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Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

Working paper

# Cross-border public services in Europe



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## 1. Introduction

This working paper builds on evidence provided by an [ESPON targeted analysis on cross-border public services](#)<sup>1</sup> (CPS) across Europe.

Exploring territorial patterns of cross-border public services<sup>2</sup>, this overview highlights that CPS provision helps European border regions to better integrate. CPS address joint challenges of neighbouring border regions and their provision aims to generate benefits for the general public or specific target groups in the border area. These services contribute to reducing negative border effects, better connections, raising awareness of the cross-border potential and to supporting cross-border flows of people.

This working paper is guided by the following questions:

- Where do CPS exist along European borders?
- What are the development potentials and future needs for CPS and what are possible access points to exploit these potentials?
- What main policy recommendations can be derived from the analysis on CPS provision?

Based on these questions, this working paper aims to provide arguments and inspiration for those who are engaged in developing and implementing cross-border cooperation and for the development of the EU Territorial Agenda and Cohesion Policy after 2020. This working paper seeks to attract interest not only from policy-makers in border regions but also from national decision-makers, public and private operators of services of general interest as well as from civil society organisations.

In order to build up arguments and policy pointers to support the development of cross-border public services, the results of the targeted analysis undertaken by ESPON on this topic is used throughout this working paper with many case studies in diverse territories within the EU.

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### KEY POLICY MESSAGES

#### Why invest in cross-border public services (CPS)?

- Addressing market failures: CPS compensate for an unsurmountable shortage of both domestic public service beyond national borders and private service provision.
- Reducing negative externalities of national borders: CPS can enhance cultural, political and social integration of regions separated by national borders.
- Building on positive externalities: an adequate supply of healthcare, transport, civil protection and education services in border areas increases the attractiveness of these areas for people and consequently businesses.
- Reducing allocative inefficiencies through natural monopolies: twin services on both sides of the border create deadweight losses through the provision of services that could be extended beyond the border at little or no cost.

#### How are CPS distributed in Europe?

CPS are found all over Europe, but they are spread in a rather imbalanced way with more CPS provided at borders of old EU Member States (MS). The majority of nearly 600 cross-border public services identified by ESPON's study on CPS are established along the borders of the Benelux countries, France, Germany and the Nordic countries.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.espon.eu/CPS>

<sup>2</sup> See pages 5 and 6 for a detailed definition of CPS



### Which sectors create demand for CPS?

ESPON's targeted analysis reveals that the majority of the CPS case studies operate in the fields of environmental preservation, civil protection and disaster management as well as transport. In the future, CPS development is expected especially in the fields of spatial planning, economic development, tourism and culture. Many regions also explore possibilities to establish CPS dealing with health care and labour market challenges.

### What are the typical obstacles that impede the development of CPS?

Typical obstacles include unfavourable legal and administrative framework conditions, cultural divides and one-sided scarce resources. Results of ESPON evidence also indicate a low awareness of the added value and the variety of possible solutions to establishing a CPS.

### How to reduce CPS obstacles?

- **Interreg as a leverage:** Evidence shows that the number of CPS in Europe is slowly but steadily increasing with an average of 5 to 10 new CPS per year. Since 1990, several leaps in CPS establishments have been ascertained in 1998, 2002, and 2013. This increase coincides with the introduction of Interreg back in 1990. The ESPON research team behind the targeted analysis has catalogued the common solutions practiced in different border areas to reduce obstacles, compounding these in categories including stakeholder involvement and needs assessment, infrastructure, legal frameworks as well as management and organisation. All identified solutions have the characteristics of Interreg cross-border projects, which leads to the conclusion that Interreg can serve as a leverage for durable operation of CPS.
- **Seed money funding:** The success rate of Interreg projects supporting a CPS development can be increased through seed money prior to the application stage that can support the analysis of financial sustainability of a CPS beyond an Interreg project.
- **Avoiding rebound effects** through complementary calls: evidence shows that project concentrating on a certain service and/or border segment can have a negative impact on other border segments and/or sectors. Complementary calls within the same programme or across programmes covering different priorities and border segments can result in complementary projects that increase the CPS sectoral and geographical coverage.
- **Complementary use of funding streams:** while Interreg projects are the main lever for prospective CPS, different stages of the CPS evolution might need different complementary support mechanisms. While Interreg cross-border cooperation has proven to work well in the case of stakeholder reconciliation, feasibility studies, pilot actions and market roll-out, the prototyping and testing of technological solutions can benefit from engineering capacity in the context of research and innovation grants.



## 2. Defining cross-border public services in a European context

Public service provision is acknowledged as an important element for the European social model and to achieve territorial cohesion.

The Lisbon Treaty states that good accessibility to public services is key for territorial cohesion. Public services are generally organised by national, regional or local authorities within their administrative boundaries. These services can be found in many different policy fields including transport, health care, education, environmental protection, civil protection, banking, justice and public security, including defence.

In accordance with this variety, nine policy areas for CPS have been identified and complemented by a subdivision of altogether 34 fields of intervention.

Table 1. Policy areas and fields of intervention

Policy Area code	Policy Area	Code	Field of intervention
1	Transport	1.1	Public transport services
		1.2	Transport infrastructure maintenance
		1.3	Services at border crossing points
2	Spatial planning, economic development, tourism and culture	2.1	Spatial planning or sector policy planning
		2.2	Services supporting economic development
		2.3	Services for culture and cultural heritage
		2.4	Services for tourism development
3	Healthcare, long-term care and social inclusion	3.1	Primary care, secondary care and tertiary care
		3.2	Services for hospitals
		3.3	Services for non-hospital care or ambulatory care
		3.4	Medical emergency care and rescue
		3.5	Services for long-term care
		3.6	Social assistance and social integration
4	Education and training	4.1	Early childhood education and primary education
		4.2	Services for secondary education
		4.3	Services for tertiary education
		4.4	Vocational education and training
		4.5	Recognition of diploma & professional qualification certificates
5	Labour market and employment	5.1	Information/advice services for facilitating mobility of workers
		5.2	Services for job placement
		5.3	Qualification & life-long learning
6	Communication, broadcasting and information society	6.1	Mail delivery, telephone or mobile phone services
		6.2	Broadcasting services
		6.3	Digital services
7	Environmental protection, natural resources management and climate change action	7.1	Protecting/restoring & managing terrestrial freshwater water bodies (blue infrastructures), estuaries & coastal waters
		7.2	Restoring/protecting & managing valuable terrestrial ecosystems or landscapes & for developing green infrastructures incl. services for risk prevention & climate change resilience
		7.3	Resource efficiency/promoting low carbon economy or greening of the society
		7.4	Solid waste, sewage water collection/treatment & drinking water
		7.6	Production/distribution of energy derived from renewable sources
8	Civil protection and disaster management	8.1	Fire-fighting & assistance in accidents
		8.2	Flooding management
		8.3	Managing large-scale incidents & major disasters
9	Citizenship, justice and public security	9.1	Public advice & support services for citizens
		9.2	Services in the fields of justice, police & customs



Public services may also be provided across national borders. With the opening of the European internal market, cross-border public services increasingly gained attention. Increasing interest in CPS may also be influenced by an observable “come-back” of municipal public service provision in Europe that gives rise to a need for better coordinating service provision across national borders (Jaansoo and Groenendijk, 2014).

Unfortunately, no analytical concept exists that allows to clearly define or delineate the exact nature and scope of cross-border public service provision activities (INTERACT, 2015). It may be argued that all cross-border cooperation activities run by regional and (...) local authorities are still public services, whatever their legal form might be (Council of Europe, 2012). However, this broad definition is not suitable in the scope of this study, because it implies that the analysis would have to consider every publicly-driven cross-border project, be it short-term (one-off) or durable.

Also, a transferred use of the EU-level definitions elaborated for different categories of “Services of General Interest” is inadequate. This is due to the vagueness of the EU-level concept and its terminology (ESPON, 2013), but also because the narrow definitions would neglect CPS in the fields of police, justice or statutory social security schemes.

Hence, formulating an operational definition to analyse CPS in a European context is not an easy and straightforward task. Therefore, specific criteria have been defined by ESPON allowing for a systematic approach to determine whether a service could be considered as CPS. Flexible criteria rather than a formal definition for CPS have been developed in order to remain flexible and adhere to large variety of possible CPS in Europe. These working criteria, in turn, require a case-by-case assessment.

In general, all criteria have to comply. Only for services at EU external borders it is suggested to apply the criteria less strictly, to illustrate how first steps towards CPS in the stricter sense can develop along these borders.

The following criteria have been defined: The CPS:

1. covers a specified cross-border area and must have already materialised in the cross-border area.
2. addresses a joint problem or development opportunity in the cross-border area.
3. shall have a target group on both sides of the border, even if it is targeted in quite different ways.
4. is non-discriminatory: within the target group there is no access restriction for using the CPS (non-discriminatory access).
5. includes actors from both sides of the border who are involved in initiation, establishment/financing and/or provision. The degree of involvement can vary however.
6. is publicly organised, either directly provided by a public body or a private/ non-profit organisation via a concession.
7. can be provided in any of the policy fields listed in Table 2.1. The sub-fields are not exhausting.
8. is publicly financed.
9. is a service which means that the mere existence of a (hard) infrastructure does not represent a service (e.g. a cross-border bridge, road or pipeline).
10. offers a long-term service provision, i.e. there is no limited timeframe as in case of “one-off projects”.
11. delivers which means that the service is existing and running at the time of analysis.



### 3. Cross-border public services throughout Europe

The ESPON CPS Targeted Analysis offered the first approach to

- compile a European wide overview of CPS provision; no corresponding data had been collected previously;
- develop such an overview not only for a certain policy field but to cover all relevant policy fields in which CPS can be identified;
- systematically look into the reasons, challenges and solutions to implement CPS.

These cornerstones hint at the limits of the compilation of CPS in Europe as no database provides sufficient information to contact all potential providers. Thus, ESPON evidence builds on CPS found in document analyses and online sources, collected through a survey distributed to all European border regions and through in-depth search tapping on various local sources in the case study areas. The compilation of CPS has been hampered by a lack of awareness of regional and local players who are sometimes not even aware that they are offering a cross-border public service, as the term “cross-border public service” and the concept behind it are obviously not known everywhere. This is also linked to a past lack of a clear methodological concept defining CPS. Even cross-border institutions are not always aware of the variety of CPS provided in their region, since the providers may be of very different nature and a CPS may consist of a very small service not widely known but addressing specific target groups only. In consequence, ESPON’s compilation does not claim to provide a complete picture of all CPS existing throughout Europe. Nevertheless, this overview provides a good starting point to identify tendencies of CPS development and implementation.

ESPON inventory includes a total of 579 CPS in Europe. The analysis gives an overview of the principal reasons that trigger the development of CPS over domestic service provision and what typical challenges had to be overcome for achieving the implementation of a cross-border public service.

