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# The essence of cross-border functional areas and some possible policymaking outcomes for Latvia

through the results of CROSSGOV and Core-IB ESPON projects

**Roland HESZ**

Chief Analyst

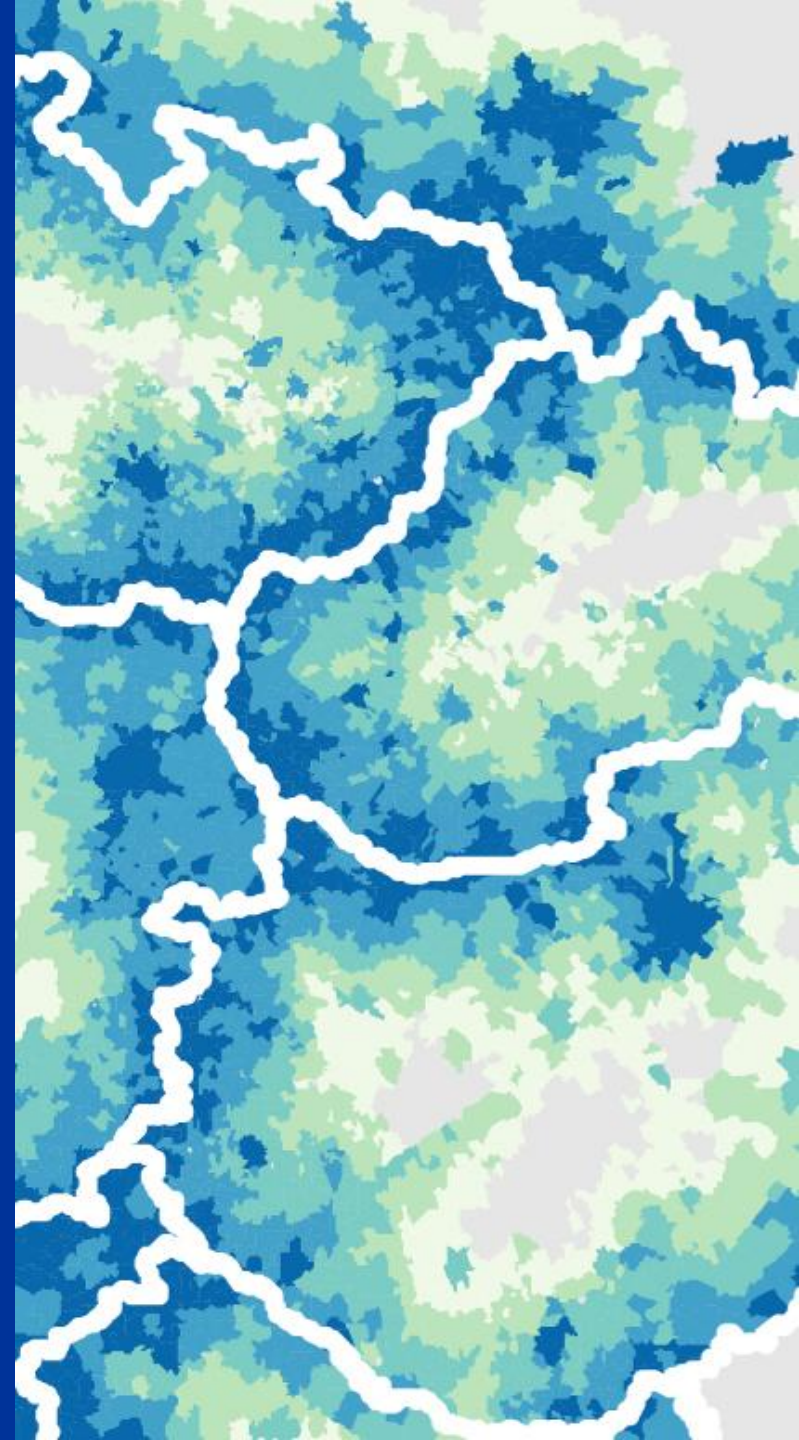
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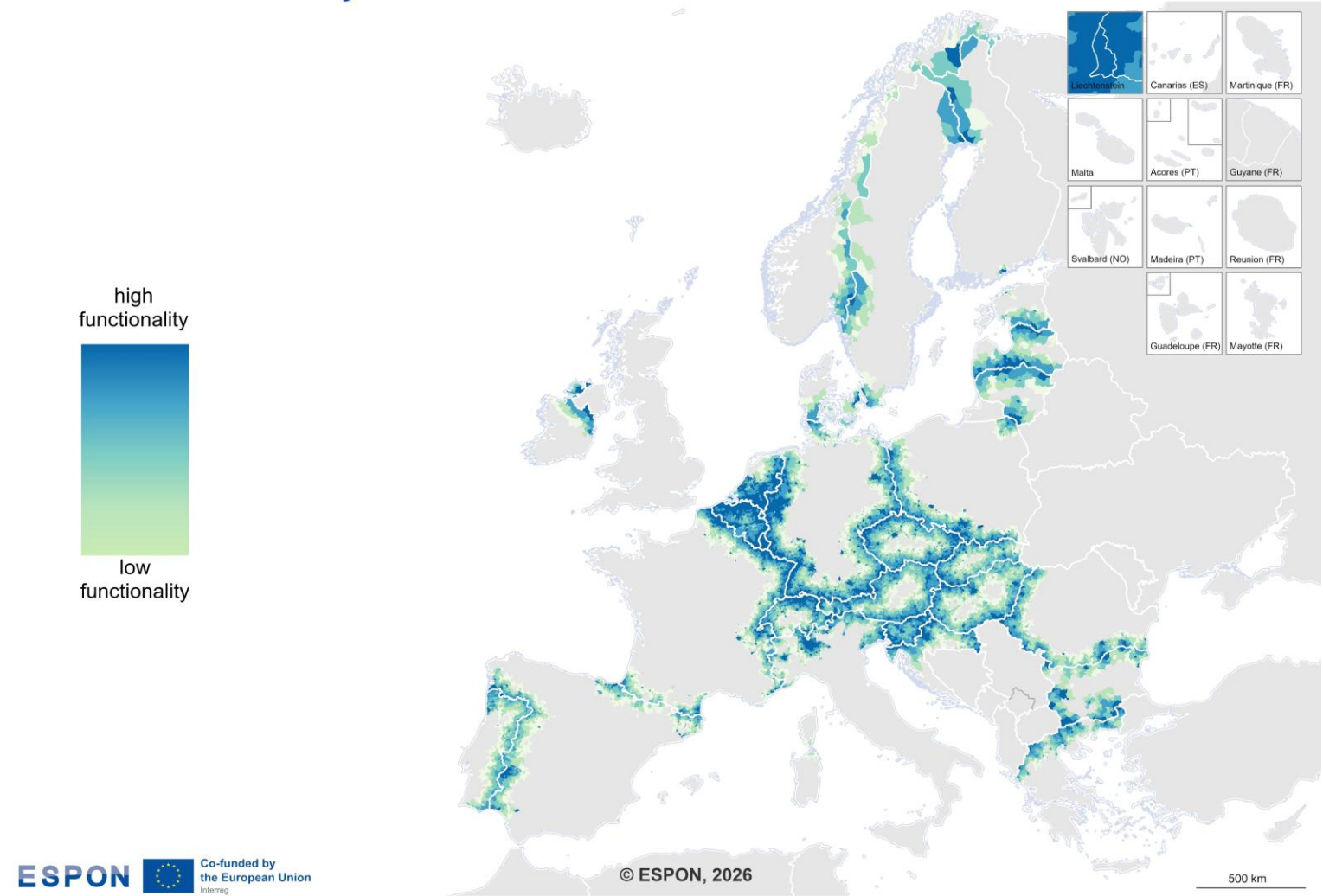
1

# Methodological approach to cross-border functional areas



# Cross-border functionality

Cross-border functionality



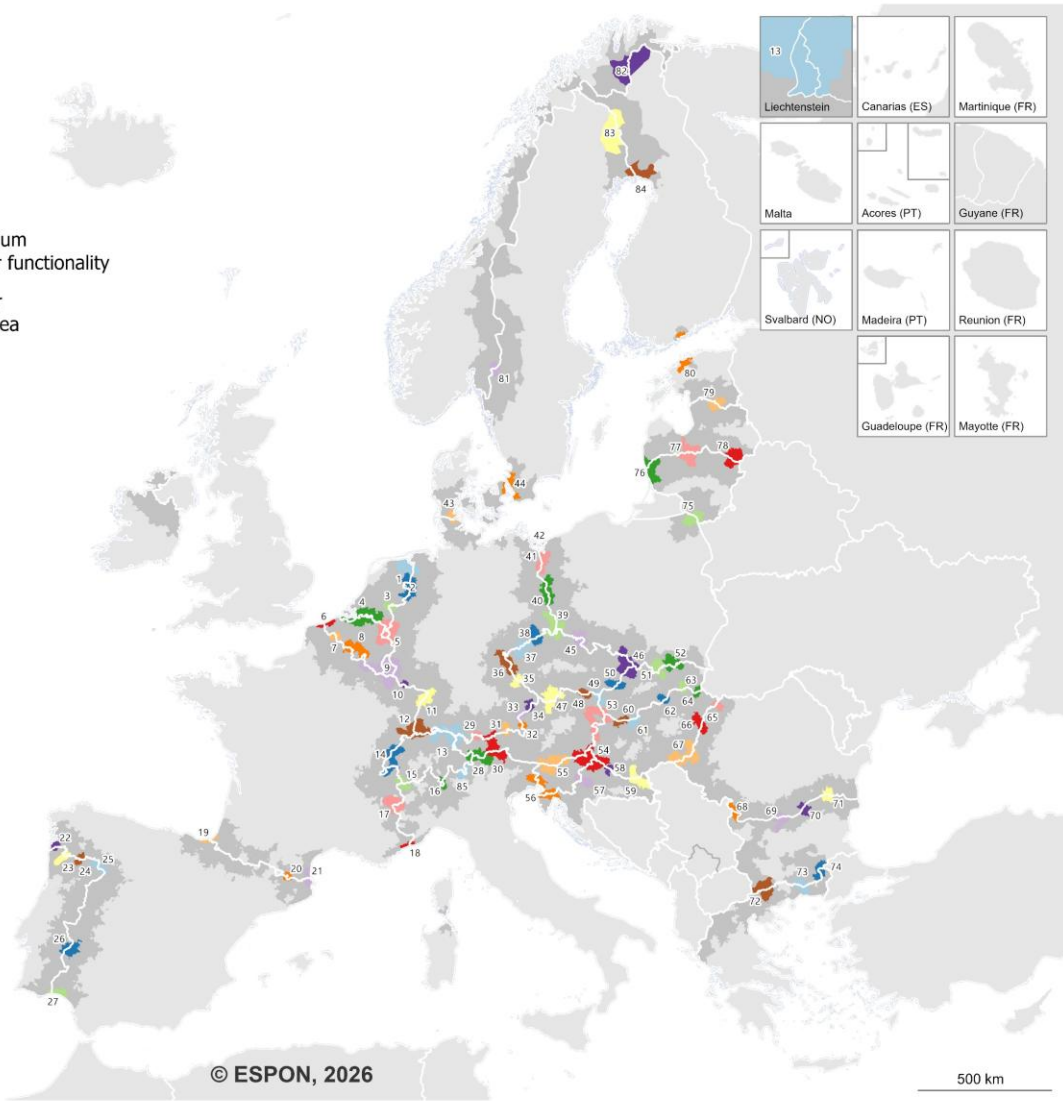
# Cross-border functional areas

## Cross-border functional areas

- 1) Groningen (NL)-Papenburg (DE)
- 2) Enschede (NL)-Lingen (Ems) (DE)
- 3) Kleve (DE)-Nijmegen (NL)
- 4) Antwerpen (BE)-Eindhoven (NL)
- 5) Liège (BE)-Maastricht (NL)-Münchenglöblich (DE)
- 6) Dunkerque (FR)-Koksijde (BE)
- 7) Kontrijk (BE)-Lille (FR)
- 8) Charleroi (BE)-Maubeuge (FR)
- 9) Aubange (BE)-Luxembourg (LU)-Metz (FR)-Trier (DE)
- 10) Forbach (FR)-Saarbrücken (DE)
- 11) Karlsruhe (DE)-Strasbourg (FR)
- 12) Basel (CH)-Freiburg im Breisgau (DE)-Mulhouse (FR)
- 13) Dornbirn (AT)-Friedrichshafen (DE)-Schaan (LI)-Zürich (CH)
- 14) Annemasse (FR)-Genève (CH)
- 15) Aosta (IT)-Orsières (CH)-Passy (FR)
- 16) Como (IT)-Lugano (CH)
- 17) Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne (FR)-Susa (IT)
- 18) Nice (FR)-Sanremo (IT)
- 19) Biarritz (FR)-Donostia/San Sebastián (ES)
- 20) Font-Romeu-Cadillo-Via (FR)-Puigcerdà (ES)
- 21) Figueras (ES)-Perpignan (FR)
- 22) Valença (PT)-Vigo (ES)
- 23) Braga (PT)-Lobos (ES)
- 24) Santa Maria Maior (PT)-Verin (ES)
- 25) Alcañices (ES)-Bragança (PT)
- 26) Badajoz (ES)-Évora (PT)
- 27) Lepe (ES)-Vila Real de Santo António (PT)
- 28) Meran (IT)-Sölden (CH)-Sölden (AT)
- 29) Füssen (DE)-Reutte (AT)
- 30) Brunico/Bruneck (IT)-Garmisch-Partenkirchen (DE)-Innsbruck (AT)
- 31) Kufstein (AT)-Rosenheim (DE)
- 32) Bad Reichenhain (DE)-Salzburg (AT)
- 33) Braunau am Inn (AT)-Burghausen (DE)
- 34) Esternberg (AT)-Passau (DE)
- 35) Cham (DE)-Domažlice (CZ)
- 36) Cheb (CZ)-Heř (DE)
- 37) Annaberg-Buchholz (DE)-Chomutov (CZ)
- 38) Dresden (DE)-Ústí nad Labem (CZ)
- 39) Gorzów (DE)-Liberec (CZ)-Lubau (PL)
- 40) Dębno (PL)-Frankfurt (Oder) (DE)
- 41) Schwedt/Oder (DE)-Szczecin (PL)
- 42) Heringsdorf (DE)-Świnoujście (PL)
- 43) Flensburg (DE)-Sonderborg (DK)
- 44) København (DK)-Malmö (SE)
- 45) Náchod (CZ)-Walbrzych (PL)
- 46) Cieszyn (PL)-Ostrava (CZ)-Žilina (SK)
- 47) České Budějovice (CZ)-Linz (AT)
- 48) Laas an der Thaya (AT)-Čejmo (CZ)
- 49) Břeclav (CZ)-Malacky (SK)-Zistersdorf (AT)
- 50) Trenčín (SK)-Uherské Hradiště (CZ)
- 51) Nowy Targ (PL)-Poprad (SK)
- 52) Bardufjor (SK)-Nowy Sącz (PL)
- 53) Bratislava (SK)-Szombathely (HU)-Wien (AT)
- 54) Leibnitz (AT)-Maribor (SI)-Nagykanizsa (HU)-Varaždin (HR)
- 55) Klagenfurt am Wörthersee (AT)-Kranj (SI)
- 56) Koper/Capodistria (SI)-Rijeka (HR)-Trieste (IT)
- 57) Krško (SI)-Zagreb (HR)
- 58) Csurgó (HU)-Durdévac (HR)
- 59) Osijek (HR)-Pécs (HU)
- 60) Győr (HU)-Komárom (SK)
- 61) Muža (SK)-Tatabánya (HU)
- 62) Rimavská Sobota (SK)-Ózd (HU)
- 63) Gónc (HU)-Košice (SK)
- 64) Dombrád (HU)-Kráľovský Chlmec (SK)
- 65) Csenger (HU)-Satu Mare (RO)
- 66) Debrecen (HU)-Oradea (RO)
- 67) Arad (RO)-Sighet (HU)
- 68) Municipul Calafat (RO)-Vidin (BG)
- 69) Plevna (BG)-Turnu Măgurele (RO)
- 70) Giurgiu (RO)-Pyrce (BG)
- 71) Calărași (RO)-Sistovo (BG)
- 72) Petrich (BG)-Serres (EL)
- 73) Kirkovo (BG)-Komotini (EL)
- 74) Pylakio (EL)-Svilengrad (BG)
- 75) Lazdijai (LT)-Suwalki (PL)
- 76) Klaipėda (LT)-Nica (LV)
- 77) Bauska (LV)-Joniskis (LT)
- 78) Daugavpils (LV)-Zarasai (LT)
- 79) Velpa (EE)-Valkeas (LV)
- 80) Helsinki (FI)-Tallinn (EE)
- 81) Eda (SE)-Edslog (NO)
- 82) Karasjok (NO)-Utsjoki (FI)
- 83) Muonio (FI)-Pajala (SE)
- 84) Haparanda (SE)-Tornio (FI)
- 85) Sondrio (IT)-St. Moritz (CH)

