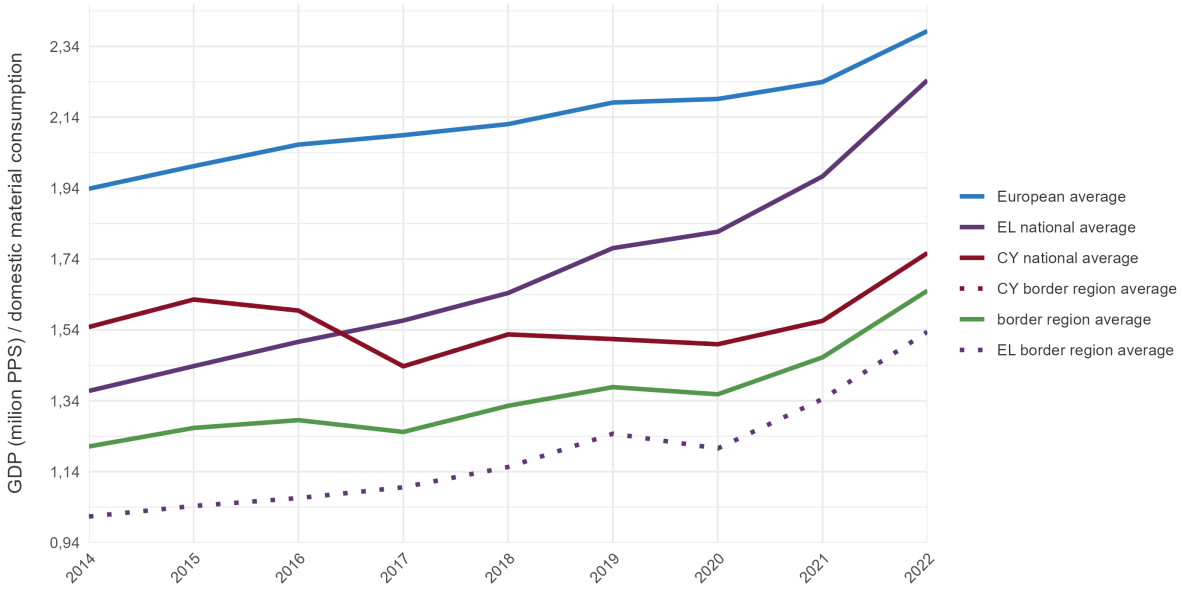
The indicator shows the economic value generated per unit of material consumed for each region within the cross-border area. Developments over time provide insights if the decoupling of productivity from resource use is progressing on regional level.

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

Figure 2.24: Resource productivity



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

The chart shows an overall positive trend of increasing resource productivity in both the Greek and Cypriot national contexts (visualised by the purple and red filled lines). Between 2014 and 2022, this trend remained consistently positive in Greece but was more inconsistent in Cyprus where the national average decreased in 2016. Before 2016, it is evident that Cypriot values were higher than Greek ones.

However, due to the 2016 drop and the subsequent intense progression in measured resource productivity, the Greek national average has surpassed the Cypriot average since that time. In 2022, the Greek national average was at around 2.14 million PPS/GDP, while the Cypriot national average was approximately 1.74 million PPS/GDP. By contrast, the average for the Greek border region is significantly lower than the national averages for both Greece and Cyprus.

The European average is significantly higher than the values in Greece and Cyprus. The average for the border region represents a combination of the lower values from the Greek border region values and the higher Cypriot values, reaching around 1.64 million PPS/GDP in 2022.

2.3.4.2 Generation of waste per GDP

Indicator description

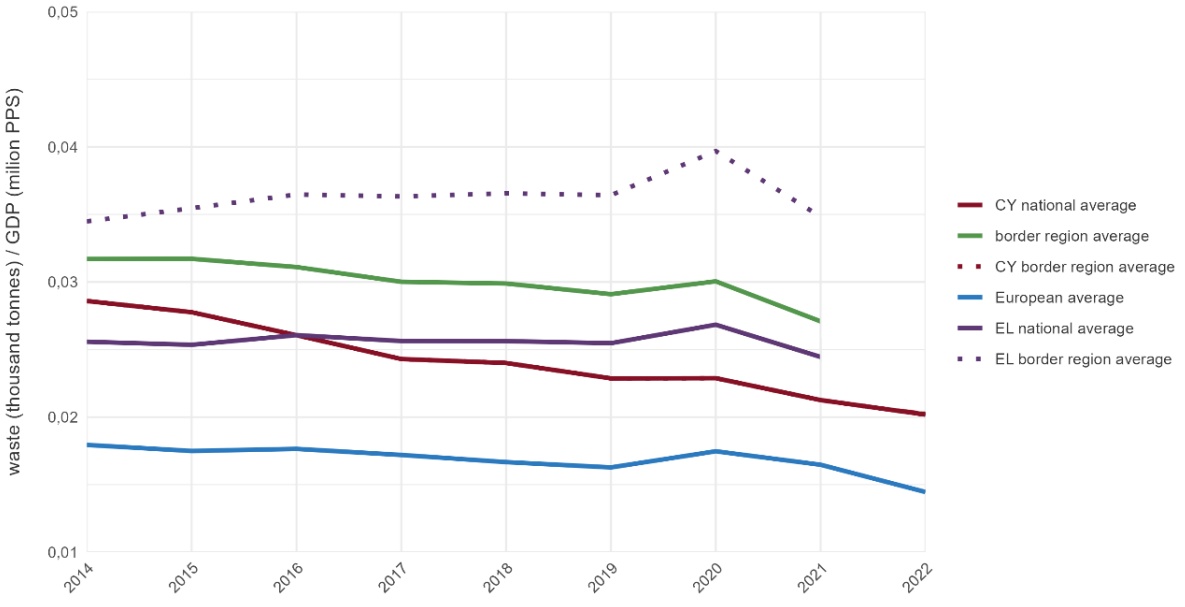
The indicator shows the regional distribution of waste creation in relation to the GDP development. Comparing waste generated to GDP reflects the waste intensity of the economy and provides a measure of "eco-efficiency". Observation of its change from year to year permits to assess whether the economy 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 2.25 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, Cyprus and their border region.

Figure 2.25: Waste generation per GDP



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

Greece's national average remains relatively stable throughout the period, at approximately 0.025 tonnes of waste per million PPS. A slight increase was observed in 2020, followed by a gradual decline. A comparable trend is seen in the Greek border region, although its values are consistently higher than the national average. The Cypriot national average shows a continuous and steady decrease over the period, with no notable fluctuations. Until 2016, Cyprus's national average exceeds Greece's; however, from 2017 onwards, it falls below. By 2022, the Cypriot national average had reached approximately 0.02 tonnes of waste per million PPS.

The European average gradually declined from around 0.018 tonnes in 2014 to approximately 0.015 tonnes in 2022. This consistently represents the lowest value in the comparison, remaining well below both the Greek and Cypriot national averages throughout the period.

Meanwhile, the cross-border regional average remains significantly higher than the European average, falling between the elevated values of Greece's border region and the somewhat lower values of Cyprus's border region. From 2022 onwards, it shows a marked decline, reaching approximately 0.015 tonnes of waste per million PPS by the end of the period.

2.3.5 Key messages on the green dimension

Due to the area's physical geography and the large number of islands, the protected areas in the border region are relatively dispersed. They are dotted along the coastlines and in the mountainous interiors of the Greek islands and Cyprus. Larger, contiguous Natura 2000 and national protected areas can be found on Crete and Rhodes, as well as across Cyprus, with marine protected sites extending into the surrounding waters.

Air pollution, as measured by PM2.5 concentrations (in $\mu g/m^3$), is higher on the Cypriot side of the border, and the border region's overall air quality is below the EU average. In contrast, the coastal waters around the Greek islands consistently record "good" or "high" water quality, whereas in Cyprus, water quality is mostly "moderate" to "good/high". Energy infrastructure is satisfactory, albeit fragmented. The most significant element is the extra-high-voltage submarine cable linking Crete with mainland Greece. Within the border area, there are 4 power stations, all of which are based on gas and oil, which highlights the region's reliance on conventional fuels.

The border region is relatively exposed to natural hazards, with landslides being the most widespread risk, followed by seismic activity. Droughts also affect both sides of the border, increasing the risk of wildfires. These risks emphasise the importance of resilience planning across the islands. The area's dispersed population and numerous islands also underline the importance of cooperation in planning preparedness, mitigation and response measures to boost capacity.

This border region continues to face challenges in transitioning towards sustainability due to low resource productivity and high waste generation, both of which diverge from EU averages. Between 2014 and 2022, progress was uneven: Greece has shown a more dynamic increase in resource productivity at the national level, albeit a slower increase in the border area, while Cyprus has made more significant strides in waste reduction. These complementary patterns highlight opportunities for cross-border learning and joint initiatives on circular economy strategies.

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.

