



Economic and social impact of closing borders

Presentation

The **crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic** means we are facing an unprecedented situation in which **all aspects of our lives have been put to the test**, including such undisputed realities as freedom of movement of people and workers in the area of the European Union.

In this regard, the **closure of the border** between the French and Spanish states to **contain expansion of the virus is an additional element impacting** the situation of **citizens** who carry out their daily lives and/or professional work indistinctly between Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Euskadi and Navarra, as well as of **cross-border cooperation projects** supported by the Euroregion.

However, we have now reached a point (always stated with caution) where it seems that **the situation is beginning to stabilise, and we should now look to the future and think about the territory's recovery.**

For that purpose, it is **vital to understand and qualify the impact of the border closure and health crisis**, identifying the main needs and priority actions to take. In this context, it is indispensable to **learn first-hand what citizens have to say, as well as cross-border workers.** Only from the knowledge of the impacts caused will we be able to extract lessons that will allow us to act in the future.

In this respect, a double survey was carried out, aimed at cross-border citizens and partners in Euroregional projects

The aim of this document is to make a **first approach to the economic and social impact of COVID-19 in the Euroregion's territory**, identifying the main problems that citizens have faced during these months.





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Chapter 1

A new reality with the border closed

1.1. Cross-border citizenship

1.2. Cross-border workers

Chapter 1 | A new reality with the border closed

The border closure has negatively impacted cross-border workers and citizens, resulting in major economic and social disorder. It is therefore indispensable to identify key actions to lessen as much as possible the damage that the border closure has engendered for cross border workers and citizens.

With the aim of identifying a series of **actions and guidelines to mitigate the impact of the closed border** on cross-border workers and citizens, the **NAEN Euroregion** has carried out a **survey** addressing residents of these groups in Euskadi, Navarre and Nouvelle-Aquitaine. The process namely focuses on the **main impact factors and problems identified in the social and labour area** affecting the lives of cross-border citizens.

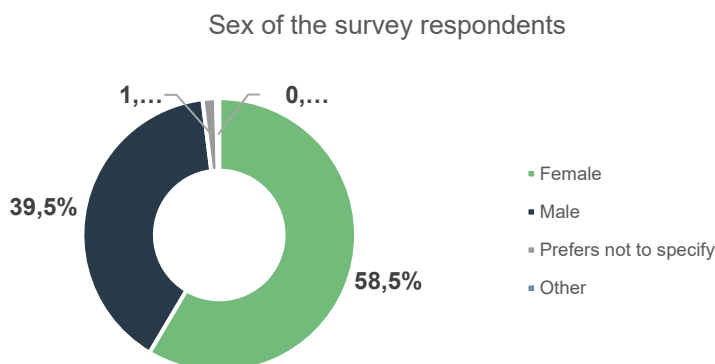
Well aware of what the border closure has meant for cross-border citizens, this survey thus aims to **quantify and qualify that impact** by gathering **testimonials that shed light on the reality of the cross-border life** of many citizens.

In this sense, as shall be further explained below, the impact will be analysed in cross-border citizens due to economic reasons, and in cross-border workers. Obtaining the perspective of both groups will facilitate more concrete understanding of the social, economic and labour impact. The survey process was therefore begun on 4 June 2020, with citizens given about ten days to respond. As mentioned above, the main aim of the survey was to **identify possible actions and guidelines to be implemented by the NAEN Euroregion in the context of the border closure.**

1.1. Description of citizens and workers

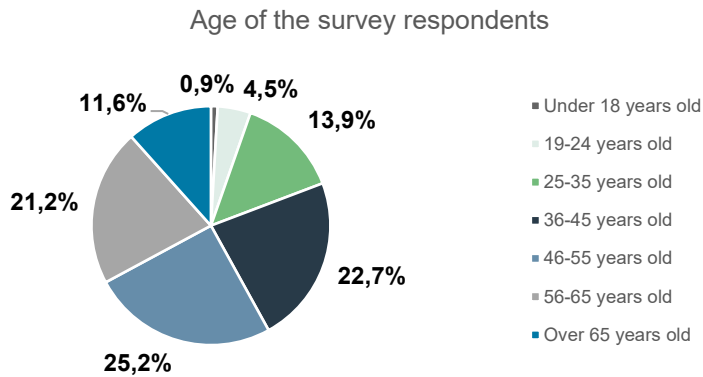
To obtain an overview of the survey respondents' description, respective **demographic data** was collected; they were asked to provide their age, gender, level of education and origin. The survey, addressing cross-border workers and citizens, obtained a total of **2,357 responses**.

Among the survey respondents, **58.5%** self-identified as **women**, **39.5%** as **men** and **1.6%** preferred **not to specify** their gender.



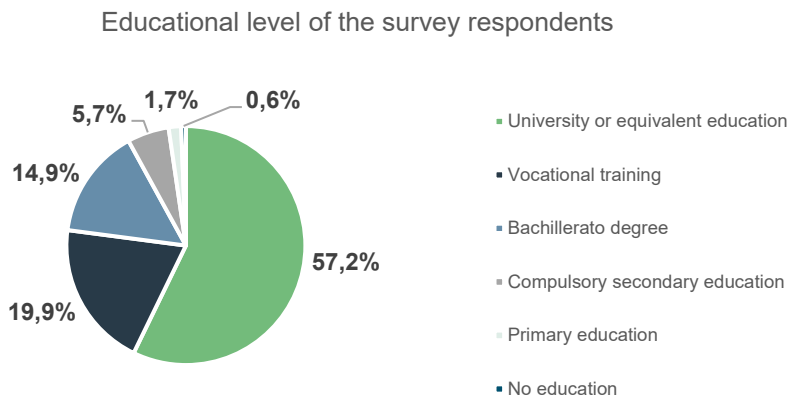
Most of the survey respondents self-identified as **women (58.5%)**, while **39.5%** self-identified as **men**.

People **between 46 and 55 years old** were the **age group** that most responded to the survey (**25.2%**), followed by people **between 36 and 45** and people **between 56 and 65**. The groups notably **less represented** were **minors under 18 (0.9%)** and people **between 19 and 24 years old (4.5%)**.



People between **46 and 55 years old** were the **most representative** group, respectively followed by the **group of those between 26 and 45 years old**.

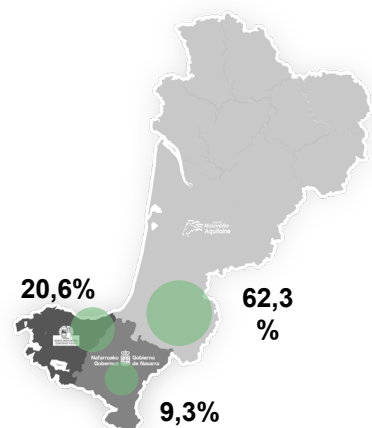
In terms of **education**, it was found that most survey respondents had **university or equivalent education (57.2%)**, followed by **19.9%** with **vocational training** and **14.9%** with a **bachillerato** (post-secondary school) degree. Notably, only **0.6%** of the respondents indicated they had **no education**.



57.2% of the survey respondents indicated they have a **university education or equivalent**.

62.3% of the respondents reside in **Pyrénées-Atlantiques** (Nouvelle-Aquitaine), **20.6%** in **Gipuzkoa**, **9.3%** in **Navarra** and the remaining **4.3%** in other territories close to the border (Álava, Bizkaia, Landes, etc).

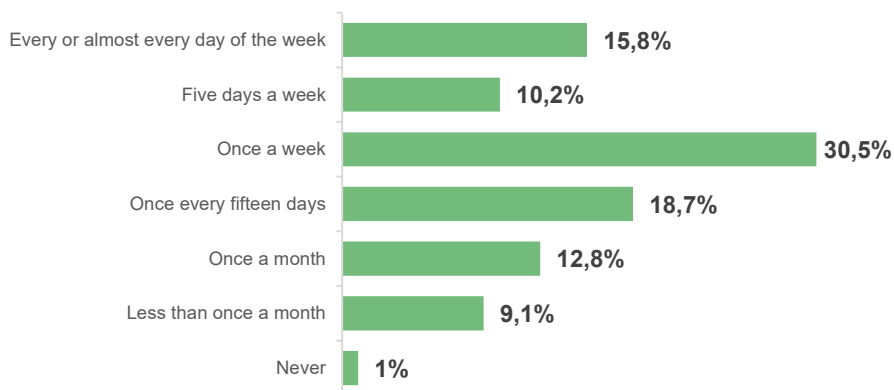
Pyrénées-Atlantiques is positioned as the territory **most represented** in terms of cross-border citizens, with **62.3%**.



After completing the demographic description of the survey respondents, their **cross-border personality** was determined, identifying the flows of movement between territories and border-crossing recurrence.

In this regard, **30.5% of the respondents cross the border once a week, while 18.7% do so once every 15 days and 15.8% every or almost every day.** People who cross the border just once a month (12.8%), less than once a month (9.1%) and never (1%) were ruled out as cross-border persons. **Cross-border workers and citizens** accordingly accounted for **75% of the survey respondents.**

Border-crossing recurrence

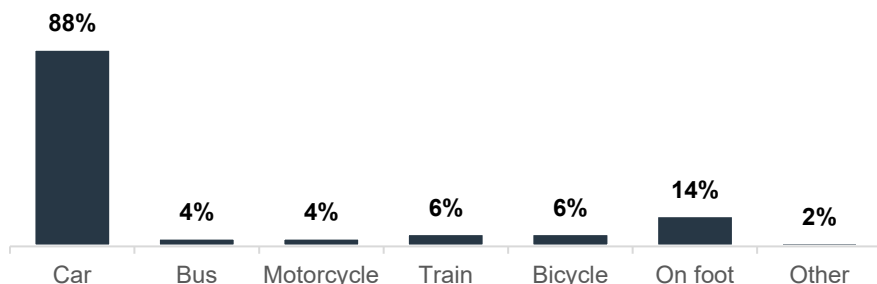


75% of the survey respondents cross the border more than once a month. 15.8% of such people cross every or almost every day of the week.