Low to medium cross-border functionality

Cross-border functional area



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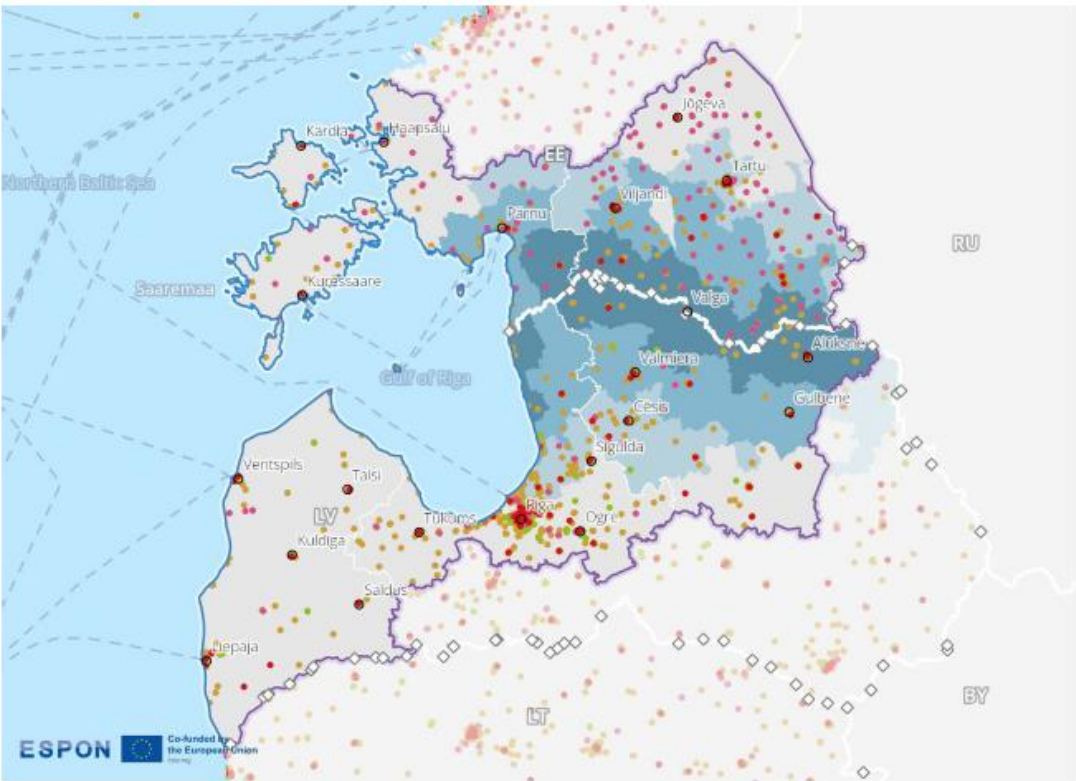
© ESPON, 2026

500 km

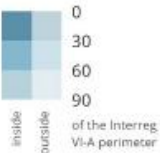
Territorial level: LAU 2021  
Source: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2026  
Origin of data: own calculations, 2025  
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

# Spatial distribution of urban functions

Figure 2.7: Travel-time accessibility from border crossings



Car travel time from border crossing in minutes (2025)



◊ border crossing

Services

- hospital
- doctor
- pharmacy
- shop

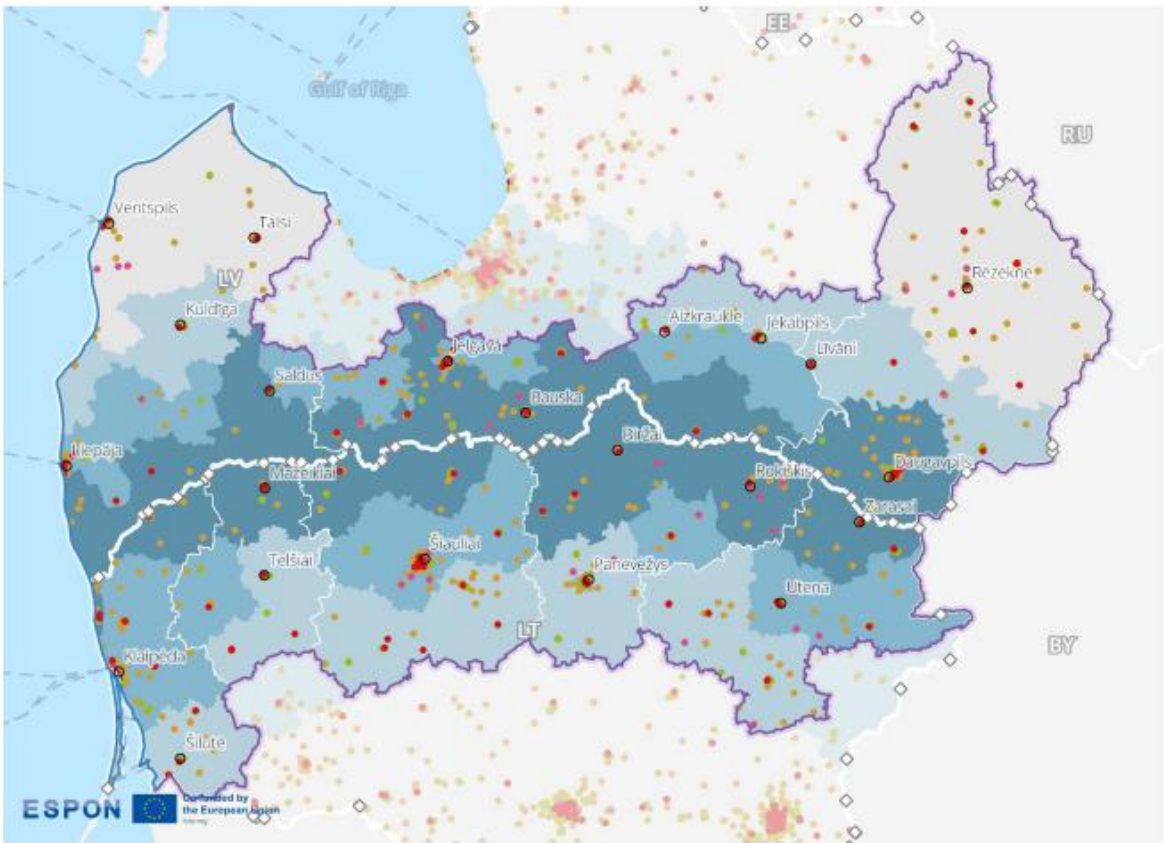
Level of detail: LAU  
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026  
Origin of data: ESPON CRO55GOV, 2026;  
ESPON PROCECY Update, 2022  
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

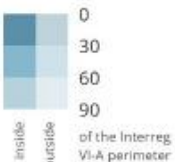
0 30 60 km

© ESPON, 2026

Figure 2.7: Travel-time accessibility from border crossings



Car travel time from border crossing in minutes (2025)



◊ border crossing

Services

- hospital
- doctor
- pharmacy
- shop

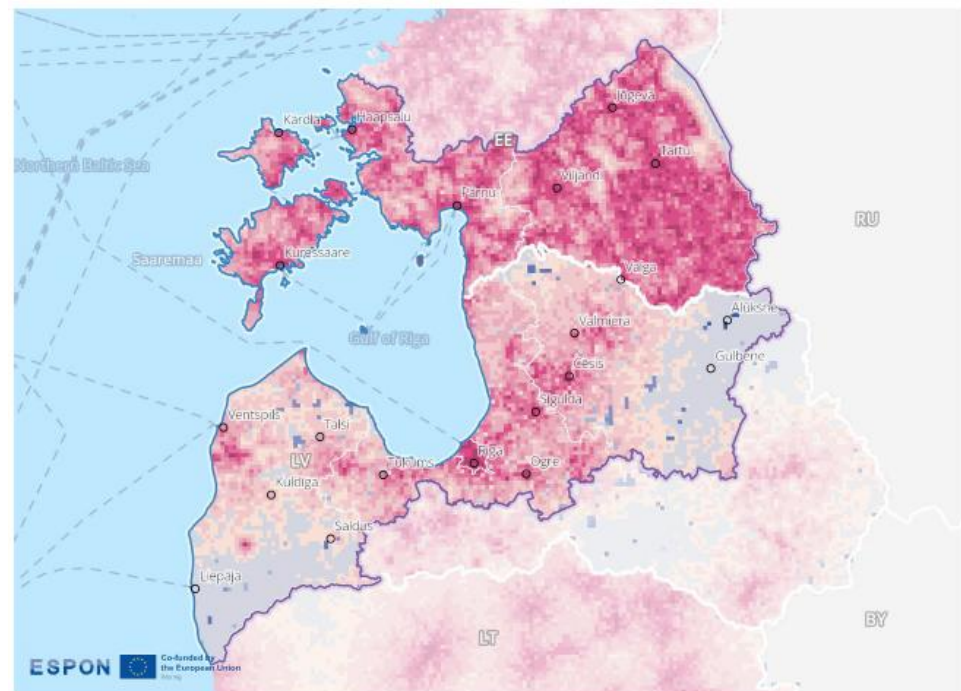
Level of detail: LAU  
Source: FAU, UPOL, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026  
Origin of data: ESPON CRO55GOV, 2026;  
ESPON PROCECY Update, 2022  
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

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

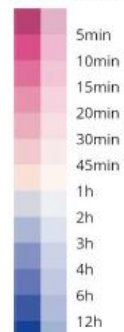
0 25 50 km

# Accessibility to urban functions

Figure 2.33: Travel time to doctors

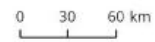
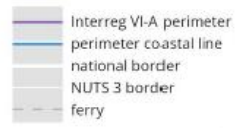


Car travel time to the nearest doctor (2021)



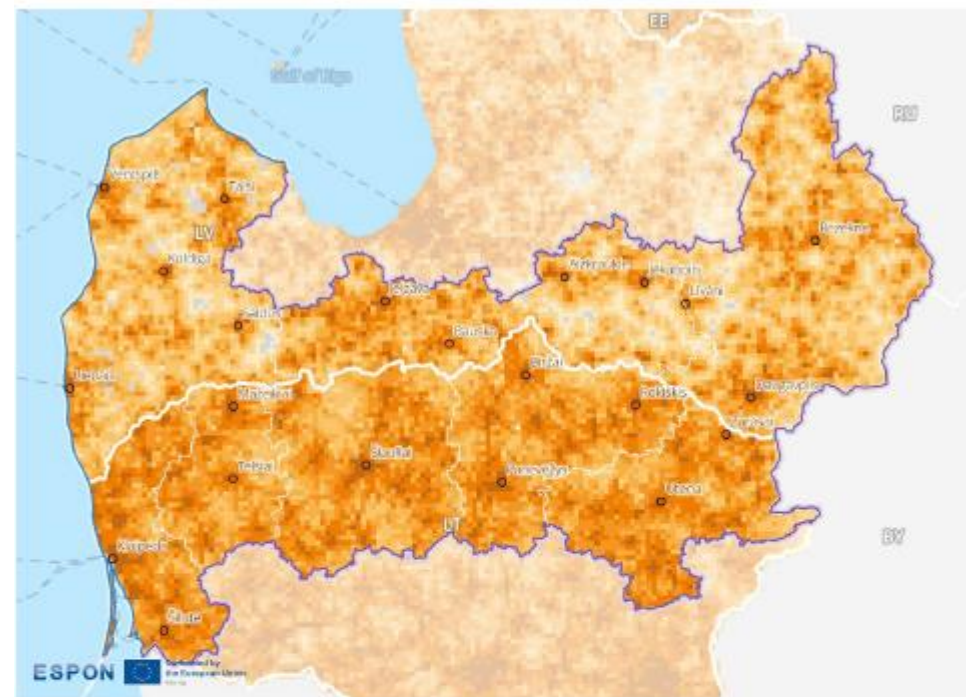
inside  
outside  
of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

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

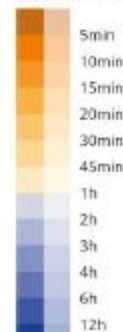


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Figure 2.31: Travel time to grocery shops

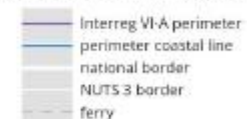


Car travel time to the nearest shop (2021)



inside  
outside  
of the Interreg VI-A perimeter

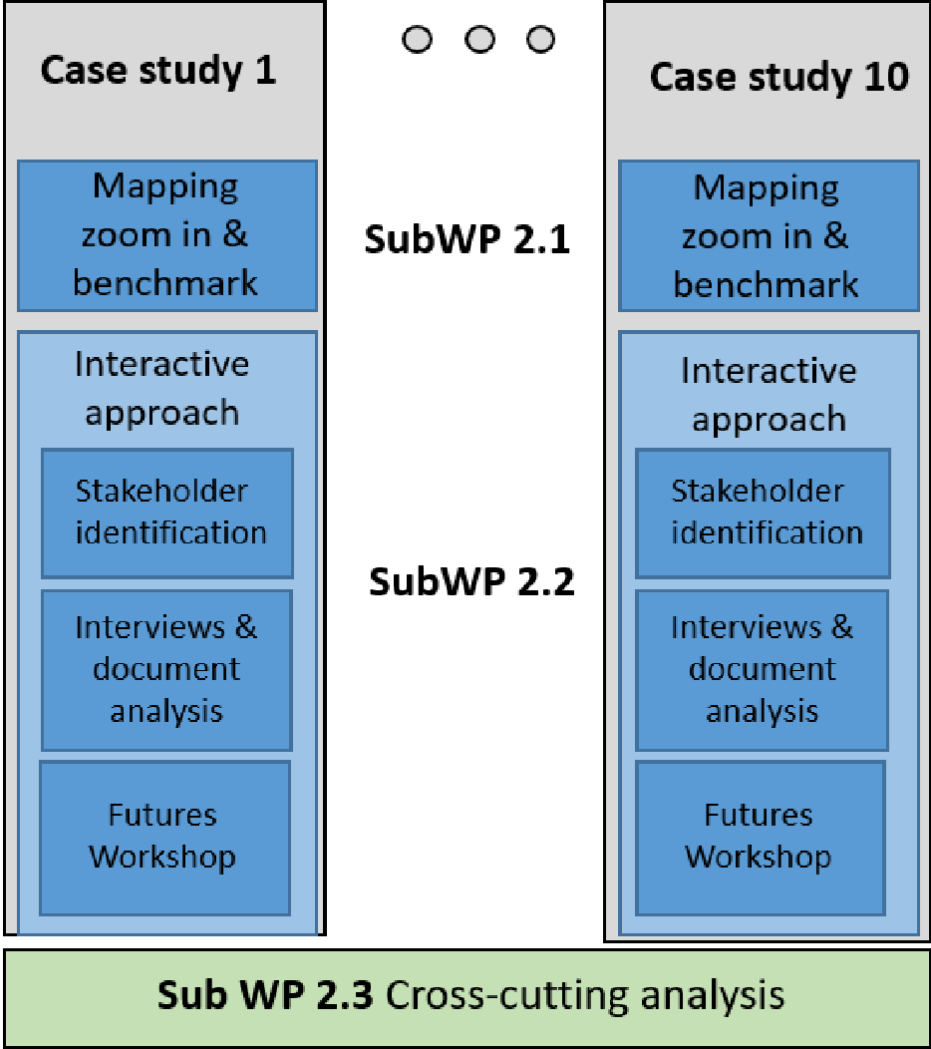
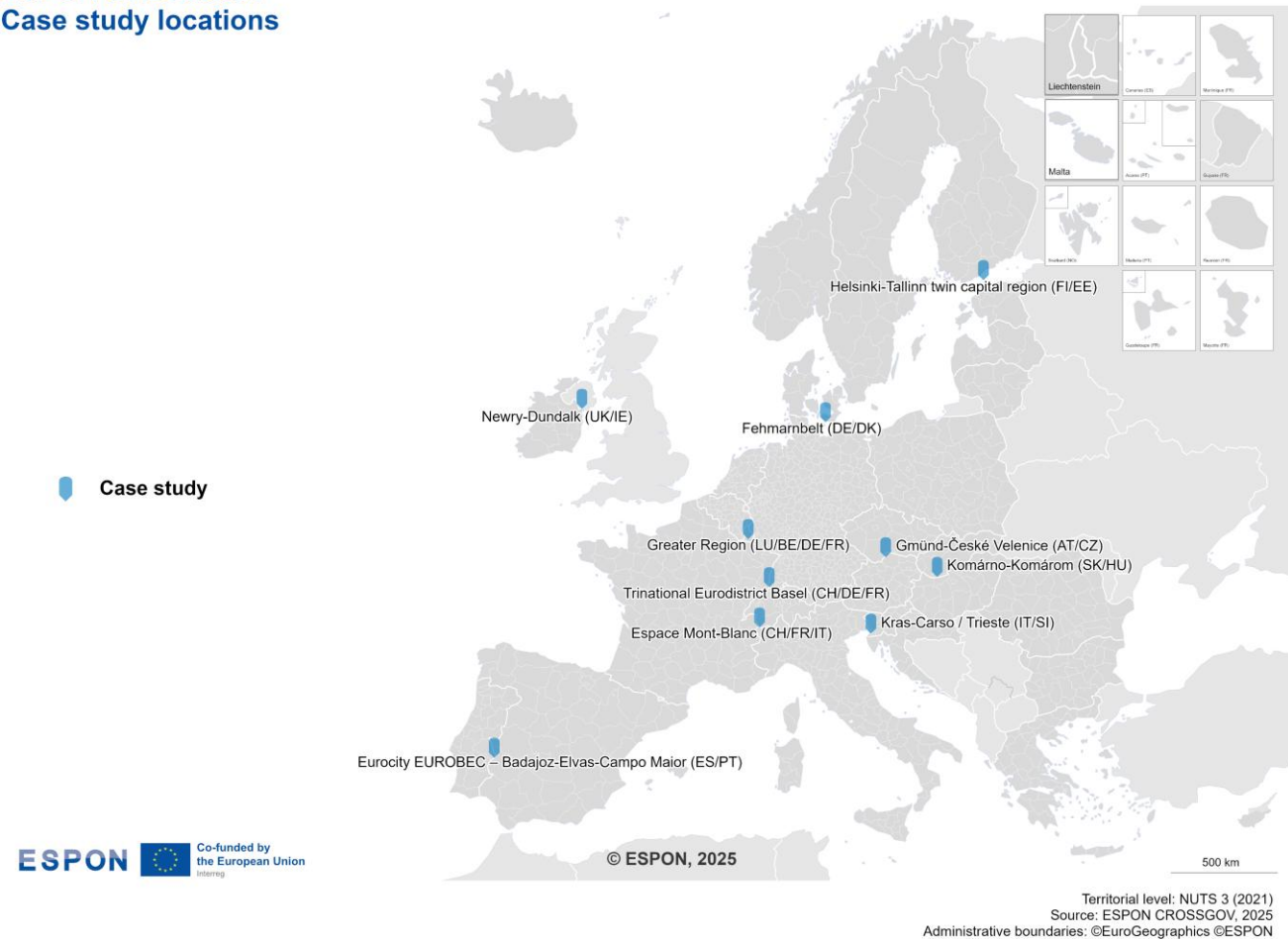
Level of detail: 2.5km grid  
Source: FAU, UPOI, ÖIR & EPRC, ESPON Core-IB, 2026  
Origin of data: ESPON PROCEC Update, 2022  
©EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries



