

# *Post-War Population Transfers and Their Legacy for Potential Cross-Border Citizenship: The Case of Czech-Polish Euroregions*

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## *NCN project: The impact of post-war population resettlements on Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation*

The project aims to identify the effects of post-war displacement of the German population on bilateral cross-border cooperation in the entire Polish-Czech border area and to categorize them. In previous studies on the issue of Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation, the significance of the impact of post-war population transfer on its intensity has not been taken into account.

After 1945, the German-speaking population was expelled along the western part of the Czech-Polish border (from Bohumín/Chałupki to the Czech-Polish-German border), while no major population shifts occurred in the eastern part (from Bohumín/Chałupki to the Czech-Polish-Slovak border). The project explores how these differences affected cross-border cooperation, assuming stronger integration in the east.

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Source:  
[euroregion-beskidy.pl](http://euroregion-beskidy.pl)

# *6 euroregions*

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# *Methodology*

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## **Mixed-methods approach:**



Statistical analysis



Semi-structured interviews in euroregions



Document review



First systematic application of Decoville et al. (2013) framework in partly rural Central European borderland. Four integration dimensions (Ibidem).

# *Four integration dimensions (Decoville et al., 2013):*

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
<b>Population Transfers</b>	Change in the number of German-speaking residents	Share of German-speaking populations before WWII vs. now	National statistics

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
<b>Structural</b>	Cross-border transport infrastructure, living standards	Number of cross-border railway links, GDP per capita (NUTS3), population density change	ESPON, national statistics, desk research
<b>Institutional</b>	Density and quality of cooperation networks	Number of cross-border public services (excluding transport), number of Interreg projects	ESPON, keep.eu, desk research
<b>Functional</b>	Cross-border mobility of residents	Cross-border shopping and commuting flows	Gallup International 2020
<b>Ideational</b>	Attitudes towards European integration, trust towards neighbours	Voting for Eurosceptic parties, town partnerships, general trust levels	Electoral commissions, Gallup International 2020, desk research

# Structural Dimension

**Czech side** = socioeconomic periphery, mountainous, no town >25,000 residents

**Polish side** = semi-periphery, higher population density, more developed (Opole, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Nysa)

**Demographic changes:** Massive post-WWII population decline, especially after expulsion of German-speaking population

**Czech side:** 41% population drop (1930-1950), slow recovery until 1998, decline since then

**Polish side:** similar pattern, with new settlers from Eastern Borderlands

## **Cross-border transport:**

- 3 main road crossings; roads need modernization, bypasses

- Historically 4 railway links → 2 remain, underused, poor infrastructure (esp. on Polish side)

- Czech train Mikulovice-Głuchocłazy-Jindřichov rarely used by locals/tourists. Few, irregular bus connections, often private or seasonal (e.g., ski buses)

- Regional authority from the Polish side: notes the differences in the economic and population potential of both sides of the Euroregion, which may hinder cooperation.

## **Key challenge**

Poor cross-border mobility limits integration; unused potential for cooperation.

# *Institutional Dimension*

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## **General performance:**

- ERP is an average performer among Czech-Polish euroregions. Polish side shows higher activity.

## **Czech side challenges:**

- ❑ Small secretariat, limited capacity
- ❑ Working groups only on Polish side
- ❑ Fewer inhabitants → lower overall engagement.

## **Municipal partnerships:** Existing partnerships boost CBC and joint projects

Active towns: Vrbno-Głogówek, Zlaté Hory-Głuchołazy, Rýmařov-Ozimek.

## **Funding and focus:** Heavy reliance on CZ-PL INTERREG and Small Projects Fund. Focus mainly on tourism development

## **Firefighter cooperation:**

- ❑ Strong thanks to Czech-Polish intergovernmental agreement.
- ❑ Polish firefighters often assist on Czech side (shorter response times)
- ❑ Ongoing challenges: communication, procedures, language

## **NGO involvement:** Weak point. Low engagement due to complex funding and application procedures

# *Functional Dimension*

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## **Shopping tourism:**

Czechs frequently travel to Poland for cheaper groceries and better access to shops, especially from peripheral areas (e.g., Osoblaha, Vidnava).

Popular destinations: Prudnik, Głuchołazy, Paczków.

## **Cross-border tourism:**

Main flow: Poles traveling to Czechia, especially to the Jeseníky Mountains for winter/summer recreation

Polish side has fewer tourist attractions near the border

2022 decline in Polish tourists → linked to Polish government subsidies promoting domestic tourism.

## **Cross-border commuting:**

Poles frequently commute to Czechia for work, especially in factories (e.g., sawmill in Zlaté Hory)

Czech workers rarely commute to Poland (lower wages on Polish side).

# Ideational Dimension

Would you personally feel comfortable about having citizen from CZ/PL as your (share of the "comfortable" answers)

	2015	2020	change
Neighbour	81	86	+5
Work colleague	79	83	+4
Family member	76	80	+4
Manager	65	69	+4

Whole area of CZ-PL.

Trust is rising but still among the lowest in the EU.

**Measuring challenges:** No direct, reliable indicator at ERP level

## Main proxies:

Trust toward cross-border neighbors (Czechs ↔ Poles)  
Support for Eurosceptic parties.

## Euroscepticism (European Parliament elections):

Czech ERP districts: ~37% for hard Eurosceptic parties in 2024

Polish ERP districts: similar to national average (~11-14%)

Czech side also strong support for ANO 2011 (soft Euroscepticism)

**Czech Euroscepticism** = more institutional skepticism, not anti-Polish sentiment

**Polish side** shows no significant anti-EU or anti-Czech attitudes

Respondents: some differences in general national characters BUT no nationalism

Regional authority from polish side: „In terms of mentality, it's a difficult collaboration.” ALSO He suggests that the seemingly close proximity between Poles and Czechs may be misleading due to cultural and historical differences. He points out that neither the Poles resettled from the eastern borderlands nor the Czechs settling in these areas have roots in these regions.

# Conclusions

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## Key findings:

- Historical disruptions (post-war expulsions, resettlement) still shape present-day weaknesses in cross-border cooperation (CBC)
- Structural dimension (population decline, broken ties, weak infrastructure) limits institutional, functional, and ideational integration

## Challenges:

- Czech side: depopulation, underdeveloped infrastructure, higher level of Euroscepticism, limited NGO role
- Poor cross-border transport (Historically existing railway connections were discontinued after 1945) and lack of coordination between Czech and Polish transport providers
- Uneven institutional engagement (the Polish side more active)

# *Recommendations*

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- Strengthening institutional capacity, including expanding the secretariat and improving coordination between local governments.
- Implementing joint transportation planning initiatives and enhancing public transport services between key settlements could facilitate greater daily cross-border interaction and economic cooperation.
- Bridging historical divides requires cultural projects, cross-border education, language exchange, and encouraging residents to join CBC projects.

***Thank You!***

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