#### 3.1 Spatial and thematic distribution of CPS

**CPS are found all over Europe, but they are spread in a rather imbalanced way with more CPS provided at borders of old EU Member States (MS).**

The highest share of CPS in Europe has been identified along the borders between five of the six founding EU Member States (i.e. the Benelux countries, France and Germany) and Nordic countries. A high density of CPS can also be observed along the German-Swiss, French-Swiss, Czech-German and (partially) Austrian-German borders, and along the Danish-German border.

The relatively high share of CPS along the southern part of the Finnish-Russian border can be explained by more flexible interpretation of the working criteria in one of the case study regions. This concentration along selected borders indicates that a long-standing tradition of general decentralised cross-border cooperation, or mutual cooperation at national levels as well as population density determine largely the number and share of CPS per border segment.

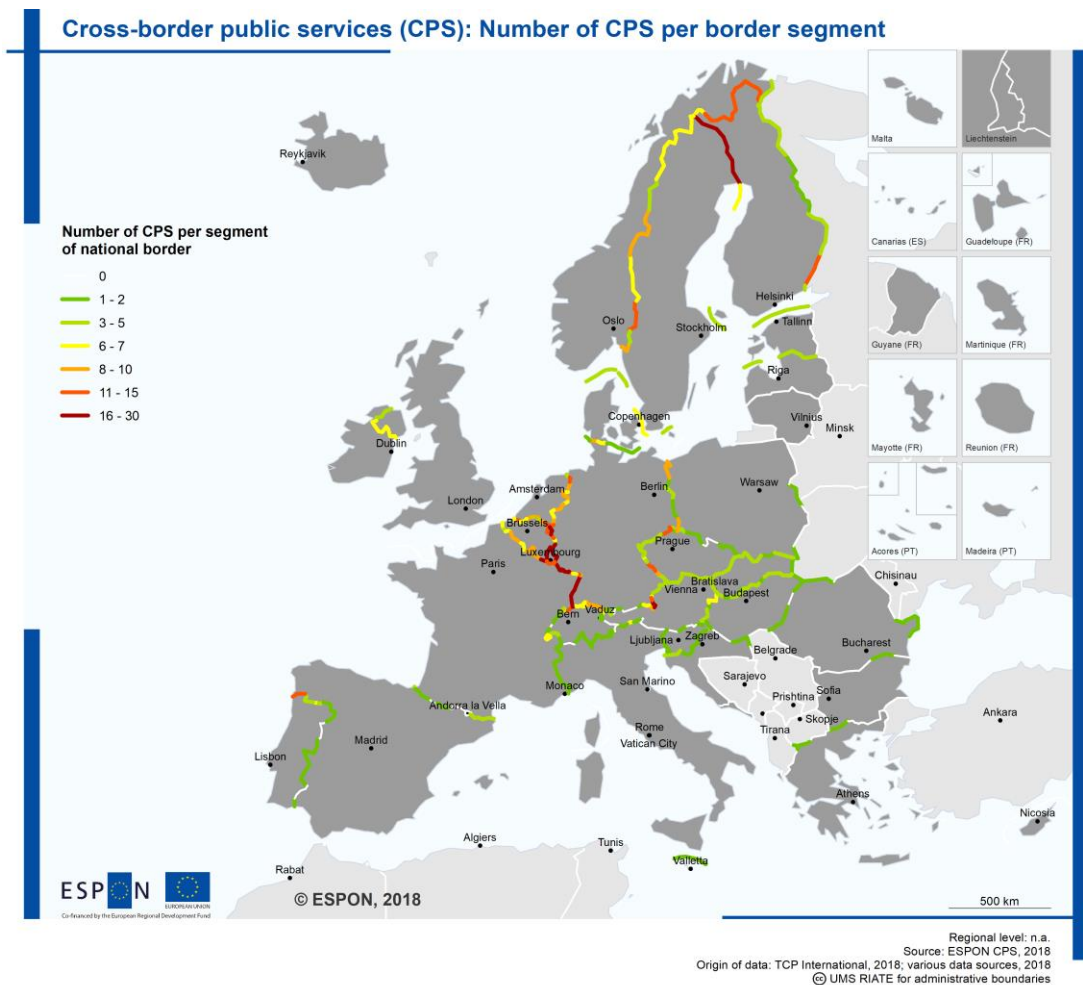
Border segments with more than five or ten CPS can only be found in Western Europe (Benelux countries, France, Germany, Switzerland) and in Nordic countries (Norwegian-Swedish and Finnish-Swedish borders, as well as Finnish-Norwegian and along the southern Finnish-Russian borders), with two exceptions along the Czech-German (Elbe-Labe region) and Austrian-German (Salzburg area) borders (Map 1).

Other borders show only very few CPS (for instance, Slovak borders or the border between Portugal and Spain). For some borders, no or only one or two CPS have been identified (for example, Latvia-Lithuania, Hungary-Romania, Bulgaria-Romania and Bulgaria-Greece). While keeping the abovementioned limitations of the availability of CPS data in mind, this still indicates a tendency of quite varying numbers of CPS provided along different borders.





Map 1: Number of CPS per border segment



It appears that CPS primarily exist along borders that either

1. have a long tradition of cross-border cooperation in areas with high population densities or rural areas (Western Europe), i.e. high demand or specific needs for services of any kind, or in contrary in areas
2. with extremely low population densities and long distances between towns and villages, i.e. in areas with difficulties and high pressures for maintaining public services (Nordic countries).

The French-German border accounts for approx. 11% of all CPS (Table 2), followed by the Dutch-German border with 7% and the Belgian-Dutch border with 6.4% of all CPS.

**Almost 42% of all identified CPS are located along borders of the Benelux countries and its neighbours France and Germany.** The border to a non-EU country with the highest share of CPS is the Norwegian-Swedish border (4.6%), remarkably ranked 7, followed by the German-Swiss and French-Swiss borders, ranked 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> with 3.9% and 3.4% of all identified CPS.

A further aggregation of this distribution reveals, that 64% of all identified CPS are located along borders between old EU Member States, almost 11% of all CPS along borders between old and new EU Member States, nearly 8% between new EU Member States and 17% between EU and non-EU countries (Fig.1).





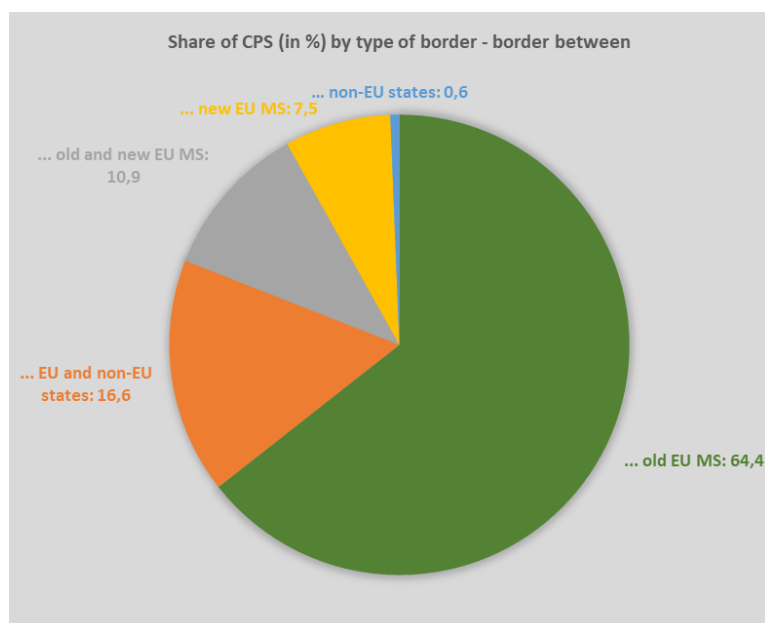
Table 2: Share of CPS by country borders

Rank	Border between	Share (%)
1	France – Germany	10.75
2	Germany – Netherlands	7.08
3	Belgium – Netherlands	6.42
4	Austria – Germany	5.64
5	Belgium – France	5.11
6	Czech Republic – Germany	4.72
7	Norway – Sweden	4.59
8	Belgium – Germany	4.19
9	Finland – Sweden	4.06
10	Germany – Switzerland	3.93
11	Germany – Luxembourg	3.80
12	France – Switzerland	3.41
13	Germany – Poland	3.15
14	Spain – Portugal	3.01
15	Finland – Russia	2.62
16	Belgium – Luxembourg	2.49
17	Denmark – Germany	2.36
18	France – Luxembourg	2.23
19	Finland – Norway	1.97
20	Austria – Hungary	1.44
21	France – Spain	1.05
J.	Other borders	15.99

Source: ESPON CPS database, 2018

**Most identified CPS are implemented between partners from two neighbouring countries, and only rarely involve partners from three or more countries.**

Figure 1: Share of CPS by type of border



Source: ESPON CPS database, 2018

The majority of CPS (88%) cover two neighbouring countries, 8.8 % cover three, and 3.6% even more than three countries. On the one hand, this result is not surprising given the fact that most border regions in Europe represent just borders between two countries.



On the other hand, even in border regions where three or more countries are neighbouring each other (such as Euregio Bayerischer Wald-Böhmerwald-Unterer Inn, Greater Area Luxembourg), most CPS are only established pairwise between two countries, even though there might be potentials to involve three or more countries.

While this often may have legal or sometimes technical reasons, one reason could also lie in the complexity of the CPS implementation process – the more partners from different countries are involved, the more complex and protracted this process may become. In any case, most of the identified CPS covering three or more countries are found in the Nordic countries.

### **Most CPS deal with (i) environment protection, (ii) civil protection and disaster management or (iii) transport.**

Almost 60% of all identified CPS fall under these three policy fields, of which 21% are concerned with environment protection including wastewater treatment, due to the substantial presence of borders crossing natural areas and the existence of many border rivers. Almost the same number of CPS concern civil protection and disaster management and a little bit lower share could be found in the field of transport (Table 3 and Map 2).

*Table 3: Number and share of CPS themes<sup>3</sup>*

Theme / Field of intervention	Frequency	Share (%)
Environment protection	119	20.6
Civil protection and disaster management	118	20.4
Transport	105	18.1
Healthcare and social inclusion	64	11.1
Education and training	57	9.8
Spatial planning, tourism, and culture	55	9.5
Labour market and employment	29	5.0
Citizenship, justice and public security	27	4.7
Communication, broadband, and information society	5	0.9

Source: ESPON CPS database, 2018

The next most important policy fields for which CPS have been implemented so far, tend to be healthcare, education and spatial planning, each of which roughly accounts for 10%. Labour market and employment CPS obviously have, in total, a rather low relevance, so have CPS on citizenship, justice and public security, while CPS on communication/broadband/information society seem to be least relevant, accounting for less than 1%<sup>4</sup>.