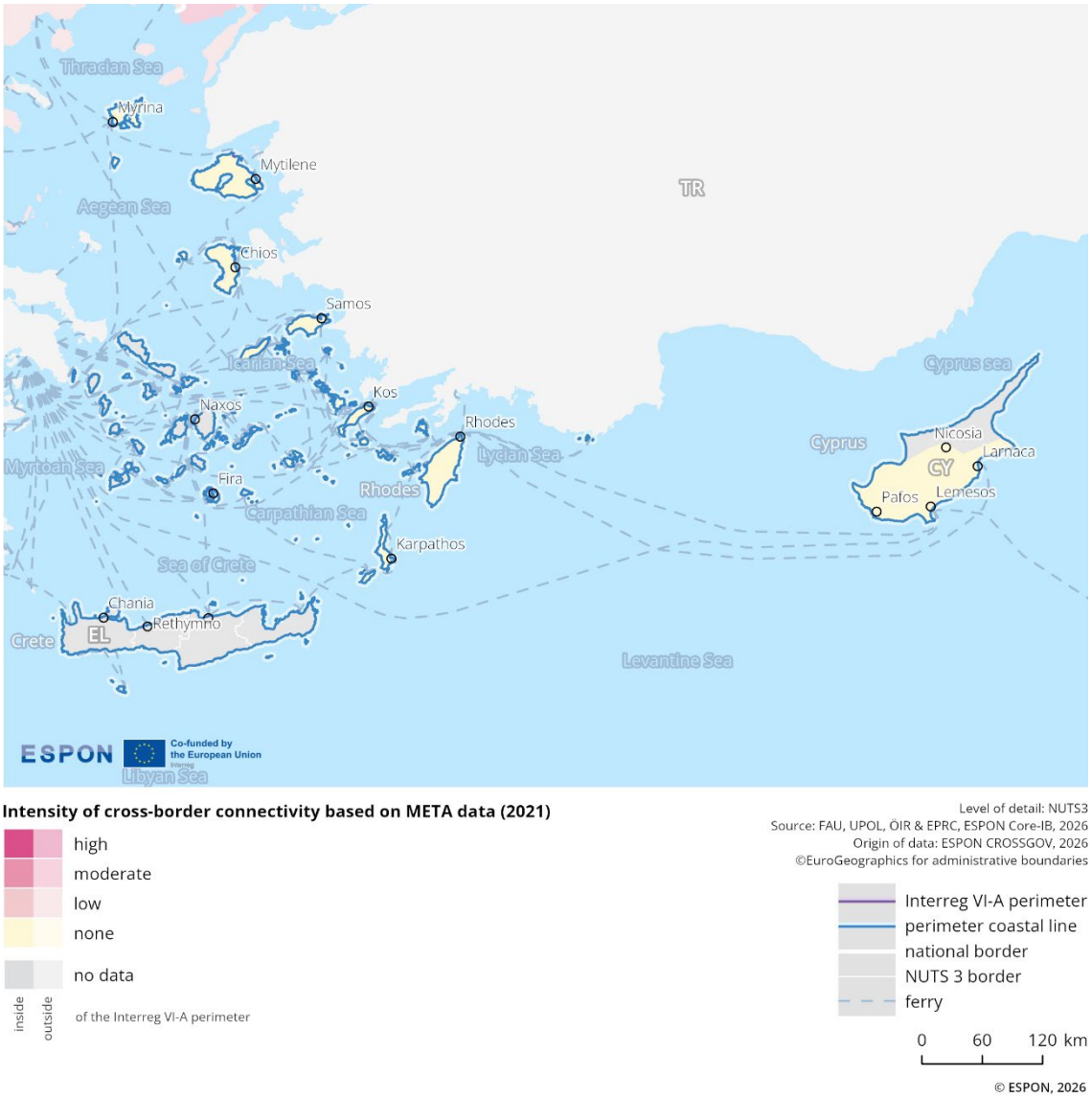
- **Source/method of retrieval**: Processing Facebook data on existing connections across the border (data for Good Meta)
- **Temporal coverage**: 2021
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.26 illustrates the spatial distribution of cross-border connectivity in social media based on Facebook information in the border area. The different shades of pink indicate varying intensities of interaction, ranging from low to high, with darker tones representing stronger intensity of cross-border connectivity in social media.

The map shows that the intensity of cross-border connectivity among residents of this border region is relatively low and evenly distributed. However, this observation should be treated with caution, as data is largely unavailable for the majority of small Greek islands, particularly in the western part of the region, as well as for Crete. For the Greek islands where data is available, including the main towns of Rhodes, Kos, and Mytilene, cross-border connectivity on social media, as measured by the number of connections between users of META social media, is limited (absent according to the indicator scale). Similarly, interaction with Greek counterparts appear to be absent among residents of Cyprus.

Figure 2.26: 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.

There is no language barrier within this cross-border region, as Greek is the official language used on both sides of the border.

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

Several NUTS3 regions show 20 to 40 nights per capita in 2023, including regions on the island of Crete and the islands of Kalymnos, Karpathos, Kasos, Kos, Rhodes, Andros, Thira, Kea - Kythnos, Milos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Syros, Tinos, Ikaria and Samos[14]. In Cyprus, the per capita figures are somewhat lower, though still comprising 10 to 20 nights spent per capita.

The leading tourism regions in terms of total overnight stays over the 3-year period are Kalymnos, Karpathos, Kasos, Kos, Rodos (approx. 25 million), Kýpros (approx. 16 million), Irakleio (approx. 15 million), Andros, Thira, Kea - Kythnos, Milos, Mykonos, Naxos, Paros, Syros, Tinos (approx. 13 million), and Chania (approx. 9.3 million).

[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&

Figure 2.27: Overnight stays in tourism

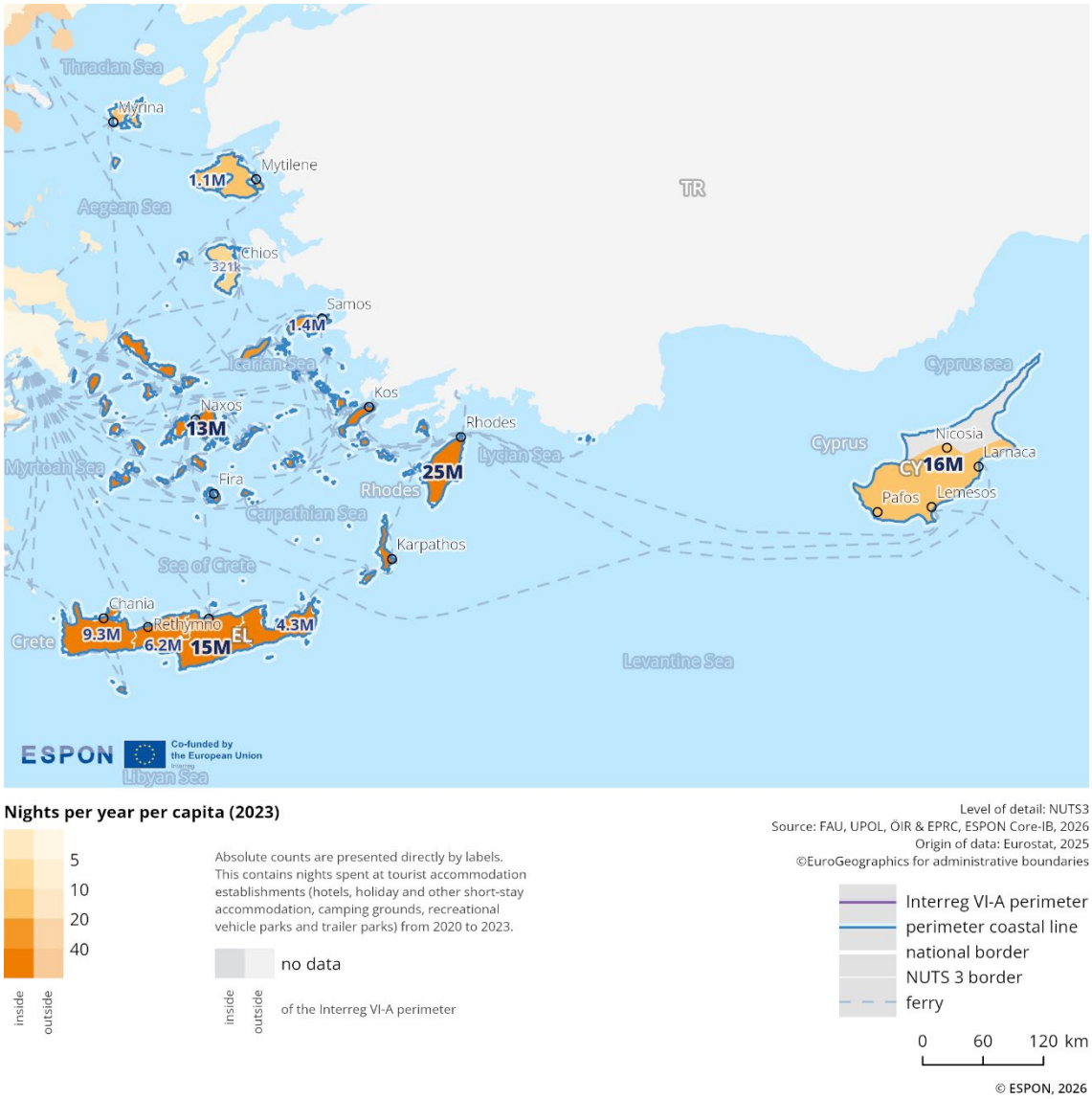
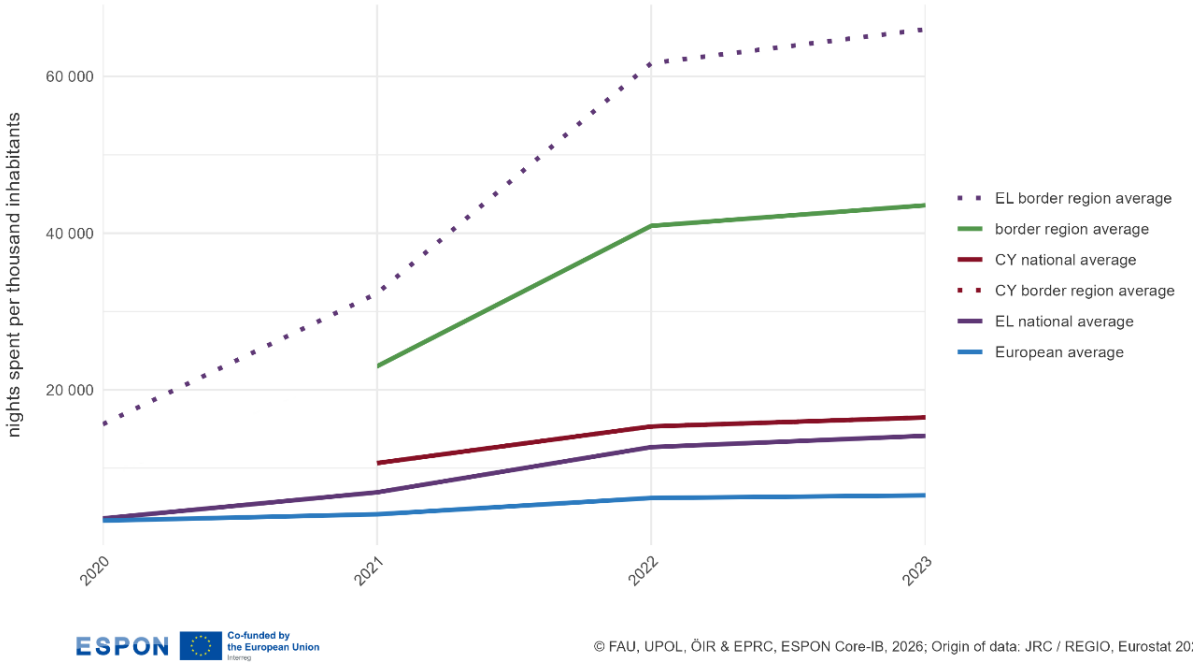


