

ESPON

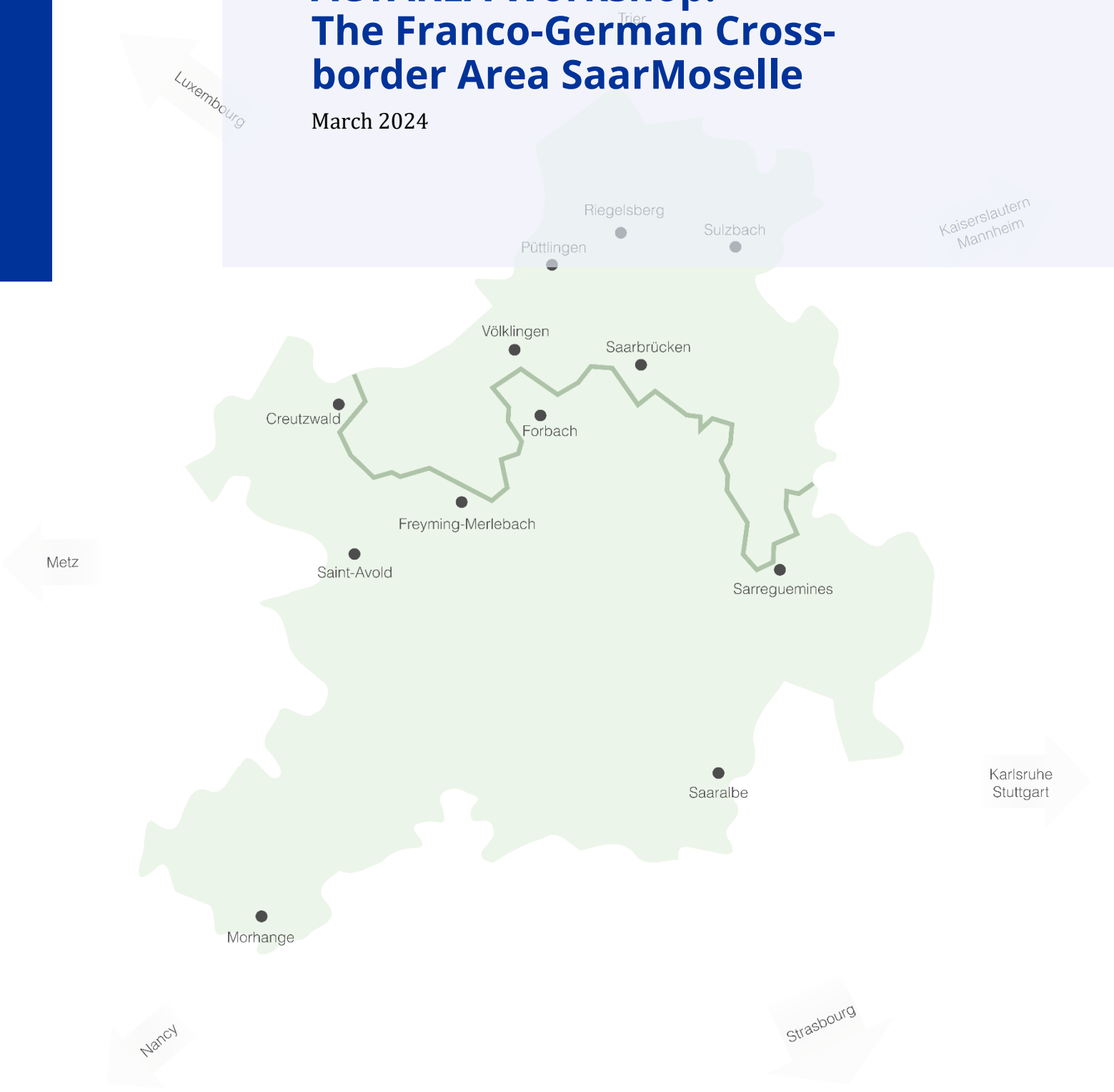


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PRE-EVENT BRIEF

ACTAREA Workshop: The Franco-German Cross- border Area SaarMoselle

March 2024



Workshop: Methodology, topics and structure

The use of the ACTAREA web application is decisive for the entire workshop structure and its content, which is why this methodological approach is first briefly described below before the actual workshop topics and the course of the workshop can be discussed.

