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# Cross-border Public Services (CPS)

Targeted Analysis

**Final Report**

**Scientific Report – Annex X**  
**Case study report – Euregio Scheldemond**



Version 16/11/2018

This targeted analysis is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinions of members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.

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Figure cover page: Euregio Scheldemond

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Final Report

Scientific Report – Annex X  
Case study report – Euregio Scheldemond

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# 1 Introduction

The Euregio Scheldemond is a cross-border region along the Dutch-Belgian border around the river Scheldt estuary. The region has about 3 million inhabitants which mostly live in the region's largest cities such as Ghent, Bruges and Vlissingen.

Cross-border flows of people are relatively large in the region. People cross the border for their daily activities, for example for shopping, leisure, education and work. These daily cross-border flows are supported by different cross-border public services (CPS). In short, these are public services that are provided or made possible by public authorities on both sides of the border for an undefined time and with a target group on both sides of the border.

Currently 23 CPS could be identified in the Euregio Scheldemond, of which 16 are located along the Dutch-Belgian border and seven are along the French-Belgian border. These CPS emerged due to the presence of several framework conditions. The region has a long cooperation tradition and different administrative and legal frameworks support CPS development.

The case study explores possibilities for further CPS development in the Euregio Scheldemond. In order to do so, Chapter 3 sets out the main characteristics of the region and the main potentials and challenges for CPS development in view of the multi-dimensional reality of the border. The chapter concludes with a short overview of current CPS provision in the region.

Chapter 4 describes three current CPS in-depth, namely the GIP Scheldemond the joint firestation of Kieldrecht – Nieuw-Namen and cross-border home and elderly care by Aan-Z. The main functional characteristics of these CPS are described, such as main administrative and legal frameworks and the production basis used, motivations for developing the CPS and their organisations structures. This illustrates the variety of different CPS provision alternatives.

Chapter 5 assesses the possibilities for further CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond for two examples, namely nautical management for North Sea Port and home-care in bi-polar villages. The assessment illustrates the importance of first establishing a common understanding of the needs and to explore the possibilities for CPS development following existing legal and administrative frameworks before deciding on the functional characteristics of the CPS.

Chapter 6 concludes with lessons learned and elements suitable for transfer to other regions. This focuses in particular on the role of individuals for CPS development and awareness creation needs in view of case by case decisions.

## 2 Methodology

The case study applies different methods. Comprehensive desktop research was the basic method to collect information about the overall situation in the border region. The variety of documents ranges from political, planning and legal documents to studies and newspaper articles.

Three existing CPS and two potential future CPS for in-depth analyses were selected in close collaboration with the Euregio Scheldemond. The information on the existing CPS was gathered through document analysis and complemented with information collected via an online survey and two expert interviews.

To collect information on the potentials for future CPS and to explore jointly practical possibilities for their development two focus groups were conducted on 21 June 2018, one for each future CPS. The first focus groups was held at the Port Company of North Sea Port with the harbour managers of the Ghent and Zeeland harbours and a representative of the province of Zeeland who has been involved in the development of cross-border protocols and conventions. The second focus groups was held at the EGTC Linieland Waas and Hulst and focused on home-care in the sub-region of the ETGC. Representatives from organisations providing home-care in the border area attended the focus group.

## 3 The case study region at a glance

Different border characteristics illustrate opportunities and challenges for CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond. Key characteristics are described in the following section, before reviewing the current CPS provision in the region. The latter could serve as inspiration for further CPS development.

### 3.1 Multidimensional reality of the border

Different aspects of the border determine the potentials for CPS. Following the methodology defined in the ESPON GEOSPECS project four main dimensions describe opening and closing effects of the border - political and governance dimension, physical and geographical dimension, economic dimension, and socio- cultural dimension (ESPON, 2012). Opening and closing effects for each of these four dimensions illustrate challenges or opportunities for CPS development.

**Opening effects from a political and legal point of view.** Different cooperation networks and bodies support the development of CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond. All cooperation initiatives contribute to opening effects of the border, including in particular different agreements, conventions or protocols that are partly concluded at Euregio level (for examples see Box 3-1).

At the level of the cross-border region, the Euregio Scheldemond provides the overall framework for cross-border cooperation and initiates projects. The Euregio was established in 1989 and consists of the three provinces and 142 municipalities. The Euregio is chaired by

the Scheldemond council and is supported by the Scheldemond fund. The mission of the Euregio is to mark the region by stimulating cooperation in the areas of bio-based economy, agro-food, logistics, sustainable harbours, healthcare and experience economy by offering a platform for creative, innovative cooperation initiatives across the sectors.

*Box 3-1 Cooperation agreements at Euregio level*

Two protocols concluded at Euregional level support the development of CPS.

**Disaster protocol.** Euroregional protocol on mutual assistance in case of catastrophes, concluded in 2003 among the Provinces of Zeeland, West-Flanders, East-Flanders and the municipalities of the Euregio Scheldemond. The protocol is an extension of domestic guidelines for handling in case of catastrophes. The protocol has been amended in 2005 with guidelines for aftercare.

**Firefighting protocol.** In 2006 the firefighting protocol Scheldemond was signed. This agreement allows firefighters across the border to perform their work when other than the domestic firefighter are faster or better equipped to allow assistance – so called “Neighbour support”. The agreement is an enforcement of earlier agreements and focuses in particular on the border municipalities of Assenende, Beveren, Brugge, Eeklo, Gent, Hulst, Knokke-Heist, Maldegem, Sint-Gilles-Waas, Sint-Niklaas, Sluis, Stekene, Terneuzen and Zelzate. Cross-border cooperation in case of emergencies exists longer and has been concluded by an agreement at national level in 1984, which has been amended and made more specific for the Scheldemond region in 1990 (Euregio Scheldemond, 2009).

Stakeholders of the Euregio Scheldemond also cooperate at higher geographical levels, including theme specific and generic cooperation. Theme specific cooperation includes the Flemish-Dutch Scheldt Committee for the coordination of environmental aspects in the Scheldt estuary. The International Scheldt Commission is an intergovernmental body for sustainable management of the Scheldt river district; and the Common Nautical Authority ensure nautical and maritime safety and security of the waterways.

General cooperation includes the involvement of Euregio stakeholders in the Interreg programme Netherlands-Flanders or through the Benelux Union. For 2014-2020 the Interreg programme Flanders-Netherlands focuses on innovation, labour mobility and sustainable growth related to energy efficiency and related to biodiversity, resource efficiency and the environment (Cooperation programme Vlaanderen-Nederland 2014-2020). The Benelux union focuses for the years 2017-2020 among others on labour mobility, policy and justice, low carbon economy, education and health care. In particular some BENELUX agreements support CPS development in the Euregio Scheldemond (Box 3-2).

*Box 3-2 Cooperation agreements at BENELUX level*

Different agreements and cooperation initiatives at BENELUX level support the development of CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond. This includes among others

**BENELUX Treaty.** The BENELUX Treaty on cross-border cooperation and inter-territorial cooperation from 2004 follows up on the BENELUX agreement of 1986. The Treaty supports cross-border cooperation by allowing different types of cross-border governance models. The following models or instruments exist along the instruments at European level such as the ETGC instrument and cooperation models promoted in the Madrid convention.