Figure 2.28 shows the number of nights spent at tourist establishments per thousand inhabitants between 2020 and 2023. Throughout this period, the Greece-Cyprus border region consistently recorded averages well above the European level, which includes EU member states and the EFTA countries of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. In Greece, the border-region's average is significantly higher than the national average, and this difference increases over time. Furthermore, the Greek border region consistently recorded higher numbers of overnight stays than Cyprus during the same period.

These tourism patterns have important implications for spatial development. Transport infrastructure must be able to accommodate seasonal peaks, while ensuring that tourism growth is balanced with the preservation of socio-cultural and environmental heritage, which can present challenges.

Figure 2.28: Overnight stays in tourism (comparison)



ESPON Co-funded by the European Union Interreg

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

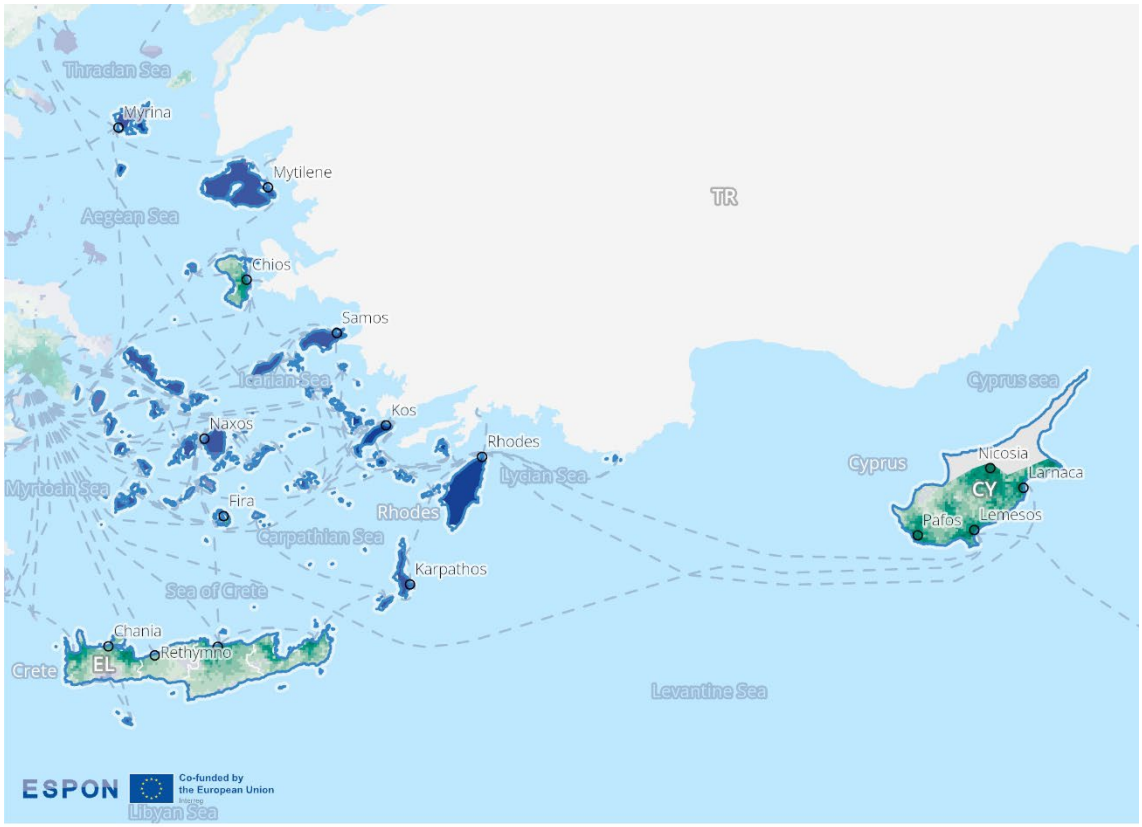
- Secondary schools (Figure 2.29)
- Grocery shops (Figure 2.30)
- Hospitals (Figure 2.31)
- Doctors (Figure 2.32)
- Pharmacies (Figure 2.33)
- Cinemas (Figure 2.34)

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–Cyprus border area, essential services such as hospitals, doctors, pharmacies, schools, and grocery shops are only accessible on some of the many islands. As a result, travel times exceed one hour in some parts of the programme area, particularly for schools and doctors. In comparison, pharmacies and grocery shops are somewhat more evenly distributed and easier to access.

On the largest islands, Crete and Cyprus, services are concentrated in cities and more densely populated areas. This common challenge in Greek and Cypriot border areas creates an urban–rural gradient, with shorter travel times in urban centres and longer ones in rural or remote regions.