ACTAREA web application

The ESPON ACTAREA web application was developed as a tool for workshops in the context of collaborative processes. It is a tool for the participatory development of schematic maps ('mapshots') and syntheses. These enable a spatial visualisation of the organisation of administrative areas, institutional areas of responsibility and influence ('institutional maps').

Planning professionals, public actors, entrepreneurs and citizens have spatial perceptions of the areas in which they live or operate. These perceptions influence their daily mobility (what is far away? What is close?), their assessment of and support for local development projects, and the way they identify with their geographical surroundings.

The **mapshots** allow a conceptual representation of an interdependence area with geographical features, patterns and trends that are relevant to the observed or potential interdependence dynamics. These visualisations are created during the workshop by the workshop participants in small groups on the basis of a schematic reference map.

Cooperation across administrative boundaries is characterised not least by the respective institutional context and the cooperation environment of the respective interlinking aspect. Topic-specific **institutional maps** summarise this environment in a simplified way and help to understand the institutional context and the cooperation environment of the specific object of cooperation. These are prepared in advance so that they can be discussed and clarified with the workshop participants during the workshop.

Workshop topics

The cross-border agglomeration area of the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict is characterised by its location in the Greater Region between several large conurbations (Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main, Rhine-Neckar) and between various European transport corridors (for example with a direct connection to Paris).³ This results in a specific strategic location between Eastern and Western Europe, which is at the centre of the European markets.⁴

The Eurodistrict has six members – including five French municipal associations (Forbach Porte de France, Saint-Avold Synergie, Sarreguemines Confluences, Freyding-Merlebach, Warndt) and the Saarbrücken regional association (Regionalverband) on the German side. Currently two associated members, the Saarpfalzkreis and the Bitche association of municipalities, supplement the membership.⁵ Roughly 600,000 inhabitants live in the Eurodistrict. If the neighbouring catchment areas are included, they account for about 1 million people. Over 50% of the inhabitants live in the area of the Saarbrücken regional association, whereby the overall population density is higher in the northern part of the Eurodistrict than in the southern part. Since the year 2000, the

³ Cf. European Commission (n.d.): <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/map/maps.html>

⁴ Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (2024): <https://www.saarmoselle.org/de/saarmoselle-stark-fuer-ihre-entwicklung.html>

⁵ SaarMoselle Eurodistrict (2024): <https://www.saarmoselle.org/de/das-saarmoselle-gebiet.html>

population has decreased throughout the Eurodistrict. Further decline is expected until 2050, mainly on the German side of the Eurodistrict.⁶

Overall, the SaarMoselle agglomeration area has a polycentric structure, with Saarbrücken as the sole regional centre of cross-border significance. This part of the Eurodistrict is characterised by continuous settlement strips that continue into France in the direction of Forbach, Creutzwald and St. Avold. In contrast, the south-western part of Lorraine has a more rural character. The six medium-sized centres of Völklingen, Creutzwald, Forbach, Freyming-Merlebach, Saint Avold and Saargemünd in the central part of the Eurodistrict are an essential part of the polycentric structure. Smaller basic centres in the north and south of the Eurodistrict are very heterogeneously distributed.⁷

These structures are accompanied by different spatial dynamics within the Eurodistrict and a distribution of urban functions that significantly matter for cooperation in the two thematic areas of "retail" and "health".