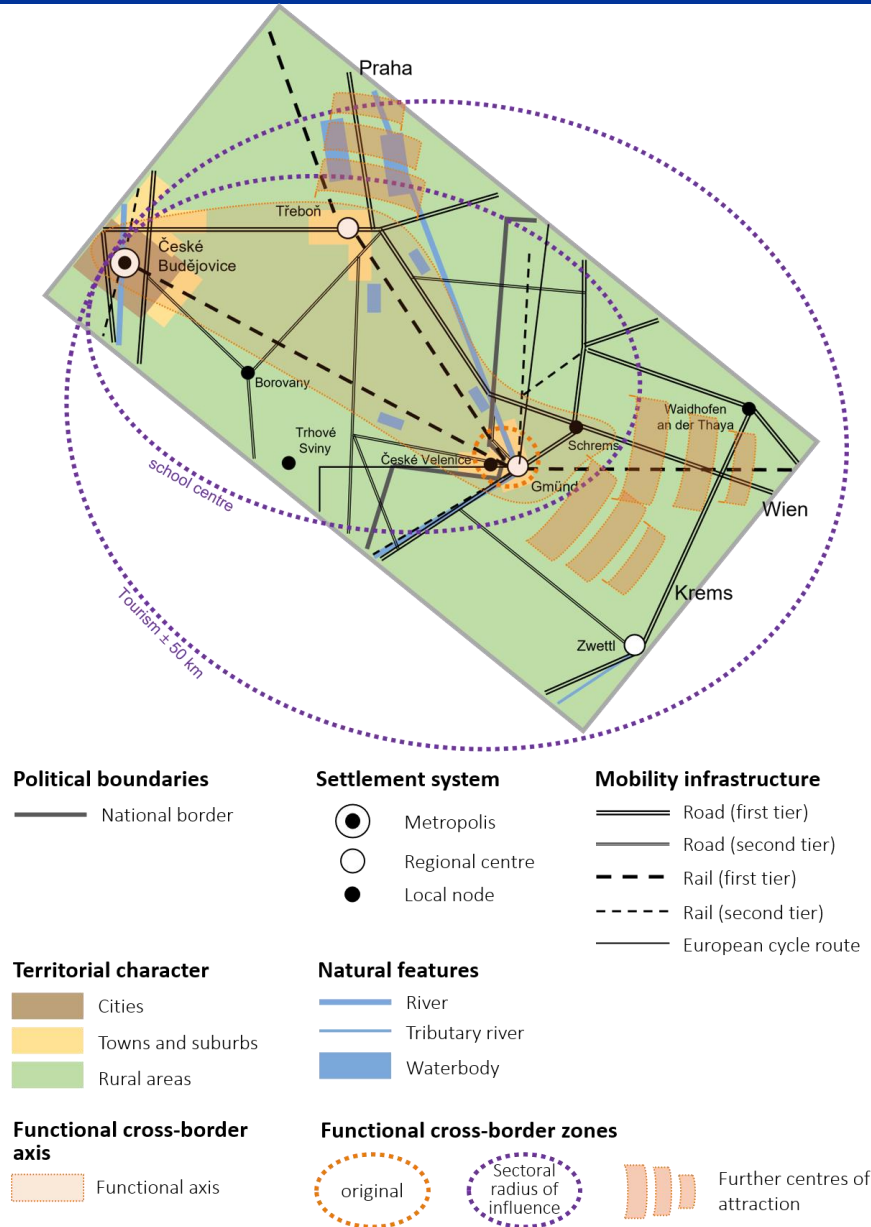
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# Methodology for the case studies

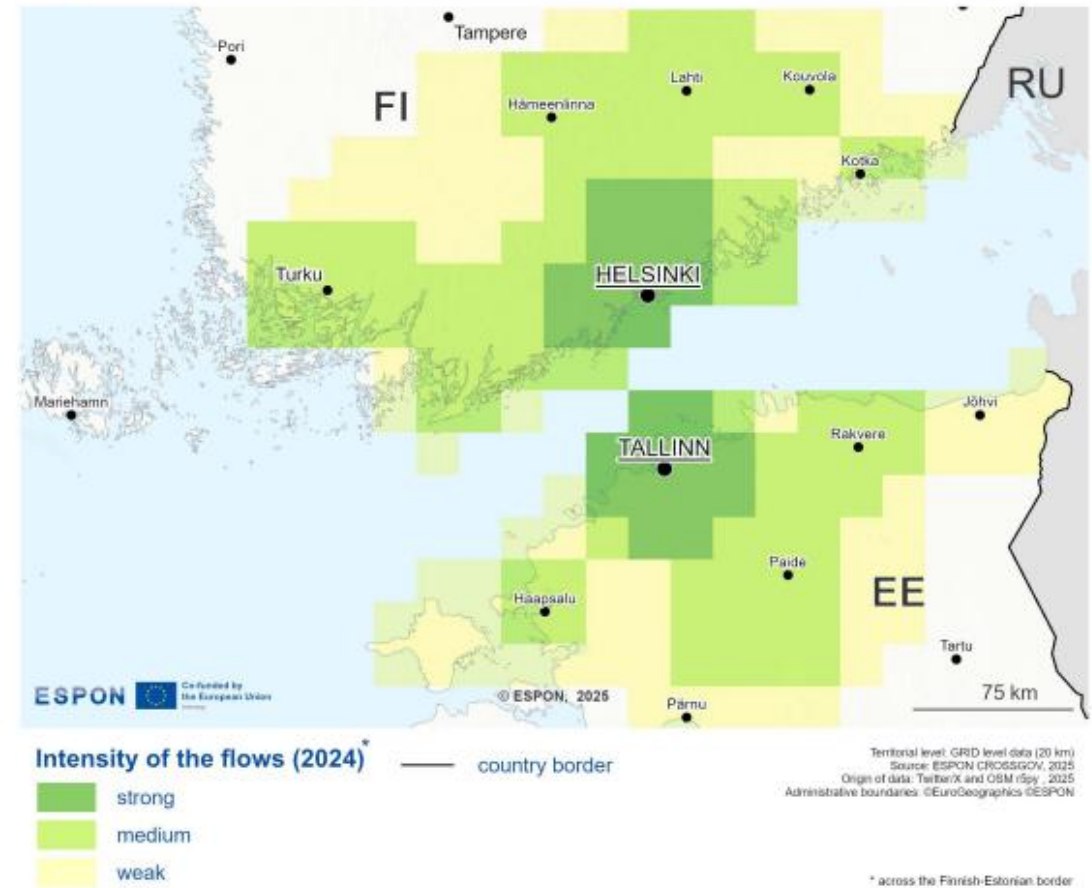
ESPON CROSSGOV  
Case study locations



# Methodology for the case studies

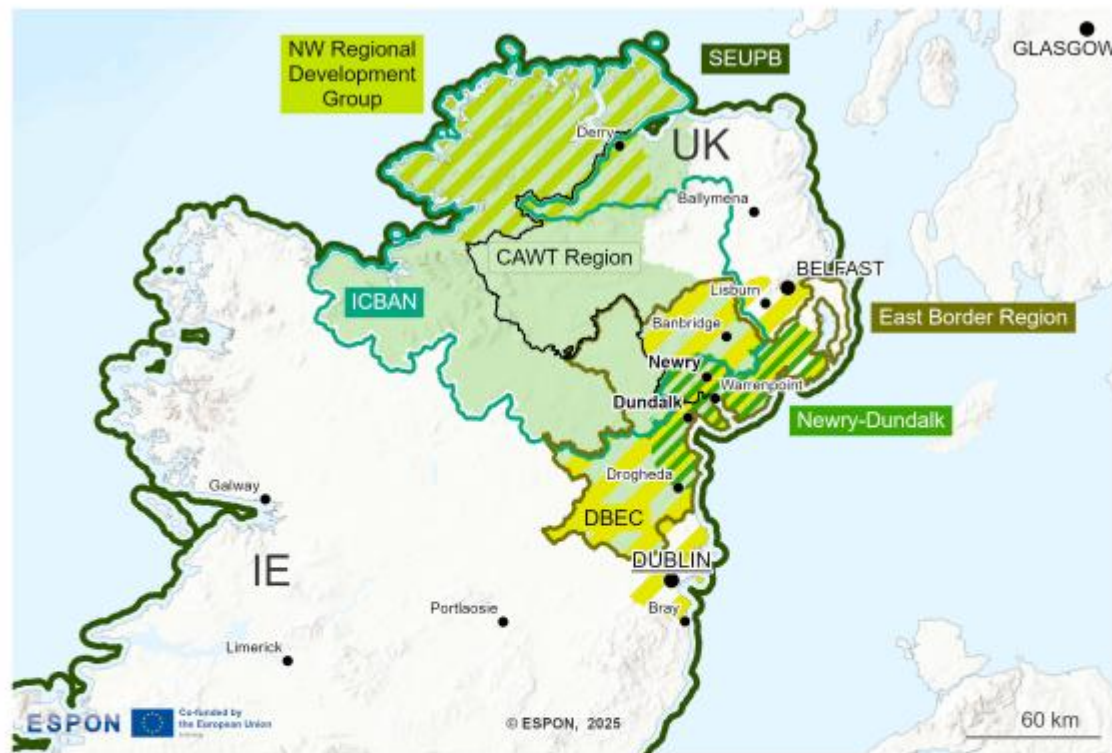


Map 5 // Cross-border catchment area based on mobility flows of people derived from geolocated Twitter data (FI-EE)<sup>3</sup>



# Methodology for the case studies

Map 8 // Cross-border governance structures and their areas of action



## Eurocity

Newry-Dundalk

## Euroregion

CAWT Region (Co-Operation and Working Together)

East Border Region Ltd. Committee

Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)

## Other

North West Regional Development Group

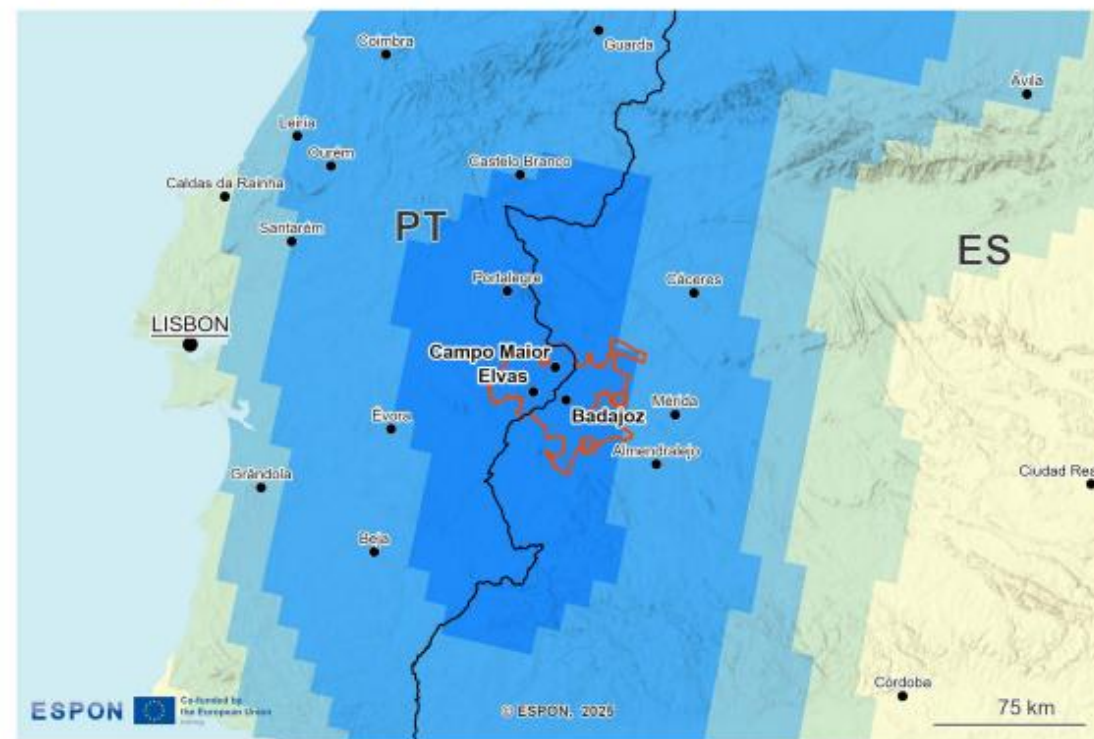
SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body)

Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC)

country border

Source: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2025  
Origin of data: Websites of cross-border institutions, list of EGTs, and Euro-regions, 2025  
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