- BGTC or Benelux grouping of territorial cooperation is a legal cross-border body. This builds upon the earlier Common Public Bodies (*Gemeenschappelijk Openbaar Lichaam – GOL*).
- An administrative agreement is a cooperation without legal personality that transfers tasks of one participant to another participant who can then perform the tasks on behalf of the first.
- The Common body for cross-border or territorial cooperation ensures a platform for cooperation without legal personality.

**Provision of cross-border medical emergency services.** Border-crossings for emergency services are allowed between the Netherlands and Belgium with the conclusion of a bilateral agreement in 2009 (SG BENELUX, 2011).

**Education agreements.** Diplomas are mutually recognised in the BENELUX. The different GENT agreements between the Netherlands and Belgium have been replaced by a Benelux wide agreement to recognise all diplomas in higher education since early 2018.

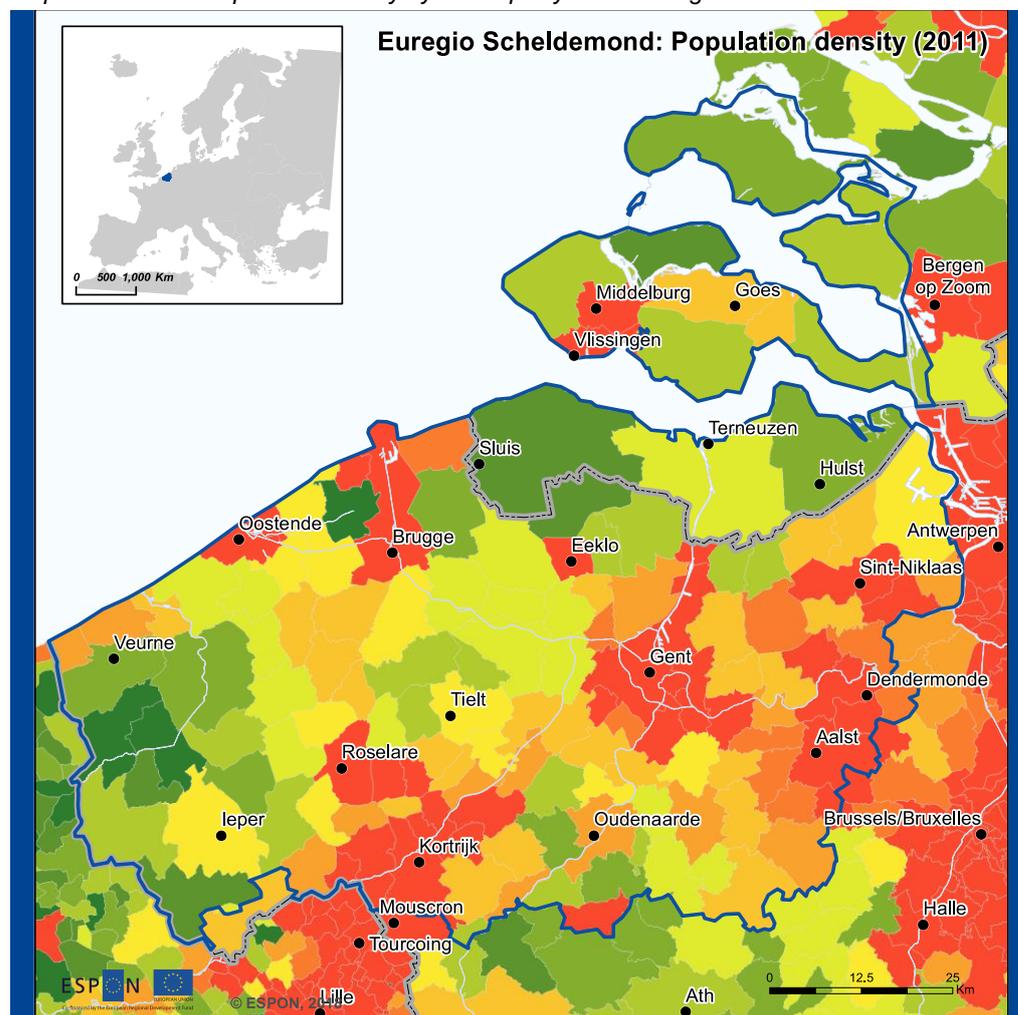
Cooperation networks also exist within the boundaries of the Euregio Scheldemond. Under the framework of the Euregio Scheldemond three clusters of municipal cross-border cooperation have been established. The eastern most cluster, Linieland of Waas en Hulst has established an EGTC and has the most mature cooperation structure. The EGTC exists of eight stakeholders including the municipalities of Beveren, Sint-Gillis-Waas, Stekene and Hulst. The EGTC aims at stimulating cross-border cooperation and implementing joint projects. The EGTC works around the four themes of port & economy, mobility, nature, recreation & cultural history and habitation and liveability (Zillmer et al., 2017). Municipalities of the centre cluster, around the harbour zone of Ghent and Terneuzen, have established a common public body (GOL) to frame the cooperation. The municipalities of Damme, Knokke-Heist, Maldegem, Sint-Laureins and Sluis form the third cluster of intermunicipal cross-border cooperation.

**Closure effects from a political point of view** of may occur as result of differences in governance systems. The large number of stakeholders in the region and relatively small municipalities on the Belgian side of the border cause fragmentation in decision- and policy-making processes. Furthermore, Belgium has a federal system with four administrative layers as compared to three administrative layers in the Netherlands. In combination with different assignments of competences on either side of the border this leads to governance asymmetries, which may result in border closure effects.

**Opening effects from a geographical point of view.** Settlement structures and geographic conditions are favourable for cross-border cooperation and thus CPS. Indeed, the Scheldt estuary and notably the Western Scheldt, provides drivers for CPS development, since it symbolises a natural border within the Netherlands contributing to a peripheral image of the border area south of the Western Scheldt. This peripheral image can be a driver for seeking increased cross-border cooperation and CPS development.

Population patterns strengthen geographical differences. Map 3–1 depicts the population density per municipality. In particular areas in the direct vicinity are less populous surrounded by larger cities, in particular in Belgium. A limited demand for public services in these border areas may illustrate a need for CPS development focusing on coordinated service delivery.