Figure 2.29: 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

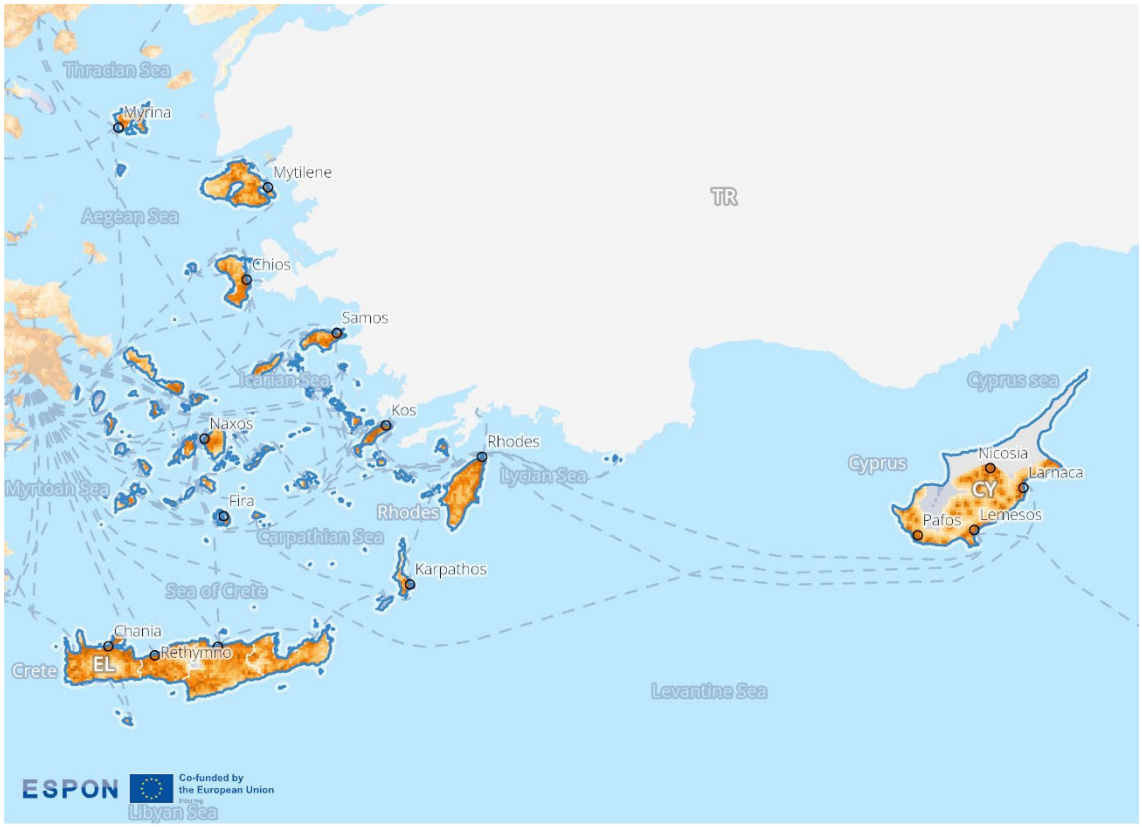
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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 60 120 km

Figure 2.30: 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

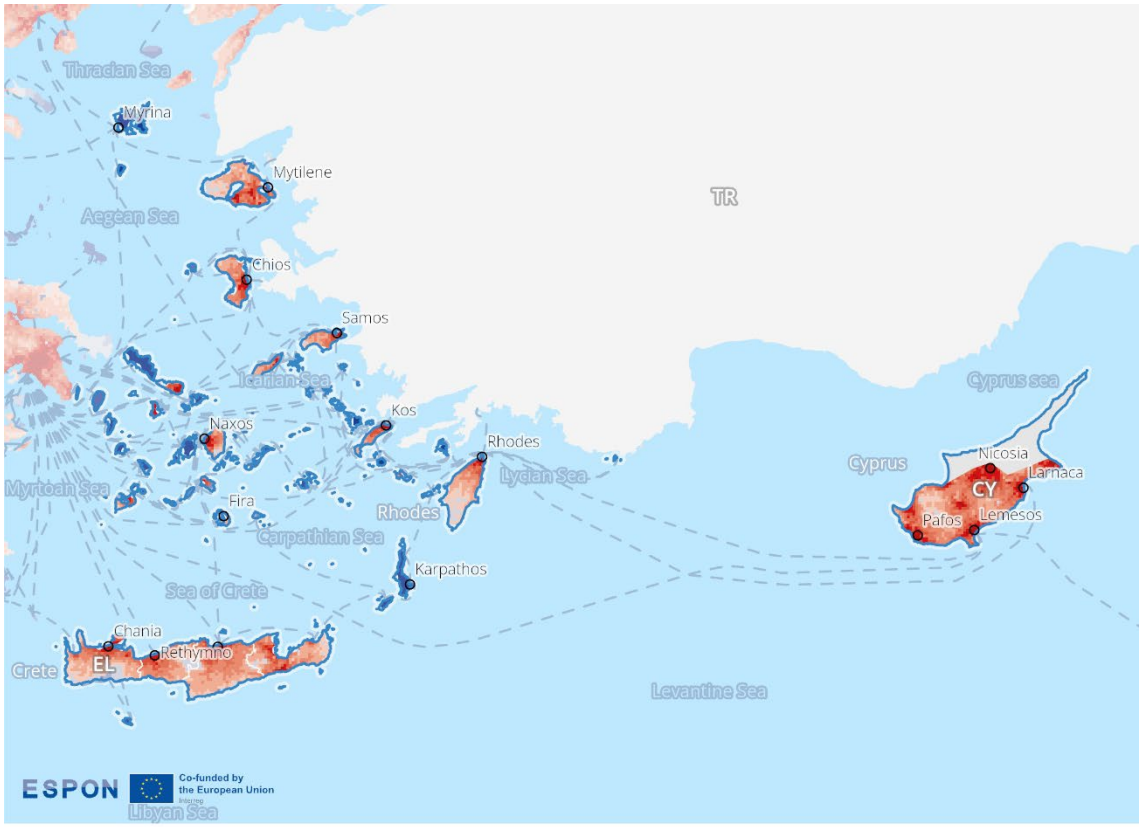
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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 60 120 km

Figure 2.31: 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

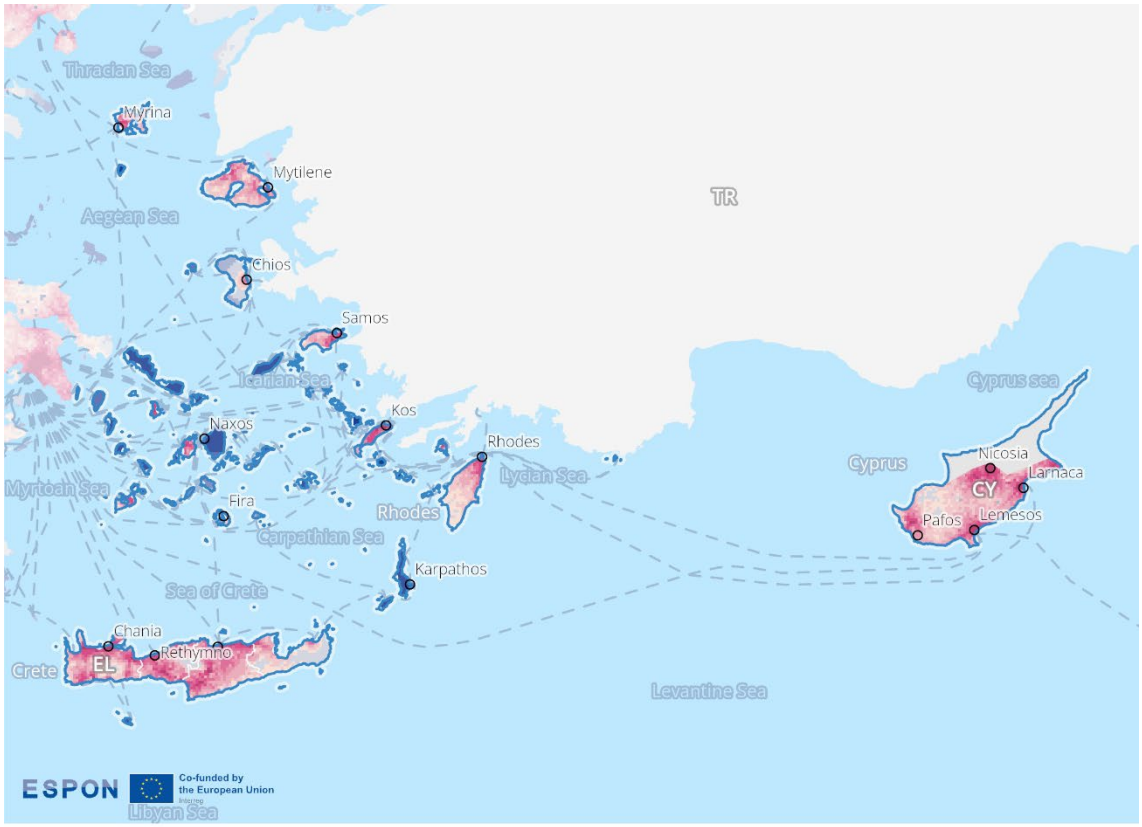
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 60 120 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.32: Travel time to doctors



Car travel time to the nearest doctor (2021)