In this regard, it is notable that **cross border workers are the ones who most habitually move between territories** (49.6% travel every or almost every day of the week). Conversely, cross-border citizens due to economic reasons cross less frequently, mostly just once a week (40.5%).

Cross-border persons hence **mainly use cars** to move between territories (**88%**), while trains, motorcycles, bicycles, walking and other methods of transportation are generally less used.

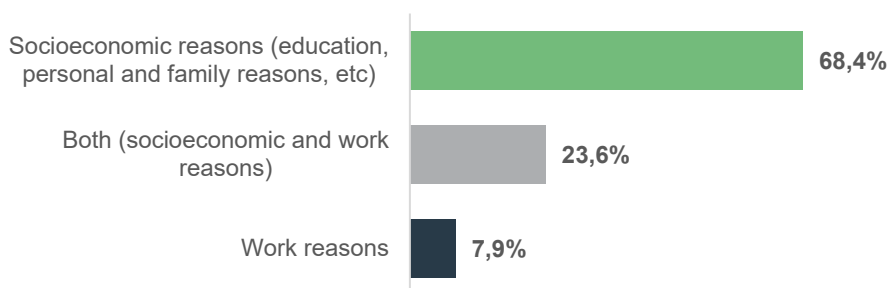
Transportation methods most habitually used to move between cross-border territories



88% of cross-border persons travel between territories by car.

Finally, to conclude the description of the survey respondents, they were asked about **the reasons why they habitually cross the border**, breaking them down into three large groups: **socioeconomic reasons** (education, personal and family reasons, health, business, culture, sports and leisure activities, etc), **work reasons** or **both**.

Main reasons for moving between cross-border territories



68.4% of cross-border people move between territories for **socioeconomic reasons**.

2.2. Impact of the border closure on cross-border citizens who cross for socioeconomic reasons

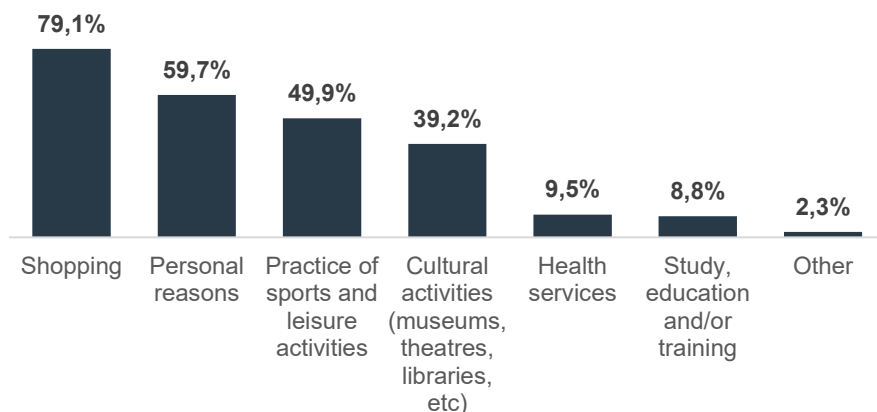
After a first analysis of the survey respondents and having identified the cross-border citizens, it was concluded that **92.1% of such people crossed between cross-border territories for socioeconomic reasons once or more than once every 15 days**. Of that 92.1%, 23.8% also crossed for work reasons.



92.1% of the cross-border people cross the border for **socioeconomic reasons**

Cross-border citizens accordingly move between territories mainly to go **shopping (79.1%)**, for **personal reasons** such as travelling to a second home or visiting friends and/or family (**59.7%**), to **do sports or leisure activities (49.9%)** and for **cultural activities (39.2%)**.

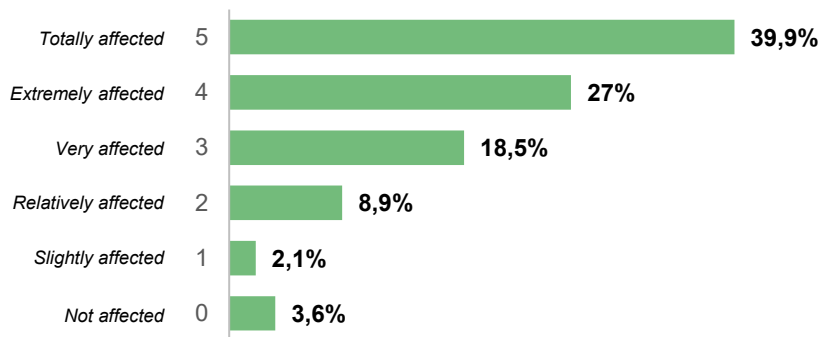
Main socioeconomic reasons for moving between cross-border territories



The main socioeconomic reasons why citizens cross the border are **shopping (79.1%)** and **personal reasons (59.7%)**.

The border closure has affected those activities on both sides of the border. Some **39.9% of cross-border citizens** accordingly **consider that they have been totally affected** by the border closure, while **27% have been extremely affected** and **3.6% indicate they have not been affected**.

Impact of the border closure during the COVID-19 crisis on the daily life of cross-border citizens



66.9% of cross-border citizens have been **totally or extremely affected** by the border closure.

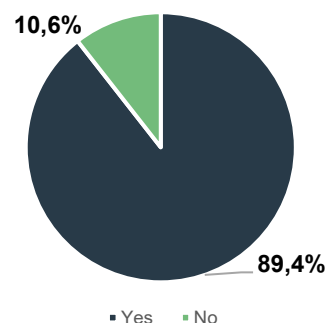
Once the extent of the impact that cross-border citizens believe affects their daily lives was identified, the analysis focused on how and where this impact occurred, depending on citizens' movements to carry out cross-border activities.

In this regard, the impact caused by COVID-19 was **mainly notable in Pyrénées (68.3% of residents considered the impact very high or total) and in Gipuzkoa (63% considered it very high or total)**. Navarra was the region with less impact, though with a percentage similar to Pyrénées and Gipuzkoa (62%). Some 6.5% of Navarra residents do not consider that it has had any impact, 3.3% more than in Pyrénées-Atlantiques and 2.2% more than in Gipuzkoa.

Some **89.4%** of cross-border citizens thus **indicated that they had stopped doing some cross-border activity since the border closure**, while only **10.6%** have continued doing those activities in their own territory.

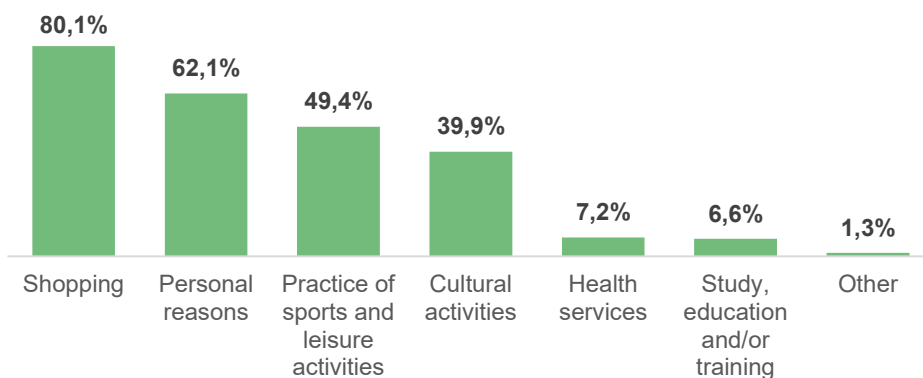
89.4% of cross-border citizens **stopped doing certain socioeconomic activities** due to the border closure.

Percentage of citizens who affirm or deny having continued to carry out cross-border activities



The main activities that cross-border citizens had stopped doing after the border was closed were accordingly identified. Of the **89.4%** of citizens who **stopped doing any cross-border activity**, **80.1%** indicated that they had stopped **shopping**, while **62.4%** stopped doing **activities of a personal nature** (visits to family and/or friends, travel to a second home, etc) and **49.4%** **sports and leisure** activities (such as, for example, cuisine-related). The most affected activities were thus in turn the main activities motivating cross-border citizens to move between territories, to go shopping, for personal reasons and to participate in sports and/or leisure activities.

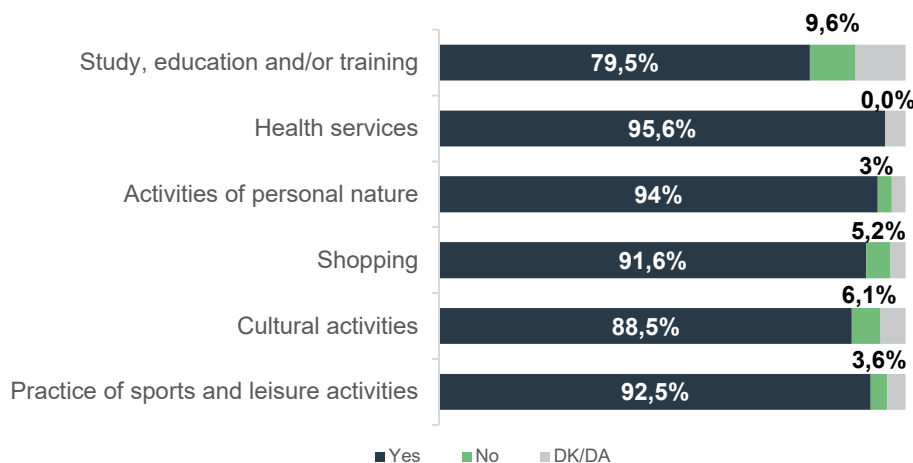
Economic activities interrupted by the border closure



80.1% of cross-border citizens **stopped doing socioeconomic activities** due to the border closure.