Map 3–1 Population density by municipality in the Euregio Scheldemond



**Population density (inh/sqkm)**

- < 75
- 76 - 100
- 101 - 150
- 151 - 200
- 201 - 250
- 251 - 300
- 301 - 400
- 401 - 500
- 501 - 600
- > 601

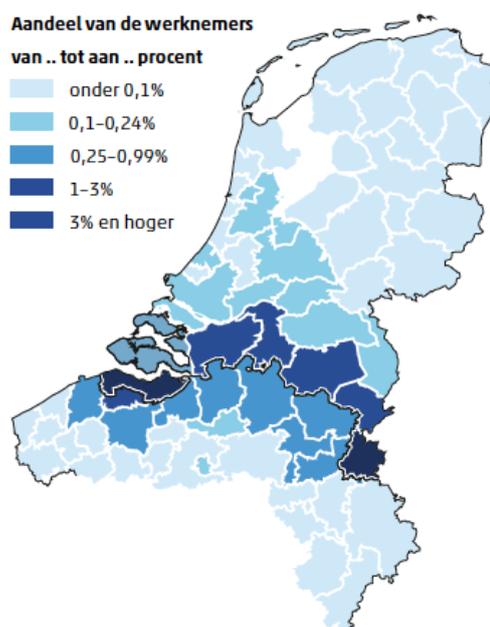
- Case Study region
- National border
- Sea, lakes

Local level: LAU2  
 Source: ESPON CPS  
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018;  
 ESPON LAU2 census file, 2011  
 Spatial Foresight, 2018  
 CC - UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

**Opening effects from an economic point of view.** The perceived peripheral location of part of the region impacts economic development. This is most notable in labour flows. Employees from the southernmost part of the Dutch province of Zeeland (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) seek frequently employment in Belgium. More than 3% all employees in this area commutes to Belgium (see Figure 3–1).

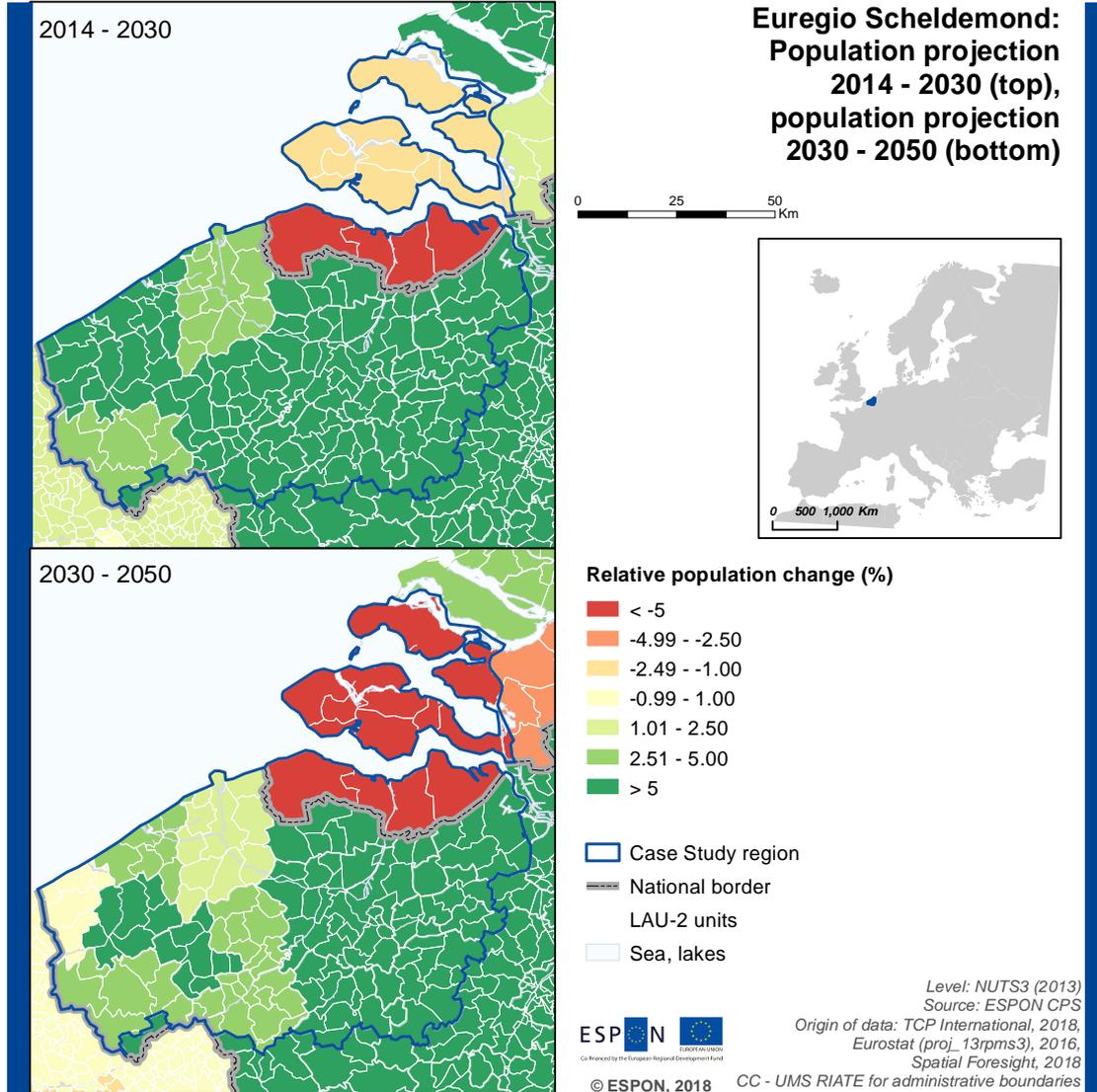
Figure 3–1 Cross-border commuters along the Dutch-Belgium border, 2014

### Grenspendelaars, Nederland → België, 2014



Source: (CBS, 2017)

On the long-term people may consider moving out of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen rather than commuting. This region is expected to face the strongest population decline in the Euregio Scheldemond (Map 3–2). The overall population growth in the Euregio Scheldemond is forecasted to 4% until 2030, with the exception of the Dutch regions, which are expected to face decline of population (Euregio Scheldemond, n.d.). In particular the Dutch area along the border (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) as well as smaller Belgian (rural) municipalities will face further decrease in population in the next years.



These population changes will have economic impacts and may increase cross-border flows in the future. These increased cross-border flows suggest opening effects with respect to CPS development.

Already today, most job opportunities are on the Belgium side of the border, which is more urbanised (Ponds et al., 2013). This imbalance on the labour market for the 1.4 million economically active people in the region may decrease by better matching the labour markets in the Netherlands and Flanders. Therefore different administrative and juridical boundaries would need to be further reduced (Ponds et al., 2013). Another solution could be to increase economic cooperation in the region and therewith increase the critical mass to compete with the main economic hubs in the neighbourhood of the Euregio, such as the urban regions of Antwerp and Rotterdam. The harbours of Ghent and Terneuzen have already been merged to better market themselves against the harbours in Rotterdam and Antwerp (Section 5).

**Opening effect from a socio-cultural point of view.** Since the citizens in the Euregio Scheldemond speak the same language, share a common history and use cultural services

on both sides of the border the socio-cultural dimension has only opening effects (Ponds et al., 2013).