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

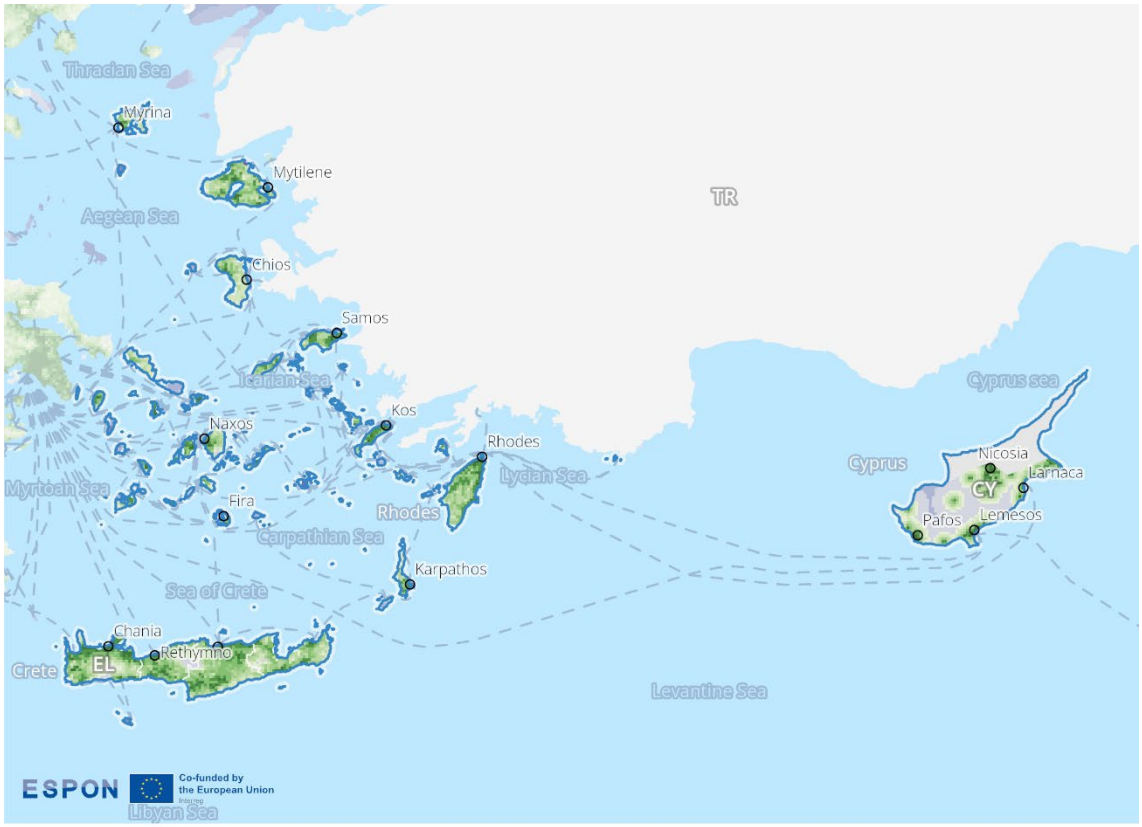
inside outside of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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 60 120 km

Figure 2.33: 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

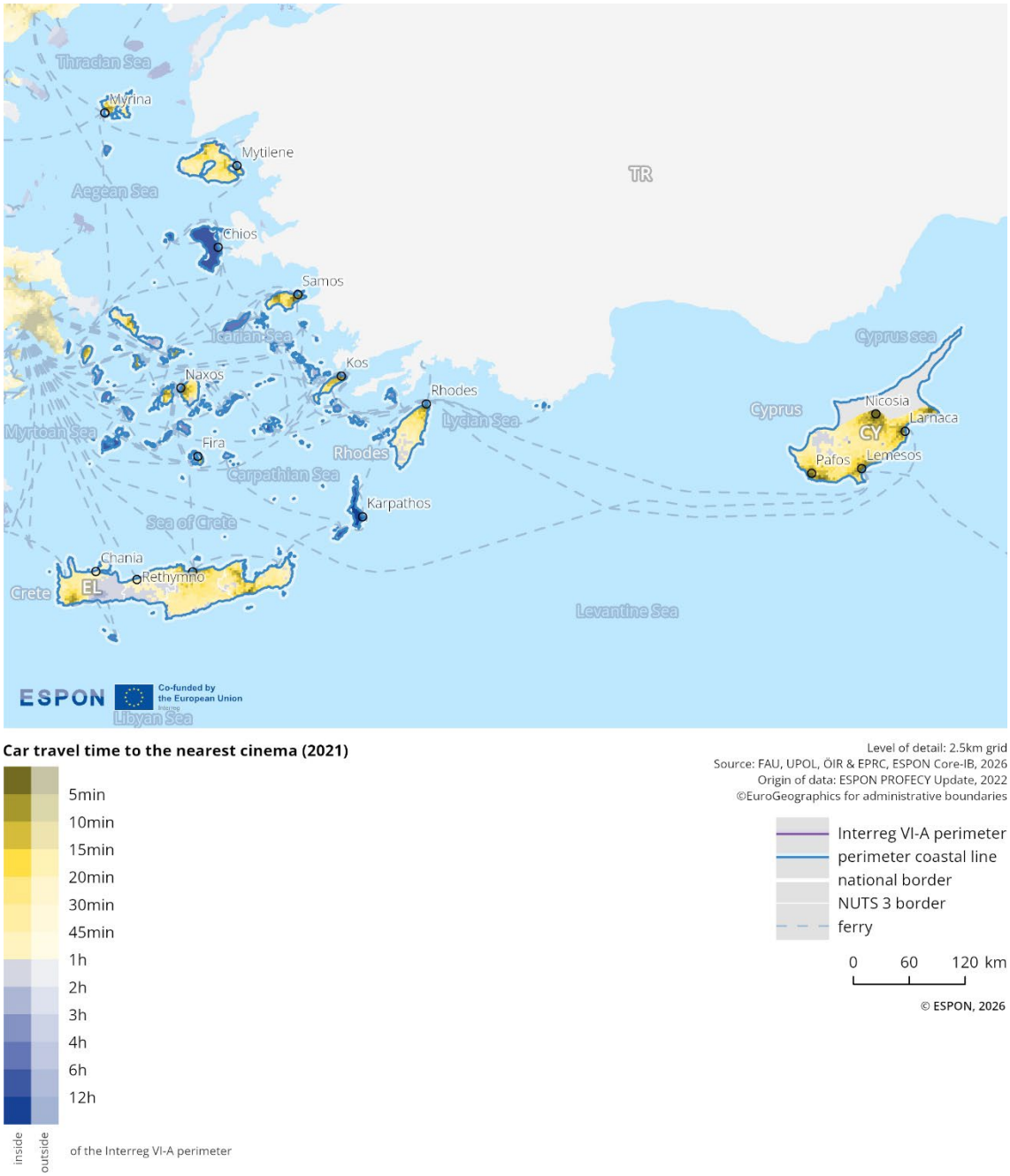
Level of detail: 2.5km grid
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026
Origin of data: ESPON PROFECY Update, 2022
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

0 60 120 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.34: Travel time to cinemas



2.4.4 Key messages on the socio-economic dimension

Although there is no language barrier between Greece and the Greek-speaking inhabitants of Cyprus, social integration across the border, as measured by the number of connections established between users on META social media platforms, is limited, potentially due to physical barriers and the geographic distance between key population centres.

Tourism emerges as a defining activity in the border region. The spatial distribution of overnight stays highlights its importance, with activity levels far exceeding the EU average. Tourism contributes to regional income, infrastructure development, and employment, thereby supporting regional prosperity. However, the associated pressures are unevenly distributed and can generate environmental and so-

cial tensions. Overtourism, seasonal peaks, and land-use conflicts in particular may reduce local acceptance, despite the clear economic benefits. In 2023, several NUTS3 regions on the Greek side recorded 20–40 nights per capita, whereas figures on the Cypriot side were somewhat lower.

Access to essential services is limited in certain areas of the border region. Hospitals, doctors, pharmacies, schools, and grocery shops are only available on certain islands, meaning some communities face travel times of over an hour. The gaps are most evident for doctors and secondary schools, while pharmacies and grocery shops are more evenly distributed and accessible. These disparities highlight the potential for innovative approaches to improve access to key services and for cross-border cooperation in addressing accessibility challenges. However, weaknesses in digital infrastructure could be a barrier to remote service provision.

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.

Border controls enforced through the Schengen Borders Code can have a tangible effect on the smooth functioning of cross-border flows within the Schengen area, particularly with regard to commuting and logistics, as they introduce delays and unpredictability. In the case of the Greece-Cyprus border area, the Code is expected to come into effect in 2026, when Cyprus is due to join the Schengen Area.

2.6 Governance dimension

The relationship between the 2 countries has always been exceptionally close. There is a commitment to cooperation and coordination at all levels of government. Cooperation efforts cover various areas, including research.