Map 8 // Interreg Cooperations (2014-2020)<sup>11</sup>



country border

Eurocity EUROBEC

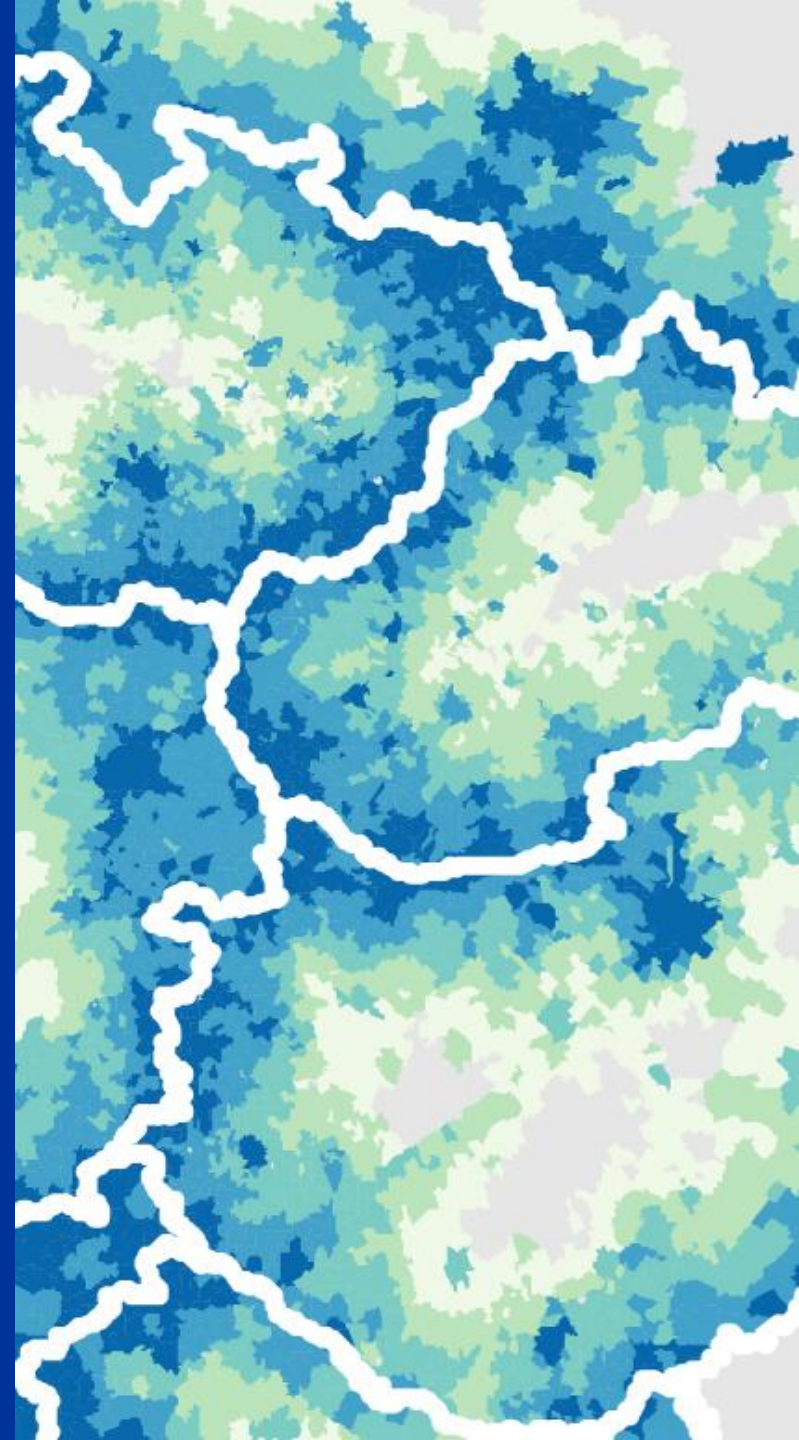
Intensity of the connections between the Interreg partners

weak strong

Territorial level: Geographical data  
Source: ESPON CROSSGOV, 2025  
Origin of data: Interreg Keep database of the EU, 2025  
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

2

## The case of Komárno–Komárom (SK/HU)

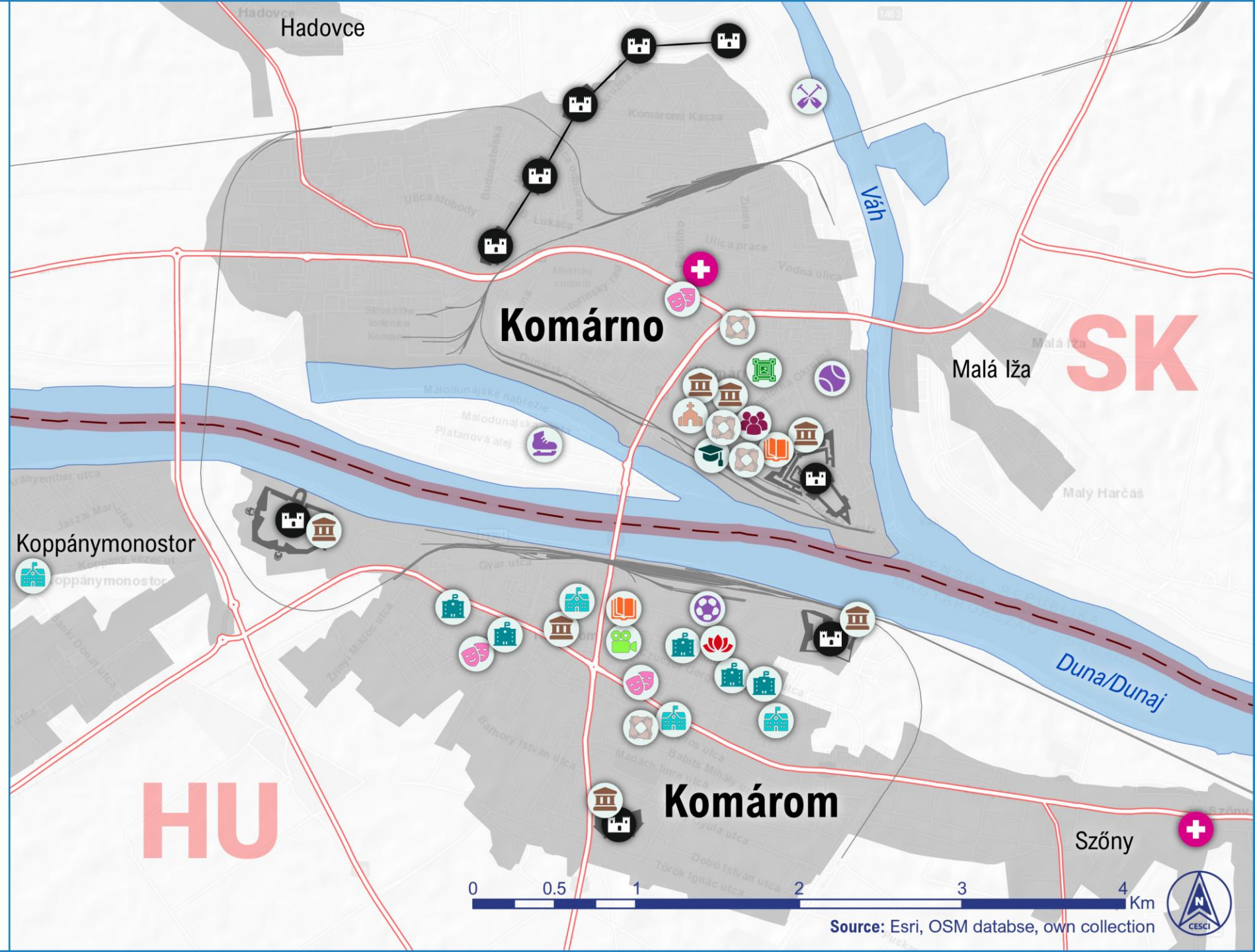


## Spatial configuration of the cross-border functions in Komárno-Komárom twin city

### Cross-border function of Komárno and Komárom

- |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  University       |  Theatre                 |
|  Secondary school |  Community center        |
|  Primary school   |  Other cultural facility |
|  Library          |  Sport facility          |
|  Cinema           |  Spa                     |
|  Gallery          |  Fortress                |
|  Museum           |  Hospital                |
|  Monument        |                                                                                                           |

**#ACCESS:** Promotion of legal accessibility  
across the Slovak-Hungarian border  
[HUSK/2301/3.1/010]



# Characteristics of the Komárno-Komárom twin city regarding economic structure and transport

## Transport

-  Train station
-  Train stop
-  Bus route 288

## Activities of industrial enterprises

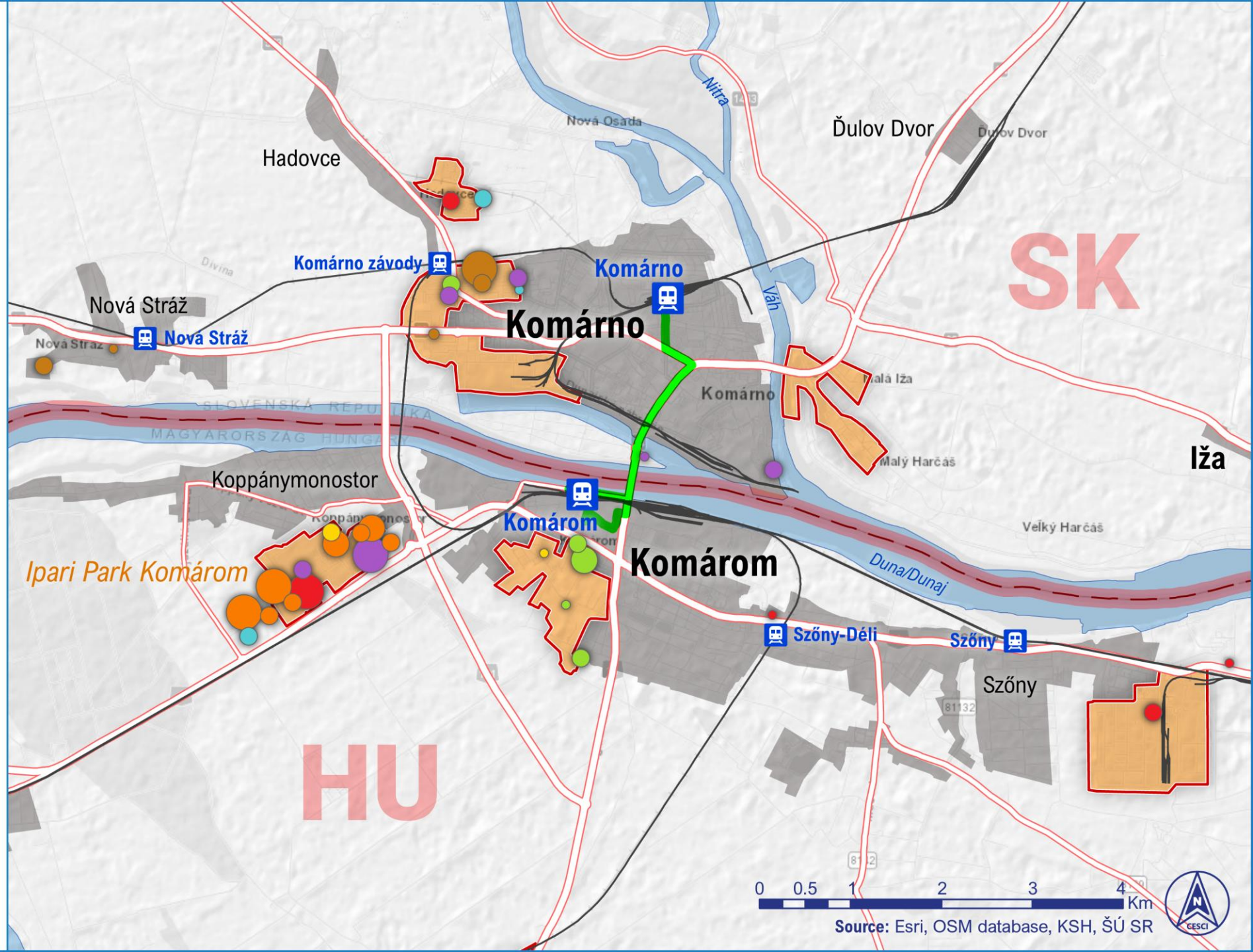
-  Vehicle industry
-  Paper industry
-  Metal industry
-  Light industry
-  Machinery and electronics industry
-  Food industry
-  Chemical industry

## Size of industrial enterprises

-  499 pers. <
-  100 - 249 pers.
-  250 - 499 pers.
-  50 - 99 pers.

 industrial park, industrial estate

#ACCESS: Promotion of legal accessibility across the Slovak-Hungarian border [HUSK/2301/3.1/010]







<https://epiteszforum.hu/egyensulyban-otezer-tonnaval-a-komaromi-monostori-hid>



<https://kombibike.eu/>





<https://nemocnicakomarno.agel.sk/nemocnica/novinky/231016-zakaz-navstev.html>



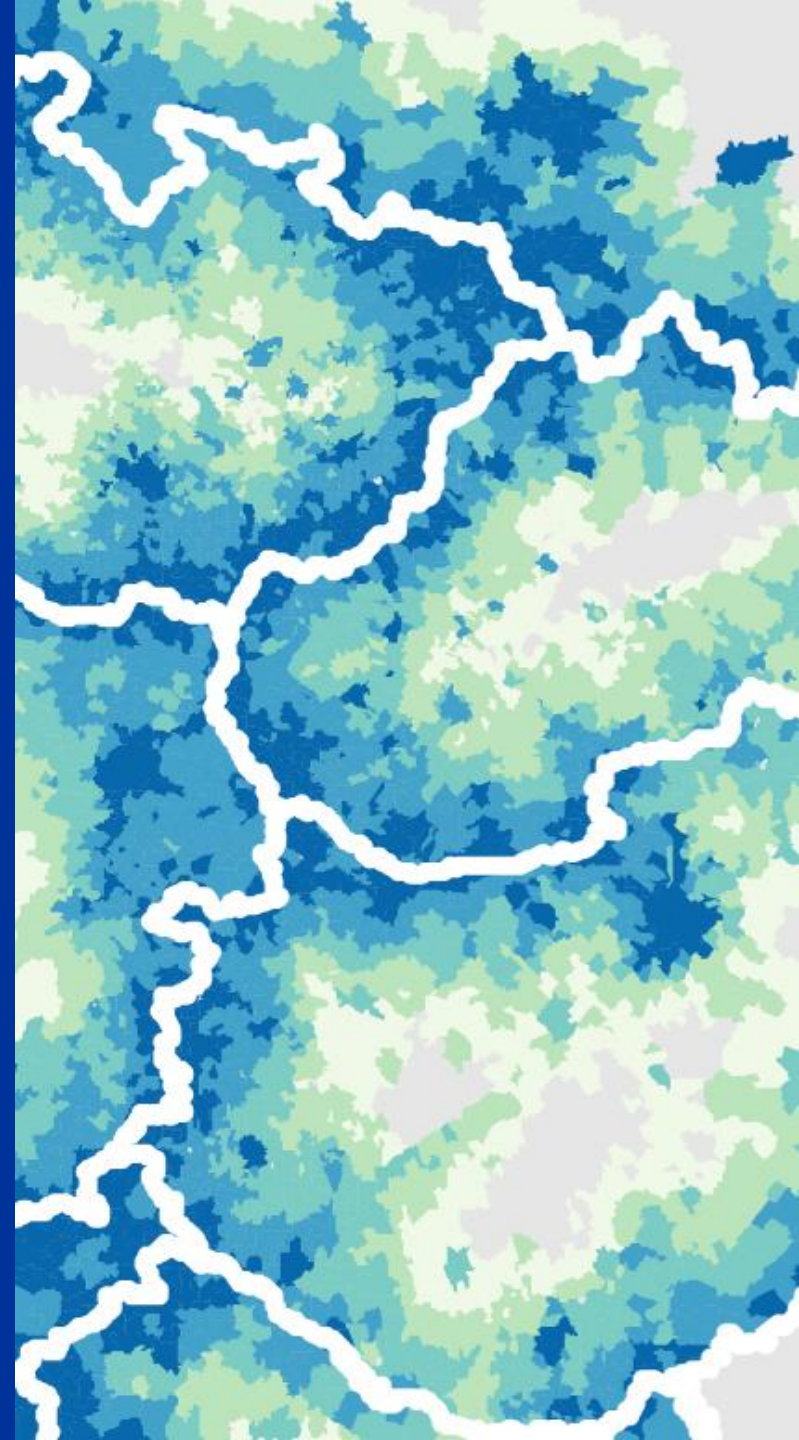
<https://nemocnicakomarno.agel.sk/nemocnica/novinky/240216-rok-mri.html>



| Challenge                                                                               |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Response                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Description                                                                             | Type             | Solutions for regional and governance policies (e.g. change of laws and regulations, establishment of new services or institutions, financial constructions)                                                                                                                        | Relevant sectors (e.g. healthcare, transport, tourism, labour mobility, multisectoral/overall) | Territorial level of the solutions (local, microregional, regional, national, cross-border, macroregional/transnational covering more than two countries, EU level) | Related good practices in Europe                                                               |
|                                                                                         | (present/future) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                |
| Integration and joint use of tourist attractions                                        | present          | Capitalise the opportunities provided by the Pons Danubii EGTC and the two Tourism Action Plans (TAPs) to create an integrated destination management and make efforts to enhance the international recognition of the local heritages (e.g. UNESCO, European Capitals of Culture). | tourism                                                                                        | EU level, regional                                                                                                                                                  | <a href="#">Gorizia and Nova Gorica: European Capital of Culture 2025</a>                      |
| Harmonisation of local healthcare systems, agreement on accepting cross-border patients | present          | Harmonising the national insurance systems, coordinating the local capacities and making possible the usage of cross-border healthcare facilities (Komárno: especially the oncology, the obstetrics and the emergency treatment; Komárom: the rheumatology service).                | healthcare                                                                                     | microregional, national                                                                                                                                             | <a href="#">ZOAST: cross-border healthcare zones</a>                                           |
| Joint green waste and green infrastructure management                                   | present          | Creating joint green waste and infrastructure management, establishing a joint biogas plant and maintaining a joint rental system of related green infrastructure management machineries.                                                                                           | waste management                                                                               | microregional, cross-border, national                                                                                                                               | <a href="#">Flensburg and Padborg: cross-border heating system</a>                             |
| Joint planning and coordination platform for creating common strategies                 | future           | Establishing joint platform for the urban planning departments and revitalising the underutilised urban spaces (e.g. brownfields).                                                                                                                                                  | urban planning                                                                                 | national, local                                                                                                                                                     | <a href="#">Görlitz and Zgorzelec: joint management system for cross-border urban planning</a> |
|                                                                                         |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                     | <a href="#">3Land project: revitalisation of the banks of the Rhine</a>                        |