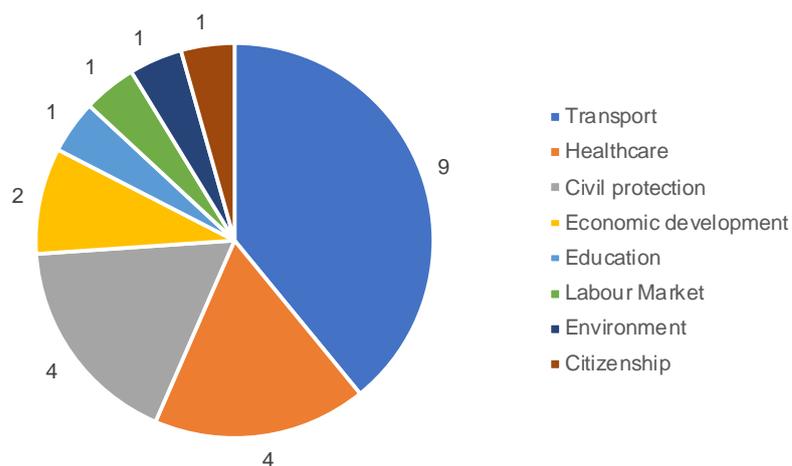
### 3.2 Existing CPS in the region

The predominantly opening effects along the Dutch-Belgian border in the Euregio Scheldemond led to the establishment of sixteen identified CPS to date. Besides CPS along the Dutch-Belgian border, seven CPS along the Belgian-French border materialise in the Euregio Scheldemond. The Euregio Scheldemond hosts thus in total 23 CPS (see Map 3–3 and Table 3–1 for a comprehensive overview).

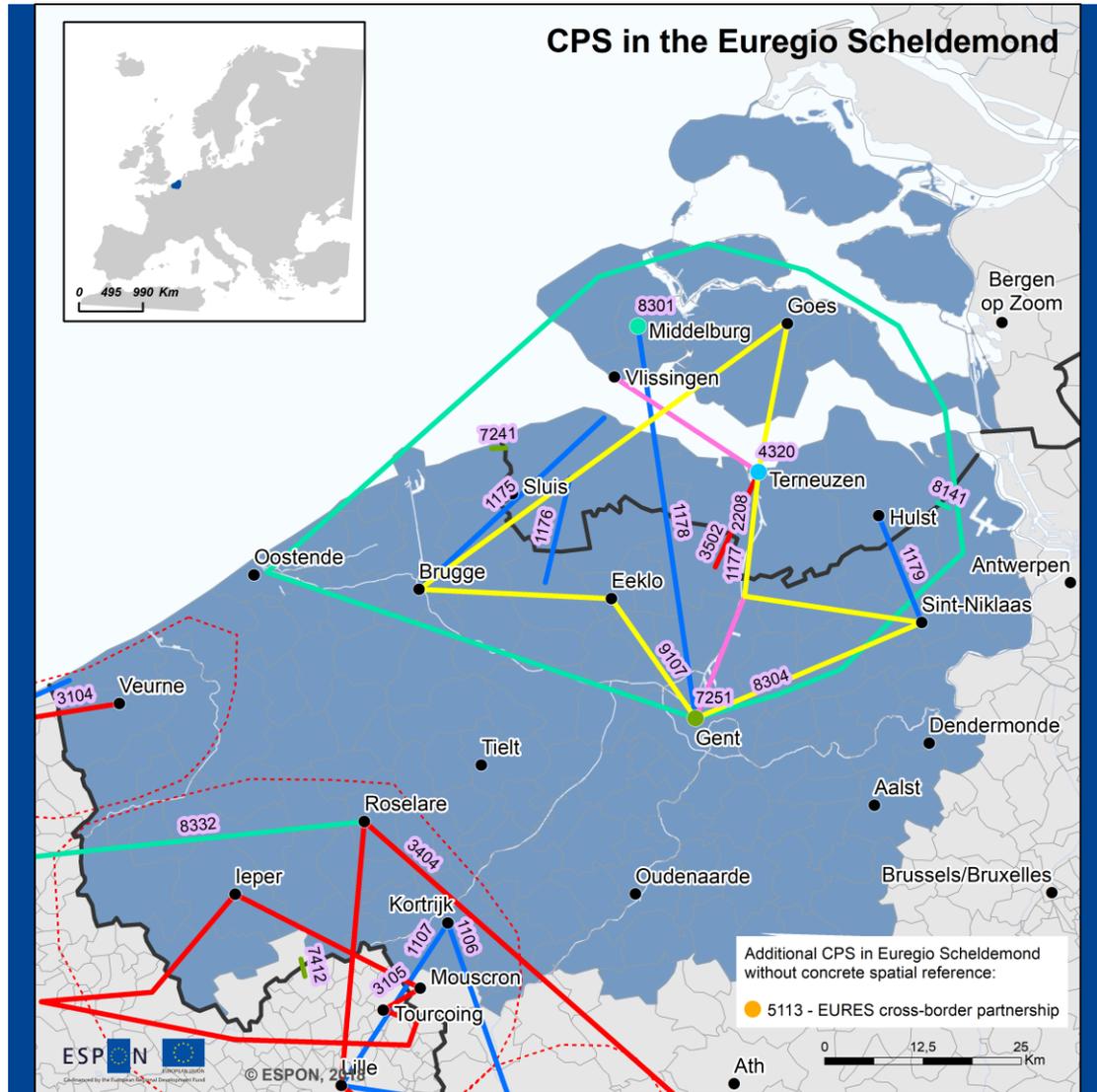
Most CPS in the region are in the field of transport, including various bus and train connections. Other policy fields with more than one CPS are provided are health care, civil protection and economic development (Figure 3–2).

The number of CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond has been steadily growing since the early 2000s. This is also the period in which most regulatory frameworks have been concluded or updated (see section 3.1).

Figure 3–2 Number of CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond by policy field