2.6.1 Cross-border cooperation

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

2.6.1.1 Cross-border governance structures

Indicator description

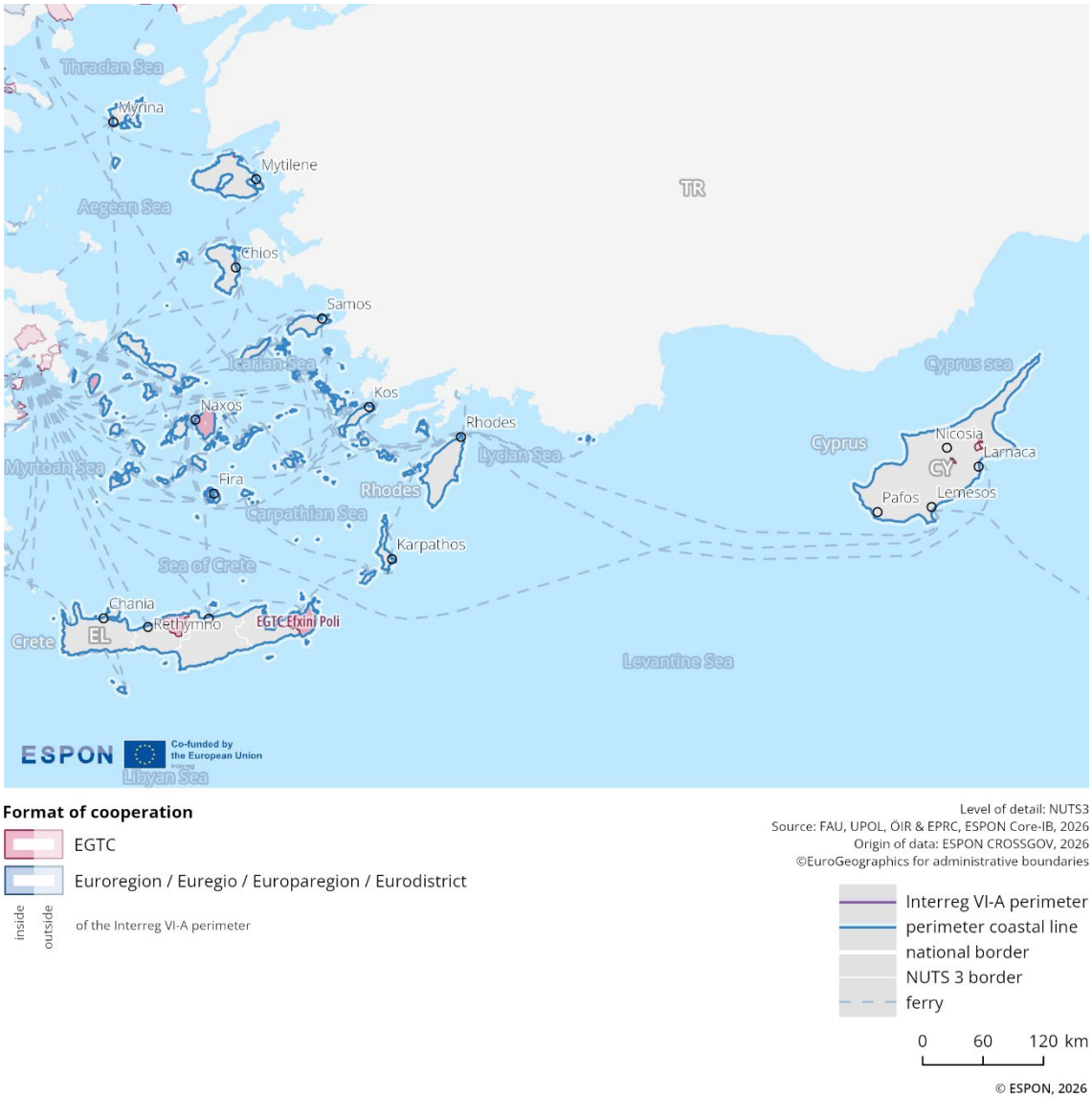
The indicator shows active institutionalised cooperation that act as cross-border entities. It includes cooperation formats such as Eurocities, Euroregions, EGTC, cross-border associations, cross-border councils, etc.

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

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.35 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.

Figure 2.35: 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.

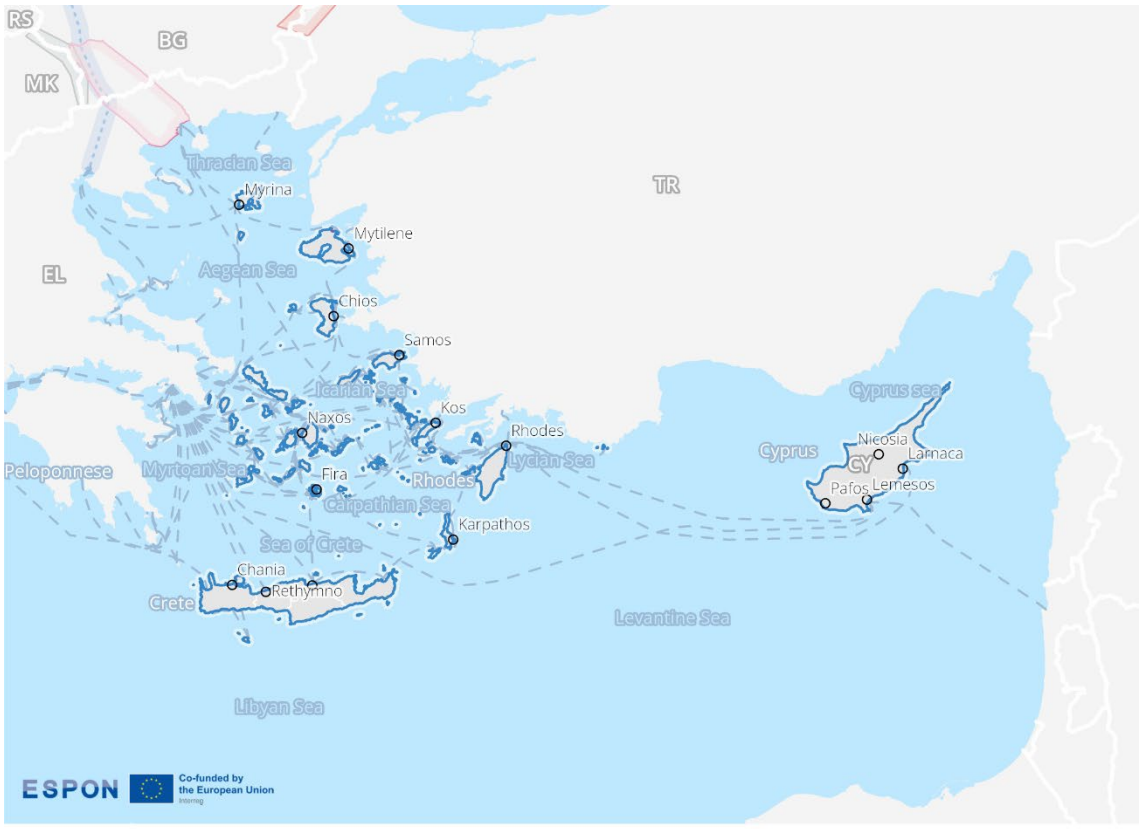
- **Source**: ESPON cross-border public services (CPS) 2.0 database
- **Temporal coverage**: 2022
- **Unit**: n/a

Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.36 depicts the geographical extent of cross-border public services in the border area in 2022. Different thematic areas are represented by distinct symbols and colours, indicating services such as disaster management, health care, transportation, education, environment, energy, job placement, and culture. The visualisation highlights where these services operate across the national boundary.

The map covering the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean regions shows a complete absence of geo-located cross-border public services between Greece and Cyprus.

Figure 2.36: 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 80 160 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. In the case of the Greece-Cyprus programme area, there has been no reported participation in b-solutions projects yet.

2.6.1.4 Institutionalised advice centres for cross-border issues

Indicator description

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

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

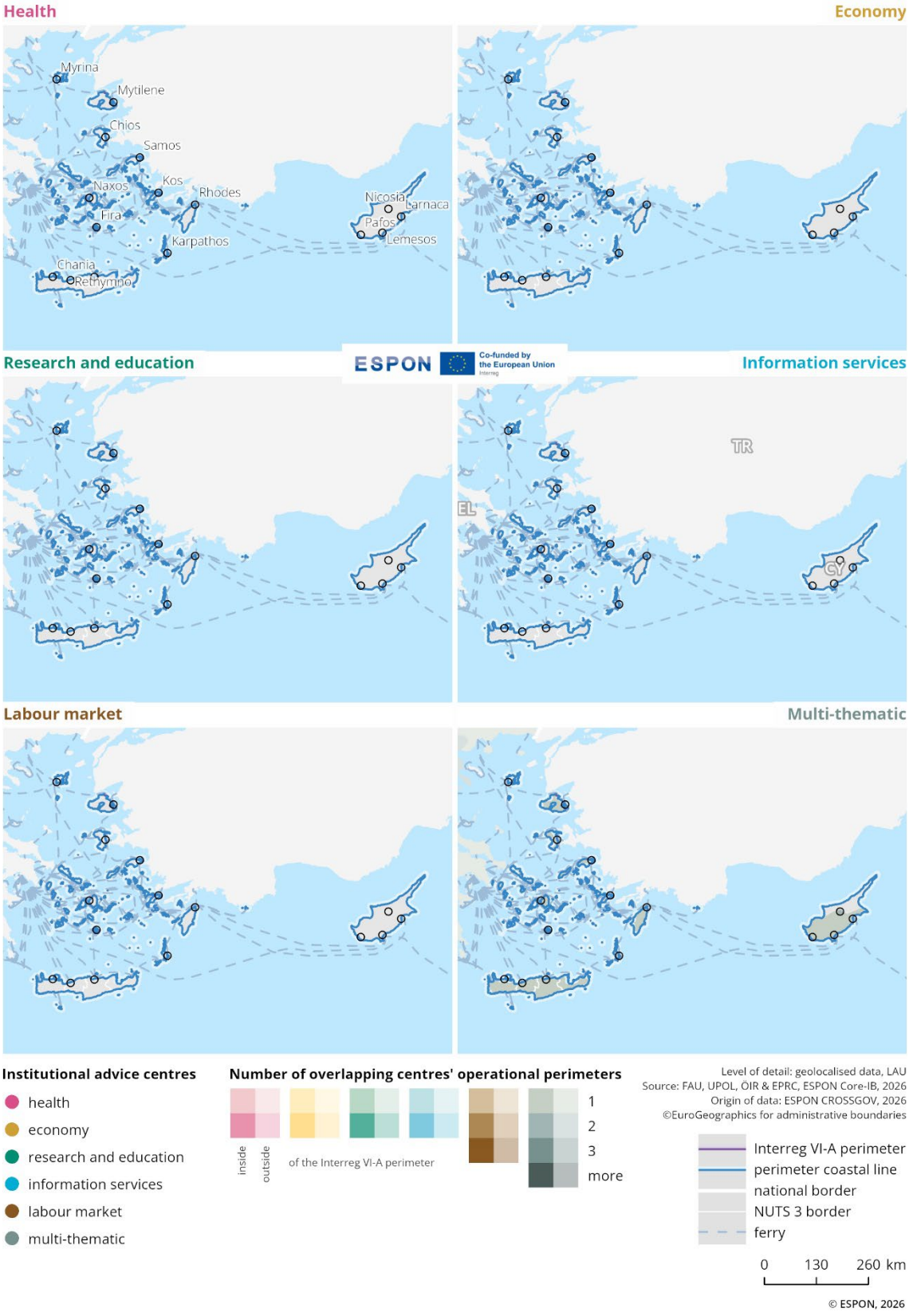
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

