

Cross-Border Business Development

in the Dutch-German
Borderland

Collection Volume 1

Vincent Pijenburg
Patrick Szillat
Jan Lucas



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Preface

Like a marker pen on a map, the Covid-19 pandemic drastically highlighted the persisting existence of borders that used to play an ever decreasing role in people's perception and behavior over the last decades. Yes, inner European borders are open in normal times. Yes, people, goods, services and ideas are crossing the border between Germany and the Netherlands freely. Yet we see that the border can turn into a barrier again quickly and effectively and it does so in many dimensions, some of them being not easily visible.

Barriers hinder growth, development and exchange and in spite of our progress in creating a borderless Europe, borders still create barriers in many domains. Differing labor law, social security and tax systems, heterogeneous education models, small and big cultural differences, language barriers and more can impose severe limitations on people and businesses as they cross the border to travel, shop, work, hire, produce, buy, sell, study and research.

Borders are of all times and will therefore always exist. But as they did so for a long time, huge opportunities can be found in overcoming the barriers they create. The border must not necessarily be a dividing line between two systems. It has the potential to become a center of growth and progress that build on joint efforts, cross-border cooperation, mutual learning and healthy competition. Developing this inherent potential of border regions asks for politics, businesses and research & education on both sides of the border to work together.

The research group Cross-Border Business Development at Fontys University of Applied Science in Venlo conducts applied research on the impact of the national border on people and businesses in the Dutch-German border area. Students, employees, border commuters, entrepreneurs and employers all face opportunities as well as challenges due to the border. In collaboration with these stakeholders, the research chair aims to create knowledge and provide solutions towards a Dutch-German labor market, an innovative Dutch-German borderland and a futureproof Cross-Border economic ecosystem.

This collection is not about the borderland in times of COVID-19. Giving meaning to the borderland is an ongoing process that started long before the pandemic and will continue far beyond. The links that have been established across the border and those that will in the future are multifaceted and so are the topics in this collection.

Vincent Pijnenburg outlines a broader and introductory perspective on the dynamics in the Dutch-German borderland.. Carla Arts observes shopping behavior of cross-border consumers in the Euregion Rhine-Meuse-North. Jan Lucas explores the interdependencies of the Dutch and German economies. Jean Louis Steevensz presents a cross-border co-creation servitization project between a Dutch supplier and a German customer. Vincent Pijnenburg and Patrick Szillat analyze the existence of clusters in the Dutch-German borderland. Christina Masch and Janina Ulrich provide research on students job search preferences with a focus on the cross-border labor market. Sonja Floto-Stammen and Natalia Naranjo-Guevara contribute a study of the market for insect-based food in Germany and the Netherlands. Niklas Meisel investigates the differences in the German and Dutch response to the Covid-19 crisis. Finally, Tolga Yildiz and Patrick Szillat show differences in product-orientation and customer-orientation between Dutch and German small and medium sized companies.

This collection shows how rich and different the links across the border are and how manifold the perspectives and fields for a cross-border approach to regional development can be. This publication is as well an invitation. Grasping the opportunities that the border location entails requires cooperation across professional fields and scientific disciplines, between politics, business and researchers. It needs the contact with and the contribution of the people in the region. So do what we strive for with our cross-border research agenda: connect!

Vincent Pijnenburg
Professor
Cross-Border Business Development

Patrick Szillat
Associate Professor
Cross-Border Business Development

Growth along our borders

Since the Schengen Agreement came into effect in 1995, it has become the most normal thing in the world. Crossing national borders, without border checks. There are around 100,000 such border crossings every day between the Netherlands and Germany, alone.

For people who live near the border, it is even more commonplace. Many of them cross the border for work, shopping or fuel. And they communicate with their neighbours over the border in their own dialect.

Today we tell our children how it used to be. How we had to wait until the stern-faced border guide had checked our passport, before waving us through.

The COVID-19 pandemic seemed to turn back time. Suddenly, all across Europe, borders re-emerged. Roadblocks were set up, and numberplates were carefully checked. Only essential travel was permitted.

At the urging of the Netherlands and Germany, unlike in much of Europe, the border crossings between our two countries remained open. In these extreme circumstances, the excellent relationship between our countries – at every level, from heads of government through to local mayors – became clear, once again. Our countries were put to the test, and came through with flying colours. A key element in this success was the Taskforce established with neighbouring countries by the Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet.