Source: Service provider CPS database, 2018



**Themes / fields of application of CPS services**

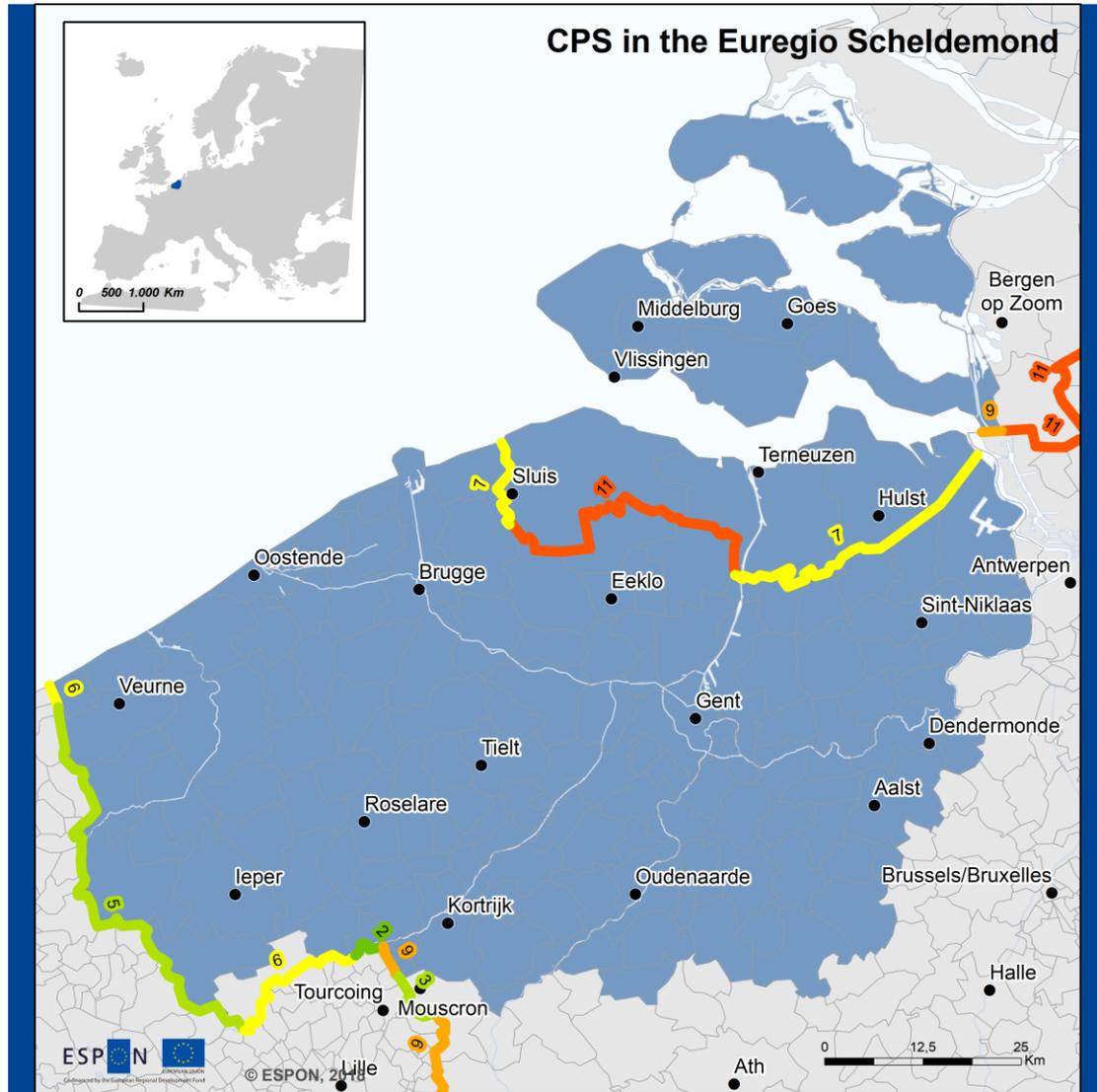
- Citizenhip, justice and public security
- Civil protection and disaster management
- Communication, broadband and information society
- Education and training
- Environment protection
- Healthcare and social inclusion
- Labour market and employment
- Spatial planning, tourism and culture
- Transport

- Case study area
- Health care area
- National border
- LAU-2 units

Local level: LAU2  
 Source: ESPON CPS  
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018;  
 Eureconsult, 2018; RRG GIS Database, 2018

Map 3-4

Number of CPS per border segment in the Euregio Scheldemond



**Number of CPS per border segment**

- no CPS
  - 1 - 2
  - 3 - 5
  - 6 - 7
  - 8 - 10
  - 11 - 15
  - 16 - 23
- Case study area  
LAU-2 units

Local level: LAU2  
Source: ESPON CPS  
Origin of data: TCP International, 2018;  
Eureconsult, 2018; RRG GIS Database, 2018

Table 3–1 Overview of CPS in the Euregio Scheldemond

#	Map	Name	Theme	Year	Target group	Description
<b>Belgium - Netherlands</b>						
1-6	1175 - 1180	6 cross-border bus lines between Flanders and Zeeland	Transport	-	Cross-border workers and jobseekers, pupils, students and apprentices of all ages, tourists	The six different bus connections crossing the Flemish and Dutch border are differently organised. The CPS is either provided as cross-border extension of a nationally operated service, e.g. between Sint Niklaas and Hulst operated by De Lijn, or is operated in a network, e.g. between Brugge and Breskens, which is operated jointly by Connexion and De Lijn.
7	2207	Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant	Economic development	2009	Enterprises, pupils and students, economic actors	The Biobase Europe Pilot Plant is a publicly supported facility for product and process development. The CPS serves as a platform for business and product development contributing to the region's economic development.
8	2208	North Sea Port	Economic development	2017	Economic actors of various sectors; public authorities such as firefighters	In December 2016 the public shareholders of the harbours of Ghent and Zeeland Seaports signed an intention agreement to assess the possibility for a merger. Since December 2017 the harbours are jointly managed and since July 2018 the harbours are officially managed under the umbrella of a European holding company. A European holding company (SE) is a private enterprise following the EU regulation EC 2157/2001. The original shareholders of the Zeeland Seaports (Province Zeeland and the municipalities of Borsele, Terneuzen and Vlissingen) and the shareholders of Harbour of Gent (Province of East Flanders and the city of Gent) remained the main shareholders in the new cross-border harbour management. Due to this public ownership, the harbour management of North Sea Port can be considered as CPS.
9	3502	Cross-border body "Well-being of the elderly Assenede-Sas van Gent"	Healthcare, social inclusion	2002	Elderly people, people in need of home-care	Aan-Z health offers primary health-care services in neighbouring Belgium and Dutch municipalities. This CPS is described in depth in Chapter 4.
10	4320	Bio Base Europe Training Center	Education and training	2012	Economic actors of various sectors; Researchers; Pupils and students and apprentices of all ages	Bio Base Europe Training Center is a publicly supported training facility. Different players could make use of the facilities to organise trainings, workshops or other events in the field of bio economy.

#	Map	Name	Theme	Year	Target group	Description
11	5113	EURES Cross-border partnership Scheldemond	Labour market and employment	-	Cross-border workers, job-seekers, trainees employers / companies	EURES is a European network of public labour market services in Europe. The partnership of the EURES Scheldemond involves public employment services, employers' organisations, employees' organisations and the five provinces in the cross-border region.
12	7241	Zwin Nature Park	Environmental protection, natural resources management and climate change action	-	Tourists	Het Zwin is a nature park along the Dutch Belgium coastline. It is one of the few areas where salt water breaks through the dunes towards the hinterland, making it an unique landscape for both Flanders and the Netherlands. 80 % of the nature park is situated on Belgium territory. Belgium and Dutch authorities work closely together to maintain this park (Het Zeeuwse Landschap, 2018).
13	8141	Joint fire station Nieuw-Namen - Kieldrecht	Civil protection and disaster management	2014	General public	In 2006 the firefighting protocol Scheldemond was signed. This agreement allows firefighters across the border to perform their work when other than the domestic firefighter are faster or better equipped to allow assistance – so called "Neighbour support". The agreement is an enforcement of earlier agreements and focuses in particular on the border municipalities of Assenende, Beveren, Brugge, Eeklo, Gent, Hulst, Knokke-Heist, Maldegem, Sint-Gilles-Waas, Sint-Niklaas, Sluis, Stekene, Terneuzen and Zelzate (Euregio Scheldemond, 2009). The agreement opened also for the cross-border public service of the joint fire station in the bi-polar villages of Kieldrecht-Nieuw Namen. This cross-border public service is described in more detail in chapter 4.
14	8301	Cooperation of firefighting and rescue services in the scope of "Maritime Incident Response Groups" (MIRG-EX)	Civil protection and disaster management	2012	Fire brigades, ships	Fire and rescue services from France, England, Belgium and the Netherlands joint efforts to provide better services for vessels at sea. Teams from the different countries train regular together to get familiar with each other equipment to ensure joint actions in case of emergencies.
15	8304	Regional/local cross-border cooperation in case of disasters	Civil protection and disaster management	2003	Fire brigades, General public	Euroregional protocol on mutual assistance in case of catastrophes, concluded in 2003 among the Provinces of Zeeland, West-Flanders, East-Flanders and the municipalities of the Euregio Scheldemond. The protocol is an extension of domestic guidelines for handling in case of catastrophes. The protocol has been amended in 2005 with guidelines for aftercare.
16	9107	Border InfoPoint (grensinfopunt) „Euregio	Citizenship, justice	-	Entrepreneurs, students,	The cross-border information point Scheldemond is one of the information points among the Dutch-Belgium and Dutch-German