Figure 2.37 shows the locations and types of institutionalised advice centres, along with their operational domains, in the cross-border Interreg region between Greece and Cyprus. 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.

There are no institutionalised advice centres in the region, nor are there any outside it.

Multi-thematic operational domains are present in both countries within the Interreg area, but they are not particularly prominent.

Figure 2.37: Institutionalised cross-border advice centres



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 2.38), 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
Physical geography	▪ Islands, mountainous and semi-mountainous medium-sized islands ▪ Difficulty of access and isolation, interconnection of only specific island units ▪ Distance between Cyprus and the Greek islands, and the rest of the EU
Economy	▪ Greece and Cyprus have been severely affected by the financial crisis ▪ Small primary and secondary sectors ▪ The tertiary sector, linked to tourism, is very strong
Infrastructure	▪ Inadequacies in infrastructure (sea transport and road network) limitations for tourism
Tourism	▪ Pressures of mass tourism and seasonality. Volume of tourism is extremely high especially in the South Aegean, Crete and Cyprus ▪ Tensions around the capacity of the islands and the protection of the environment and natural resources and other local productive activities
Innovation	▪ Both countries are classified as moderately innovative. Crete is the only region in the cooperation area, that scores among the strong innovators. ▪ Levels of public and private spending on R&D among the lowest in the EU ▪ Growth potential limited by lack of critical mass ▪ Potential in sustainable development, Blue Economy activities, actions to strengthen SMEs
Environment	▪ Natural resources investment opportunities ▪ Circular Economy – Sustainable water management
Climate	▪ Faced with multiple natural and environmental risks, especially floods and forest fires
Employment	▪ The regions of Greece rank among the top for OECD well-being indicators for health and safety but are among the lowest in terms of jobs and life satisfaction.

Total Budget: EUR 57,489,019.00

Figure 2.38: Split of Interreg allocation

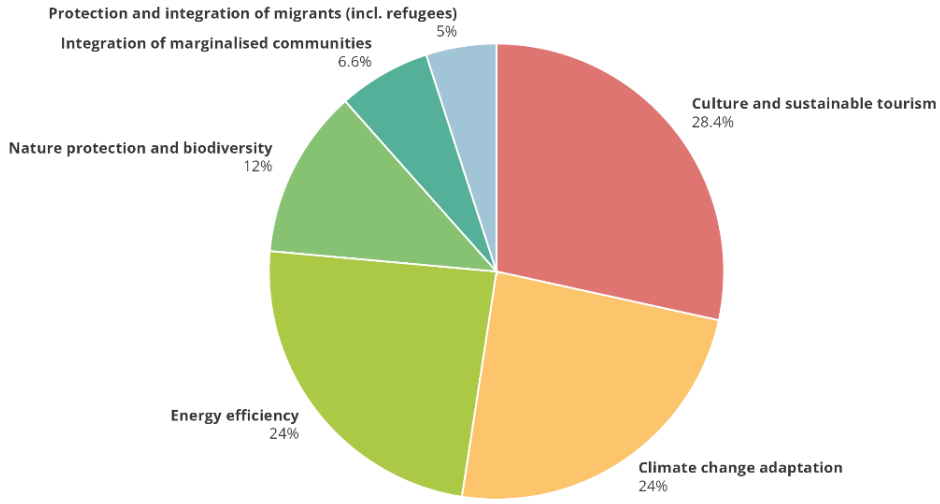


Table 3 shows the number of Interreg 2021-2027 cross-border and transnational programmes which share at least one NUTS3 region with the border area. Each programme has its own distinct rationale, value and territorial focus. However, for the purposes of, for example, planning and capitalisation activities 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.[15] 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)
/	3

Key aspects

- The cross-border programme aims to strengthen collaboration between Crete, the South and North Aegean regions, and Cyprus.
- It focuses on environmental protection, climate change adaptation, sustainable tourism, and social inclusion to promote a greener, more resilient, and inclusive Europe.
- Territories within the programme area also participate in the 2021-27 Interreg B Programmes Euro (MED), Next Med, and Adriatic Programme.

[15] 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.

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[16]. 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

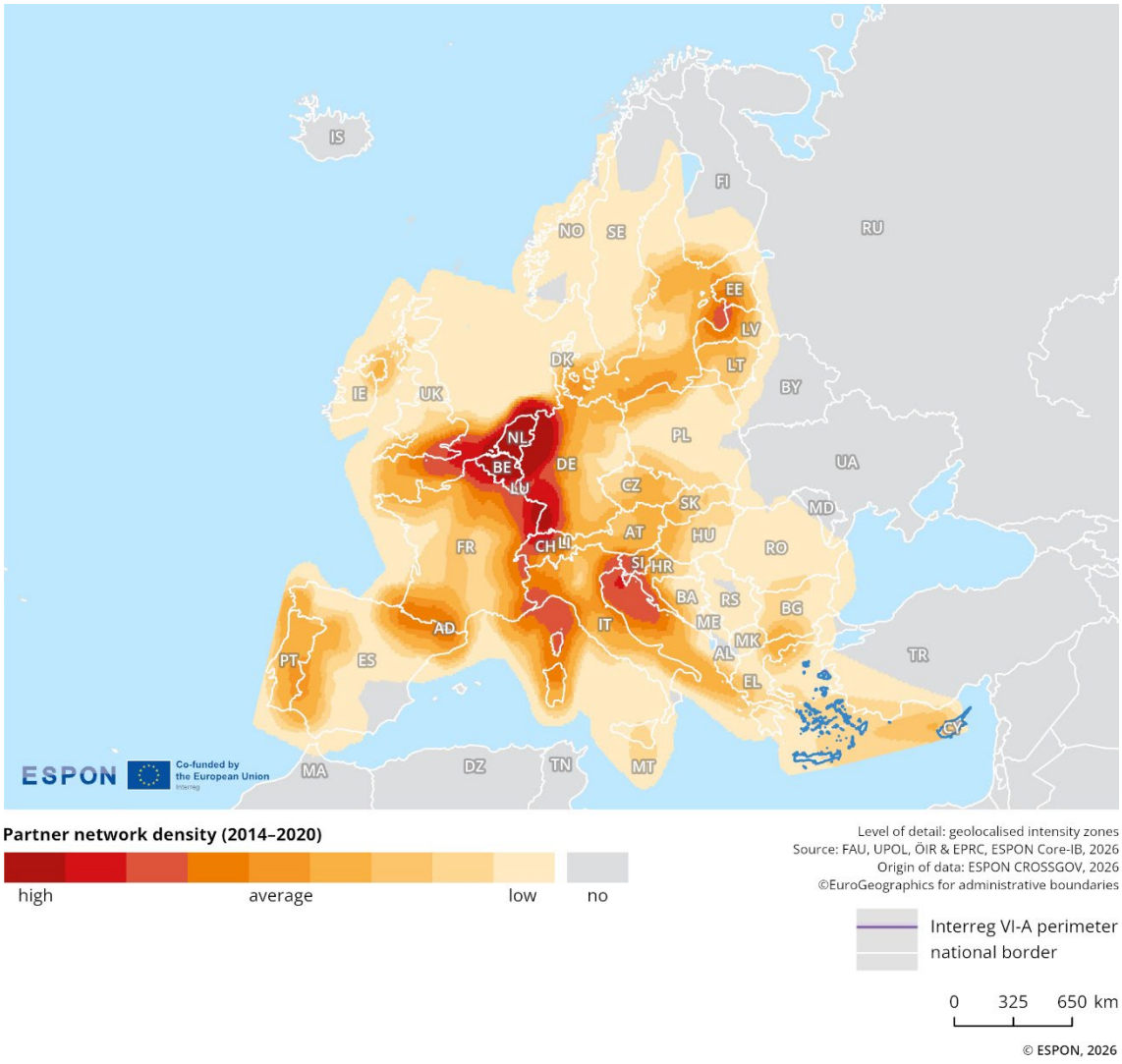
Please refer to the technical annex for more information.