They were next asked if they would resume doing these activities in the same way as before the health crisis when the border opens again. The citizens who stopped doing some of these activities considered that, in general, **they will resume those activities**, indicating a **reflection of optimism for the sectors corresponding to the cross-border activities**. In this regard, an assessment of citizens by the activity they stopped doing will next be shown. The assessments were done on an individual basis with the aim to achieve a better understanding of the future behaviour of cross-border citizens.

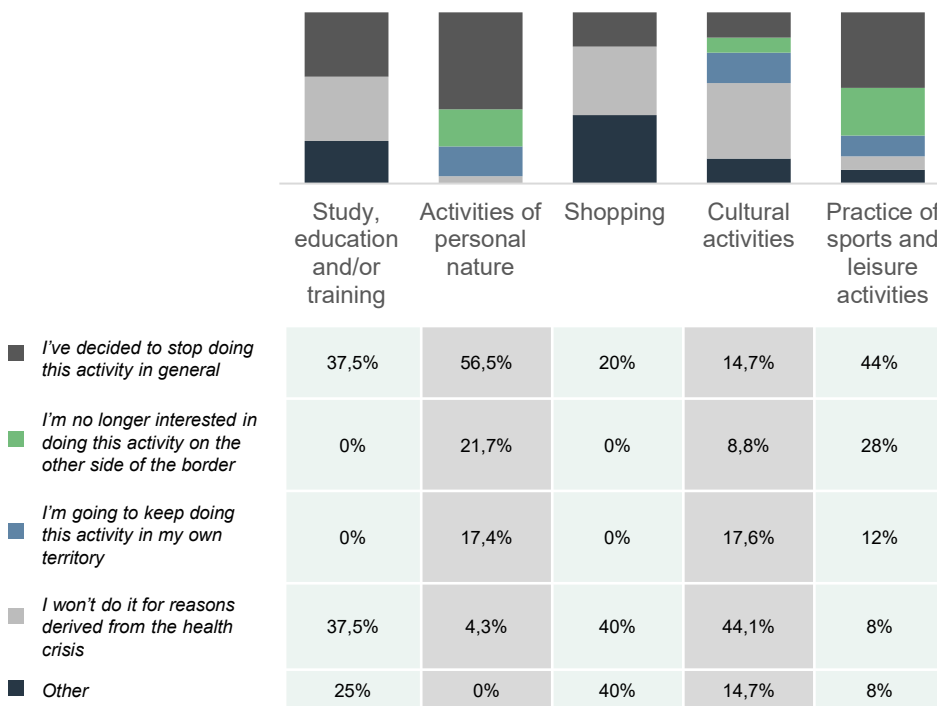
Citizens who affirm or deny that they will resume those activities in the same way as before the health crisis



The activities that will resume with less incidence after the border opens, according to cross-border citizens, will be **health services (95.6%)** and **activities of personal nature (94%)**.

Even though most cross-border citizens will resume cross-border activities in the same way as before the health crisis, the **main reasons why some of those citizens will not resume those activities when the border opens** were identified.

Main reasons why they will not resume those cross-border activities in the same way as before the health crisis



The main reason why cross-border citizens will not resume those activities are, on average, **stopping such activities in general (34.5%), reasons derived from the health crisis (26.8%) and loss of interest in activities on the other side of the border (19.5%).**

Finally, to obtain a detailed picture of how the closure has impacted the daily life of citizens, they were asked to briefly indicate the **main obstacles** encountered in this regard. Hence, from among the more than **1,400 citizen testimonials**, the most common problems mentioned were identified:

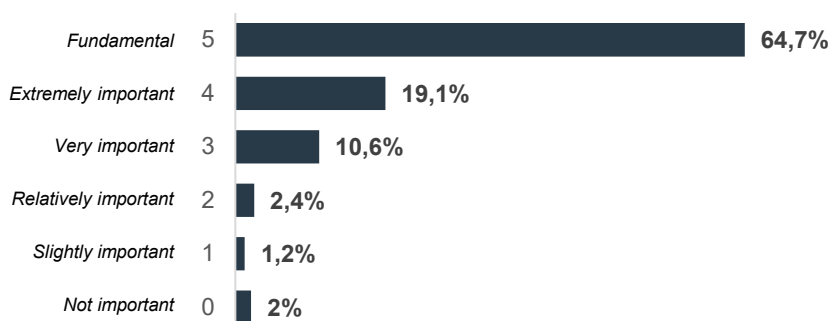
- The loss of freedom of movement in the case of the population of some towns and/or districts led to limited access to certain goods or basic services that are not available there;
- Long lines caused by the border closure that hinder/block movements to carry out essential activities;
- Difficulties of travel to carry out educational and/or training activities in France;
- Diverse criteria depending on the government, regarding supporting documentation to present at the border control (movements for work and/or personal reasons, such as care for dependent people);
- Impossibility of travel to second home to attend to its needs;
- Impossibility of visiting family and/or friends.

Relevance of cross-border cooperation for cross-border citizens

With the aim of learning **how cross-border citizens perceive cooperation between the three border territories** (the scope of work of the Euroregion), an additional series of thematic questions were asked. They were accordingly asked to make a **general assessment of the importance of the cooperation** and to identify **possible actions to facilitate their daily life** in the 'new normal'.

The **assessment of the cross-border citizens** on the importance of boosting cross-border cooperation to improve their condition amid the current situation is shown below. It can thus be seen that in general terms the citizens consider the **cross-border cooperation very important**. Indeed, only 2% do not consider it important.

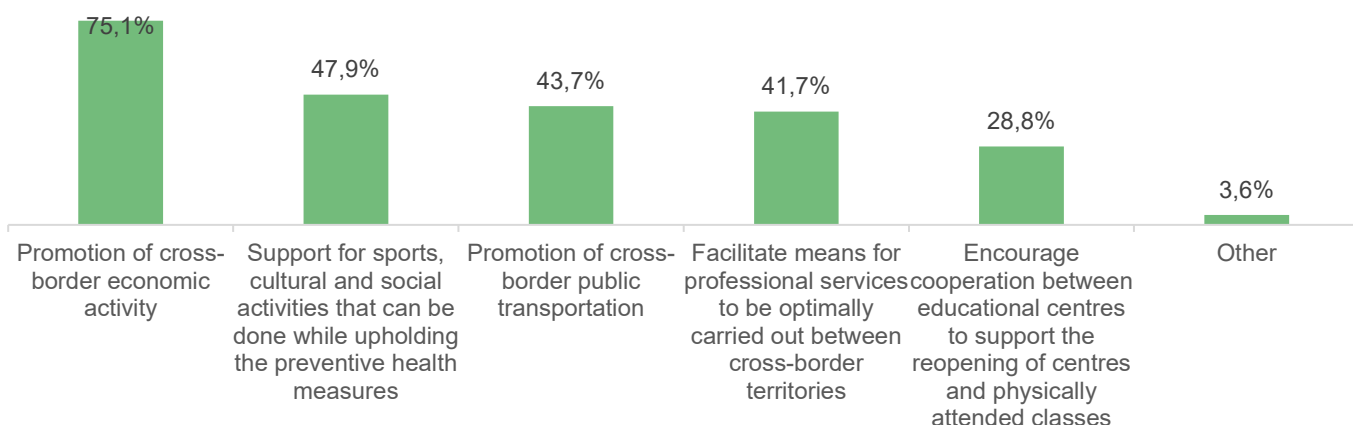
Importance of boosting cross-border cooperation to improve the conditions of cross-border citizens



83.8% of cross-border citizens consider that cross-border cooperation is **fundamental or very important** to improve the conditions of cross-border citizens.

Possible actions or interventions that within the scope of cross-border cooperation could help mitigate the impact of the border closure on the daily life of cross-border citizens were also put forward. Some **75.1%** of cross-border citizens would accordingly consider it important to **promote cross-border economic activity**, followed by **support for actions of sports, cultural and social nature (47.9%)**.

Percentage of actions prioritised by citizens to mitigate the border closure's impact on their daily life



The opportunity to mention different initiatives that citizens freely deem important was also given. A common pattern was accordingly identified among the different testimonials, which stressed the need to give **more visibility to cross-border citizenship**. Given the current flows of cross-border citizens, many of those people thus hold that it is necessary to **reinforce their cross-border personhood** in order to move more freely between territories with fewer restrictions in terms of administrative documentation.

In the end, it was found that only **53.9% of cross-border citizens are familiar with the NAEN Euroregion**, a cooperation body for promotion of projects that boost the economic, social and cultural development of cross-border territories at cross-border, interregional and European scale, while **46.1% of citizens do not know about the Euroregion**.

1.3. Description of the cross-border workers

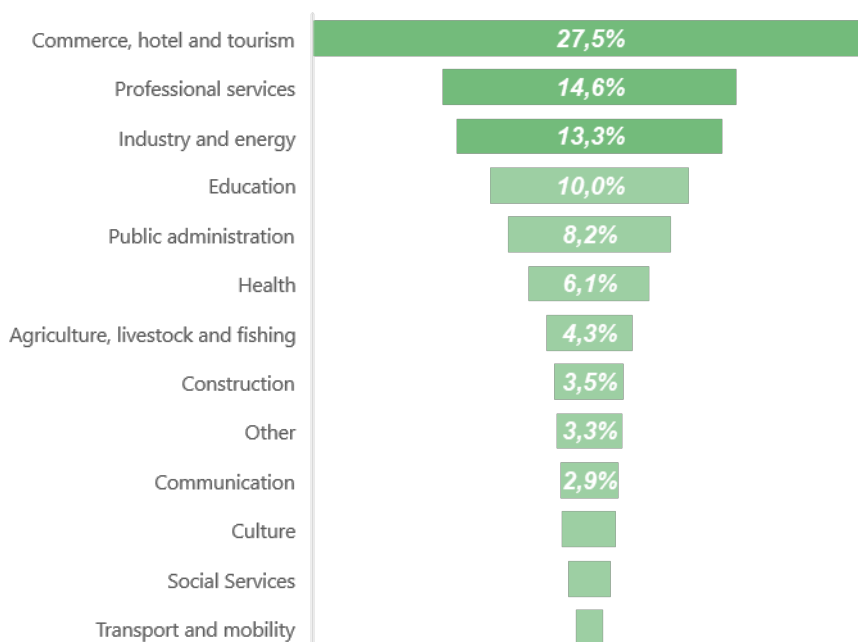


As previously mentioned, **31.5% of the survey respondents are cross-border workers**. Of that 31.5%, 23.5% also cross for socioeconomic reasons.