Retail

To identify "retail" interdependencies and their potential development in the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, other territorial characteristics than the principal settlement structures described above also matter as well as the effects of different structures:

- Due to its central location in the Greater Region, the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict has one of the highest numbers of cross-border commuters in Europe. In consequence, the retail sector also has a strong cross-border focus.⁸
- The diversity of offers contributes to the quality of life in the French-German border region. Border region residents take advantage of these different offers for living, shopping, culture and leisure on both sides of the border.⁹
- Retail developments appear to be unbalanced due to inadequate connections of rural locations and the competition between city centres and more easily accessible shopping centres outside the city centres¹⁰:
 - Motorised private transport accounts for a high proportion of the total traffic volume. This is reflected in the limited use of cross-border public transport, which can have a negative impact on the quality of life.
 - In this context, planning (German urban land-use planning and French regional planning) has so far had a limited strategic significance and has proved difficult to coordinate. As a result, many city and town centres are suffering from a loss of attractiveness (which has been further accentuated and accelerated by the pandemic) and require renewal or new approaches to make them fit for the future and increase their attractiveness for shoppers.
- There are therefore common spatial challenges with regard to a balanced organisation of the retail trade, which require cooperation on both sides of the border in retail planning¹¹:

⁶ Agl Hartz - Saad - Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D1: Raumanalyse & Statistik Großregion (2024): <https://www.sig-gr.eu/de/cartes-thematiques/demographie/evolution-population/2000-2021.html> or <https://www.grande-region.lu/portal/de/daten/gebiet-und-bevoelkerung/bevoelkerungsprojektion/bevoelkerungsprojektion-insgesamt-gr>

⁷ Agl Hartz – Saad – Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D1: Raumanalyse.

⁸ ibid.

⁹ Agl Hartz – Saad – Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D5: SWOT und Hemmnisse der grenzüberschreitenden Kooperation.

¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ Agl Hartz – Saad – Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D3: Territoriale Strategie des Eurodistricts.

- On the one hand, there is a legal obligation to consult the neighbouring country on spatially significant plans in accordance with European requirements (directives). Not least due to the different planning frameworks and procedures as well as the lack of coordination mechanisms (both formal and informal), this is, however, rarely applied in practice.¹²
- On the other hand, within the topic of "retail", the "control of large-scale retail" is particularly important, due to its direct influence on services of general interest in general as well as spatial structures and mobility requirements¹³. This is directly linked to the loss of attractiveness of city centres.
- Against this background, the study on planning processes for large-scale retail projects in the Saar-Moselle Eurodistrict proposes, among other things, the development of a common vision (of retail design, especially), the definition of common objectives and the development of coordination procedures. The following objectives, are examples to be discussed within this framework:
 - securing and strengthening urban centres in the Eurodistrict;
 - securing and developing a comprehensive basic and local supply network in the Eurodistrict;
 - agreement on regionally significant/cross-border retail locations in the Eurodistrict.¹⁴

In addition to these observations, tensions between different interests and perspectives must be taken into account when developing the questions to be addressed in the workshop and when working on them:

- (1) The observations outlined above primarily correspond to the perspective of urban and regional planners, who exert influence in the interests of balanced spatial development and other overarching objectives.
- (2) Customers' shopping behaviour has changed, not least as a result of the pandemic. Apart from considerations of price-performance ratios and the use of online shopping, (motorised) accessibility or the ability to do many purchases in one place also matter for customers' shopping decisions.
- (3) Retailers have to be profitable to avoid bankruptcy and they are exposed to a variety of challenges, such as price competition between different store sizes or the need to diversify their offers in order to remain competitive.

Corresponding to these reflections, the following questions will be addressed during the workshop with regard to their real-life feasibility:

- Which retail locations are of regional importance/ have a cross-border impact (i.e. how can consumer catchment areas be delineated for different types of commercial services)? Which locations could become commercial hubs of regional or cross-border significance? Which locations are sustainable in view of the transition of mobility? Which may be exposed to further decline?
- Where are (particular) conflicts between large-scale and local retail locations? Which locations may have conflicting interests on both sides of the border, which would benefit from a common understanding?
- In which specific areas of the retail trade is there a need for coordination? Which locations are affected from a cross-border perspective?