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 2.39 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, the level of partner network density in the Greece-Cyprus border area appears to be quite evenly spread, and is close to the European average. Based on the keep.eu database and excluding duplicates, the number of project partners increased from 160 in Interreg IV-A (2007–2013) to 165 in Interreg V-A (2014–2020), an increase of about 3%. 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.

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

Figure 2.39: Interreg V-A partner network density



2.6.3 Key messages on the governance dimension

The relationship between the 2 countries has been exceptionally close. However, participation in initiatives such as EGTC and b-solutions has so far been limited. Interreg engagement focuses on environmental protection, climate change adaptation, sustainable tourism, and social inclusion, with the aim of promoting a greener, more resilient, and inclusive Europe. Some parts of this cross-border region are also covered by the Interreg B Programmes Euro (MED), Next Med and Adriatic for the period 2021-27, which could facilitate broader cooperation. The level of cooperation density in this border area is close to the European average. Between Interreg IV-A and Interreg V-A, based on the keep.eu database and excluding duplicates, the number of project partners increased by about 3%, from 160 to 165.

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 territorial character of the Greece–Cyprus border region is shaped by islands and insularity, as well as varied topography, including mountainous interiors, flat coastal lowlands, and extensive coastal zones; • These topographic and hydrographic conditions have a strong influence on the region's spatial structure: urban centres are concentrated in coastal and inland hubs, while large areas remain sparsely populated and rural; • Topographic and hydrographic conditions also impact economic, social and environmental cooperation opportunities and barriers. The population density is higher and more evenly distributed on the Cypriot side, whereas dispersed rural settlements across the region contribute to an overall density below the EU average; • The border region has experienced modest population growth above the EU average, yet ageing is accelerating. The share of elderly (65+) has grown by 24.2%, creating new demands on health and social care, as well as labour market challenges. This could pose a particular problem for small island communities and rural areas; • Settlement changes are limited, although some expansion is visible around Nicosia. This may be due to the population growth in Cyprus and the appeal of the capital as a place to live and work; • Accessibility across the border region is limited to air and ferry connections, impacting the development of green, integrated transport options in the area. Mobility is more intensive around cities than in peripheral rural areas, which likely indicates infrastructure constraints.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • A relevant policy option is to address the challenges of double insularity faced by islands at the external edges of Europe, with a focus on overcoming structural isolation and improving functional connectivity; • The development of innovative solutions for linking urban and coastal towns with their hinterlands to strengthen functional linkages to the mutual benefit of both areas; • A focus could be on labour market functioning through territorial cooperation by improving access to skills development and training, while taking the demographic shifts and evolving workforce needs into account; • Territorial cooperation initiatives could address the potentials of green transport solutions in territories that rely heavily on air and ferry connections for cross-border mobility.

Economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• GDP per capita in the border region has gradually converged with the EU average since 2010, but gaps remain. Growth has been more dynamic in Cyprus, whereas the Greek side has experienced stagnation, particularly between 2014 and 2019; • Employment rates show no significant differences within the border region. Until 2019, rates were slightly higher and more dynamic in Cyprus, while the gap between national and border-area levels gradually narrowed in Greece; • The working-age population remains above the EU average, but has fallen since 2014. The decline has been more pronounced in Cyprus; • Sectoral patterns are relatively stable. Trade, transport, and tourism-related services (G–I) dominate alongside real estate (L) and social/public services (O–Q). These sectors together make up more than half of GVA. From 2014–2023, GVA grew by 57%, with the largest share being contributed by sector group G–I; • Wage levels show clear asymmetry: most Greek regions report 10–15 €/hour, while in Cyprus wages range from 15–20 €/hour. This may encourage labour mobility, although distance and transport constraints limit its extent; • Housing prices differ between coastal and urban areas and inland locations, reflecting stronger demand in coastal and urban areas and weaker demand inland; • Digital connectivity remains weak on both sides, with internet speeds ranging from 50 to 150 Mbps and little difference between urban and rural areas.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • The contribution to economic growth and resilience across the border region, with particular attention to the needs of peripheral and isolated communities; • Cooperation projects could focus on the development of sustainable, high-value tourism strategies, reflecting the role of tourism as a key economic sector; • Integrated planning approaches can be promoted via territorial cooperation to address the high housing costs and access to services, helping to maintain the long-term attractiveness of areas for businesses and residents; • A focus could be on the digital transition and the improvement of digital access across the territory, particularly to strengthen service provision and business competitiveness.

Green dimension	
Key analytical findings	• Protected areas in the border region are relatively dispersed, with larger contiguous Natura 2000 and national sites concentrated in Crete, Rhodes, and across Cyprus, including significant marine zones. This reflects both ecological continuity and uneven protection coverage; • Air pollution levels are higher in Cyprus, while overall air quality across the border region remains below the EU average. In contrast, water quality is consistently "good/high" in the coastal areas of the Greek islands, whereas Cyprus shows a more mixed pattern ranging from "moderate" to "good/high"; • Exposure to natural hazards is widespread, with landslides posting the greatest risk, followed by seismic activity. Droughts and the wildfires are also present, underlining the importance of joint preparedness; • Energy infrastructure is relatively evenly distributed across the cross-border area, including 7 gas and oil power stations. There is limited diversification into renewables. The extra-high-voltage submarine cable connecting Crete to mainland Greece is a key strategic link, but there is still no energy connectivity with Cyprus; • Resource productivity and waste generation trends are asymmetrical. Greece has made more dynamic progress in terms of resource productivity, although less so in its border area. Meanwhile, Cyprus has achieved sharper reductions in waste generation. However, both countries remain below EU averages, suggesting scope for cross-border learning and joint circular economy initiatives.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • Strategy development, pilot projects and knowledge exchange can explore cross-border management approaches to enhance the protection of fragile environments, while strengthening climate resilience and improving resource efficiency; • Territorial cooperation could support mitigation, preparedness and resilience in relation to both the emerging and long-standing environmental hazards and risks; • The exploration of opportunities for cross-border learning and the development of cross-border circular economy initiatives to support more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

Socio-economic dimension	
Key analytical findings	• The border region shows limited cross-border connectivity in social media among residents. This is despite the absence of language barriers, and likely links to spatial constraints on residents' interaction; • Tourism is a key sector for the border region, with activity significantly above the EU average. Tourism intensity is spatially concentrated, with several Greek NUTS-3 regions recording 20–40 overnight stays per capita in 2023. Figures on the Cypriot side are somewhat lower; • The region has uneven access to essential services. Hospitals, doctors, and secondary schools are often more than an hour away, particularly on certain islands; • Pharmacies and grocery shops are more evenly distributed and accessible, reflecting different patterns of service provision.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • The strong linguistic and cultural links can be leveraged to support social integration despite spatial barriers to exchange; • Collective experience with mass tourism can be capitalised on through cross-border cooperation to develop competitive, green and sustainable tourism solutions that deliver benefits across the territory; • A focus could be on integrated planning and development approaches to address the digital inequalities and spatial barriers that limit access to services.

Border security and safety dimension	
Key analytical findings	N.A.
Policy options	N.A.

Governance dimension	
Key analytical findings	• Bilateral relations are strong, yet engagement with dedicated cross-border governance instruments, such as EGTCs and b-solutions, remains limited; • Interreg cooperation is well-established, with a strong focus on environmental protection, climate adaptation, sustainable tourism, and social inclusion, all of which align with EU priorities for a greener and more resilient Europe; • Parts of the border region also benefit from participation in the wider Interreg B programmes in 2021-27 (Euro (MED), Next MED, and the Adriatic), which increases opportunities for territorial cooperation; • The overall Interreg V-A partner network density in the Greece–Cyprus border area is close to the European average, indicating potential for further development.
Policy options	**Cross-cutting aspects** • The engagement with governance tools and initiatives such as EGTCs and b-solutions could be strengthened, alongside the exploration of how these instruments may be effectively leveraged through territorial cooperation; • The collaboration and synergies with other Interreg programmes to maximise benefits for the programme area, including in relation to key social challenges such as sustainable tourism and demographic ageing in rural areas.

ESPON

Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

espon.eu

ESPON 2030

ESPON EGTC
11 Avenue John F. Kennedy
L-1855 Luxembourg
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg
Phone: +352 20 600 280
Email: info@espon.eu
www.espon.eu

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.