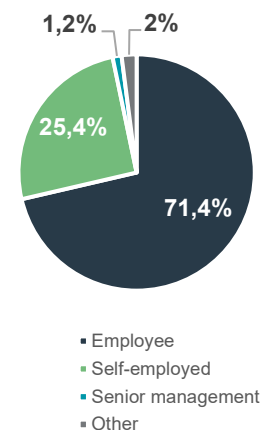
31.5% of cross-border persons cross the border for work reasons

A description of the cross-border workers was first undertaken, identifying the work sectors, their specific occupations and their reasons for crossing. In this regard, the most represented sector was **commerce, hostelry and tourism (27.5%)**, followed by **professional services (14.6%)**, **industry and energy (13.3%)** and **education (10%)**, respectively. The least represented sectors were transportation and mobility (1.4%) and social services (2.1%). Also, **71.4% of the workers work for someone else**, while 25.4% are self-employed.

Main work sectors of the cross-border workers



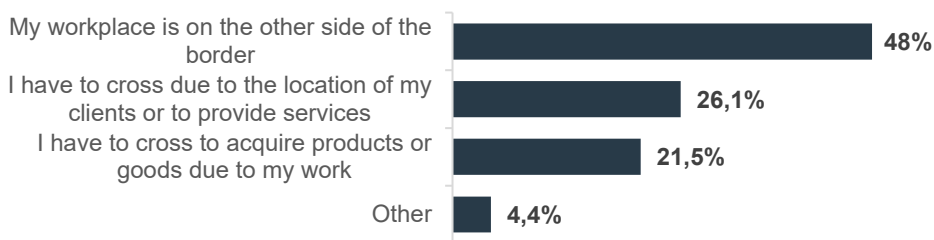
Occupation of the workers



27.5% of cross-border workers work in the **commerce, hostelry and tourism sector**, followed by **professional services (14.6%)**. Also, **71.4%** of the cross-border workers **work for someone else**.

To understand the labour-related reasons why they cross the border, they were asked about the **specific reasons for such travel**. Accordingly, **48% travel because their job is in another cross-border territory**, **26.1% travel due to the location of their clients or to provide specific services** and **21.5% travel to acquire products or goods** due to their work.

Work reasons for moving between cross-border territories

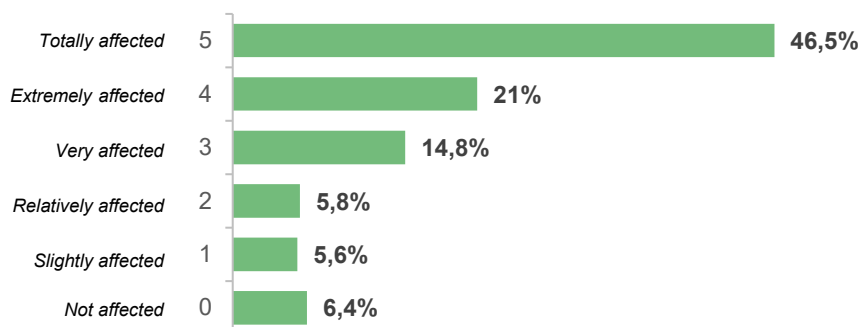


The main labour-related reason why such workers cross the border is **because their job is on the other side of the border (48%)**.

Once the labour-related reasons were described, a number of questions were posed with a view to learning **how and in what way COVID-19 and the consequent border closure has affected them**. This was also done to identify **possible impact mitigation measures**.

Some **46.5%** of the workers indicated that the border closure had **totally affected** them, while **21%** felt **extremely affected** and **14.8%** **very affected**. In this regard, the workers from the **commerce sector are those who consider that the border closure has had the most impact** (34.5% of workers indicate that they have been totally affected).

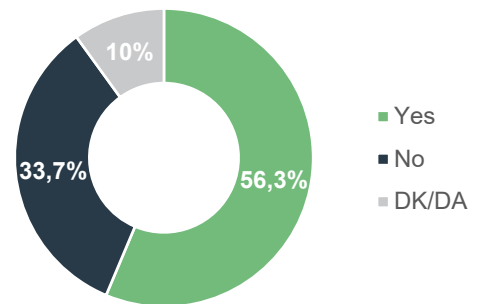
How cross-border workers are affected by the border closure during the COVID-19 crisis



67.5% of the cross-border workers have been totally or extremely affected by the border closure.

In this regard, and bearing in mind how the cross-border workers are affected by COVID-19, an exercise of **understanding the impact of the border closure on the companies** where they work was undertaken. Thus, **56.3%** of the companies of those cross-border workers **have implemented extraordinary measures derived from the impact of COVID-19** and/or the border closure, while **33.7%** of companies have not implemented measures.

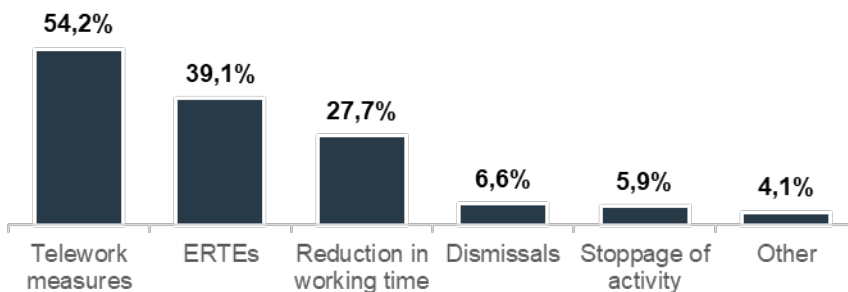
Application of extraordinary measures in companies



53.3% of the companies with cross-border workers have implemented **extraordinary measures derived from the impact of COVID-19**.

The most implemented measures were accordingly **telework (54.2%)** and **ERTEs (labour force adjustment plans) (39.1%)**, respectively followed by **reduction in working time (27.7%)** and **dismissals (6.6%)**. They were also given the opportunity to freely indicate additional measures carried out; **5.9%** of the workers then mentioned **total stoppage of activity** as an additional measure.

Main extraordinary measures implemented by companies



The main steps taken by companies with cross-border workers have been **telework (54.2%)** and **ERTEs (39.1%)**.

Finally, with a view to obtaining a detailed picture of how these measures have impacted the workers, they were asked to briefly identify the **main obstacles** encountered when these measures were implemented. Using the more than **480 worker testimonials**, it was therefore possible to identify the **most common problems** they mentioned:

- Mobility problems for services requiring physical presence or meetings with customers;
- Delay in cross-border work and insecurity about being able to fulfil the work schedule (due to long lines at the border or even the impossibility of crossing it due to imprecision about the supporting documentation to present);
- Difficulties in the processing of labour force adjustment plans (ERTEs) and in preparation for reopening of activity;

- Some cross-border workers do not have the means/resources/spaces needed in order to telework in an agile manner and these have not been supplied by the corresponding companies;
- Reduced effectiveness of company performance.

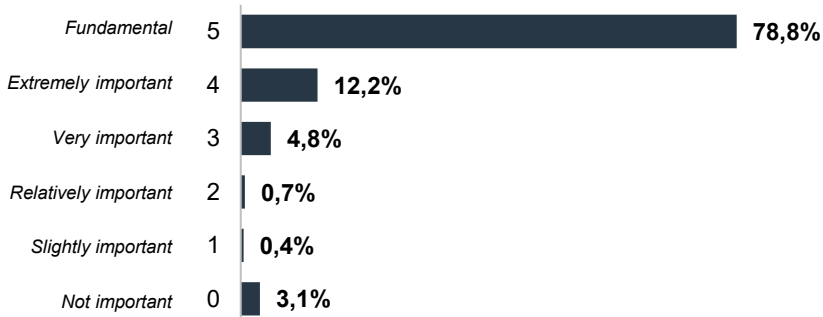
Regarding the **obstacles identified by cross-border workers due to the border closure**, the main problems identified concern **problems of mobility** between territories (long lines at the border, unfamiliar and diverse criteria for supporting documentation to present in each territory, etc), which they consider to have negatively impacted their overall performance. They also indicated in the questionnaire problems linked to **difficulties in accessing aid for workers and companies**, as well as other **tax or labour related procedures** which have caused problems for cross-border workers due to mismatch of criteria among different governments and the lack of a clear response in this exceptional situation.

Relevance of cross-border cooperation for cross-border workers

Along the same line as the questionnaire for citizens, several questions were posed to learn **how cross-border citizens perceive the cooperation between the three border territories**. They were thus asked to make a **general appraisal of the importance of the cooperation** and to identify **possible actions to facilitate their daily life** in the 'new normal'.

The cross-border workers' appraisal of the importance of boosting cross-border cooperation to improve their labour condition in the current situation is shown below. It can accordingly be seen that in general terms the workers **consider that cross-border cooperation is fundamental**. Indeed, **nearly 80% consider it fundamental, while only 3.1% do not consider it important**.