# 3

## Policy considerations for Latvian border regions



# Policy options related to functional areas

## Estonia-Latvia

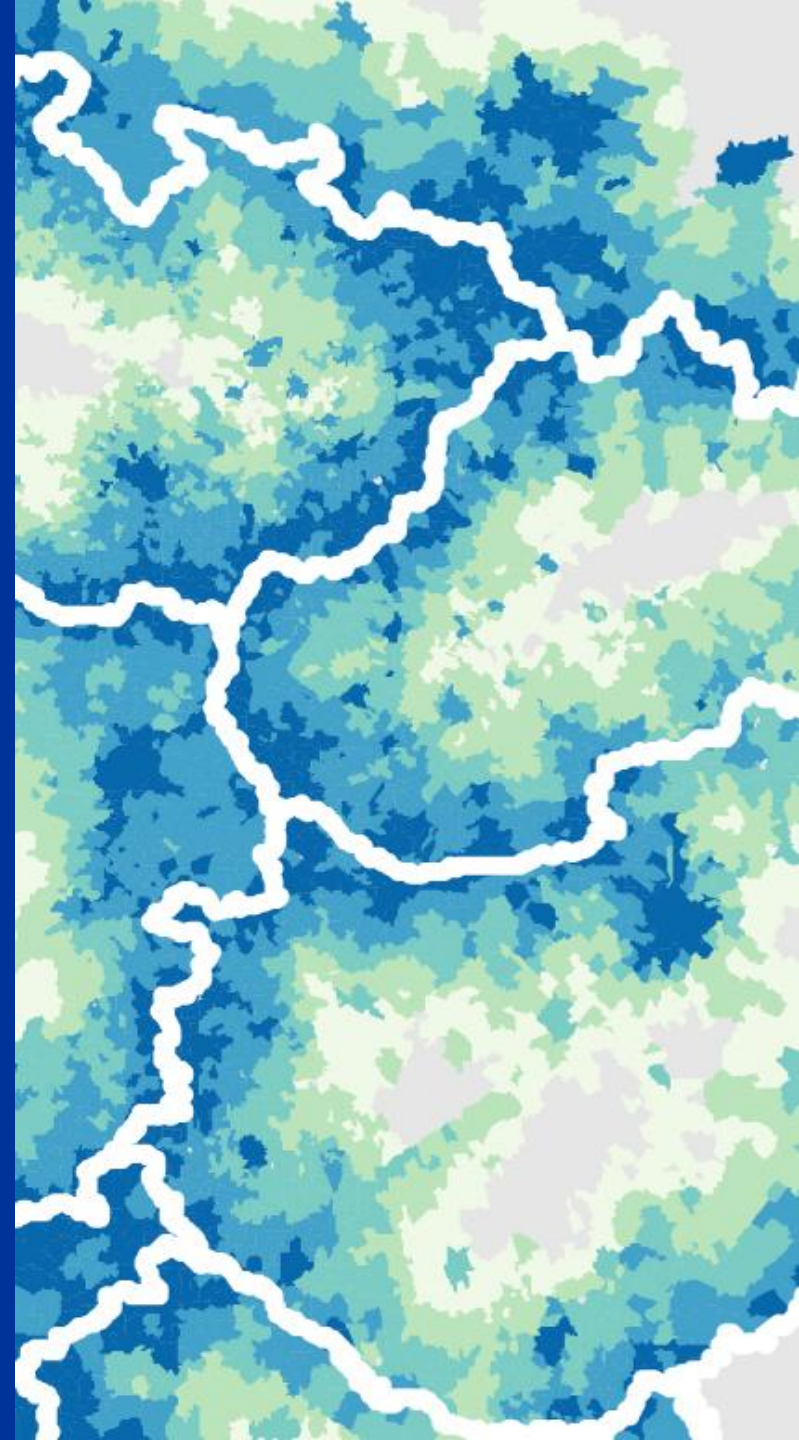
- Address the **population ageing** and **workforce shrinkage** through coordinated cross-border spatial development approaches
- **Accessibility** improvements could be used to support more balanced settlement patterns and a more even distribution of services across the border region
- The disparities between **major urban hubs and remote border areas** could be reduced through integrated settlement and service approaches
- The improvement of **access to essential services** in Latvian regions to reduce persistent urban–rural disparities.
- The existing governance structures can be used to address interlinked challenges related to **energy, transport, land use, nature protection and demographic decline**;
- A focus could be on cross-border **tourism governance** approaches to address the region's tourism potential in a balanced and sustainable manner
- Cross-border governance could address to shift from predominantly sectoral approaches towards more integrated, **multi-thematic solutions**

## Lithuania-Latvia

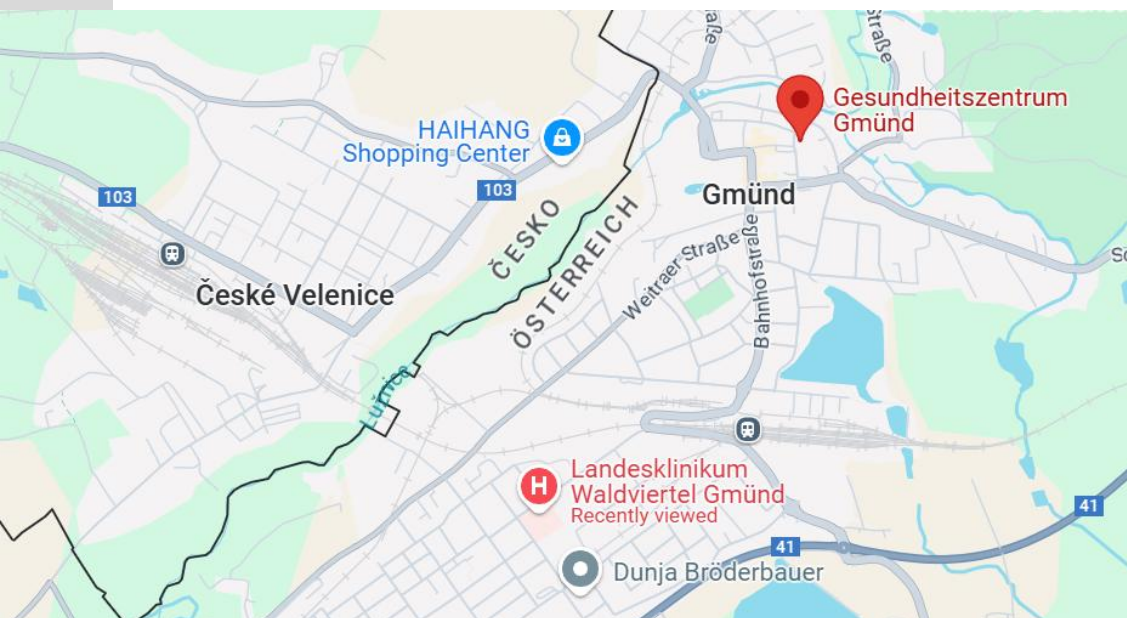
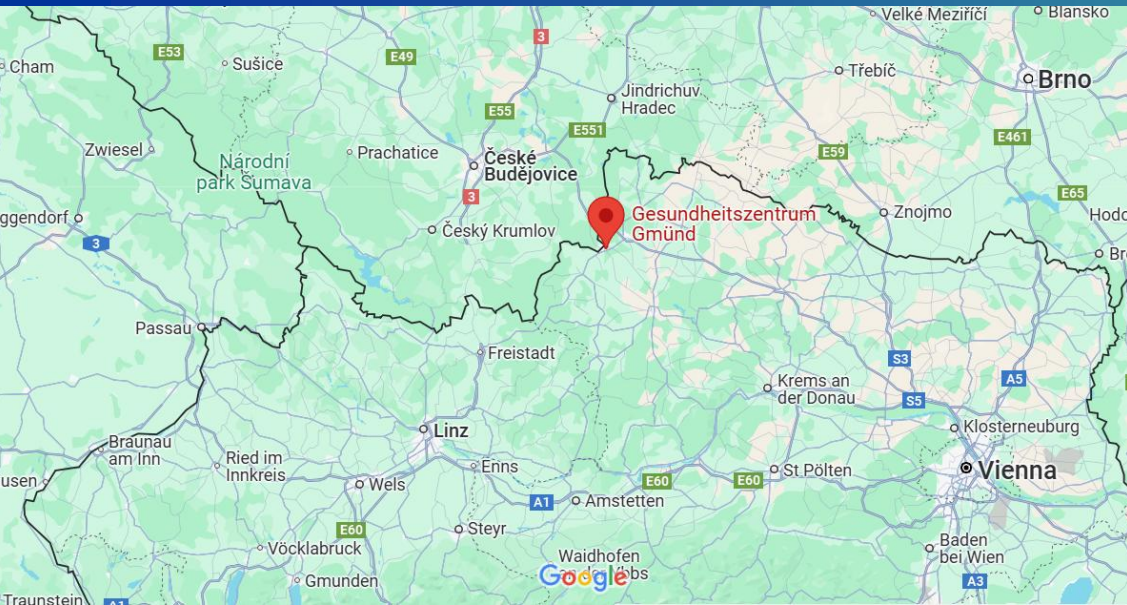
- The high overall **road and rail accessibility** can be capitalised on by strategically addressing functional connectivity and cross-border interaction;
- The improvement of **accessibility to services** in peripheral areas through coordinated cross-border cooperation and service provision approaches.
- A focus could be on sustainable growth based on **green solutions** in major cities to strengthen competitiveness while maintaining quality of life.
- A focus can be on the **service accessibility** in western and mid-eastern areas of Latvia to be improved through coordinated cross-border spatial development
- The role and added value of **institutionalised advisory centres** can be strengthened in supporting cross-border cooperation
- The existing governance structures could specifically address the region's tourism potential by promoting natural heritage sites while contributing to employment creation;
- Strategy development, institutional governance, pilot projects and knowledge exchange can focus on **education systems, labour markets and service provision to be prepared for an ageing population**, with particular attention to **social services** for people aged over 65.

# 4

## Practices from Europe



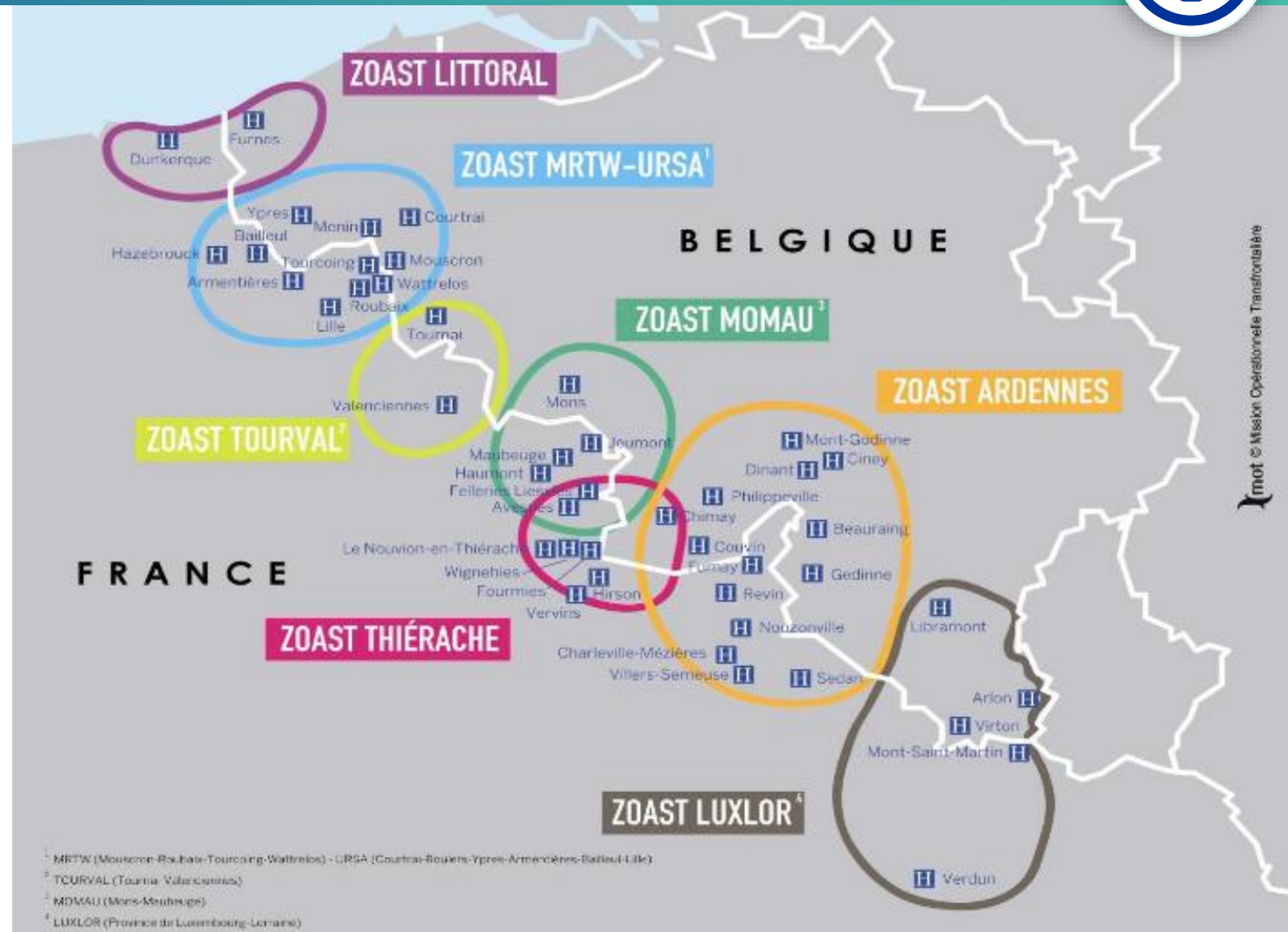
# Gmünd (AT) + České Velenice (CZ): joint outpatient clinic