These observations offer marvellous prospects for the future. They underline what we can achieve through good cooperation and the will to solve problems. After all, cooperation in the border areas is of value, to us all.

It encourages the economic growth and innovative capacity of the border regions. It is specifically in these regions that businesses can gain most from the proximity of large sales markets on the other side of the border, and in the rest of Europe. And it is specifically here that there is space for future solutions, for sustainability and innovation.

Close cooperation also improves the physical and social infrastructure. On both sides of the borders, people have better access to each other's facilities, from schools and public transport to theatres and cinemas.

In our country, the COVID-19 crisis brought about another effect. Online working led many people to realise how attractive our border regions are. People who work from home (for at least part of the week) can more easily opt to live

in a periphery region where life is cheaper, greener and less crowded than in our country's western conurbation. In the border regions, there is still often a sense of community, with a flourishing community life.

I know from personal experience just how attractive that life is. Born, raised and still very much at home in Limburg, not far from the borders with Germany and Belgium, I am a true border dweller, a *grenslander*. As Secretary of State for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, I am also responsible for the border regions.

Together with my fellow Ministers, I helped direct a further billion euro to the Dutch regions, and some of that funding benefited the border areas, too. Together with our neighbours, we are working on agreements to improve cooperation and to remove obstacles.

To intensify contacts with our neighbours, we have organised the Grensland Conferences', while border information points (*Grensinfopunten*) provide locals and local businesses with information about what it means to work, study or do business on the other side of the border.

We also encourage meetings between young people in the border regions. Via the Unbounded (*Onbegrensd*) project, we encourage cross-border initiatives in sport and culture. When people speak each other's language, they understand each other, better. The result is a generation of young Europeans, whose horizon extends beyond their own national boundaries. Young people for whom Europe naturally starts in the border region.

This fascinating book was written, under the editorial lead of Vincent Pijnenburg, with this spirit of cooperation in mind. It examines the current status of the border regions, the challenges we face and the benefits we can derive. Together, let us learn to make better use of the opportunities available, and create new perspectives. Rather than limiting opportunities, our aim is to achieve unbounded growth along our borders!

I wish you all an excellent read!

Secretary of State for the Interior and Kingdom Relations

Raymond Knops

The Editors

Vincent Pijnenburg

Born ,On the Borderland Mountain‘ on the Dutch-German border, raised in the Dutch-German border region and obtained a doctorate in cross-border cooperation. These are the ingredients that have made Vincent a ,borderlander‘, someone who sees the border as an opportunity and acts accordingly. For him, being on the road in the Euregio every day is a matter of course.

As Head Professor, Vincent is responsible for leading the research group and for setting up and conducting applied research in the field of cross-border cooperation. He ensures that the Euroregional idea is further embedded within the bachelor programmes of FIBS and in the region. This takes the form of conducting research together with colleagues, students and the professional field, organising euregional business meetings and setting up and carrying out cross-border projects.

Patrick Szillat

Born and raised in Mönchengladbach, Germany, I grew up with frequent journeys to the Dutch side of the border, sparking an early interest for the Dutch “manier van leven”.

Being a region-enthusiast, I dedicate my research towards digitalization & sustainability in cross-border relevant topics, aiming to foster prosperity of the region on both sides of the border.

Currently, I am Associate Professor of the research group CBBD. Furthermore, I lecture on topics such as e-marketing, marketing management, entrepreneurship, market analysis and e-commerce in the MBA, MSc in Business and Management and BSc. in Marketing Management. I am also the programme manager of the MSc programme Fontys runs in cooperation with the University of Plymouth.

Before joining Fontys International Business School, I studied in the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Great Britain and Poland. After my study, I worked for medium-sized IT companies in the insurance, network engineering and RFID technology as well as IT-Consulting sectors in marketing, sales and business development.

Jan Lucas

As a pupil, Jan Lucas attended a bilingual German-French school in the administrative district of the then German capital Bonn. Thinking across national borders in a European context has been his guiding principle ever since. Helping businesses and workers to identify opportunities in cross-border economic activity and to remove obstacles to seizing these opportunities is an exciting and meaningful challenge that he tackles at the research chair Cross-border Business Development. As a doctor of economics, his focus here is on quantitative, empirical analyses of economic activities and opportunities in the border region.

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