#	Map	Name	Theme	Year	Target group	Description
		Scheldemond“	and public security		workers and jobseekers	borders. The information points form a network of one-stop-shops for border crossers – commuters, workers, students etc. The border information points provide information on labour law, fiscal systems, social security, health insurances and education in the other country. The GIP Scheldemond is described in more detail in chapter 4.
<b>Belgium - France</b>						
17	1106	13 cross-border bus lines within the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai	Transport	-	Cross-border workers and jobseekers, pupils, students and apprentices of all ages, tourists	In support of increasing cross-border mobility in the Eurométropole. The region hosts 13 cross-border bus lines of which the line Mouscron-Wattrelos-Roubaix (MWR) is the most important one. The other lines stop a few metres beyond the border to allow the junction with other means of transport (metro and tram on the French side or SNCB on the Belgian side). The management of the MWR line is integrated. It is operated jointly by Transpole and TEC Hainaut. A single tariff is set up and the revenues and operating expenses are shared equally between the two organising authorities. This is, and by far, the most-travelled cross-border line with 1,070 passengers a day (ENS Département Géographie et Territoires, 2011).
18	1107	2 two cross-border rail services and a scheme of advantageous rail ticket prices for short distance cross-border trips within the Eurométropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai	Transport	2015	Cross-border workers and jobseekers, pupils, students and apprentices of all ages, tourists	In addition to the aforementioned bus lines in the Eurométropole, the region also offers two cross-border rail lines - Lille-Mouscron-Kortrijk and Lille-Tournai. Schoolchildren are 80% of the passengers of the first line and 48% of the second line. The latter also frequented by cross-border workers (25%). A subscription has been specially created for regular cross-border travellers, the Trampoline Card. (Eurométropole, 2013)
19	1180	Bus line De Panne Dunkerque	Transport	-	Cross-border workers and jobseekers, pupils, students and apprentices of all ages, tourists	De bus connection De Panne – Dunkerque replaces the closed rail connection since the 1990s. The bus connection is operated by the public transport provider of Dunkerque and can thus be classified as border extension CPS.
20	3104	Organised zone for cross-border access to healthcare “ZOAST LITTORAL”	Healthcare, social inclusion	2015	People of all ages requiring medical care	The ZOAST MRTW-URSA was created on 1 April 2008 building on existing cooperation since 1994. This ZOAST concerns the hospitals of Mouscron, Roubaix, Tourcoing and Wattrelos (MRTW) and has been enlarged in 2009 and 2014 with the inclusions of the hospitals of leper, Armentières, Bailleul and Hazebrouck. The

#	Map	Name	Theme	Year	Target group	Description
						ZOAST MRTW-URSA reaches more than 500,000 inhabitants.
21	3105	Organised zone for cross-border access to healthcare "ZOAST MRTW-URSA"	Healthcare, social inclusion	2008	People of all ages requiring medical care	The ZOAST Littoral includes the Sint-Augustinuskliniek in Veurne and the hospital in Dunkirk and is established in January 2015. It addresses challenges with health care availability and supports building synergies between health care capacities on both sides of the border for examples by increasing the access to equipment (Delecosse et al., 2017). More specifically, the PET scanner from the hospital in Dunkirk is accessible to Belgium patients. Another cooperation example is the possibility for interns to gain nursing experience in both hospitals (Ramon et al., 2014).
22	3404	Border-crossing operation of Franco-Belgian mobile emergency and resuscitation services	Healthcare, social inclusion	2008	People of all ages requiring medical care	Border-crossing operation of Franco-Belgian mobile emergency services. The agreement was concluded on 20 March 2007. The services is based on both sides of the border and provides a back-up when the local service is unavailable at the time of the call, following an order of priority for operations defined for each border area on the basis of the location of emergency service bases. (Delecosse et al., 2017)
23	8332	Regional/local cross-border cooperation in case of disasters	Civil protection and disaster management	1986	Fire brigades, General public	The province of West-Flanders and the French department Nord agreed on assistance in case of disasters since establishing the convention in April 1981. The regional agreement clarifies responsibilities at regional level and includes further details and plans specific to the area targeted. The convention has been amended a few times since 1981.

## **4 Cross-border public services provided in the region**

This section discusses three currently provided cross-border public services in depth. It contains detailed information on the legal and governance context, the services offered, the needs addressed and the delivery mode. These provide insights and ideas for the future CPS in the region that will be discussed in section 5.

Grensinfopunt (GIP) illustrates the possibility of implementing a CPS in a network, i.e. without a central cross-border body with legal personality managing and implementing the CPS. Furthermore, the CPS illustrates the need for a CPS specific production base, so-called system interface infrastructure.

The joint fire brigade in Nieuw-Namen Kieldrecht illustrates a concrete example emerging from an overarching cross-border public service – the firefighting protocol. Furthermore, this service illustrates a rather local service mainly for the benefit of the bi-polar village Nieuw-Namen Kieldrecht.

Aan-Z is currently the only cross-border public service in the region along the Dutch-Flemish border in the field of home and health care, relevant for assessing the possibilities of the selected future CPS.

### **4.1 Grensinfopunt Scheldemond (GIP)**

Grensinfopunt Scheldemond is the local focal point for all people in need of detailed information or advice on working and living across the border, for example information on pensions, social security, taxes and job opportunities in the Netherlands or Flanders. The CPS has been established in 2014 as part of a network of GIP along the Dutch-Belgium and Dutch-German borders. GIP provides uniform information to citizens and provide a one-stop-shop for people that are looking for specific information and advice. In support of these one-stop-shops, different national organisations and authorities cooperate to provide the detailed information to the GIP.