¹² MOT and Junker+Krause (2022): Vergleichende Studie über die Planungs- und Genehmigungspraxis bei großflächigen Einzelhandelsvorhaben im Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. https://www.regionalverband-saarbruecken.de/fileadmin/RVSBR/Region_Saarbruecken/Downloads/Grenzregion/Etude_comparative_commerce_Vergl_Studie_SaarMoselle.pdf

¹³ Agl Hartz - Saad - Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D6: Schwerpunktthema Einzelhandel.

¹⁴ MOT and Junker+Krause (2022): Vergleichende Studie über die Planungs- und Genehmigungspraxis bei großflächigen Einzelhandelsvorhaben im Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. https://www.regionalverband-saarbruecken.de/fileadmin/RVSBR/Region_Saarbruecken/Downloads/Grenzregion/Etude_comparative_commerce_Vergl_Studie_SaarMoselle.pdf

- Which urban centres have a particular need for renewal or reinforcement of their commercial offer? And what offers are realistically required for this?
- Where could joint action be taken to address the risk of store closures linked to the development of online retail? Where could joint decisions help to reduce (threatened) retail space?
- Where in the Eurodistrict do gaps in the supply of basic and local services reduce quality of life? How and where could demographic change exacerbate the situation in the next 10 years and where might new mobility options be needed?
- Where can vacancies be identified and how can they be realistically converted to complementary future use (i.e. helping to address tensions on the real estate market described above)?

Health

As part of joint efforts to elaborate a metropolitan strategy in the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict¹⁵, a recommendation on services of general interest was formulated. It suggests that this strategy should show ways in which a "comprehensive range of services (without borders) can be developed, particularly in the healthcare sector"¹⁶. This can encompass diverse and very different aspects of cross-border healthcare, ranging from emergency care, outpatient general and specialist medical care and inpatient care with varying degrees of specialisation to nursing services.

The current situation is influenced by polycentric patterns of urban development in the Eurodistrict and by extensive existing cooperation initiatives:

- The Eurodistrict already has a large number of collaborations in the healthcare sector that contributed to intensifying cross-border links in this area. These collaborations include
 - various agreements concluded between 2008 and 2019, between regional authorities and between hospitals and other stakeholders such as health insurers. Currently these efforts aim at further mobilising stakeholders according to the right for experimental measures in accordance with Article 13 of the Aachen Treaty¹⁷;
 - the participation in cross-border projects (COSAN¹⁸, GeKo SaarMoselle¹⁹, PTFSI²⁰), which lay the foundations and drive forward the implementation of various aspects of cooperation and integration in the healthcare sector at both levels of the Greater Region and the Eurodistrict;
 - the Health Days established as part of the GeKo SaarMoselle project and held regularly since 2021, which bring together regional players on changing health topics relevant to cross-border interdependencies²¹.

¹⁵ Agl Hartz - Saad - Wendl, AGURAM (2023): MORO „Raumentwicklung und Raumordnung in Grenzregionen stärken: zwei deutsch-französische Planspiele“, Schwerpunkt: „Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict Saar-Moselle“, Empfehlungen für die Umsetzung, <https://www.saarmoselle.org/UserFiles/File/fichiers-pages-interieurs/pi-3-urbanisme-et-mobilite/moro-planspiel-grenzregionen-ep-saarmoselle-d-20230720.pdf>

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.20

¹⁷ Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (2023): <https://www.saarmoselle.org/de/gesundheit.html>

¹⁸ COSAN (2023): <https://cosangr.eu/le-projet-cosan-on-en-parle/>

¹⁹ GeKo (2023): <https://www.sante-gesundheit-saarmoselle.org/info-deutsch>

²⁰ Interreg V A Greater Region (2018): <https://de.readkong.com/page/genehmigte-projekte-bersicht-interreg-v-a-grosregion-6272254>

²¹ Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (2023): <https://www.saarmoselle.org/de/gesundheit.html>