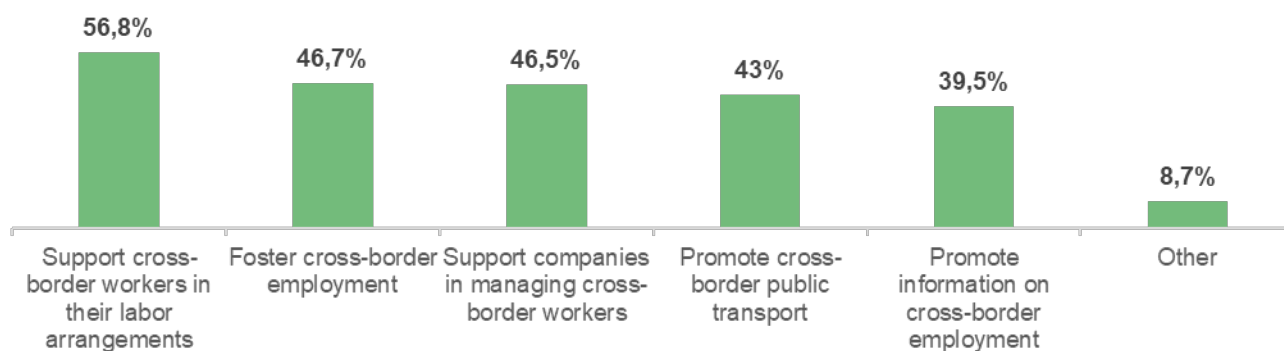
Importance of boosting cross-border cooperation to improve the condition of cross-border workers



91% of the cross-border workers consider that cross-border cooperation is **fundamental or very important** for improving their labour condition.

Also considered were possible actions or interventions which within the scope of cross-border cooperation could help mitigate the impact of the border closure on the daily life of cross-border workers. Some **56.8%** of cross-border citizens thus consider it important to **support workers in their work-related formalities**, followed by the **promotion of initiatives to promote cross-border work (46.7%)**.

Percentage of actions prioritised by workers to mitigate the border closure's impact on their daily working life



The opportunity was also given to convey different initiatives considered to be important for improving the situation of cross-border workers. A common pattern was accordingly identified among the different testimonials, which highlighted the **need to promote cohesion among territories (4.8%)** and **give more visibility to cross-border workers (1.3%)**. Given the existing flows of cross-border workers, many of these people thus considered that it is necessary to **reinforce their cross-border personhood** so they can move between territories more freely and with fewer restrictions in terms of administrative documentation. This idea was held to be important for both cross-border workers and citizens in general. Also, the workers identified the **need for the authorities of the three territories to work more cohesively**.

Finally, it was found that **62.4% of the cross-border workers know about the NAEN Euroregion**, while 37.6% of the cross-border workers do not know about the Euroregion.



Results of the cross-border citizenship survey



92.1%

Citizens who cross the border for socioeconomic reasons



31.5%

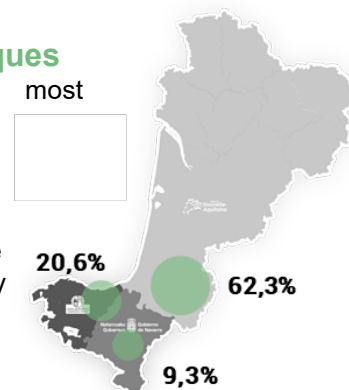
Citizens who cross the border for work reasons

Pyrénées-Atlantiques

Territory with most representativeness

75%

of citizens cross the border more than once a month (88% do so by car)



Impact of the border closure

Totally or extremely affected by the border closure



66.9%
of cross-border citizens

67.5%
of cross-border workers

89.4%

of citizens have stopped doing activities on the other side of the border

56.3%

of companies with cross-border workers have implemented extraordinary measures

Cross-border cooperation as a solution

83.3%

of citizens consider it to be fundamental or extremely important

91%

of workers consider it to be fundamental or extremely important

Cross-border cooperation is essential to improve the condition of cross-border citizens and workers.



80.1%
shopping



62.1%
Activities of a personal nature



49.4%
practice of sports or leisure activities



39.9%
cultural activities

Most recurrent extraordinary measures



54.2%
telework measures



39.1%
ERTES (labour force adjustment plans)



27.7%
reduction in working time



6.5%
dismissals

Problems of cross-border workers

Due to the situation experienced during the COVID-19 crisis, cross-border workers have had to face an unprecedented situation, as explained previously. The **general rule has been telework**, and companies on both sides of the border have been encouraged to favour this working mode for all positions where it is possible, without exception. However, making this situation a reality has not been easy, with **two problems** affecting the group of cross-border workers in practice:

- First, in cases where telework was not possible and workers had to cross the border to get to their workplace, they were confronted by the **lack of a single criterion for justifying their situation as cross-border workers**. Initially there was no specific form to facilitate verification, whereby the respective decision depended on the authorities responsible for the border control.

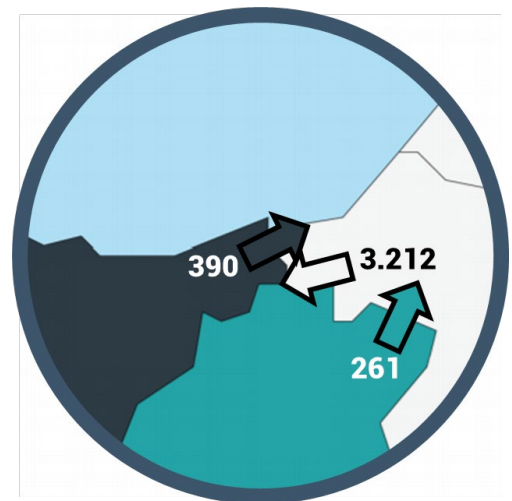
In this regard, they were instructed, among others, to prove their condition as cross-border workers (by contract, employer certificate, etc) and to provide a certificate of residence or local registration that justified the trip. It is precisely this second point that generated more conflicts, because in French territory the figure of local registration (in Spanish, *padrón*) does not exist in the same terms as in Spain, and is replaced by the figure of a sworn statement (*attestation sur l'honneur*), whose implications in the Spanish system are quite different.

- Moreover, regarding the **benefits** that cross-border workers have a right to. It is well known that to deal with the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, most EU states adopted various stimulus packages that include payments in favour of workers whose work relationship was suspended owing to force majeure. In this regard, and for the purposes covered by double-taxation agreements, such payments are assimilated as indemnities, and are therefore taxed under the same conditions and in the same place in which the replaced salaries would have been taxed.

Situations of vulnerability for cross-border citizens have occurred **due to a lack of foresight and coordination between the responsible bodies:**

- **Additional loss for workers affected by labour force adjustment plans (ERTEs) in Spain in terms of the amount received.** In the case of ERTEs for non-residents, an additional percentage is withheld. Added to the 30% of the amount that the workers no longer receive, this leads to accumulated erosion of nearly half the salary in the case of cross-border workers who cannot recover any of that withholding until the next year, when they make their income declaration;

Flows of cross-border workers



Source: *Diagnosis of Cross-border Employment in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion (2017)*

Chapter 2 | The development of European projects in the current situation

COVID-19 and the consequent border closure have also had a negative impact on Euroregional projects of the main strategic sectors of the Euroregion. It is accordingly vital to learn the views of the Euroregional partners so that action can be taken, given the negative consequences that can arise in those priority sectors.

As a cornerstone of the analysis of COVID-19's impact, in April a first **process of surveying the Euroregional partners of strategic sectors of the Euroregion was conducted**. The aim of that survey process was to **collect information about the impact of COVID-19** on the implementation of projects, in order to respond and guide the respective work of the Euroregion.

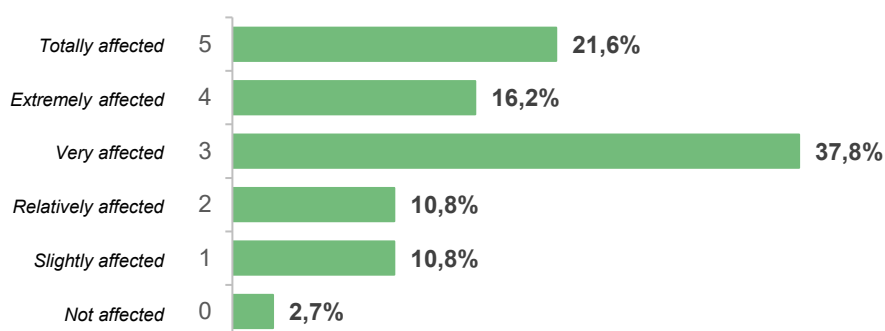
Generally speaking, the first survey found that the **impact** of COVID-19 on the projects was very **significant** for the partners, as the situation was already at that time causing problems in the execution and implementation of some of their projects and phases and/or activities. In this regard, **69.5% of the partners who responded to the survey indicated that their projects had been very or extremely affected by COVID-19**. The main problems identified by the partners at that time were **scheduling changes and/or delays, movement problems and the inability to undertake any action or activity**.

For that reason, and based on this questionnaire, which meant to learn about the early impact of the confinement and border closure on Euroregional projects, a **new questionnaire** was produced, **centring on a new context: the process toward the 'new normal'**. In this new situation, the aim was to learn the views of the partners regarding the end of confinement and the eventual opening of the border, and to understand how the projects and future prospects of the partners are now being managed.

2.1. Impact of COVID-19 on cross-border projects

The border closure has affected the deployment and development of projects in the different cross-border territories. Hence, **21.9% of the Euroregional partners consider that the project on which they work has been totally affected, while 16.2% consider that the impact has been extremely notable and 37.8% very notable**.