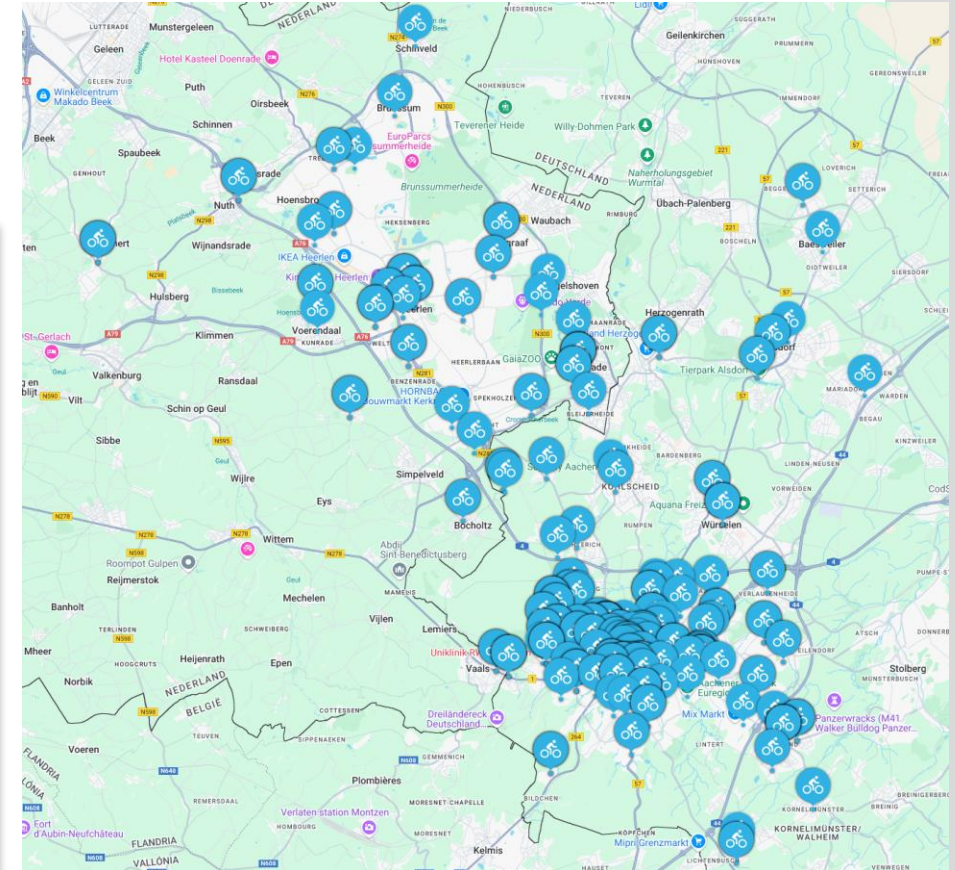
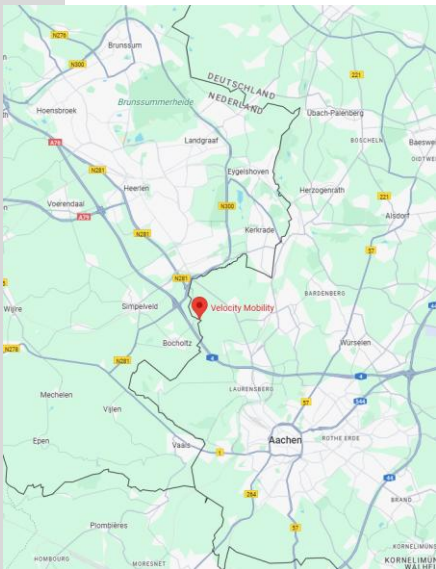
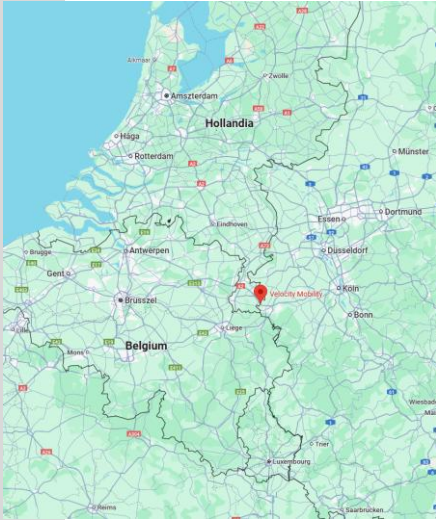
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Healthacross\\_MED\\_Gm%C3%BCnd\\_2023-08.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Healthacross_MED_Gm%C3%BCnd_2023-08.jpg)

INITIATIVE **HEALTH  
ACROSS**

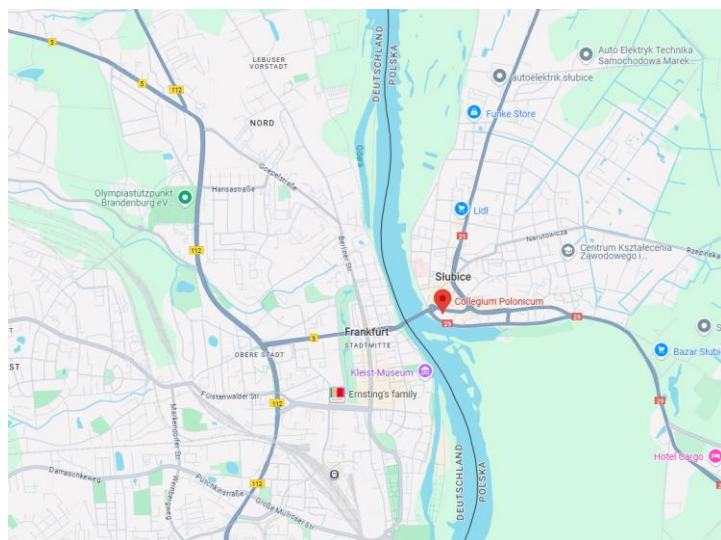
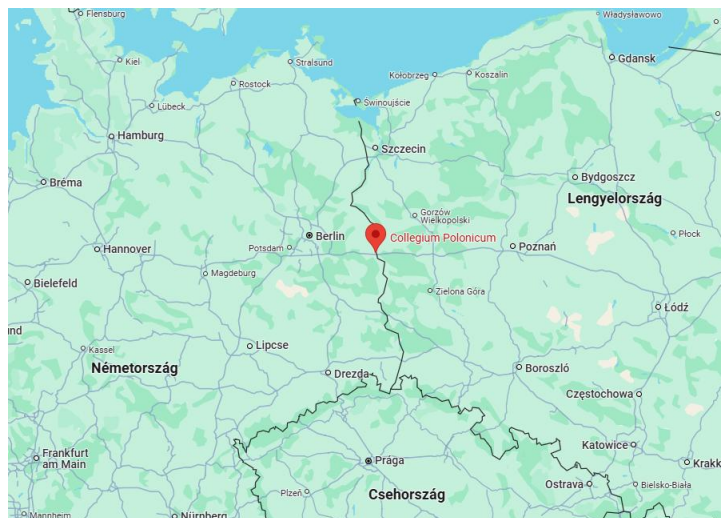
# (FR) + (BE): ZOAST – cross-border healthcare access zones



# Aachen (DE) + Heerlen (NL): e-bike sharing system



# Frankfurt (Oder) (DE) + Słubice (PL): cooperation in higher education



UNIWERSYTET  
IM. ADAMA MICKIEWICZA  
W POZNANIU



EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT  
VIADRINA  
FRANKFURT (ODER)

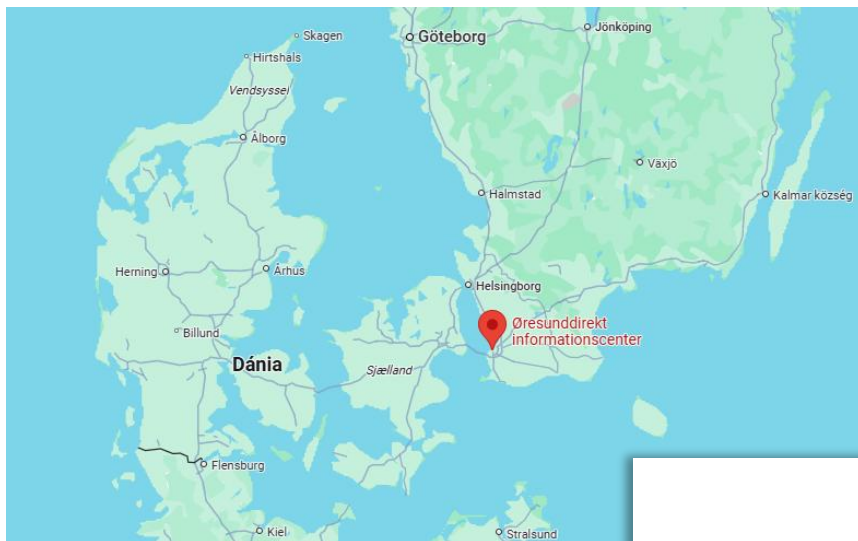


<https://amu.edu.pl/en/main-page/amu-directory/faculties/collegium-polonicum-slubice>



<https://www.cp.edu.pl/de/index.html>

# Copenhagen (DK) – Malmö (SE): Information system for cross-border labour mobility

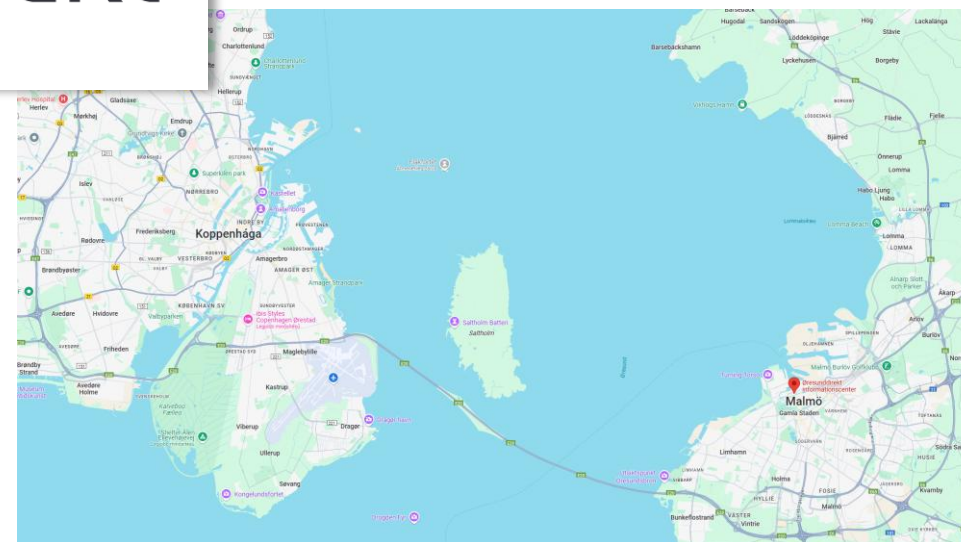


<https://www.oresunddirekt.se/en/>

Øresunddirekt

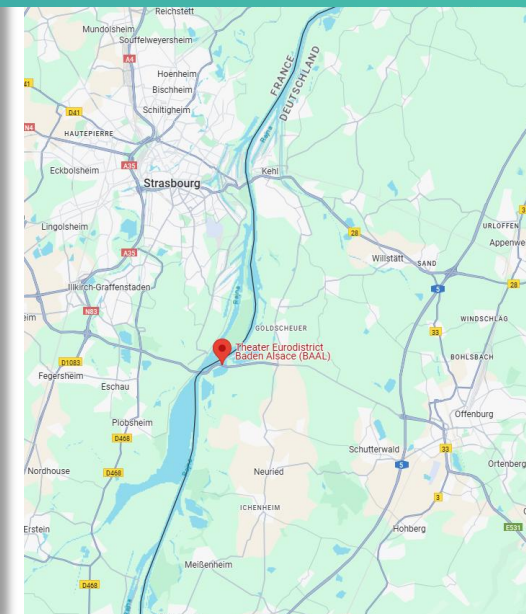
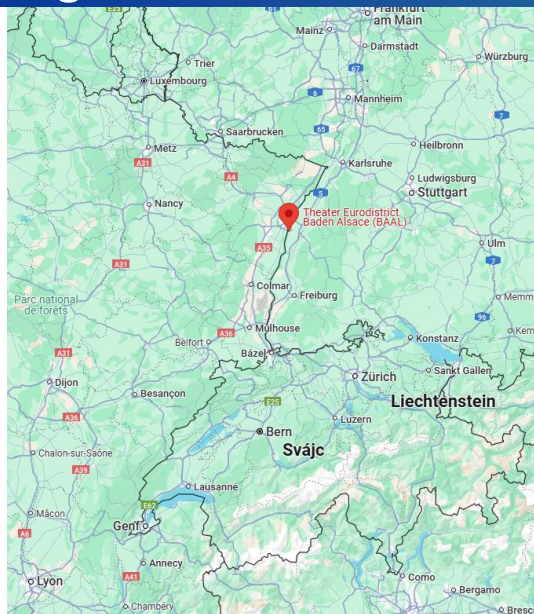


<https://www.newsøresund.se/af-vill-minska-pa-oresunddirekt/>





# Strasbourg (FR) + Offenburg (DE): Bilingual theatre at the border



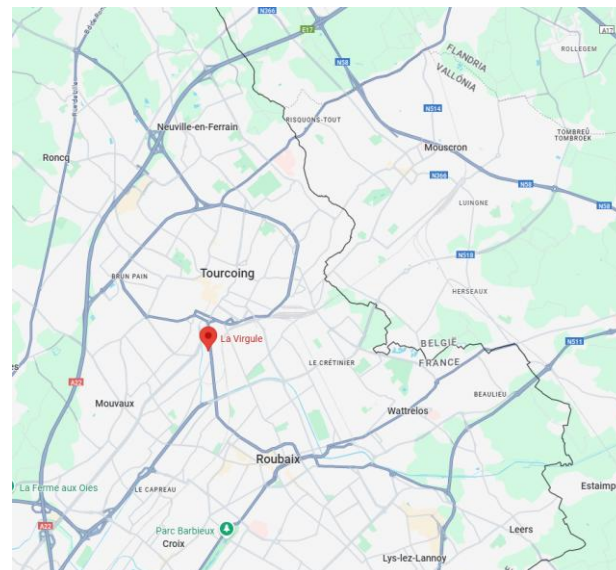
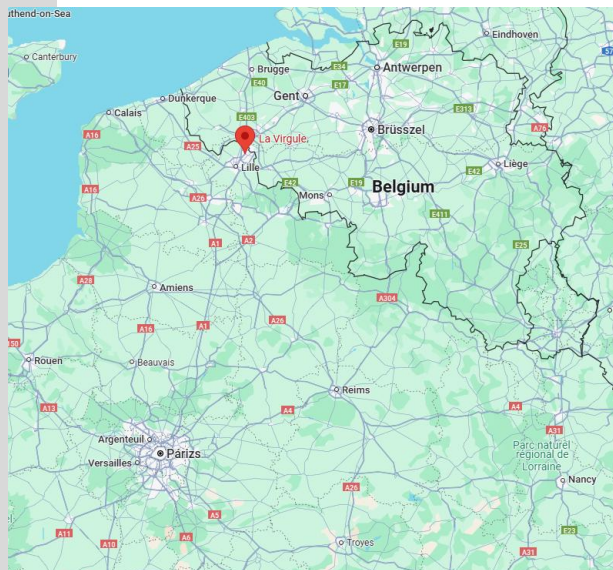
Theater Eurodistrict  
BA<sup>den</sup> AL<sup>sace</sup>



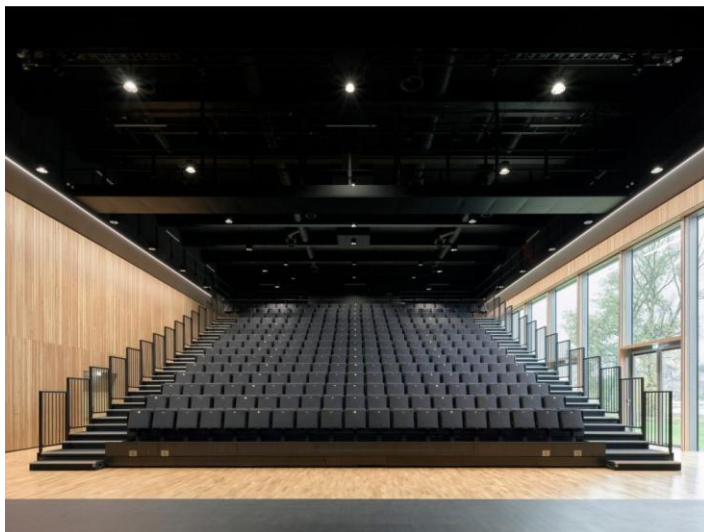
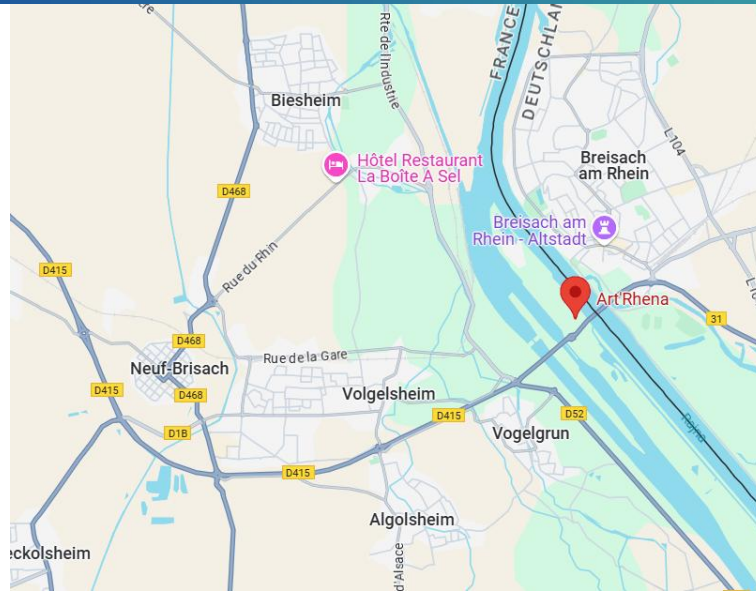
<https://theater-baden-alsace.com/>