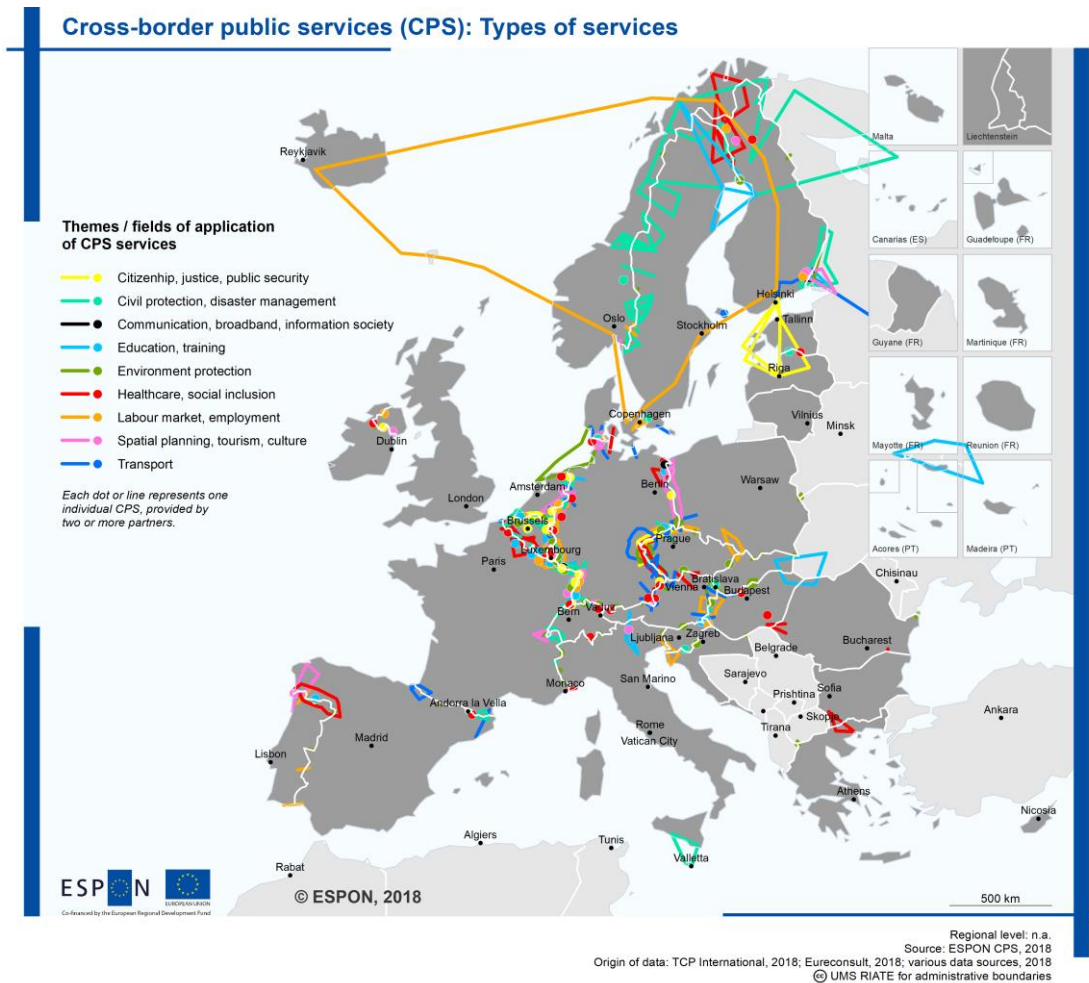
### **The spatial distribution of CPS themes is quite uneven across Europe, with borders that show a clear focus on one or two themes, contrasted with borders showing a mixture of a wide array of fields of interventions.**

For example, CPS in the Nordic countries have a strong focus on civil protection and disaster management on the one hand, and healthcare on the other. In contrast, CPS in the Baltic States are predominantly concerned with citizenship, justice and public security and CPS along the Czech-German and Austrian-German borders are concerned with either environmental protection (including sewage water treatment), medical emergency care or with transport services. The Belgian-French border area is, interestingly, a forerunner in healthcare CPS. Other borders like the British-Irish border or the border between Germany and the Netherland cover a wide array of intervention fields addressing various policy objectives and public needs.

*Map 2: CPS by policy areas*

<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning that even though for this analysis each CPS has been assigned to just one theme, in reality some specific CPS have a multifaceted character, touching different fields of intervention. For example, airborne helicopter rescue services may be both assigned to healthcare and to disaster management.

<sup>4</sup> One explanation could be that this theme is too new given the recent significant developments in the IT domain.



A further look into the detailed spatial distribution of CPS by area of intervention reveals some interesting insights.

In the health sector, emphasis was given to establish CPS on primary care (Benelux and Nordic countries, French borders to Germany, Italy and Spain) and on medical emergency or rescue services (for example, along Austrian, Czech and German borders, Belgian-French border). The types of services found in this policy field range from “small-scale” solutions (e.g. bilateral hospital cooperation) to territorially more wide-ranging and integrated solutions (e.g. integrated health care zones at the Belgium-French border). Highly integrated solutions can only be found in regions with a long cross-border tradition, whereas other regions seem to begin CPS provision with smaller solutions that may be further developed and become more integrated over time.

Traditionally, there are many CPS on joint wastewater treatment and drinking water provision, a management of border rivers and other water bodies (i.e. lakes), and on nature parks, all across Europe. Their occurrence along many European borders confirms that these CPS are often the first to be established, since they are often implemented more easily as compared to e.g. CPS in health care. Meanwhile there are also a number of CPS on solid waste treatment and renewable energy related matters. As regards education, there is a strong focus on university cooperation, but between the old and new EU Member States there are also some interesting CPS on school cooperation. CPS supporting cross-border spatial planning were established between Germany and the Netherlands, in the Greater Region, between France and Germany as well as between France and Switzerland.

This is similar for CPS related to cross-border business development. It can be concluded that the themes addressed in the various CPS either reflect



1. **regional topographic and natural assets and specificities** (e.g. environmental CPS, CPS in civil protection and disaster management);
2. **high demand for services** (e.g. transport CPS, CPS in spatial planning, tourism and culture, as well as education and training); or
3. **urgent political issues** (e.g. healthcare and social inclusion, labour market and employment, citizenship, justice and public security)

or a combination of the three factors.

### 3.2 CPS Target groups

**About one third of CPS have a broad or unspecific defined target group.** These addresses either public authorities (about 20%, Table 4) or the general public (about 13%). Depending on the policy field, targeted public authorities include, for example, planning authorities, schools or hospitals, fire brigades, rescue units or police and custom authorities. The largest specific target group are tourists (about 13.5%), which is not surprising since they are often one of the groups targeted by two of the most frequent CPS policy fields, namely environment protection and transport. CPS targeted at pupils, students, apprentices, job seekers and cross-border workers have a share around 12% each, followed by almost 7% of services addressing needs of economic actors and enterprises. More than 5% of all CPS are targeted at people requiring medical or permanent care, which can be exclusively attributed to healthcare CPS. Other target groups such as researches, other stakeholders or families tend to be rarely targeted individually but are sometimes one of several target groups.

Table 4: CPS target groups

Target groups	Frequency	Share (%)
Public authorities	195	19.5
Tourists	135	13.5
General public	132	13.2
Pupils, students and apprentices	125	12.5
Cross-border workers	115	11.5
Job seekers	111	11.1
Economic actors	68	6.8
People of all ages requiring medical or permanent care	55	5.5
Researchers	28	2.8
Other stakeholder groups	21	2
Other person groups *	16	1.6

\* inter alia including families (with small children) and residents. Source: ESPON CPS database, 2018

#### The territorial extent of the potential target group differs largely per CPS.

The majority of CPS have a fairly equal distribution of the target group on both sides of the border. For some other CPS however, only a smaller part of the general target group is located on the other side of the border. Based on ESPON online survey results, there is no pattern according to the type of CPS with a more imbalanced territorial scope of the target group. This indicates that the very specific and individual nature of each CPS is decisive for the territorial extent of the target group rather than the policy field. This is due to the wide variety of different degrees of integration mirrored in different CPS. To give an example, the territorial extent of the CPS specific target group naturally differs between an international school in a border area and a local bi-lingual school offering its domestic service also to pupils from the neighbouring country.



For most CPS, the frequency of use by the target group is variable, while in some other cases the target group is fixed and the CPS is steadily used on a day-to-day basis (e.g. cross-border sewage water treatment or cross-border drinking water provision). Typical CPS used on a daily basis often are in the fields of labour market, education and training and transport.

CPS that are less frequently used are typically 'stand-by' services such as emergency medical care services, firefighting or civil protection services and health care services.

### 3.3 CPS set-up is can be time consuming and requires individual solutions

**The number of CPS in Europe is slowly and steadily increasing in Europe**, with an average of 5 to 10 new CPS per year.

After 2000 more CPS have been established than during previous decades. Among others this is due to more frequent introduction of CPS involving Eastern European countries. From 1970 to 1990, only very few initiatives were initiated to establish new CPS, mainly in the field of environment protection (nature parks, sewage water treatment etc. A maximum of five CPS implemented per year can be observed in this period (1986). Since 1990, a jump in CPS establishments can be seen with peaks of 22 (1998), 23 (2002) and 27 (2013) new CPS per year. However, there are also years with only few new CPS (for example 2005, 2009 or 2011), but these remain the exception. This strong increase clearly coincides with the introduction of the Interreg Community Initiative back in 1990 and its continuing implementation during the following decades.

**Map 3. illustrates the temporal development of CPS in Europe in 5-year increments.** Until 1989, when only few CPS services were implemented each year, this happened mainly between France and Germany. Increasing dynamics in the coming ten years still focussed on Western Europe. Only after the year 2000 and in the course of EU enlargements, Eastern European countries recognised the CPS instrument and started to use it widely. In the first years, German-Czech cooperation were initiated, later CPS along the Austrian-Hungarian and Slovenian borders started emerging.