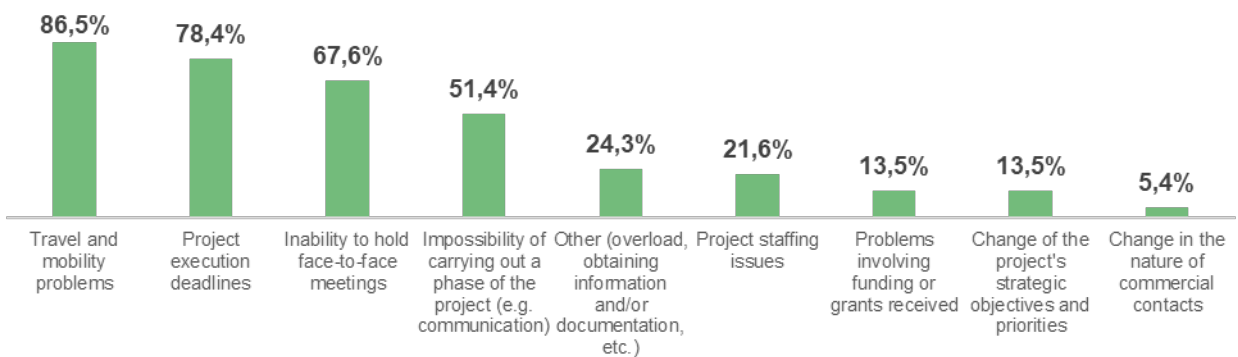
Effect of border closure during the COVID-19 crisis on execution of projects



37.8% of the European projects were **totally or extremely affected** by COVID-19.

With a view to gaining further understanding of the kind of problems occurring in the different projects, questions regarding the different obstacles encountered in this situation were asked. The most reiterated **problems** concerned **travel and mobility (86.5%)**, **project execution deadlines (78.4%)** and **the impossibility of holding face-to-face meetings (67.4%)**. The problems are similar in both situations (confinement and process toward the 'new normal').

Typology of problems derived from COVID-19 which have affected the execution of the project

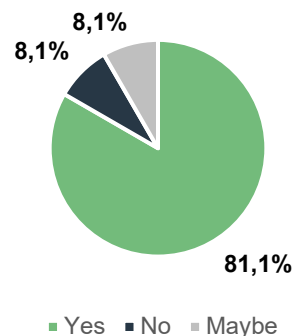


In this regard, the sectors characterised mainly by activities requiring physical presence, such as culture, education and youth-oriented activities, saw their project execution deadlines (delays in holding such activities) largely affected, with problems associated to travel and mobility. Agriculture was the most affected sector, due to the inability to carry out any project phase.

The most identified difficulties in the different Euroregional projects derive from **travel and mobility (86.5%)** and **execution deadlines (78.4%)**.

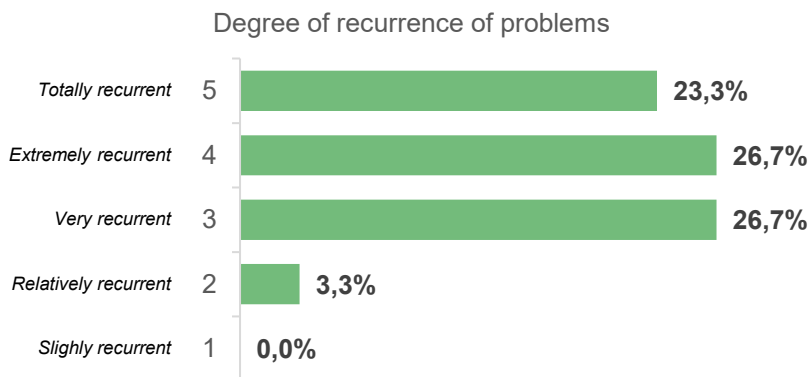
So to understand how these problems occur over time and amid progress toward the 'new normal', questions were asked about the **future recurrence of problems stemming from COVID-19**. Some **81.1% of the partners indicated that the problems would recur until borders are totally open**, while only **8.1%** indicated that they would not recur.

Percentage of partners who affirm or deny that the problems will recur when the borders open



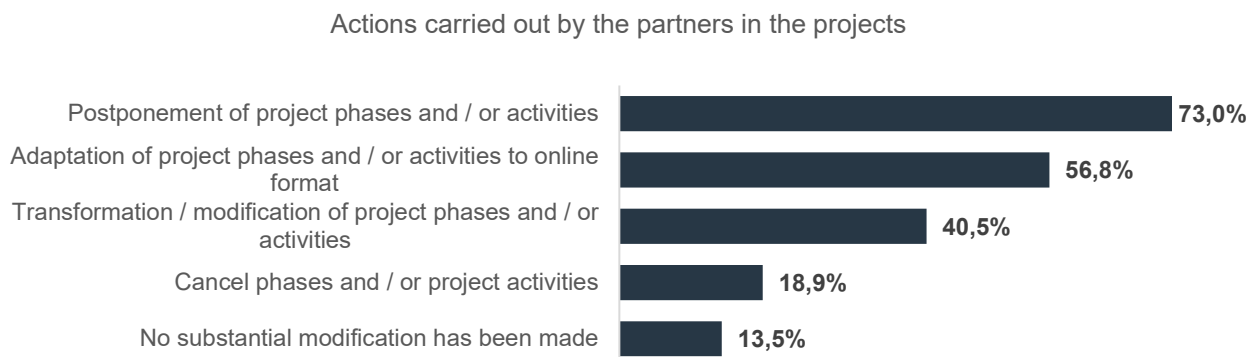
81.1% of the partners of Euroregional projects concluded that the problems stemming from COVID-19 would recur until borders are totally open.

In this regard, the partners considered that these **problems would be totally recurrent in 30%** of cases, **extremely recurrent in 23.3%** and **very recurrent in 26.7%**. It must be stressed that only one partner considered that the problems would be slightly recurrent.



53.3% of the partners consider that the problems will be **totally or extremely recurrent** until the border is totally open.

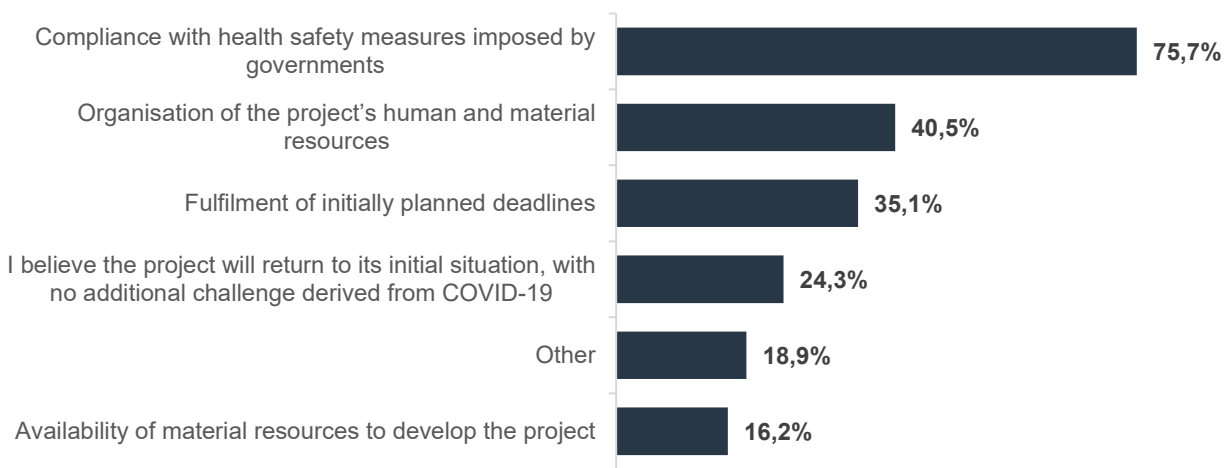
It was also deemed important to understand **how COVID-19 and the border closure had affected the execution of projects**. Most of the European partners accordingly indicated in the April survey that the actions taken mainly concerned postponement of meetings or events. In the new questionnaire, **73% of the projects suffered from postponed phases and/or activities**, in line with the confinement situation. Also, **56.8% of the projects had to make changes to activities and/or phases to adjust them to the online format** and **40.5% suffered a transformation or modification of phases and/or activities in general**.



Only **13.5% of the Euroregional projects** suffered **no substantial change** affecting their execution, development or implementation.

With a view to understanding **the future challenges** these projects face, the challenges that the European partners will have to tackle after the border opens were identified. In this regard, **75.7% of the partners considered that compliance with the health safety measures required by governments will be a future challenge for the project.** They also considered that the **organisation of a project’s human and material resources (40.5%)** and **compliance with initially foreseen deadlines (35.1%)** will be very important.

Challenges for projects when the border opens



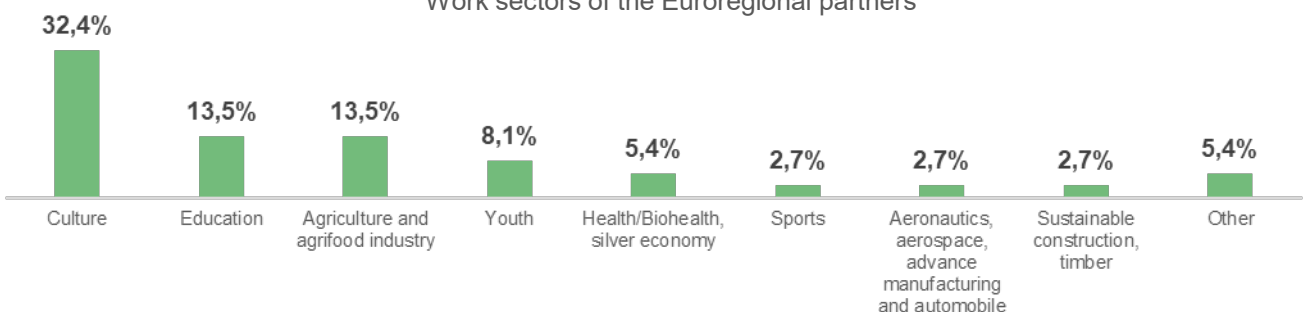
Also, one of the additional challenges mentioned by the partners was to **alleviate citizens’** eventual **reservations** about resuming participation in physically attended workshops, events involving many people and educational centres, etc.