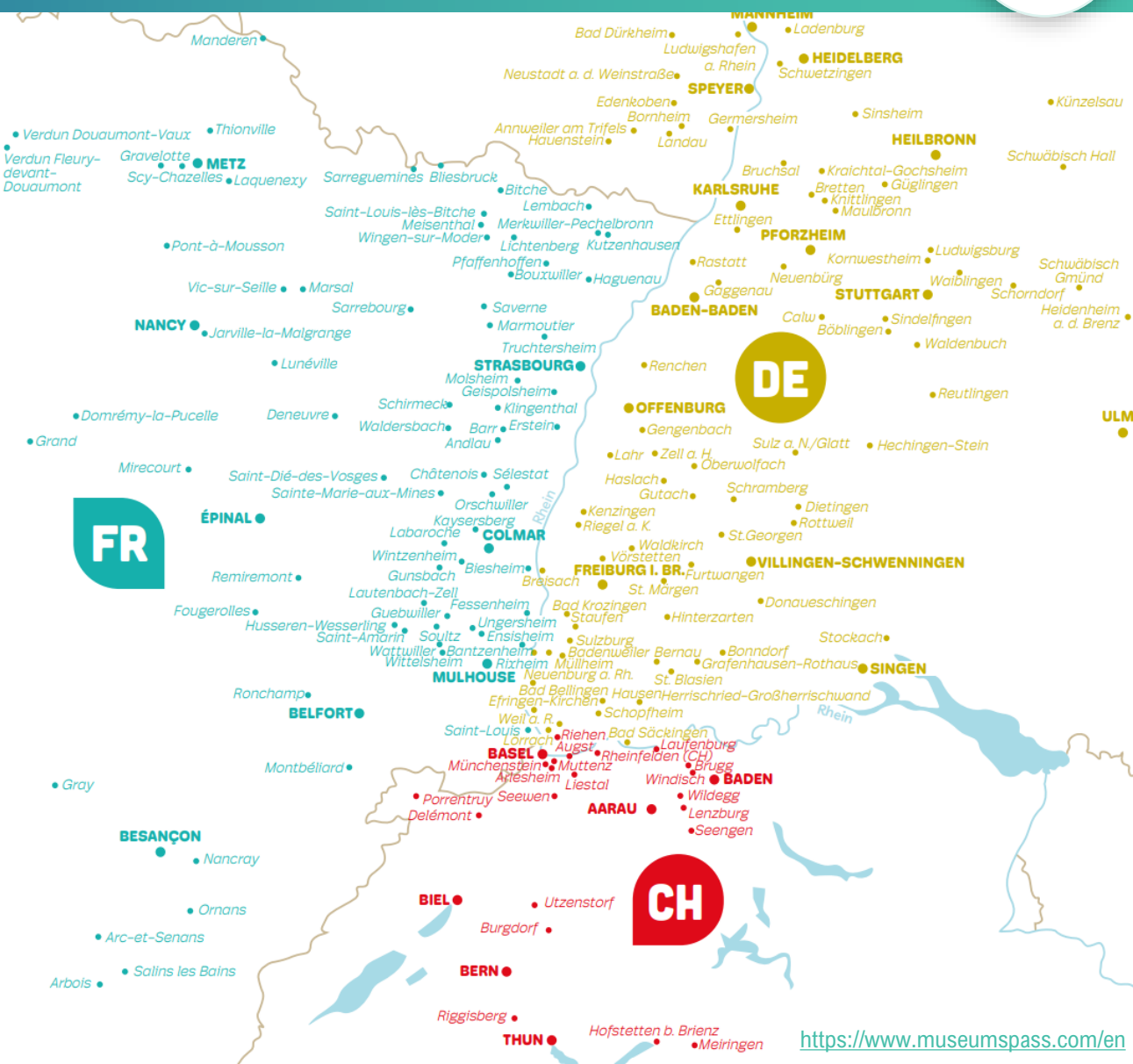
# Tourcoing (FR) + Mouscron (BE): Cross-border theatrical artistic group



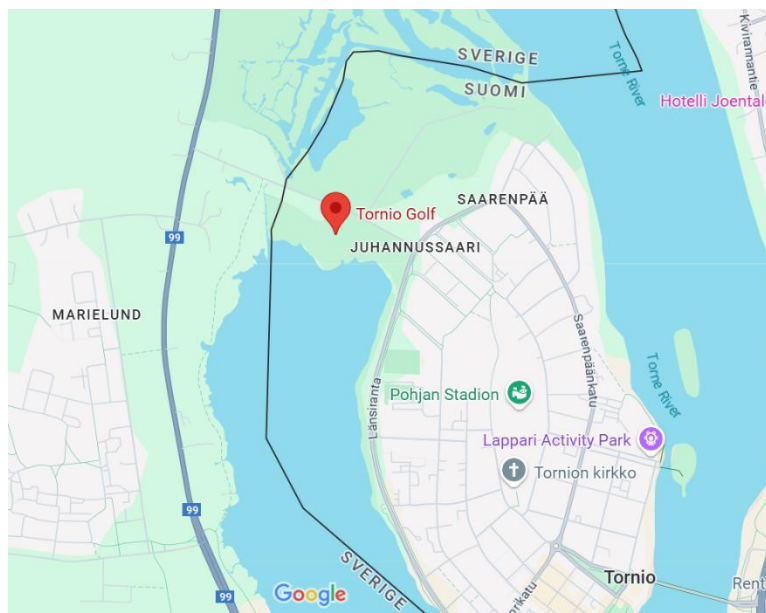
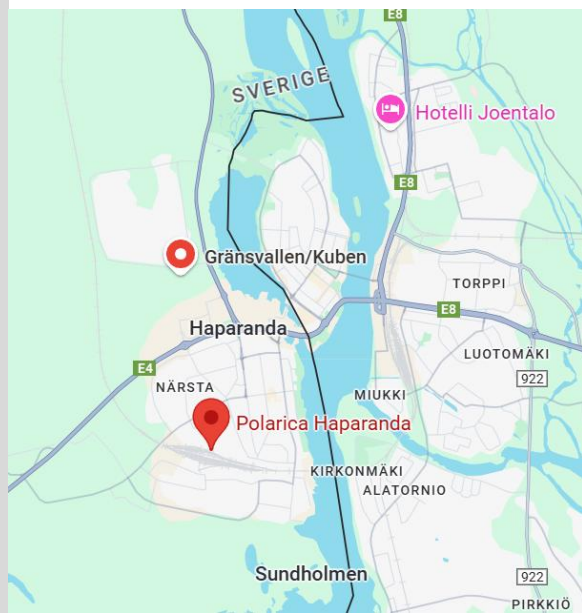
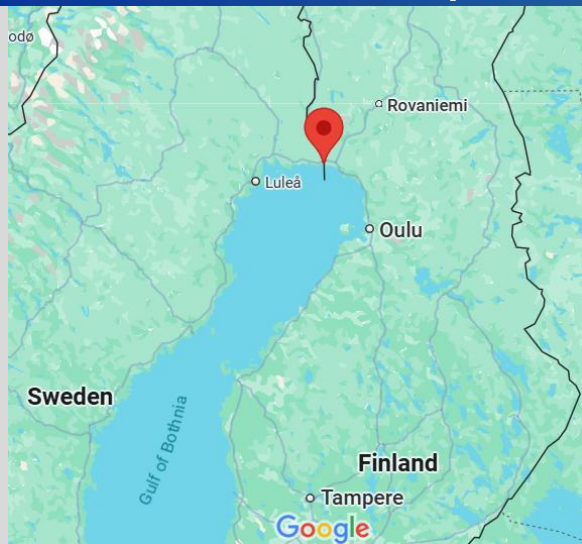
# Breisach am Rhein (DE) – Neuf-Brisach (FR): Joint cultural centre



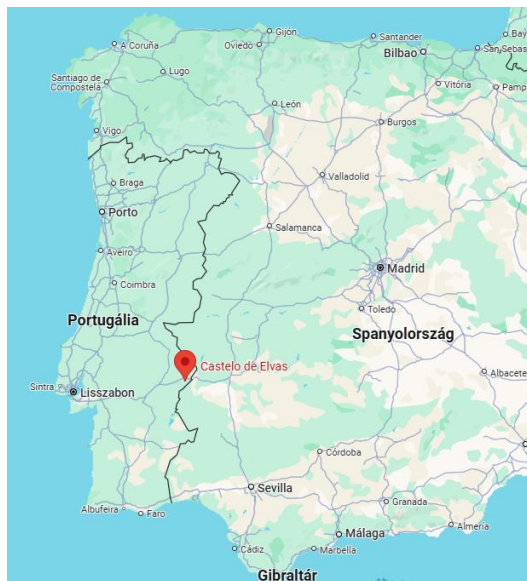
# Upper Rhein Valley (CH – DE – FR): Cross-border alliance of museums



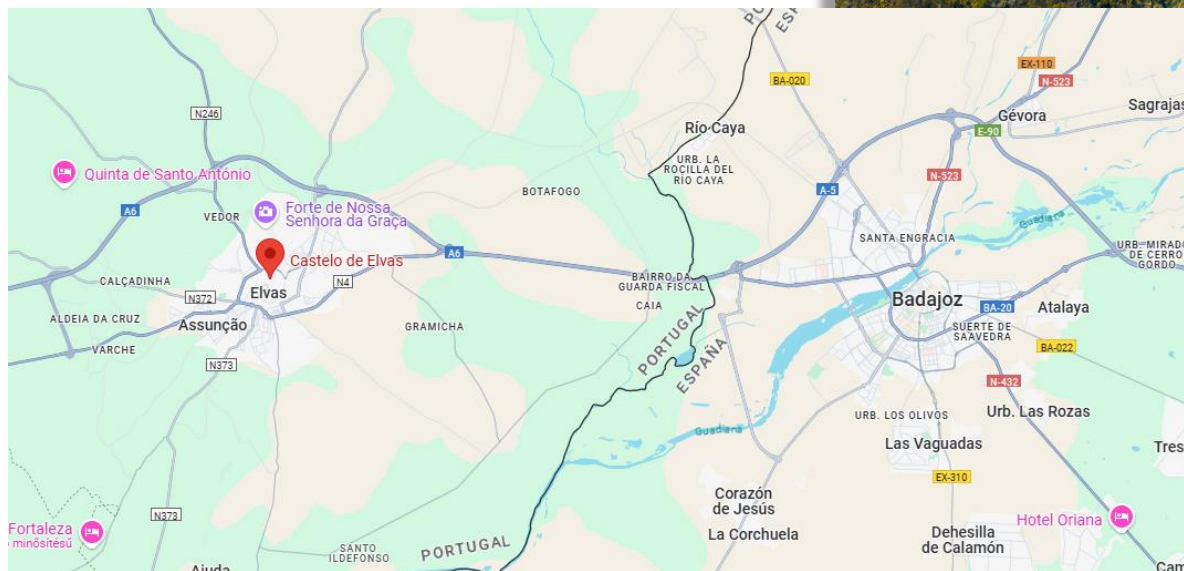
# Tornio (FI) + Haparanda (SE): Shared use of sports facilities



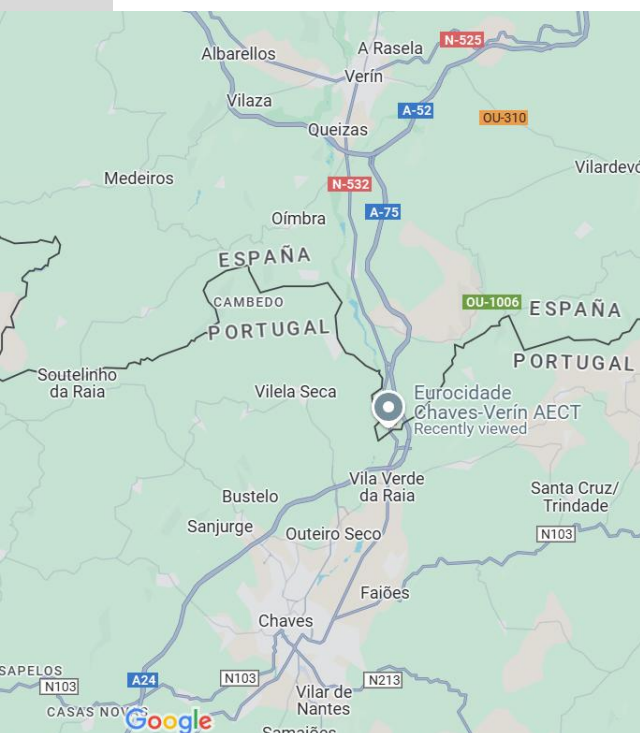
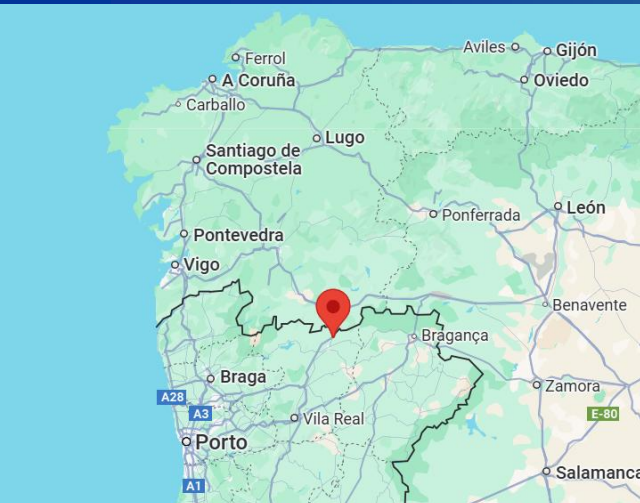
# Badajoz (ES) + Elvas (PT): Joint reconstruction of built heritage



<https://cm-elvas.pt/descobrir/forte-da-graca/>



# Chaves (ES) + Verín (PT): Joint tourism office



How to get there



Tourist Information



Maps and Itineraries



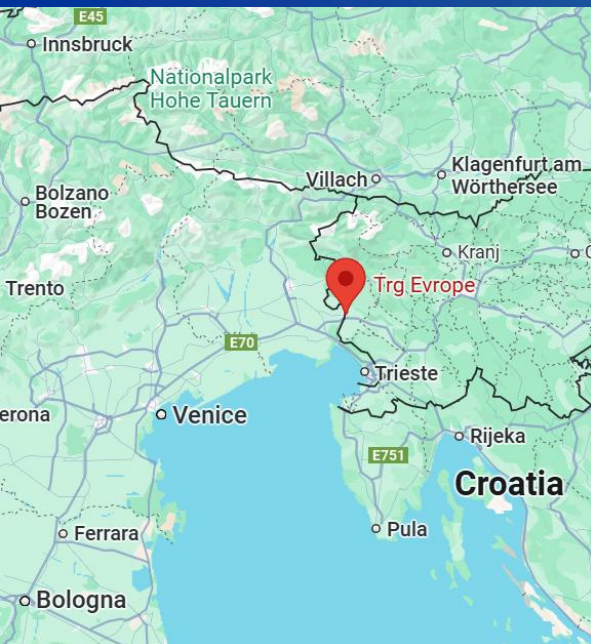
Where to eat



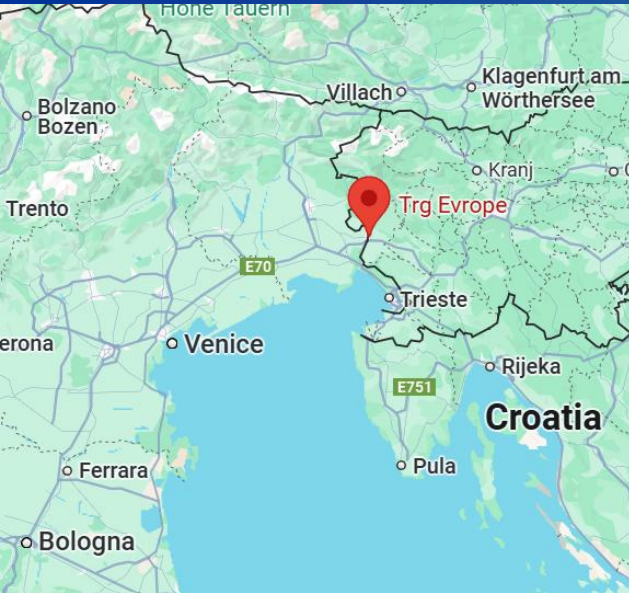
Where to sleep

[https://www.visitchavesverin.com/pages/1137?poi\\_id=696](https://www.visitchavesverin.com/pages/1137?poi_id=696)