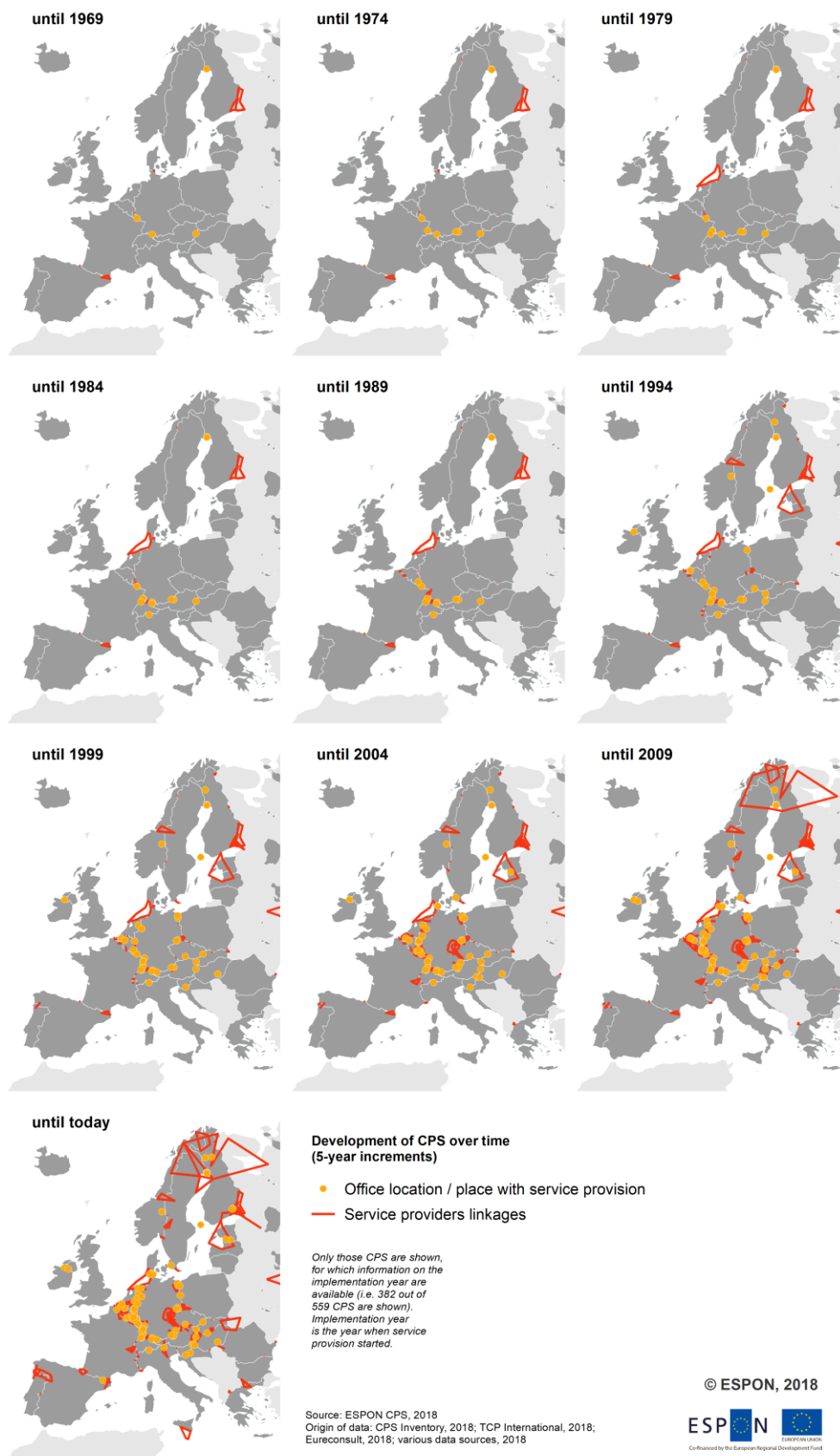
**Establishing a CPS takes generally a few years**, although there is a large variability of the time needed to establish a CPS. The range was from six months up to 20 years. Figure 2.5 illustrates this variety. Implementation time for most CPS lies between 1.5 and five years, however, experiences show that this seems to be very case specific, depending on many factors. Previous experience, or a long-standing cooperation in the area does not always guarantee that a CPS can be established faster than in other border areas or policy fields with less experience<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> In any case, it is often difficult to identify the "starting point" for a CPS implementation – even for stakeholders. Sometimes, ideas for a CPS circulate already for years. In other cases, smaller pilot actions paved the way of the CPS.



Map 3: Development of CPS provision in Europe







One of the reasons why only few CPS per year are implemented may be linked to difficulties in the design and administrative implementation. Subject to the type of service envisaged and the local and regional conditions, the implementation can take several years. First, stakeholders on either side of the border need to develop a common problem understanding, followed by identifying possible solutions, setting-up possibly required structures or concluding specific agreements before shaping actual service delivery in question. Also, developing the production base of a service (such as sewage pipes, tram way tracks etc.), which may be a prerequisite of the service provision, may take quite a long time and may involve some lengthy legal planning and public participation procedures.

While health care CPS have the tendency to take the longest on average to be established, and CPS in the field of spatial planning, economic development, tourism and culture tend to need the lowest development time, variation is also huge within policy fields as indicated in Table 5, so that no significant correlation could be derived.

This further supports the finding that many factors matter for CPS development including past traditions and existing policy documents and agreements but also the specific nature of the CPS within a policy field. For example, extending an existing bus line across the border may mainly require an approval of the involved MS whereas the development of a new and joint tramline requires many agreements ensuring that all formal and security standards are met.

*Table 5: Time needed for developing and implementing a CPS (in years)*

Theme / Field of intervention	Minimum	Average per field	Maximum
Healthcare and social inclusion	5	8.3	15
Citizenship, justice and public security	1	5.8	17
Transport	0.8	5.4	18
Environment protection	2	4.4	10
Civil protection and disaster management	1.7	4.4	11
Education and training	0.5	4.4	20
Labour market and employment	1	4	20
Spatial planning, economic development, tourism and culture	1	1.8	3

Source: Online survey ESPON CPS 2018; based on information from 61 CPS





## 4. Added value and benefits of CPS

### 4.1 Why developing a CPS?

Ensuring affordable and accessible public services is an important political objective and inherent to the European social model. National borders hamper achieving this objective. CPS provision provides a solution to overcoming these border issues and has specific advantages in favour of affordable and accessible public services in border regions.

**CPS contribute to reducing negative border effects**, for example by enhanced cultural integration, increased understanding of the neighbours or a common understanding on shared issues or needs.

**CPS contribute to better connections**, not only between people but also by increasing the accessibility to services, provision of missing resources, or by offering a one-stop-shop and thus a simplification in dealing with a variety of border challenges. By increasing the accessibility and the scope of services, the quality of the services can be improved as knowledge and resources from both sides of the border can be better exploited.

**CPS support cross-border flows of people**, for example by offering better information on complementarities of two neighbouring regions or by better labour market matching.

**CPS contribute to raising awareness of cross-border possibilities** in terms of work, health care, recreation, education etc. This may have a positive effect on the image of the cross-border region and can support regional economic development.

**Case study:**  
Easing cross-border use of local and regional public transport: Elbe-Labe Ticket

A single ticket system for public transport has been introduced in the Euregion Elbe-Labe. The ticket simplifies public transport use for tourists who wish to explore the national parks on both sides of the border between Germany and the Czech Republic. In addition, shopping and leisure activities have a strong cross-border dimension. Transport associations from both sides of the border took the initiative to jointly offer a service in favour of these cross-border flows.

Users can buy a single ticket on either side of the border and make use of domestic public service lines and cross-border connections.



## 4.2 Expected results of CPS provision

CPS bring different benefits to cross-border regions.

**They can address a gap in domestic service provision.** A CPS can overcome a shortage of service provision on one or both sides of the border. Such shortage may result from a peripheral location of the border region, from low demand on each side, or may be specific to cross-border flows, for which usually no domestic services exist.

**CPS can bring about change in the cross-border region.** A CPS can contribute to more effective service provision in the border area. They may address shared problems more effectively rather than individual and non-cooperative activities. Change can be brought about also by extending existing domestic services across the border, for example to achieve faster rescue responses in peripheral areas.

**CPS can make service provision less costly.** A CPS can generate efficiency gains and cost reductions for the service provider as compared to domestic service provision.

In this sense CPS development can ensure a critical mass for affordable and accessible public service by building on

- economies of scale by covering a wider service area than domestic services and thus increase the demand for the service; or
- economies of scope, making better use of infrastructure investments and operating costs shared among stakeholders in the cross-border region.



### Case study:

Making best uses of diminishing human resources by establishing a joint fire station



A joint fire station has been established on the Belgian-Dutch border in Kieldrecht - Nieuw-Namen, in the Euregio Scheldemond. Prior to the establishment of the CPS two fire stations existed in this cross-border village. Securing sufficient and well trained staff became increasingly challenging for both fire stations due to population decline and ageing trends in the area.

Following an existing cooperation agreement in the field of firefighting, stakeholders decided to merge the two individual fire stations situated only 2 km away from each other. The merger of the two fire stations allowed to make better use of the scarce resources. The new joint fire station has sufficient staff to cover the full area and to cover different shifts.



## 5. Typical challenges and solutions

### 5.1 Obstacles and unfavourable framework conditions

**Unfavourable legal and administrative framework conditions are the main obstacles** during the establishment of a CPS. ESPON 2018 online survey responses and case studies confirmed that legal and administrative hurdles, such as asymmetric or unclear competences of policy actors and incompatible domestic legislation are the most relevant hurdles. In many cases more than one obstacle has been mentioned. Other obstacles are language barriers (cultural divides), one-sided scarce budgetary resources (economic discontinuity), and mental barriers (socio-cultural divides). These obstacles are the main impediment to develop further CPS, even if a need is perceived. Finally, the lack of a common strategy, or the political will or interest to engage in cross-border activities have been named as additional challenges. Comparing the obstacles within different policy areas no significant differences can be observed.

To overcome these obstacles, **multiple modifications of cross-border legal frameworks are necessary**. Most frequently mentioned is the conclusion of a specific local or regional cooperation agreement between the competent entities organising the public service, followed by the elaboration of a new convention between local and regional authorities. The differences between policy areas are minor.

Independently from the delivery mode, CPS often require **a new cross-border structure or body**. Structures without a new legal personality seem to dominate CPS delivery and often already existing structures are used and adapted, no matter whether existing services on both sides of the border are better coordinated, a domestic service is extended, or a completely new CPS is developed.

Summing up, the often **time intensive set-up of CPS can be attributed to a combination of different needs for change that may occur individually or together** referring to legal frameworks at higher levels or the level of the CPS provision, governance adaptations for developing and implementing the CPS and a change of domestic rules and processes.

### 5.2 Learning from other examples

Sometimes CPS can be developed without considerable challenges. In other cases, CPS development may face few or several challenges. In this context, other experiences of CPS development and provision are a valuable source of information. They may inspire, give food for thought and help to avoid starting challenges or typical errors. Examples can be from the own and from other regions.

Learning from **examples in the own region** allows comparing examples of CPS provision in similar settings and border realities.

**Examples from other regions** and countries may provide different approaches to implement a similar CPS. The approach adopted for a single CPS depends on the envisaged function of the CPS and the multidimensional border reality.

Thus, **examples can only highlight general approaches that may be useful, they cannot be copied but need adaptation and change**. It is therefore recommended to focus on practical aspects of the CPS. Many solutions to CPS development are case specific, however, concrete measures or elements can be transferred to other contexts.

Learning from other examples requires a **dialogue with stakeholders involved in the example's** development and provision to understand not only how the CPS is operating but to see similarities and differences of the respective socio-economic and territorial context.