75.7% of the partners consider that **compliance with the health safety measures imposed by governments** will be a future challenge for the project.

2.2. Impact of COVID-19 on strategic sectors

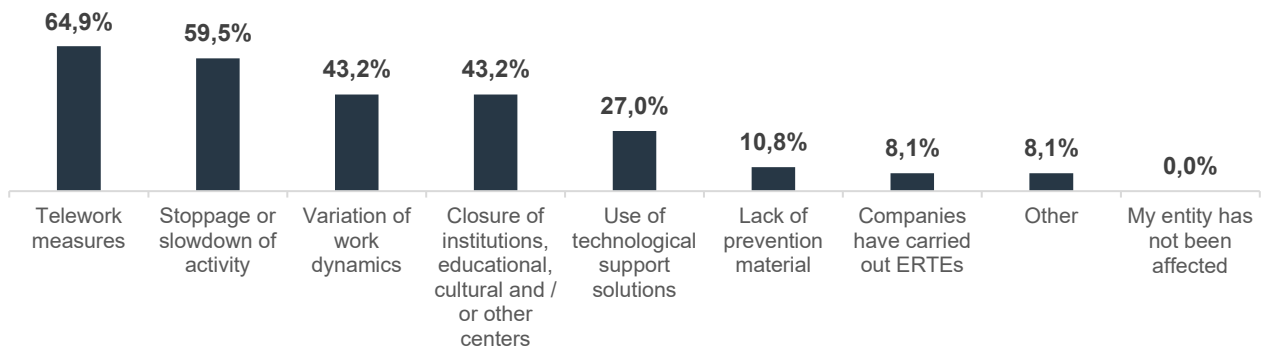
Once COVID-19’s impact on the strategic projects was analysed, the impact on the **strategic sectors of those partners** was analysed. In this regard, the sectors most represented were **culture (32.4%), education (13.5%) and agriculture (13.5%).**

Work sectors of the Euroregional partners



Once the main work sectors of the partners were identified, they were asked how **their institution had been affected by COVID-19**. In this regard, **64.9% of the partners indicated that they had implemented telework measures**, while **59.5% mentioned the full halt or slowdown of activity** and **43.3% changed work dynamics**.

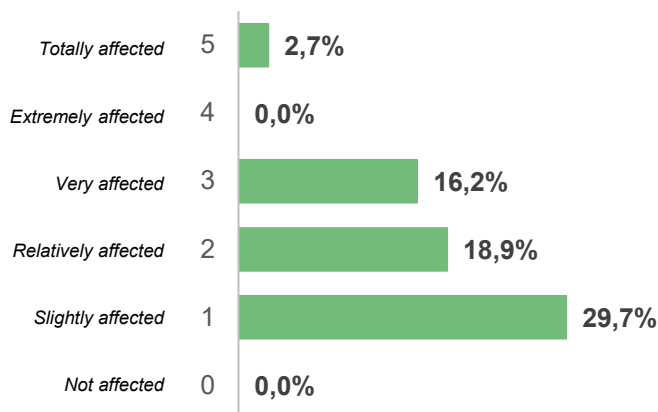
Problems encountered by the different organisations



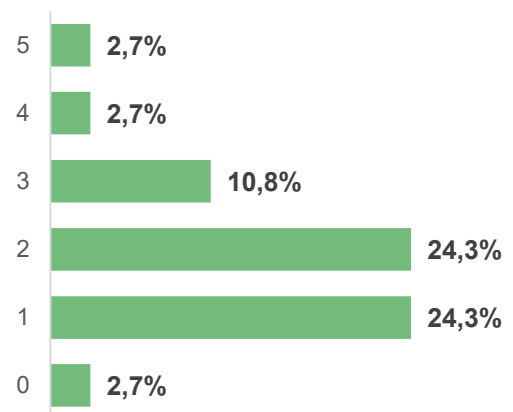
No European partner considered that their respective organisation had not been affected by COVID-19, while 64.9% implemented telework measures.

The partners were thus asked to assess the economic and labour impact they believe the border closure would have for their organisation. A total of **29.7% considered that the border closure would have some economic impact on their organisation**, while **24.3% considered that it would have some labour impact**.

Economic impact on the organisation



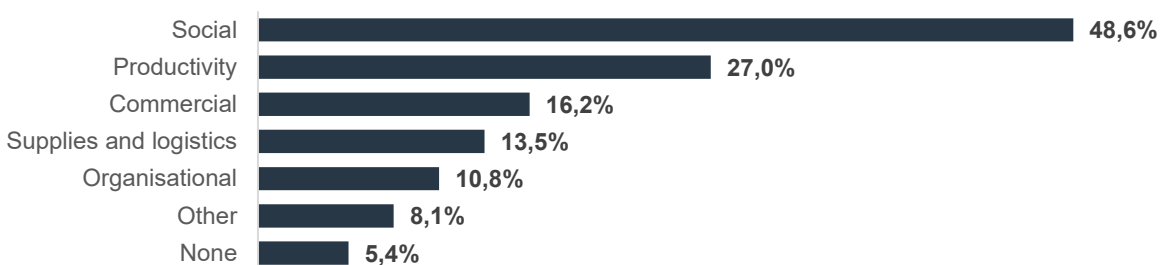
Work impact on the organisation



In general, the Euroregional partners **do not consider that the border closure will have an overly significant impact** on their organisation.

The partners also considered other impacts such as organisational, concerning supplies and logistics, and commercial, etc. They were therefore asked about possible additional impacts in their corresponding organisations, obtaining the following figures: **48.6%** of the partners considered that it would have a **social impact** on the organisation; **27% on productivity**, **16.2 on commercial aspects** and **13.5% on supply and logistics**, while **10.8%** considered that it would have an **organisational impact**. Other impacts were also considered, such as methodological or associated to cooperation or work culture, etc.

Other impacts caused by the COVID-19 crisis



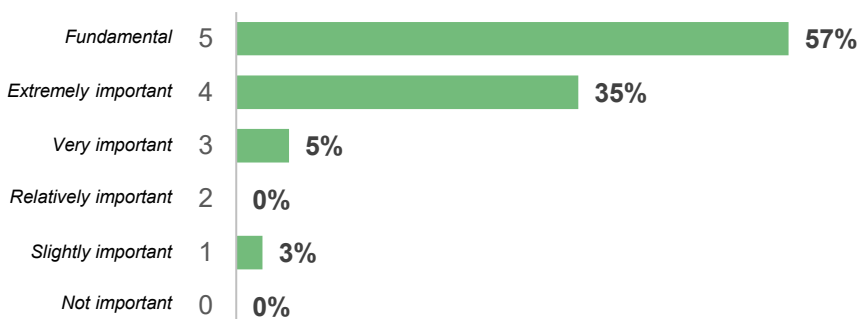
48.6% of the European partners considered that the border closure would have a **social impact** on their respective organisations.

Relevance of cross-border cooperation for the European partners

Along the same line as the questionnaire for citizens, a number of questions focused on learning **how the Euroregional partners perceive cooperation between the three border territories** in the context of the Euroregional projects. They were thus asked to make a **general assessment of the importance of that cooperation** and to identify **possible actions to facilitate their daily activities** in the 'new normal'.

The partners' assessment of the importance of boosting cross-border cooperation is shown next. It can thus be seen that the partners generally **consider cross-border cooperation to be fundamental**. Indeed, **nearly 56.8% consider it fundamental, while none of the partners consider that it is not important**.

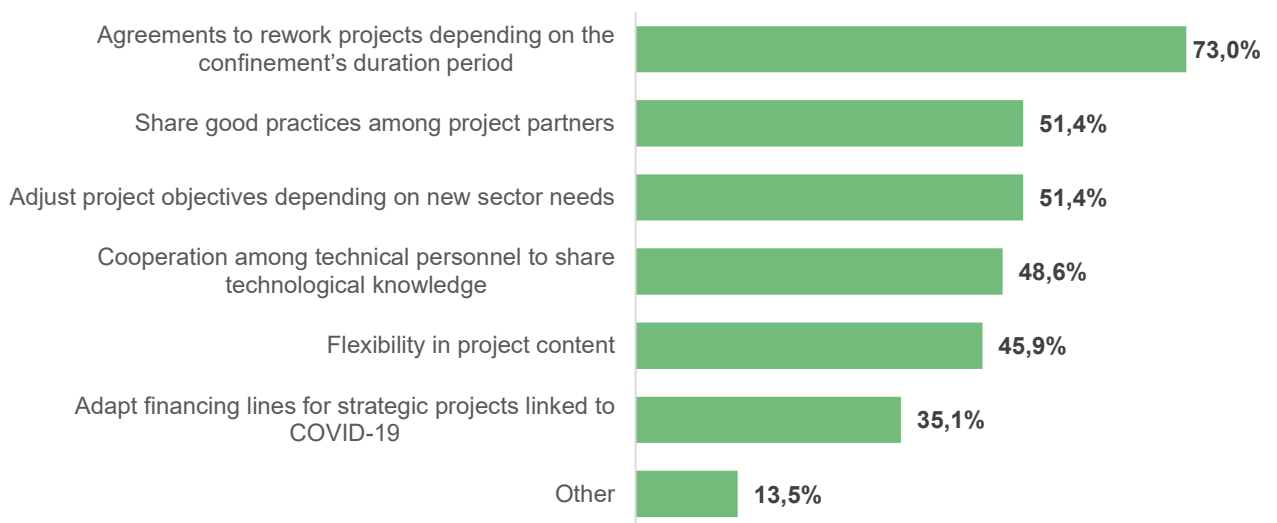
Importance of boosting cross-border cooperation to mitigate the impact on cross-border projects



56.8% of the Euroregional partners consider cross-border cooperation to be **fundamental** for mitigating the impact of **COVID-19** on their projects.