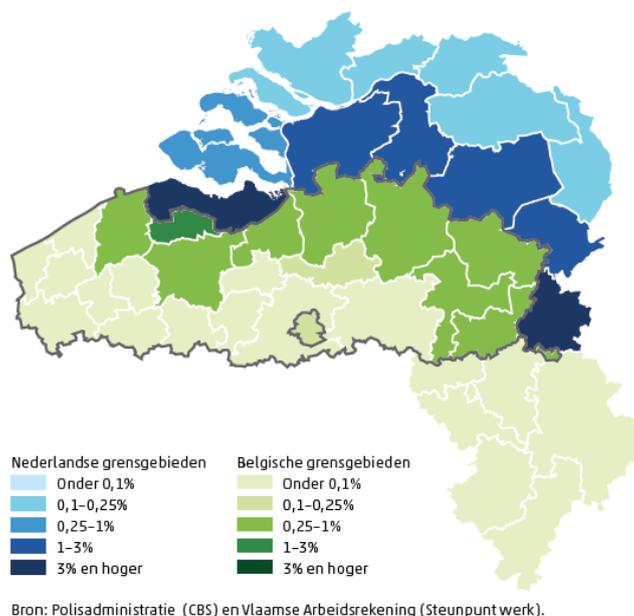
#### **4.1.1 Information and advice to increasing number of cross-border workers**

Prior to the establishment of the GIP Scheldemond, people that are, have been, or would like to work across the border could receive advice and information through different national employment agencies. The Dutch employment agency UWV operated “Bureau Belgium” in Terneuzen. Due to budget cuts, the office in Ternuezen was closed and services for cross-border workers were limited to online support only. In response to this limitation stakeholders in the Euregio Scheldemond initiated the establishment of the GIP Scheldemond to continue personalised and individualised support to cross-border workers. In doing so, stakeholders made use of experience and results from different Interreg projects.

The establishment of the GIP did not only fill the gap of lacking personalised advice on cross-border working and living, it also addressed the increasing demand to this type of information (GOL Terneuzen-Gent, 2012). Differences in demographic and economic development on

both sides of the border contribute to increasing flows. The share of employees in the neighbouring country in the Euregio Scheldemond is among the highest of the Dutch border region (Figure 4–1). The flow of people is in particular large for the area of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. People living in this part of Zeeland find more job opportunities in the Flemish cities across the border. These are not only Dutch people, but increasingly Belgium citizens that live in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen due to cheaper housing prices.

Figure 4–1 Share of employees living in the neighbouring country  
**Aandeel werknemers woonachtig in buurland, 2014**



Source: CBS, 2017)

The GIP Scheldemond also contributes to making better use of the economic potential in the border region. The CPS contributes indirectly to better matching of different labour markets. In particular in regions that are challenged by population decline better matching of the labour market could contribute to sustain economic growth. The potential for cross-border flows is almost twice as high as current flows as estimated in recent studies. These flows often don't occur due to uncertainty, ambiguity and administrative burden concerning labour law, fiscal systems, social security, health insurances and education (Ten Doeschot et al., 2017).

In short, the CPS GIP Scheldemond has a supply task in the form of providing information and advice to citizens, mostly concerning labour market issues. In that sense the, CPS intervention rationale can be described as quality improvement foreseeing in a demand from the population and improving efficiency by offering coordination advice and information in the form of one-stop-shops.

#### 4.1.2 Specific cooperation agreements for the functioning of the CPS

The need for local focal points on cross-border labour market issues was acknowledged by politicians. This supported the conclusion of administrative and legal frameworks for the functioning of the CPS (see Box 4-1).

*Box 4-1 Importance of political support for the establishing of the CPS*

Politicians at local, regional and cross-border and BENELUX levels acknowledged the need for advice and information on cross-border labour market issues. Via active engagement or the inclusion of labour market issues in political agendas and strategies, politicians encourage cooperation and commitment among the different players involved in the GIP. Political support furthermore eases financing and marketing and promotion of the service among the target group.

The GIP builds on specific agreements between the involved partners of the GIP. These specific agreements shape the service and ensure its delivery. Specific agreements and administrative frameworks have been concluded for the establishment of the GIP Scheldemond at the level of all GIP and specifically for the GIP Scheldemond.

All GIP along the Dutch-German and Dutch-Belgium borders are based on feasibility and business plans from 2015 and the subsequent intention declaration among the six Euregios. The intention agreement engaged the Euregio Scheldemond to establish a GIP following the minimum requirements for service provision laid down in the agreement. The intention agreement acknowledges 1) increasing number of cross-border movement 2) cross-border crossers have a need for information and advice on different systems 3) national and regional systems keep on evolving that ask for individualised support (e.g. increasing flexibility on the labour market, changes in social security, taxation rules etc.). Hence the agreement requires each Euregio along the Dutch border to establish and manage front-offices for individualised information and advice. Citizens would need to be able to reach the information point via phone at least during office hours and personal meeting would need to be possible at least two times a week. In addition the agreement calls for the use of common and uniform branding of the GIP. Lastly, the intention agreement expects the partners of the GIP to engage in and support coordination activities. Two groups have been established to encourage coordination and cooperation. 1) an expert group with advisors 2) a coordination group consisting of strategic representatives from the GIP. Each year the expert group proposes a joint action plan to the coordination group. The coordination group meets once a year in one of the Euregios.

#### **4.1.3 Network organisation to bring the services closer to citizens**

Besides the intention agreement between the Euregios along the Dutch borders, specific agreements and arrangements exist at the level of each GIP. The GIP Scheldemond has a slightly different development path than the other GIPs along the Dutch borders. Due to the closure “Bureau Belgium” in Terneuzen, the region started establishing a local focal point before the introduction of GIP. Later the two different initiatives have been aligned allowing for uniform branding and service provision along the Dutch borders.

Different stakeholders in the Euregio Scheldemond cooperated to maintain a front-office for labour market issues in the region. This involves a network of local employment offices, labour unions and employers organisations that previously engaged in Interreg projects.

Today, this partnership is still the basis for the organisational structure of the front-offices of the GIP Scheldemond. Unlike in most other Euregios along the Dutch borders the GIP Scheldemond consists of multiple offices. The region hosts in total seven offices hosted by the different partner organisations, ensuring a financial contribution from all partner organisation to the functioning of the GIP. In addition, GIP Scheldemond makes currently use of Interreg funding.

The cooperation among the partners is laid down in different business plans and a joint declaration from 2015. These documents ensure the cooperation and the service provision of the GIP. The business plan and declaration calls for a coordinated service provision. The Werkservicepunt (WSP) Terneuzen acts as coordinator of the GIP Scheldemond and encourages cooperation among the different partners and front-offices.

The organisation of back offices remained more or less the same as before the establishment of the GIP. Different national ministries and agencies have different type of information relevant for cross-border workers. The back-offices consist of organisations dealing with social security, taxation, health and social insurances, pensions etc. Employees from the GIP transfer the needed information between the users of the service and the organisations in the back-offices.

In short, instead of information and advisory services offered by many different nationally organised organisations and authorities, the GIP offers uniform information and advice to citizens. Besides the local offices in the Euregio Scheldemond, joint branding and exchange of information and experience in a wider network of GIP along the Dutch border supports easy access to information in a wider area.

#### **4.1.4 System interface infrastructures to support uniform services across partners**

The organisational structure demands specific infrastructures to support uniform service provision across the seven different partner organisation. The use of soft infrastructures such as joint education of staff and exchange of information and knowledge between staff is secured through the cooperation agreement. These types of activities are supported with Interreg funding.