**Case study:**

Learning from cross-border hospital care services with a comparable economic setting

Specialised health care services are not equally accessible at the Czech-German border area of the Euroregion Elbe/Labe. Opening the German hospital in Sebnitz, directly located at the border to residents of neighbouring Czech municipalities could improve health care accessibility for Czech citizens and avoid possible capacity reductions of the hospital in Sebnitz in view of population decline.

The economic cross-border reality is similar to that of the Austrian-Czech border, where out-patient hospital care is provided by an Austrian hospital in Gmünd to Czech citizens from České Velenice, a municipality across the border (see example in Section 3.2). So far, unbalanced income and cost levels and a lack of political interest at higher administrative levels have hampered the cross-border hospital care provision in Sebnitz. To overcome these obstacles, local stakeholders in the Euroregion Elbe/Labe have initiated an exchange with the representatives of Gmünd. This exchange shall create knowledge on how to initiate a step-wise and convincing process for CPS development.

### 5.3 Challenges and solutions at different stages of CPS development

Table 6: Challenges and solutions at different stages of CPS development

	Common challenges encountered	Possible solutions found
Needs, objectives and tasks	Identifying and mobilising all required stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Start with a few key stakeholders</b> who can then collaboratively address additional stakeholders through their individual networks.</li> <li>• <b>Develop an overview of benefits</b> of the future CPS (see also the next two rows).</li> </ul>
	Unequal distribution of benefits (even though target groups exist on both sides of the border)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Take a long-time perspective</b> to assess non-immediate benefits. Changing macro-economic conditions may alter the encountered benefits after a certain period of time.</li> <li>• <b>Start off with small, non-formalised</b> but clearly defined volunteer actions, serving as a “testbed” for ideas and services.</li> <li>• <b>Look at the overall border area.</b> Benefits may be reversed at other parts of the border area or possibly for other services. Across the full border and across sectors benefits may be balanced.</li> <li>• <b>Consider indirect and occasional benefits.</b> Some CPS benefits become only visible once services are provided. This holds, for instance, for civil protection and disaster management CPS that are required only in case of large incidents.</li> </ul>
	Assessing closing and opening effects of the border reality appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To fully understand closing and opening effects</b> it is important to consider the border reality from both sides of the border and with a few to the policy field for which the CPS is envisaged. The same border reality can have closing and opening effects for different policy fields.</li> <li>• <b>Advocate opening effects.</b> Often closing effects mirror obstacles or challenges that endanger the CPS development process if they are at the centre of attention.</li> </ul>
	Lack of comparability of information and data, particularly on the demand for CPS provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use existing cross-border documents.</b></li> <li>• <b>Use ESPON or Eurostat data</b> to develop proxies that help to build an argument.</li> <li>• <b>Develop a joint harmonised information system</b> that takes into account different needs. This may evolve in a</li> </ul>



Common challenges encountered		Possible solutions found
		spatial monitoring system CPS that supports the development or improvement of other CPS.
	Different domestic price systems or service levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implement a fee system</b> (e.g. transport tickets) for cross-border transport that <b>considers income differentials</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Combine different funding sources</b> according to the expected benefits of the target groups.</li> <li>• <b>Extend an existing fee system</b> across the border.</li> </ul>
Infrastructure use	Domestic legal frameworks for CPS provision with different quality standards or norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assume the ‘stricter’ rules</b> from either side of the border.</li> <li>• <b>Lobby for border area interests</b> to initiate required legal adjustments at higher levels.</li> <li>• In the future <b>the cross-border mechanism</b> proposed by the European Commission may support easier adoption of relevant national rules.</li> </ul>
	One-sided scarce budgets or costs differentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Step-wise service development</b> building on pilot actions to test budget effects and to make it easier for the other partner to join the CPS.</li> </ul>
Legal frameworks	Lack of a clear legal basis for CPS provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use existing cross-border documents</b> to start CPS development on a voluntary basis that are politically supported.</li> <li>• <b>Develop the CPS bottom-up</b> with structures as simple as possible. Formalise the CPS gradually in accordance with increasing success of CPS and as required.</li> <li>• <b>Establish a cross-border structure with legal personality.</b></li> </ul>
Management and organisation	Cultural and language barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve staff with required <b>language skills and different domestic backgrounds</b>.</li> </ul>
	Different or unclear responsibilities and competences or changes of responsibility at key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Actively involving existing cross-border structures</b>, such as Euroregions.</li> <li>• <b>Develop a relatively wide network</b> and intensive communications with relevant players.</li> <li>• <b>Identify the added value of each partner</b>, taking into account comparative advantages of partners.</li> <li>• <b>Define clear interim steps and milestones</b> in the implementation process.</li> <li>• <b>Assign clear tasks to all partners involved</b> in the implementation, to share work and to generate ownership.</li> <li>• <b>Partners should implement rules of conduct</b> as to how the implementation process should continue in case of a change of key personnel.</li> </ul>
	Readjustments required due to changing external factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CPS providers</b> must constantly <b>monitor</b> their offerings and <b>adapt</b> them to changing conditions.</li> <li>• <b>CPS providers</b> should <b>continuously inform</b> the general public and/or target groups of the border region about the <b>added value</b> of the CPS to maintain or even increase acceptance and demand levels.</li> </ul>
	Need to clearly differentiate services provided domestically and cross-border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CPS</b> should be <b>clearly separated from domestic services</b> (no overlaps, rather complementing) and <b>providers</b> of related <b>domestic service should be involved</b> (at least consulted) <b>in the development and implementation</b> of the CPS (ideally they even take over CPS delivery).</li> </ul>





**Case study:**  
Sharing costs for a joint tourist office

The border towns of Haparanda (Sweden) and Tornio (Finland) share a single tourist office to better accommodate the needs of tourists in the Bothnian Arc region. The establishment of the CPS required adopting practical solutions for the coordination of activities and resources. The two local authorities agreed to share the administrative costs for the tourist office. This implied keeping two separate budgets for wages, marketing, printed material etc. Some activities are covered solely by the side on which the costs are born, in case the activity does not have a cross-border value. This approach further stabilised the cooperation between the two border towns. New opportunities to expand the activities are explored and may be presented in a new tourism master plan to be published end of 2018.



**Case study:**  
Making use of an existing cross-border structure to support cross-border job placement services



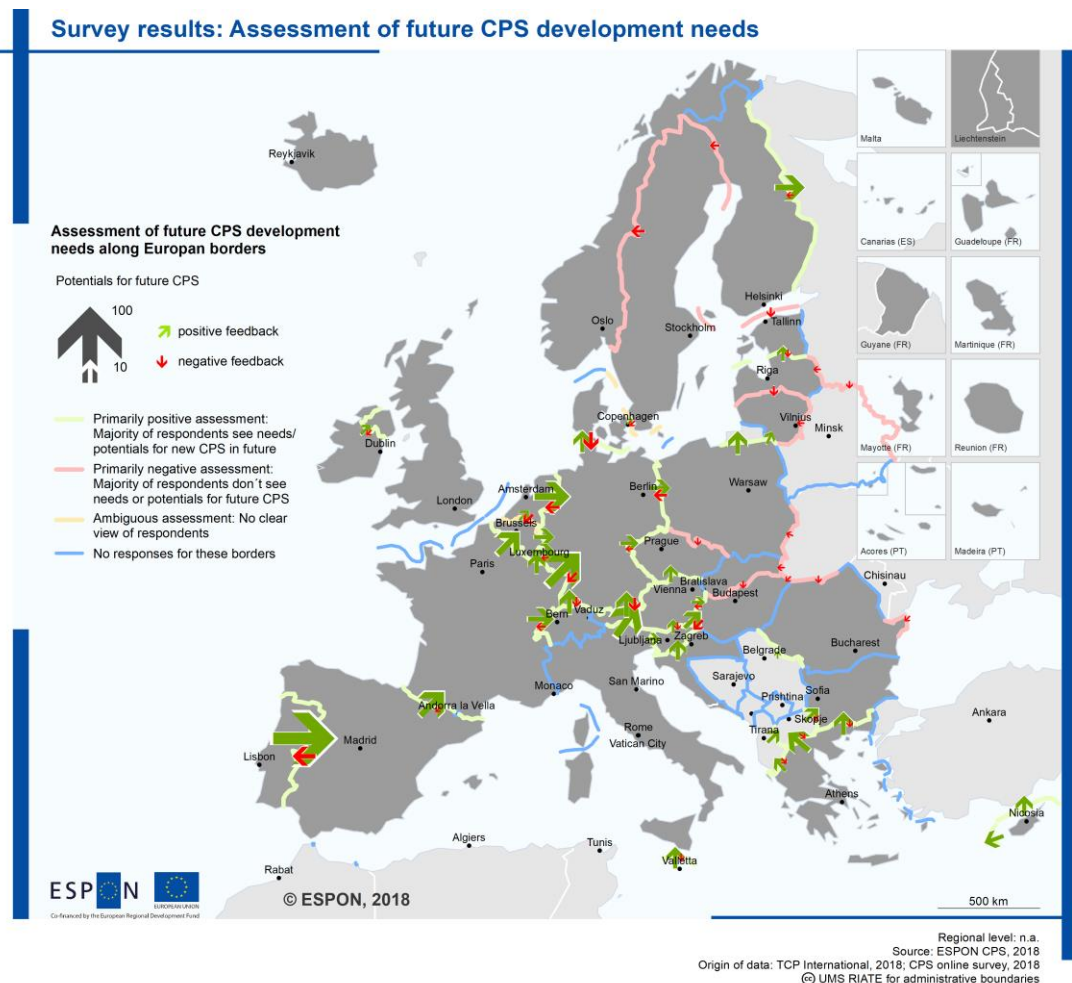
The cross-border region of Sønderjylland-Schleswig (Denmark and Germany) has the long-term vision to creating a single, harmonised labour market. However, job agencies on either side of the border focus on job placements in their own territory. Therefore, the Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig filled the job placement service gap by establishing the CPS “Job over grænsen”. The CPS provides job placement related services across the border for job seekers. It acts as mediator between job seekers companies as well as between existing job agencies in the Danish and German border regions. Job over grænsen is located in the Regionskontor and information centre of the Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig, allowing to utilise existing office spaces, capacities and infrastructure of the overall centre.

## 6. Potentials for future CPS

CPS development may not necessarily evolve from existing cross-border spatial plans or other joint sector policy documents but also arises from bottom-up activities if needs are identified by local or regional stakeholders. Consequently, such policy documents do not sufficiently indicate the likelihood of future CPS development. In order to give an indication for the likelihood of future CPS in Europe, the ESPON 2018 online survey asked whether regional and local players know about any plans for future CPS development and for which policy fields these exist (Map 4).