Possible actions or interventions have also been suggested, which in the scope of cross-border cooperation could help mitigate the border closure's impact on projects. Some **73%** of European partners accordingly consider that it is important to **generate agreements to rework projects depending on the duration period of the confinement (73%)**, and also to **share good practices between project partners (51.4%)** and **adjust the project goals depending on the sectors' new needs (51.4%)**.

Percentage of actions prioritised by the partners to mitigate the border closure's impact on projects



73% of European partners consider it important to generate agreements to rework projects as a key initiative for mitigating COVID-19's negative impact on cross-border projects.

The opportunity was also provided to freely share different initiatives deemed important for the partners. A common pattern was thus identified among the different testimonials, which stressed the **need for assistance that covers digitisation and online adaptation of the phases and/or activities of the projects**.

Finally, the partners were asked to reflect about **possible solutions the Euroregion could provide to help them in this process**. In this regard, the following actions and/or suggestions stand out:

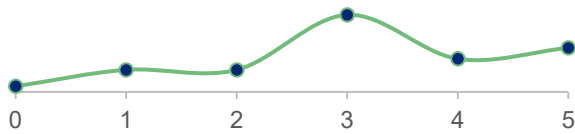
- Maintain financing plans so that research lines already in place among the partners can continue;
- Work as a vital tool for conveying the links between the regions, and the negative effects that unilateral measures may have (e.g. border closure);

- Be a 'visible agent' to remind of the need for different treatment of cross-border interchange zones;
- Put more emphasis on shared work projects, to generate common knowledge, not necessarily by means of 'traditional' face-to-face interchange but rather by processes of digital/online interchange, studies, practice pools and databases of agents on both sides of the border, etc;
- Enhance visibility of good practices by organising forums to share experiences;
- Focus the employment portal on concentrating specific information that addresses the cross-border community, also with a view to stimulating job opportunities amid the recession situation resulting from COVID-19.



Results of the survey of the Euroregional partners

Impact on cross-border projects



37,8%

of European projects were totally or extremely affected by COVID-19

Main problems identified in the different Euroregional projects



86,5%

Travel and mobility



78,4%

Deadlines



67,6%

Holding face-to-face meetings



51,4%

Inability to carry out a phase

81,1%

of the partners of the Euroregional projects concluded that the problems derived from COVID-19 will recur until the borders are totally opened



73%

of the projects have suffered postponements of phases and/or activities

The main future challenge will be **compliance with the health safety measures imposed by governments**

Impact on strategic sectors

Sectors most represented by the Euroregional partners



32,4%
Culture



13,5%
Education



13,5%
Agriculture

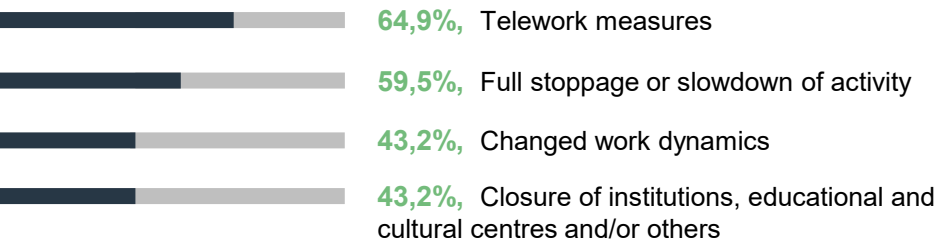


8,1%
Youth



5,4%
Health

Measures taken by companies in the strategic sectors



The partners **do not believe the border closure will have an overly significant impact** on their organisation.

Cross-border cooperation as a solution

56,8%

of the partners consider it to be fundamental

Cross-border cooperation is essential to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on cross-border projects.

Appendix

Methodology of the surveys

A.1. Survey of cross-border citizens

A.2. Survey of partners of Euroregional projects

Appendix | Methodology of the surveys

A.1. Survey of cross-border citizens

Identification

Name of operation: Impact of Border Closure on Cross-border Citizens

Periodicity: One-time survey

Category of operation: Random sampling survey

Methodology according to data origin: Direct gathering of primary data by random sampling.

Objectives

The survey's generic aim is to collect information about how the situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of the border between France and Spain has impacted the daily life of citizens of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion, with a special focus on the situation of the population of cross-border workers, identifying the main associated challenges and problems and obtaining their assessment regarding different typologies that can help mitigate that impact.

This overall objective can be substantiated in four specific goals:

1. To describe the population of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion with respect to its cross-border movement habits;
2. To identify the main socioeconomic habits impacted by the border closure;
3. To describe the incidence of the health crisis and border closure in the labour environment;
4. To obtain an indicator regarding the surveyed citizens' assessment of the importance of cross-border cooperation, especially in exceptional situations such as that derived from the border closure.

Scope

Population scope:

The survey's population universe is the population resident in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion.

Geographic scope:

The territorial area the survey refers to is the Nouvelle-Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion.

Timeframe:

The reference time of the survey on the impact of the border closure on cross-border citizens is that of the months from March to June 2020 (coinciding with the period the border was closed).

This is a one-time survey.

Sampling design

As this involves a random sampling via a freely disseminated web survey, no sampling design as such was done.

However, to ensure the survey's representativeness, two objective values were proposed for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%:

- In the case of the cross-border population, the calculation was based on the figure of 1,463,392 inhabitants of the border regions: Pyrénées-Atlantiques (679,354 inhabitants), Gipuzkoa (713,007 inhabitants) and the Northwest and Pyrenees of Navarra (71,031 inhabitants). The objective value was **385 responses**, of which 179 should come from Pyrénées-Atlantiques, 187 from Gipuzkoa and 19 from Navarra;
- In the case of the cross-border workers, it was calculated based on the estimated figure of 3,683 cross-border workers from the *Diagnosis of Cross-border Employment in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarre Euroregion* (2017) (3,212 Pyrénées-Atlantiques residents and 651 Gipuzkoa or Navarra residents). The objective value was **350 responses**, of which 291 should be from Pyrénées-Atlantiques residents and 59 from Gipuzkoa or Navarra residents.

A.2. Survey of the partners of Euroregional projects

Identification

Name of operation: Impact of COVID-19 on Euroregional Projects

Periodicity: One-time survey

Category of operation: Census

Methodology according to data origin: Survey of the entire statistical population.

Objectives

The survey's generic aim is to collect information about how the situation stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of the border between France and Spain has impacted the development of cross-border cooperation projects supported by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion, identifying the main associated challenges and problems and learning the respective opinions about the kind of support actions deemed most suitable for adjusting to the new situation when cross-border movement is once again permitted.

This overall objective can be substantiated in the following specific goals:

1. To qualify the impact of the border closure situation during the COVID-19 crisis on the development of cross-border projects, characterising the typology of problems faced by the partners and the response actions undertaken;
2. To characterise the extent of the situation's impact depending on the sectors affected, especially in the economic and labour areas;
3. To assess the partners' future prospects regarding the continuation of the cross-border projects.
4. To identify possible support measures the Euroregion could offer the partners of the cross-border cooperation projects.

Scope

Population scope:

This survey's population universe comprises those responsible for ongoing Euroregional projects that are being supported by the Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskadi Navarra Euroregion EGTC.

Geographic scope:

The territorial area the survey refers to is the NouvelleAquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion.

Timeframe:

The reference time of the survey on the impact of COVID-19 on Euroregional projects is that of the months from March to June 2020 (coinciding with the period the border was closed).

This is a one-time survey.

Sampling design

As this is a statistical operation of census type there was no need to carry out a sampling design process, as the survey was launched to the entire population universe.

Conclusions

Conclusions

The restrictions and controls on the mobility of European citizens within the Schengen area decreed by the EU Member States in the context of the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 have resulted in the **suspension of the freedoms of movement of persons, goods, and services protected by the Treaty of Lisbon**. In addition, it has meant the paralysis of strictly cross-border activity, with negative effects on the social and economic ecosystems of those living in the vicinity of those borders that we managed to erase.

The results of these surveys show us that the impossibility of moving freely within the cross-border area has meant that the daily life of the cross-border population, often organised on the border between the two States, has been **paralysed with possible effects on their family and socio-economic relations, and even on their access to health services**.

Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union recognises the challenges faced by border regions and stipulates that the Union must pay particular attention to these regions when developing and pursuing its action leading to the strengthening of its own economic, social and territorial cohesion. Border regions are the places where the process of European integration should be perceived most positively yet living between different administrative and legal systems remains complex and costly. In fact, the European Commission estimates that by removing only 20% of existing cross-border obstacles, border regions could increase their GDP by 2%.

The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) aims to **facilitate and promote territorial cooperation**, including one or more axes of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation, with the objective of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU.

The EGTC Nouvelle-Aquitaine Euskaid Navarra Euroregion, as a tool for the promotion of cross-border cooperation between the three territories, has worked and continues to work actively to respond to the different challenges of the territory. In this sense, the results identified in this report will guide us in our future lines of action, with special **emphasis on access to information on cross-border issues and on the casuistry of cross-border workers**.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

The Euroregion expresses its gratitude to the **municipal councils along the border, the administrations and the institutions that work in the area of cross-border cooperation and agents from the territory**, due to their involvement in disseminating the survey. We also thank the **cross-border** citizens for their ample participation and the information provided through the questionnaires.





• **E** EURORÉGION
EUROESKUALDEA
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