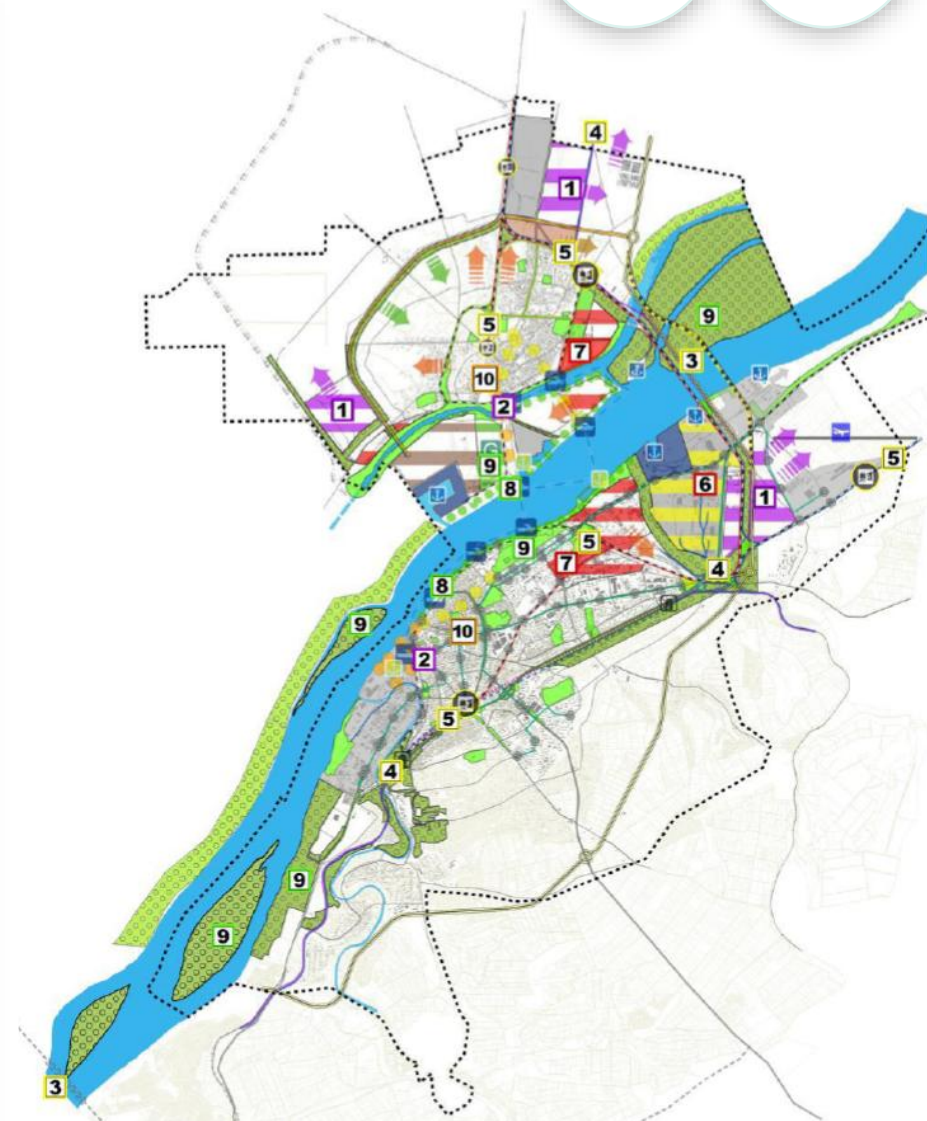
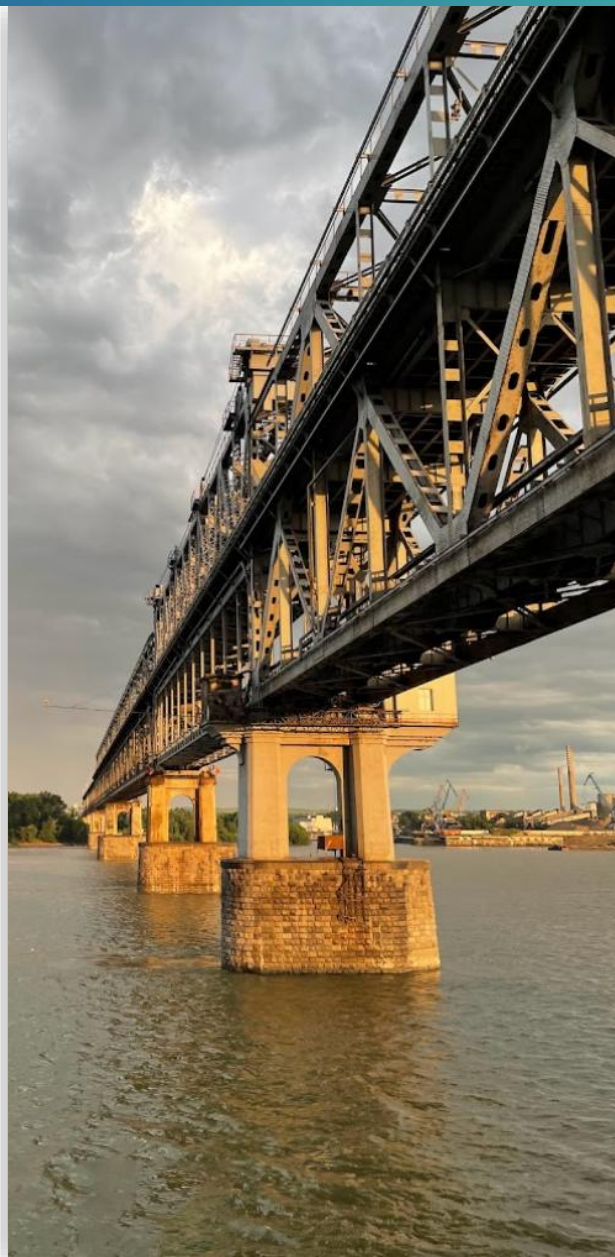
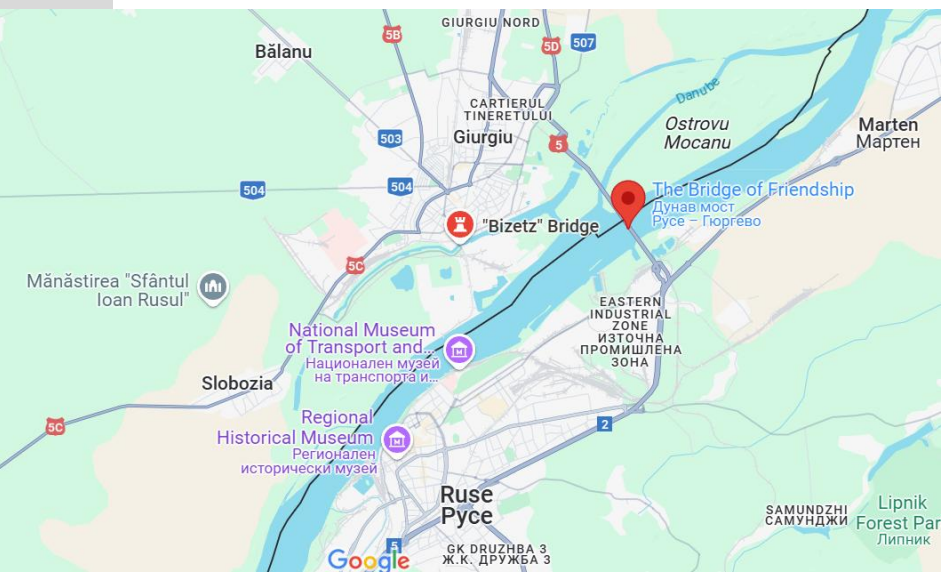
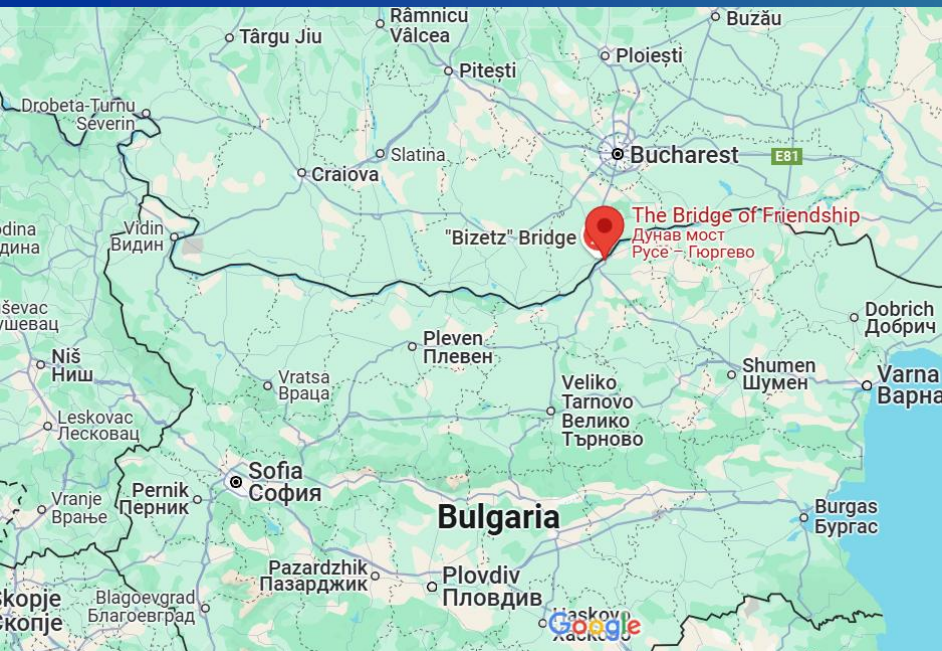
# Gorizia (IT) + Nova Gorica (SI): Integrated tourism offer



# Gorizia (IT) + Nova Gorica (SI): Joint Capital of Culture application



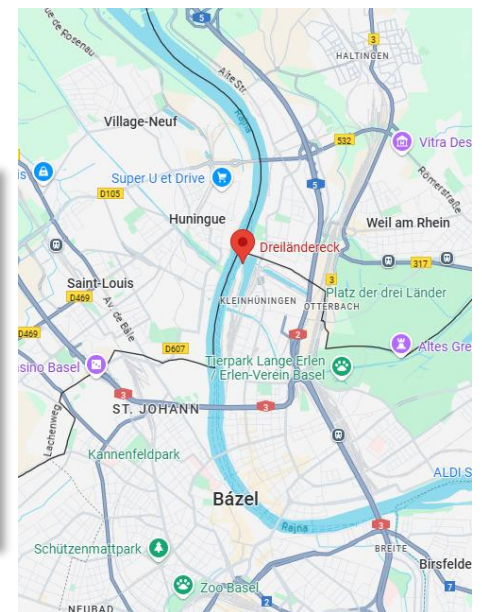
# Giurgiu (RO) + Ruse (BG): Joint urban plan



# Basel (CH) + Huningue (FR) + Weil am Rhein (DE): Joint urban planning agreement



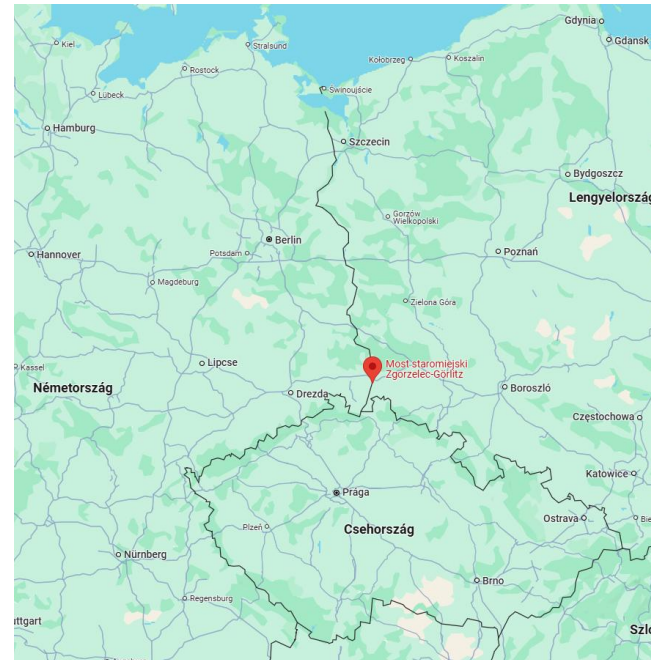
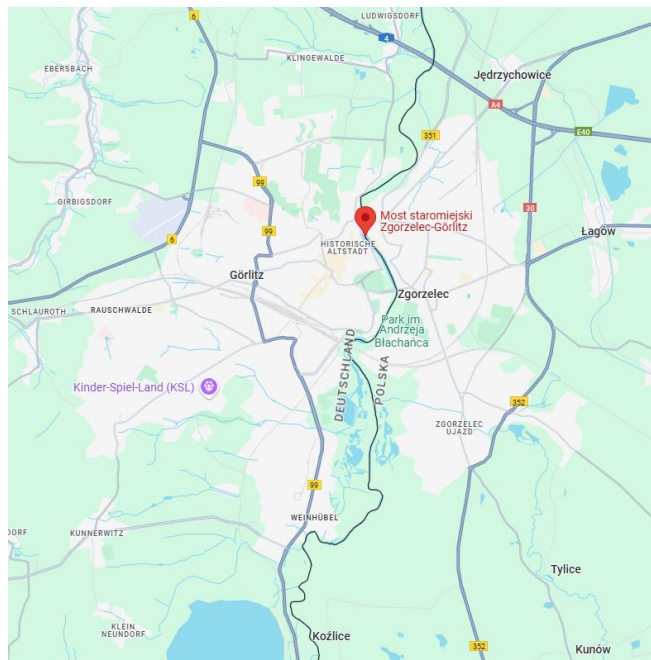
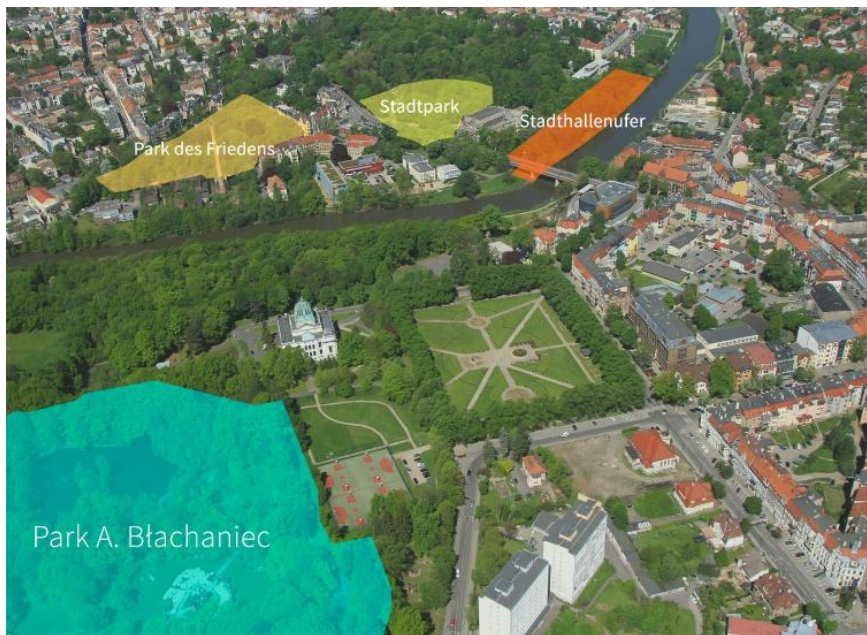
<https://3-land.net/en/>



<https://fontana-la.ch/en/projekte/taedtebauliches-konzept-klybeckquai-westquai/>

HUNINGUE  
WEIL AM RHEIN  
BASSEL  
**3LAND**

# Görlitz (DE) + Zgorzelec (PL): Joint intermunicipal committee



Stadt Görlitz



Miasta Zgorzelec

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# Thank you for your attention

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<https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/home/>