Map 4: Assessment of future CPS development needs

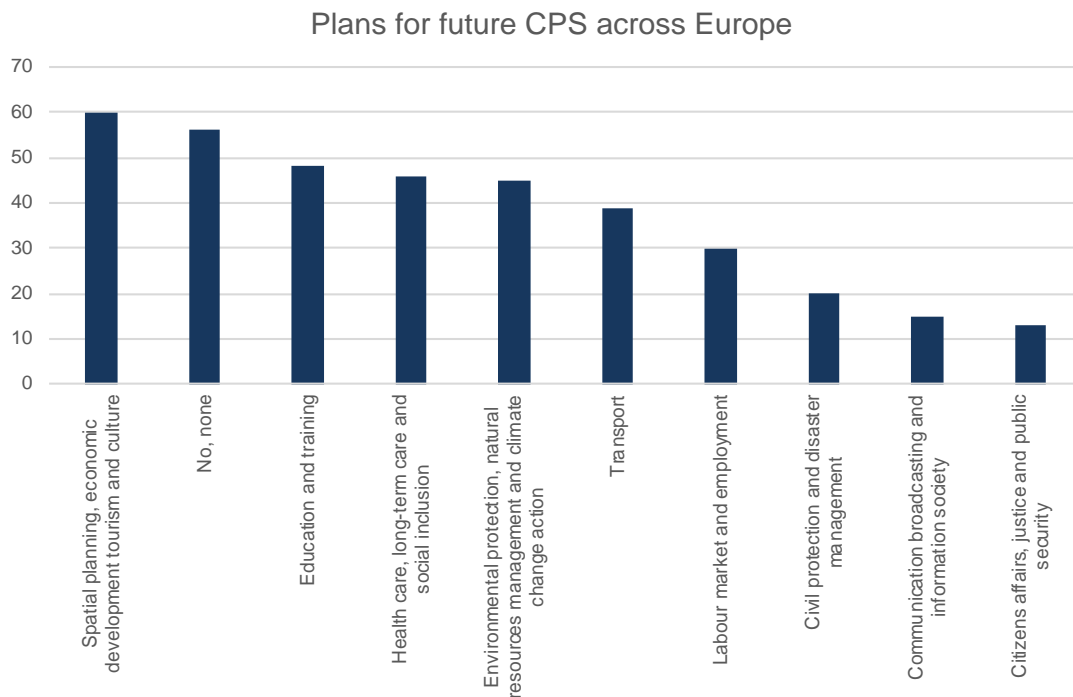


The answers are not representative but collect indications for future CPS development from 49 border relations in Europe (Figure 7). Responses cover with few exceptions (France-Italy, Poland-Slovakia, Hungary-Romania and Bulgaria-Romania) all EU internal borders, thus including borders between old MS, new and old MS, new MS. Various responses also refer to CPS development along external borders including not only Switzerland, Norway and Russia but, for instance, Belarus, Albania and Turkey. Some responses also referred to tri-national border relations. And few responses also indicated CPS development plans for maritime borders, including Cyprus, the Italian-Malta and the Danish-Swedish border.





Figure 7: Plans for future CPS across Europe



Source: Online survey ESPON CPS 2018; based on 134 responses, 61 respondents indicated more than 1 field of intervention or theme

About 40% of respondents indicated that no plans are currently made to develop future CPS for any of the policy fields. These can be found both in border areas with a high density of CPS already in place as well as at borders with only few or no CPS so far at all. In some cases, this may indicate a certain saturation with CPS provision, although for the same border relations other respondents indicated further CPS plans (Map 4).

For some border relations with few or none current CPS respondents, however, exclusively stated that there are no plans for future CPS development. This holds in particular for some external borders but also a few borders between new member states. Reasons may be a lack of awareness of existing plans in other authorities, a lack of feasibility in view of the often mentioned legal and administrative obstacles or a lack of awareness regarding the benefits CPS may create.

In consequence, some border regions may risk missing opportunities for integrated regional development in a cross-border context, thereby possibly hampering their future regional development potential. Even if specific potentials for further CPS along these border areas have not been analysed it is unlikely that they do not have any need or potential for CPS provision, given the increasing application of CPS for enhancing development of border regions in many parts of Europe.

At the same time, plans for additional CPS in border areas with a high level of current CPS provision indicates that (i) past experience reveals sufficient benefits to support further CPS development and (ii) disparities in terms of current CPS provision and the benefits thereof for the target groups and providers do not tend to be balanced, or (iii) new needs arose during the recent past or new common problem understands developed.



**The ESPON 2018 online survey and case studies shed light on the interest in further developing existing CPS or on setting up new CPS.**

**The analysis of survey responses indicates a shift in the thematic foci of future CPS as compared to the CPS developed until now.**

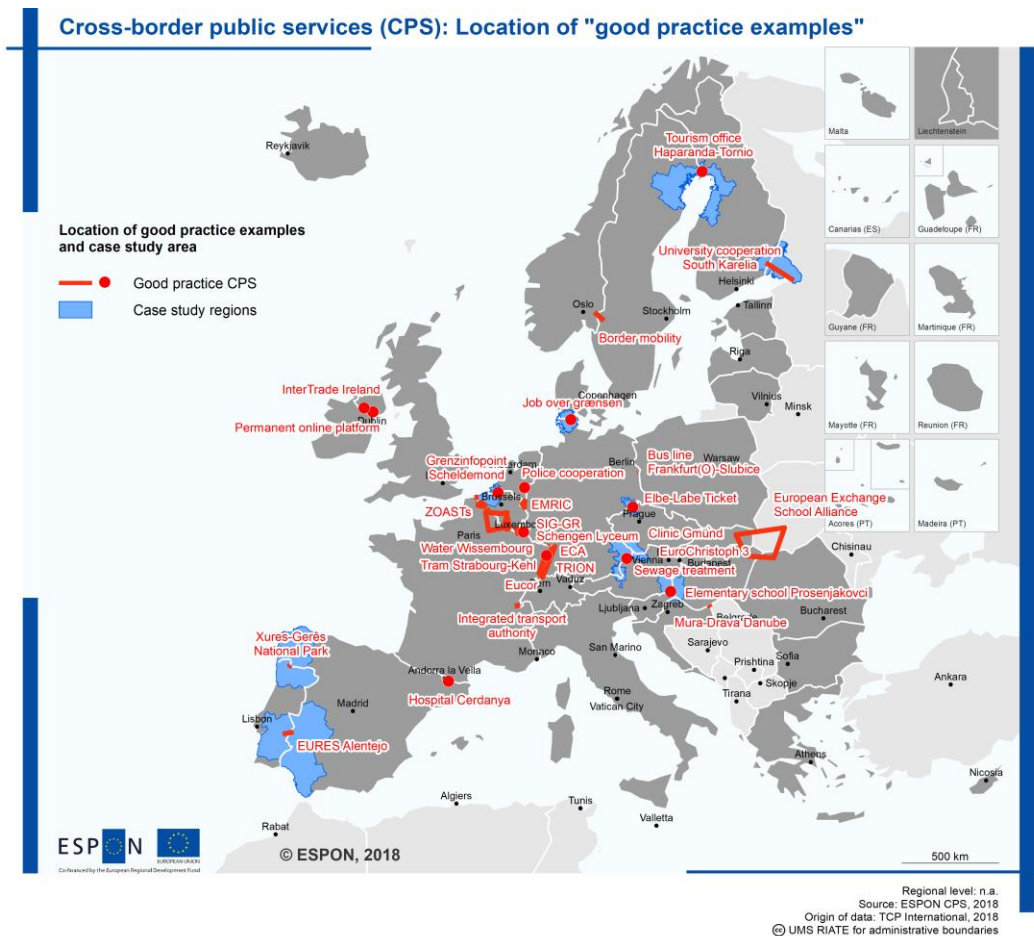
Especially, new transport and civil protection and disaster management CPS have been mentioned less frequently as compared to their current share of CPS. Further CPS in the field of transport are planned at various borders where little or no transport CPS have been identified so far. This includes for instance various parts of the Portuguese-Spanish border, the Austrian-Italian border and the Estonian-Latvian border. But also borders with existing transport CPS seem to intend to further integrate cross-border transport by offering more links that can possibly close gaps or developing generally more integrated public transport systems (e.g. for common ticketing).

Plans for future CPS in the field of civil protection and disaster management were mostly mentioned for a few borders without or with very local and limited CPS currently identified in this field. Keeping in mind the limits of survey responses and of the identified CPS currently in place, this may nevertheless hint at a saturation in this field in some parts of Europe where civil protection measures are already largely integrated across borders. At the same time no intentions for these CPS can be identified along many borders that do not seem to have CPS for civil protection and disaster management so far.

**CPS may emerge most likely in the near future in the fields of spatial planning, labour market development, tourism and culture.** These encompass in particular CPS for the joint management of cultural heritage or museums and tourism offices and promotion. Other CPS that may be established in the near future can be expected in the policy areas of education and training, health care and environment protection. Education and training CPS may in the future focus in particular on schemes enhancing mobility of pupils, students and researchers including joint educational schemes and curricula. These plans may be taken in view of future labour mobility to better match labour markets and answer the demand for qualified workers not least in border regions. In the field of health care CPS access to cross-border health care with a focus on primary and hospital care and emergency services seem to be the most relevant intervention fields in the future. This may imply some responsiveness of regions in view of EU requirements of the cross-border health care directive (2011/24/EU). In the field of environmental protection most future CPS may be expected in the intervention fields that already now dominate environment related CPS in Europe. This includes CPS in support of joint nature management, whether of water bodies or nature parks. Positive experience made in various regions seems to lead to further joint approaches, either in other cross-border areas or aiming to further integrate already existing joint management efforts to more aspects of environmental protection. Similarly, cross-border solid waste and wastewater treatment as well as fresh water provision can be expected to be dealt with in a cross-border way even more in the future. Interestingly, the energy related CPS development is not among the often-mentioned intervention fields for the future, despite apparent needs for better integrating energy provision across EU borders, as expressed in the EU's 2030 Energy Strategy.

## 7. Good practice examples

Map 5: Location of good practice examples



### 28 good practices have been collected in the frame of the ESPON CPS Targeted Analysis.

All policy fields with sufficient number of CPS<sup>6</sup> are included in the examples and within each policy field different approaches are presented. The examples furthermore include CPS from many different borders across Europe to include as different frameworks as possible within which the CPS have been developed

Due to the high number of CPS implemented at borders of old member states, their number is also relatively high in the good practice examples (Map 5). Policy themes are covered in a balanced way (Table 7) with an average of three to four examples per policy theme.

Good practice examples of CPS aim to illustrate successful approaches that can inspire other stakeholders and give food for thought on alternative ways for addressing shared needs and problems. Good practices can be a valuable contribution for awareness raising and knowledge transfer.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, only for the policy field "Communication, broadcasting and information society" no good practice example is presented.