- These activities are embedded in the central and long-term strategy of the Eurodistrict²², whose objective is, *inter alia*, to improve access to healthcare services by means of joint planning of facilities providing services of general interest. The current territorial strategy formulates four objectives in this regard, which offer starting points for further activities to strengthen integration in the healthcare sector in the future:²³
 - establishment of a permanent cross-border healthcare cooperation;
 - expansion of the range of hospital services;
 - creating broader and easier access to healthcare services;
 - facilitating the mobility of medical and nursing staff.
- Current developments highlighting new needs for cross-border networking in the healthcare sector challenge these objectives. For example, the Health Days have identified complementary topics, such as a shortage of general practitioners and specialists, which will worsen in the coming years, as well as changing healthcare needs resulting from demographic change.²⁴
- In addition, there may be further starting points for cooperation in the areas of prevention and treatment due to health hazards or diseases that are potentially related to local or regional environmental risks in the cross-border area.²⁵
- In the area of hospital care, the territory of the Saarbrücken regional association includes six hospitals and clinics at nine locations while four hospitals can be found on the French side. Their importance for cross-border cooperation varies due to their different specialist departments, degrees of specialisation and geographical location.²⁶
- Within the Saarbrücken regional association, the accessibility of hospital services is the lowest in the areas Warndt and Kleinblittersdorf, both of which are in close proximity to the French hospital sites in Forbach and Sarreguemines, respectively.²⁷ The indicator used in France for measuring outpatient healthcare accessibility ("Accessibilité potentielle localisée" (APL)) indicates a slightly below-average regional value with a clear negative trend for the French area of the Eurodistrict.²⁸
- Being part of one of the most integrated border regions in the EU, Saarland benefits from a high number of commuters from the Moselle department. Cross-border commuting has so far played a limited role in the healthcare sector. This is partly linked to special requirements to qualify to work in this sector. At the same time, population forecasts (with a sharply declining labour force potential in Saarland) indicate that Saarland will become even more dependent on cross-border commuters in the future.²⁹

²² Cf. Agl Hartz - Saad - Wendl (2021): Planspiel Großregion Grenzüberschreitendes Agglomerationskonzept für den Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. D3: Territoriale Strategie des Eurodistricts and Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (o. J.): Territoriale Strategie 2027 des Eurodistrict SaarMoselle. <https://www.saarmoselle.org/UserFiles/File/fichiers-pages-interieurs-de/saarmoselle-territoriale-strategie-2027-d.pdf>

²³ Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (n.d.): Territoriale Strategie 2027 des Eurodistrict SaarMoselle, p.28-29. <https://www.saarmoselle.org/UserFiles/File/fichiers-pages-interieurs-de/saarmoselle-territoriale-strategie-2027-d.pdf>

²⁴ Eurodistrict SaarMoselle (n.d.): <https://www.saarmoselle.org/de/gesundheit.html>

²⁵ Cf. Contrat Local de Santé de la Communauté d'Agglomération Forbach Porte de France (CLS de la CAFPF) - 2014-2017.

²⁶ Cf. German Hospital Directory (2024): <https://www.deutsches-krankenhaus-verzeichnis.de/app/suche/bundesland/saarland> and IGN (2023): <https://www.geoportail.gouv.fr>

²⁷ Federal and state statistical offices (2024): <https://krankenhausatlas.statistikportal.de/>

²⁸ Observatoire Regional de la Santé (ORS), diagnostic territorial ZI 09 (2023): <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=Zone+d%27implantation+Moselle+Est+%28ZI+09%29> - Based on: SNIIRAM 2019, EGB 2019, CNAM-TS; populations par sexe et âge 2016 distancier METRIC, Insee; traitements DREES

²⁹ Pigeron-Piroth, Isabelle; Funk, Ines; Nienaber, Birte; Dörrenbächer, Peter; Belkacem, Rachid (2021): Der grenzüberschreitende Arbeitsmarkt der Großregion. Der Einfluss der COVID-19-Pandemie. Informationen zur Raumentwicklung, Heft 2/2021, p. 74–85.