Table 7: Overview of good practice examples according to policy theme

	CPS name	Border	Summarising comparison of CPS
	Transport		
1	Tram Strasbourg-Kehl	DE-FR	Many transport related CPS aim at providing better transport connections across the border. This may be done by developing a new infrastructure (1), by extending an existing or providing a new link (2). More integrated transport CPS focus on a joint ticketing system (3) that may exist with or without cross-border transport links or even a joint authority that is responsible for organising cross-border bus transport connections and ticketing (4).
2	Twin city bus line 983 Frankfurt (Oder) – Słubice	DE-PL	
3	Elbe-Labe Ticket	CZ-DE	
4	Joint transport authority for the Geneva cross-border metropolitan area	CH-FR	
	Spatial planning, economic development, tourism, leisure and culture		
5	Joint tourism office Haparanda-Tornio	FI-SE	CPS of this policy fields may tackle a variety of regional development issues and different target groups. The examples illustrate approaches of very different intervention fields. For tourism joint offices and marketing activities are quite frequent (5) and primarily tackle tourists. Spatial planning CPS are often linked to information provision, in particular targeting public authorities of different sectors (6). Economic development CPS usually target companies or other economic players by providing information for cross-border economic activities with a focus e.g. on trade or investments (7).
6	Geographic Information System of the Greater Region	BE-DE-FR-LU	
7	InterTrade Ireland	IE-UK	
	Health care, long-term care and social inclusion		
8	ZOAST	BE-FR	While there is a wide variety of health and care CPS available, alone primary and hospital health care services show a wide variety of possible applications and degrees of integration. A comparison of these different degrees allows insights into possible step-wise approaches if a comprehensive health care integration seems unsurmountable. The most integrated examples in Europe are the integrated cross-border health care zones (8). They have been implemented at only one border relation, so far. Completely integrated cross-border care at the level of one hospital and based on a specifically established legal personality may be the next least integration level (9). The third example illustrates a cross-border extension of an existing domestic service for out-patient hospital care (10), which may be an option for border areas that first need to test cross-border health care before enterprising more integrated health care CPS.
9	Hospital Cerdanya	ES-FR	
10	Healthacross, Clinic Gmünd	AT-CZ	
	Education and training		
11	European Exchange School Alliance	HU-RO-SK-UA	CPS in education and training most often focus on either school or university education and research. The first example highlights how specialised and non-formal educational services are provided at an external EU border (11). Two school education examples illustrate how an existing do-mestic service may be extended to pupils from across the border (12) or a how a new service may be developed to facilitate a truly joint education with joint service management (13). The other two examples on university cooperation illustrate first approaches feasible at external borders (14) and a more integrated CPS for cross-border research cooperation with its own legal personality (15).
12	Bilingual elementary school in Prosenjakovci	HU-SI	
13	Schengen Lyceum	DE-LU	
14	University cooperation South Karelia	FI-RU	
15	Eucor – the European campus	CH-DE-FR	
	Labour market and employment		
16	Grensinfopoint Scheldemond	BE-NL	Labour market and employment CPS usually address information needs of commuters and/or support cross-border labour market match-making. The examples include a one-stop-shop for cross-border workers (16), a service aiming to enhance cross-border labour mobility in view of few commuters (17) a 'headhunting de-luxe' approach which not only takes care about job placement but includes support for family members, housing and other issues (18) and another comprehensive CPS originally supporting labour mobility and now also aiming to enhance business relations (19).
17	EURES Alentejo	ES-PT	
18	job over grænsen	DE-DK	
19	Border mobility	NO-SE	
	Environmental protection, natural resources management and climate change action		
20	Xures-Gerês National Park	ES-PT	Environment related CPS may take very different access points. Thus, five examples are described that tackle different environment issues.



21	Mura-Drava Danube	HR-HU	The first two examples have a focus on nature conservation in transboundary biosphere reserves. The first highlights requirements for administrative changes (20) and the second takes a view on specifics linked to river protection and management (21). The three other examples deal with water and energy related CPS in support of resource management and climate change actions. They cover drinking water provision with unilateral delivery and joint management (22), biological waste water treatment through an extension of a previously domestic service (23) and renewable energy promotion based on a common climate protection strategy (24).
22	Drinking water provision Wissembourg	DE-FR	
23	Sewage water treatment plant in Salzburg	AT-DE	
24	TRION Climate	DE-FR	
Civil protection and disaster management			
25	EMRIC	BE-DE-NL	Civil protection CPS tackle various risks emerging from either natural disasters or other emergency situations. Some of these CPS are also linked to health care when they include rescue services. The two good practice examples of this policy theme highlight a comprehensive approach to ensure public safety in various areas (25) and a very specific rescue service of a rescue helicopter managed by two national automobile associations (26).
26	Rescue helicopter "Euro-Christoph 3"	AT-DE	
Citizenship, justice and public security			
27	German-French Centre for European Consumer Protection	DE-FR	CPS in the field of citizenship, justice and public security include services dealing with everyday life issues. The three examples presented indicate three quite different access points. The consumer advice centre is the sole binational partnership within the network of European consumer advice centres (27). Focusing more on life events etc. is the service offering a one-stop guide at the British-Irish border (28) and the third practice on cross-border police cooperation (29) may be an example of a most common CPS in this policy field.
28	Permanent on-line platform	IE-UK	
29	German-Dutch Police Cooperation	DE-NL	

Source: ESPON CPS database, 2018

### The comparison of good practice examples highlights various commonalities and differences.

- Firstly, many CPS encounter similar principal obstacles, even if they differ in detail. The mere existence of the CPS shows, however, that it is feasible to overcome them.
- Secondly, each cross-border area has its own specificities and needs, some may be similar, others are of very local nature. In other words, the variety of characteristics that feature the needs are combined always in different ways. This affects the specifics of the services that are provided as well as the ways how they are managed, financed and delivered.

**Also, the good practice examples illustrate the whole variety of available alternatives for managing, financing and delivering CPS.** Actual service design in terms of the services provided depend on (a) the actual need and (b) on feasibility at a certain moment in a specific cross-border region. The examples of several policy themes show that it is possible to start with single services that may be of small-scale if an all comprehensive CPS is either not necessary or may take too long to indicate potential benefits. Many good practice examples result from previous cooperation that over time becomes more comprehensive and complex.

**Interreg funding often plays an important role in supporting CPS development.** Even running CPS rather frequently make use of Interreg funding to either develop additional service features or upgrade the existing CPS or to acquire additional resources (e.g. new infrastructure). Other typical funding sources for everyday business of CPS are public resources assigned typically to a comparative domestic service and/or income from fees by CPS users.

**The examples show that the decision about a possibly extended use of existing hard infrastructure or the development of a new infrastructure depends on (a) what infrastructure is needed to provide the CPS and (b) the adequateness of existing infrastructures.** Many CPS have been developed making use of existing infrastructure, which in some cases required to add new infrastructure elements, e.g. such as tube connections.



The good practices include some examples that required new infrastructure because either a lack of infrastructure (e.g. no transport connection) or out-of-date infrastructure that required refurbishment (e.g. old hospital).

**Changes in the management and delivery** more often relate to the actual organisation of the service rather than hard infrastructure. Several examples illustrate that even one-sided delivery with a central management mode require several changes in the management and organisation and may also lead to additional or changed costs.

These different elements of the good practice examples' comparison highlight that each CPS solution, that is not entirely covered by EU legislation, needs to be seen in the **context of the policy theme** and the **specific domestic context**. Principal 'building blocs' are re-occurring and connected in different ways to trigger solutions that may then be considered as tailor-made.

Consequently, the **good practice examples give food for thought**,

- if similar obstacles are identified, possibly the solution of a good practice may prove to be suitable or easily adjusted;
- if management and delivery depends very much on the starting points of competences, existing infrastructure and organisations;
- if the number of principal alternative delivery modes is limited but specifics are considered in the details;
- whether the own needs require a complex CPS approach or may be addressed relatively easily;
- that also other finally successful examples may have taken many years to be established.





## 8. Policy recommendations

### Cross-border institutions, border regions, CPS providers and Interreg programming bodies

#### Ensure sufficient commitment and capacity for CPS endeavours

Some CPS can be established in simple ways, not requiring the set-up of complex cross-border bodies with own legal personality etc. However, often CPS require commitment to drive the process and the capacity in terms of knowledge required, personal and institutional networks and persistency. Without commitment lengthy processes tend to lose momentum. CPS usually are a voluntary task of authorities of border regions and Euroregions that add to their everyday business. That puts every CPS endeavour at risk. Thus, regional authorities and cross-border structures should reflect critically whether they have sufficient commitment and capacity available in-house to drive such a process. Hiring an external advisor with the explicit mandate to drive the process may be an alternative. Financial resources can be ensured, inter alia, with Interreg funds.

#### Use Interreg for CPS

Cross-border Interreg programmes aim to initiate cross-border actions that may possibly become self-supporting after project duration. Stakeholders who think about establishing a new CPS might use Interreg funding for carrying out the preparatory steps or initiating a pilot service. Alternatively, existing CPS can make use of Interreg to further enhance their service quality, level etc. Results towards durable services should be outlined in funding applications already. This helps to become clear about objectives and to enhance commitment by applicants.

#### Be pro-active and patient! Not everything needs to be solved at once

In the best case, CPS development starts with a voluntary action to address a joint need. Experience shows that principal agreement needs clarification to develop a real common understanding – even the same term may have different meanings on either side of a border (or in different languages involved)! The request to be pro-active, addresses several aspects:

- CPS development needs a starting point, most often from bottom-up. A step-wise approach leading to some benefits tends to support further commitment rather than lengthy processes without any visible result. Start with “low hanging fruits” to reach success soon and to develop mutual trust, instead of searching for the “big overarching solution” from the beginning.
- For first pilot actions or small-scale CPS minimise formalisation, only ensure that sufficient resources are available (see above) and a common understanding exists. Formalisation before achieving first results may create unwillingness and also too much rigidity to adopt changes and improvements during the initial phase. Formalise only if absolutely required. Trust is indispensable for establishing CPS. Cross-border obstacles will not disappear without action. This requires continuity of action and the willingness to search for solutions – including step-wise results – even if an obstacle seems insurmountable. Existing examples show that a lot is possible with persistency and pro-active actions!
- Consider obstacles as potentials for future CPS and as an opportunity to intensify cooperation. Many existing CPS were implemented to tackle obstacles.

#### Cross-border organisations can assume different roles

Across Europe cross-border structures like Euroregions have different degrees of experience in cross-border cooperation and CPS. In consequence, cross-border institutions should adjust their roles and activities to the level of existing cooperation in their area. The more experienced they are, the more involved they may become. They should not stop with funding but can develop and provide CPS themselves or through spin-off organisations. Moreover, they should initiate CPS development by pro-actively using their networking competence. This may require considerable awareness raising activities with all players relevant for a certain CPS.





### Communicate cross-border needs to the higher level

To develop a CPS, many challenges cannot be solved at local or cross-border regional level. Interstate agreements, domestic legislative action or other activities at higher administrative level may be required. National governments often do not act by themselves without an obvious need. So, existing cross-border structures may intensify the communication of cross-border needs and desired action from higher levels. Cross-border structures need to lobby for development objectives in their area. Specific cross-border monitoring data, cross-border spatial plans or sector policy plans can be useful and convincing tools for visualising needs and indicating scenarios or visions for cross-border regional development.

### Not every need is addressed best by a CPS

Experience shows that many CPS require considerable efforts for appropriate development and implementation. Thus, if a need can be solved better domestically, there is no need for a CPS. Domestic public services tend to be more resilient than CPS, since the latter depend on the political will and competences of at least two countries.

### Assessment of the possibilities to encourage Interreg projects to develop CPS.

Some CPS originated from Interreg projects. An in-depth analysis could reveal requirements, success factors and potentials for converting time-limited projects in permanent long-lasting services. As a result, recommendations could be given for the further development of the subsidy contracts of Interreg-projects. Interreg funding plays an important role in the development of many CPS, for example, to initiate cooperation or to perform different studies for the benefit of CPS development. CPS can emerge from Interreg projects if funding for the long-term is secured. Different initiatives exist in Interreg programmes to encourage stakeholders to continue their cooperation beyond the funding period. However, there might be obstacles to realise the move from an Interreg project to a CPS. An inventory and assessment of these initiative would help stakeholders further develop their cooperation after Interreg and to establish a CPS. Interreg programmes such as ESPON or INTERACT may initiate such an assessment.

## National and regional authorities

Policy pointers for national authorities primarily address their capacity as law-making authorities. Regional authorities in federal Member States may, however, act as law-making authorities or assume direct contributions to CPS similar to those of border regions addressed above.

### Do not shy from asymmetry of responsibilities

Along some EU MS borders asymmetry of responsibility between neighbouring countries is repeatedly mentioned to hamper CPS development. Regional authorities sometimes find it difficult to identify the right person in charge or to negotiate with national authorities of their neighbouring country. However, many CPS along borders with these asymmetries show that this challenge can be overcome through existing EGTCs, Euroregions, cross-border working groups or sectoral informal committees, or even European networks. This often requires trustful working relations. Support from national authorities in a federal MS may also be beneficial for establishing sound working relations.

### Strengthen awareness about border regions' needs

National authorities (and sometimes regional authorities) have various tools to pro-actively support border regions. With respect to CPS development this includes, inter alia,

- initiating activities at local level through pilot programmes and projects;
- supporting cross-border analysis and planning e.g. by asking for cross-border consultations or providing funding for developing cross-border spatial plans, scenarios or visions;
- supporting cross-border initiatives through offering advice and knowledge, e.g. through a regional or national cross-border cooperation contact point;
- contributing to exchange e.g. through conferences, peer-to-peer meetings, info days, websites.



## Listen to border regions' concerns and requests

CPS interventions subject to nationwide rules face different counterparts at different segments of a national border. Thus, harmonisation with neighbouring countries cannot be easily achieved. In federal MS, delegation to the regional level may solve this at least partially. If delegation is not feasible or sufficient, national authorities can support border regions by willingness to conclude interstate agreements, which bridges otherwise incompatible laws. The recent proposal by the EU Commission for the 'New Cross-Border Mechanism' is meant to overcome such incompatibilities. The proposal should not only be seen as being for the benefit of regional and local units but it shall ease national authorities' need for action.

## EU level

Policy pointers for the EU level summarise actions that address different players beyond national level. This includes in particular the European Commission, cross-border ETC programmes or networks such as URBACT, AEBR, MOT, CESCO, IARDI... The ESPON ULYSSES study has developed the means to elaborate cross-border spatial development concepts.

The legal obstacles study by DG Regio<sup>7</sup> has made clear that there is a need for the recently proposed [cross-border mechanism](#)<sup>8</sup>. The benefits of both tools are reflected in the policy pointers for the local, regional and national levels. Despite these achievements, different EU level players can take further actions.

## Pave the way for support to CPS through ETC and other measures

Analyses have highlighted repeatedly that Interreg cross-border programmes are an important access point for providing EU level support. CPS development can be supported through various actions when developing the legal framework for the next programming period and at programme and project levels.

Developing CPS should be seen as an asset to strengthen cross-border cooperation in view of achieving more sustainable and self-supporting results. CPS represent a favourable result not least because many can become self-supporting through either redirecting funding from domestic to a cross-border service or raising fees upon use of the CPS.

Among others, EU institutions should pave the way for CPS development in ETC for the 2021-2027 programming period

- by favouring CPS related actions in the regulation. This could be done by mentioning CPS development explicitly as expected and eligible activity.
- by rethinking indicators as far as measuring the achievement of CPS development with ETC support is concerned.
- by collecting information on cross-border interaction for a better and more informed decision-making process in cooperation with the Member States, regions and municipalities, as well as EGTC and other cross-border structures during programming period preparation to provide all relevant information to potential beneficiaries from the very beginning.
- by supporting and financing specific European-wide studies, analysis and territorial research on CPS.
- by proposing measures to analyse and overcome any possible obstacles to the effective application of the EGTC instrument as one of the legal instruments to support CPS.

<sup>7</sup> DG Regio (2017) "Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions"

<sup>8</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A373%3AFIN>



### Consider thematically focused support

The European wide analysis has indicated some territorial imbalances with quite advanced coverage of CPS in certain policy fields (e.g. civil protection and disaster management) along some borders and a virtual lack of comparable CPS along other borders. These may require further policy-specific analysis and policy-specific awareness raising activities in the territories concerned that is initiated by cooperative action of the relevant DGs, to include ETC knowledge of DG Regio and sector policy knowledge of the policy field concerned.

In addition to these territorial imbalances of CPS in some policy fields other policy fields seem to be only emerging. Energy related CPS are among these. Not least in view of EU climate policy related objectives and policies, the EU level could pro-actively support the development of suitable frameworks for border regions rather than waiting for the demand to be voiced.

#### Interreg could be used more explicitly and targeted towards cross-border public service development

Working towards a cross-border public service (CPS) provides local and regional authorities with opportunities to explore differences and similarities in public service provision of a certain policy field. It also provides a common objective and concrete results that are directly visible and beneficial either for the general public of the territories or certain target groups. Hence working towards a CPS contributes to establishing a common identity in the border area and increases integrated territorial development. National and European level authorities should pave the way for CPS. Interreg is among the most important access points providing EU level support to CPS development.

Stakeholders in border regions are familiar with Interreg funding as source for cross-border initiatives. It can be used at various stages of CPS development and implementation. This includes exploring the needs for CPS development, proposing measures to analyse and overcome challenges for effective CPS provision or setting up a governance structure for CPS provision ensuring sufficient engagement and ownership of all stakeholders. Moreover, Interreg funding that support CPS development is an action that should lead to a concrete and long-term result.

EU level authorities could create more possibilities for Interreg support to CPS development. The new cross-border mechanism proposed in the regulatory framework for European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2021-2027 is a step in this direction, but more can be done. CPS related actions could be explicitly mentioned in the regulations, for example as expected or eligible activity. In such an approach the focus should be on actual practices rather than formal mentioning CPS in programmes. To further encourage this, EU authorities could ensure adequate funding for Interreg and propose complementary measures to reducing legal and administrative barriers. Subsequently, the ETC regulation should provide sufficient flexibility to local and regional authorities to address specific local challenges.

In addition, the benefits and added value of CPS provision could be better marketed at EU and national levels. The ESPON CPS project provided a first compilation of good practice examples providing food for thought for CPS development. More examples could be developed and shared on European platforms, such as the European Commission's FUTURIUM platform. These initiatives could be supported by ensuring possibilities for regions to exchange experience and explore possibilities to transfer good practices, likewise the practices of the current Interreg Europe programme. Collecting and sharing additional territorial evidence supports finding relevant partner regions for learning. EU and national authorities should set the scene for supporting CPS development wherever useful and beneficial for border areas. Offering space for CPS development in regulations and creating awareness provides local and regional authorities with possibilities to explore the added values of developing and implementing CPS. Consequently, working towards a CPS strengthens the cross-border cooperation. Promoting and encouraging CPS development and provision supports integrated territorial development in Europe.



### **Expanding the database of CPS throughout Europe.**

Most likely more examples of CPS exist in Europe. Further research along all European internal and external borders is required for an even complete picture as currently developed. The collection of all these examples requires research in all official languages of the EU. This would increase the total population that could respond to requests to provide information on CPS they are familiar with. Furthermore, current and future databases of CPS would need regular updates. Each database or inventory of CPS is a reflection of a particular point in time. ESPON latest Targeted Analysis illustrated the development of CPS throughout Europe. New CPS are being established and existing CPS may cease for different reasons. ESPON as well as other pan-European organisations such as the European Commission or AEHR may initiate the development of a more complete and dynamic database of CPS examples and an on-going monitoring of CPS in Europe.

### **Exploring CPS development and implementation in exclaves and enclaves.**

Enclaves are places completely surrounded by foreign territory. Exclaves are territories not attached to their main domestic territory. In most cases, exclaves are also enclaves. There are numerous ex- and enclaves in Europe with a cross-border context, i.e. exclaves and enclaves involving different nation states. Each has its own history and specific arrangements for service provision. Most of these arrangements are covered in national laws, that sometimes date back to the founding of the nation states. More detailed analysis of these arrangements could provide lessons for general CPS provision. For example, this should include the specifications that allow CPS provision, the practical implementation of service provision in these territories and the challenges that are overcome. Examples of exclaves of further interest include Jungholtz, Austria, which is only accessible via Germany due to mountainous terrain, Baarle-Hertog and Baarle-Nassau in Belgium and the Netherlands, the Vennbahn area between Belgium and Germany, Campione d'Italia in Switzerland and the Spanish territories of Llívia in France, to name only a few.

### **Analysing the relationship between voluntary, informal or little formalised cooperation and a formalised CPS.**

Many CPS started as informal voluntary action and were at some point in time 'converted' into a CPS (fulfilling the criteria laid down for this project). However, this does not mean that in all cases CPS are the "better" solution to provide a service. Quite the opposite, many stakeholders may be afraid that implementing a CPS entails a huge administrative 'overhead'. When a certain degree of formality is achieved, this usually also enforces compliance with quality standards and with national or European legislation, for example, with regard to the training of those persons who offer the service in concrete terms (for example, are all required certificates available?) or with regard to basic technological standards (do the fire engines also have certain communication techniques on board?). All these things can be handled a little less rigorously, if the service is an informal voluntary cooperation, knowing that sometimes existing (national) rules and legislations are not always met completely. The research question is to precisely identify and describe the point where stakeholders realise that "now we need a formal CPS", instead of "voluntary cooperation". Does this decision differ between different Member States or European regions? This analysis cannot be applied in a European-wide study, but requires in-depth analysis for a number of selected cases.



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