In addition to the developments already described hinting at an increasing lack of medical practitioners, this is also likely impact on the demand for skilled labour in the healthcare sector.

Besides these observations, the development of the questions to be dealt with in the workshop and the way in which they will be discussed is characterised by a tension between different expectations and potentials:

- (1) Analogous to the topic of retail, the objectives outlined above primarily correspond to the perspective of urban and regional planners, who aim for balanced spatial development and other overarching objectives and who are confronted with special legal challenges, especially in the health sector.
- (2) At the same time, these objectives are subject to normative considerations regarding reasonable travel distance to access healthcare services. These distances vary depending on the type of healthcare provision. In a cross-border region, they may also vary due to different national standards.
- (3) Patients do not necessarily consult doctors that are closest to them. In a cross-border context specific factors such as language skills and expectations of familiar service standards may play a role. Expectations of treatment quality and expertise may also be expected to vary between urban and rural locations.
- (4) Finally, doctors decide in which location they establish their practice or search for employment. These decisions have major impacts. Working as a "rural doctor" is often considered unattractive. This contributes to observed imbalances in the provision of care services as well as the expectations of patients towards health service provision.³⁰

Accordingly, the following questions will be addressed during the workshop with regard to their real-life feasibility:

- What cross-border uses of healthcare services are you aware of? Where are practices and hospitals that deliver these services located?
- At which locations do you see a potential for a complementary development of healthcare services? Which types of care would be concerned?
- Where would it be necessary to invest in the healthcare sector to make the infrastructure attractive for cross-border use? These investments could for example concern hospitals that are not to current standards. Where could it be beneficial to jointly purchase and finance cost-intensive, high-quality equipment?
- In which geographic areas is demand for cross-border healthcare concentrated? i.e. where do the potential users of such services reside?
- Which medical specialty areas should be included in the MOSAR agreement, and in which locations? Which ones have particular potential? To what extent could it make sense to expand the territorial scope of the MOSAR agreement?
- Where do cross-border flows of students/trainees/workers in the healthcare sector already contribute to cross-border mobility?
- In which fields and geographic areas could/should training efforts be strengthened to improve cross-border labour market mobilisation? Where can the exchange of students and workers in the healthcare sector be strengthened? And what obstacles, e.g. regarding the recognition of qualifications, need to be removed?
- Where have there been or are there industrial activities that may have health consequences? How large is the respective impact area of these consequences? Where are starting points for cross-border epidemiological studies for better advice and treatment services?

³⁰ As an example of efforts to increase the attractiveness of "rural doctor" positions, see e.g. Kassenärztlichen Vereinigung Brandenburg und Landeskrankenhausesellschaft Brandenburg e. V. (2023): <https://www.ich-feier-dich-voll.de/foerderangebote/landarztprogramm/> and Ministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit und Integration Baden-Württemberg (2023): <https://sozialministerium.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/gesundheitspflege/medizinische-versorgung/haus-und-landaeerzte/>

Agenda

The workshop will take place at Saarbrücken Castle on 10 April 2024.

Main moderation: Dr Jean Claude Zeimet (Spatial Foresight) & Hélène Bernard (AT²)

Supporting moderation: Dr Sabine Zillmer & Kirsti Hagemann (Spatial Foresight)

From 9:30	Arrival
10:00 - 10:30	Opening, welcome and introduction to the workshop
10:30 - 11:15	Retail trade and health care in the Eurodistrict - an introduction to the ACTAREA web application
11:15 - 11:30	Coffee break
11:30 - 12:30	ACTAREA: Working groups on the topics of "Retail" and "Health"
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch break
13:30 - 14:00	Continuation of the working groups
14:00 - 14:45	Presentation & joint discussion of the working group results "Retail"
14:45 - 15:00	Coffee break
15:00 - 15:45	Presentation & joint discussion of the working group results "Health"
15:45 - 16:40	Presentation & discussion: institutional structures in the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict of the two thematic areas
16:40 - 17:00	Conclusion: Results & next steps
17:00	End & Departure

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