In addition, the GIP makes use of system interface infrastructures, specific for the functioning of this type of CPS. Jointly, all GIP along the Dutch borders host a website with information on cross-border working and living as well as contact details of all GIP. This website is jointly financed by all GIPs / Euregios with the support of Interreg funding. All GIP exchange information on common issues and questions and advice provided via a so-call fall management system. Staff members of the different GIP can provide and information on “most frequently asked questions” in this system, limiting the number of transfers to the back offices.

#### **4.1.5 Continued discussions for improving the CPS and its delivery**

The GIP Scheldemond supports in the need for a single information point for questions on cross-border working and living. More than 1,300 persons have received individualised and personalised information and advice through the GIP Scheldemond. This implies that more than 10% of the estimated target group uses the service. 80% of the users are cross-border workers, of which most of jobseekers. 20% of the users are employers. The majority of the users, roughly 60%, contact the GIP via telephone others make use of the service via email, the website or in person in one of the seven locations.

The example illustrates the provision of a service by a network of different players and yet offering uniform services to the target group. Due to the concentration and harmonisation of information and advice provision in the different locations and via the joint website and branding, more people get familiar with the GIP and its services.

Stakeholder of all GIP, including the GIP Scheldemond are discussing how to continue service delivery and how to improve it. For the future, the GIP Scheldemond is assessing different organisational modes as well as sources for financing. They assess among others the possibility of a single office run jointly by partners from both sides of the border. The partners discuss the idea to establish a single information point following the examples of the GIP along the Dutch-German border. The advantage of a centrally managed CPS is to have better control of the information provided to the citizens. The disadvantage is that it would require the conclusion of more formal agreements or the establishment of cross-border legal body following the BENELUX Treaty (see Box 3-2) or by establishing an EGTC.

#### **4.2 Joint fire station Kieldrecht - Nieuw Namen**

Since 2015, the voluntary fire brigade from Nieuw-Namen in the Netherlands has been moved to the fire brigade less than one kilometre away in Kieldrecht, Belgium. The newly established fire station hosts 22 firefighters of which eight from the former fire brigade in Kieldrecht. This CPS illustrates the advantages of CPS provision at local level in cross-border towns and villages.

##### **4.2.1 Applying Euregional agreements for the establishment of a CPS**

The merger of the two fire brigades is a concrete materialisation of a CPS coming from the firefighting protocol concluded by the stakeholders of the Euregio Scheldemond in 2006 (see Chapter 3), which mentions the possibility of fire brigade mergers. Specifically the possibility of merging the fire brigades of Nieuw-Namen and Kieldrecht is mentioned as example (annex 4b of the protocol).

In line with the firefighting protocol, the responsible mayors from both sides of the border signed an intention agreement to start the process for merging the two fire brigades in January 2014. The agreement includes six starting points that form the basis for establishing the CPS. These six points include the intention 1) to have one fire station on Belgium territory serving also Dutch territory; 2) to base the merger on the firefighting protocol; 3) to use the

fire trucks from the station in Kieldrecht, the fire truck from Nieuw-Namen will be outdated; 4) the Dutch firefighter will be employed as fire fighters of the Belgium municipality Beveren; 5) The Belgium and Dutch certificates and diplomas will be mutually acknowledged; 6) the safety region Zeeland ensure delivery of recent and up-to-date data on planning, prevention and preparation concerning the Dutch area covered (Pauwels and Van Mieghem, 2015).

This agreement launched a project to assess the possibilities of merging the two fire brigades. This project was supported with a grant from the Scheldemond Fund of 41,000 EUR to be used for feasibility studies, extra schooling and purchasing fire extinguishers and communication material.

In April 2015 the merger of the two fire brigades was further formalised by concluding the cooperation agreement on quickest adequate assistance. This agreement allows the fire brigade of Kieldrecht to operate in Dutch territory and goes thus beyond the agreement of neighbour support as concluded in the firefighter protocol.

#### **4.2.2 New skills to comply with norms and standards across the border**

For the functioning of the joint fire station different infrastructures had to be applied. The merger of the fire brigades created a window of opportunity to build a new fire station in Kieldrecht, complying with the latest standards and allowing enough space for the larger team. This hard infrastructure has not been fully developed for the CPS, but has been adjusted to meet the new situation of cross-border cooperation.

Prior to the establishment of the CPS, voluntary fire fighters from the brigades of Kieldrecht and Nieuw-Namen jointly participated in extra education. This soft infrastructure for the establishment of the CPS aimed at coordinating the procedure related to the region specific risks and to get acquainted with the Belgium processes and procedures for fire brigades. For example, the Dutch voluntary fire fighter needed to pass sport, written and oral tests (Pauwels and Van Mieghem, 2015). New skills we among others required regarding procedures in case of a nuclear meltdown. This due to the close proximity of a nuclear power plant on Belgian territory.

#### **4.2.3 Making better use of human resources**

Combining resources from the two fire brigades allows better and more adequate service delivery in the cross-border area. With the establishment of the CPS, the fire brigade has a larger pool of human and can ensure sufficient firefighters to equip trucks and answer calls.

Prior to the establishment of the CPS the individual voluntary fire brigades had difficulties to find sufficient staff. In particular during office hours it was challenging to ensure sufficient fire fighters on stand-by in case of emergency. Even different promotion campaigns did not result in sufficient staff to equip the trucks in both villages.

The joint fire station is an examples of an effectiveness-improving CPS with a supply task. In total the CPS covers an area of more than 7,000 inhabitants, of which 6,000 in Belgium and 1,100 in the Netherlands. Although the services are rarely used, only once or twice per week,

all needs are properly addressed. This includes adequate supply to the potential users, adequate accessibility, adequate affordability mattered most.

The establishment of the CPS took around 20 months. During these months different obstacles had to be overcome and challenges were encountered.

Challenges that were possible to overcome concerned differences in competences and responsibilities of actors on both sides of the border. Even though the hierarchies of firefighters and the competences for implementation of the service are different in both countries this did not cause major issues. In fact different practical arrangements have been made to overcome these challenges.

- the full service delivery is subject to Belgium fire commander;
- the emergency assistance zone Waasland (Hulpverleningszone) and safety region Zeeland (Veiligheidsregio) are responsible for control and supervising the implementation;
- the establishment of an emergency procedure in which emergency assistance zone Waasland, safety region Zeeland and 112 Gent cooperate;
- agreement for joint yearly practice of the fire brigades of Kieldrecht and Hulst (Pauwels and Van Mieghem, 2015).

Other challenges were harder to address at local and regional levels. It was not possible to fully mutually acknowledge the necessary diploma's and certificates due to different standards and norms. As a result the Dutch voluntary firefighter joined the new CPS had to follow extra courses and trainings. Also, there is a difference in taxes paid by the fire fighters living in the Netherlands and Belgium. Belgian voluntary fire fighters can make use of an exemption for certain income taxes. Dutch voluntary firefighters cannot make use of this exemption causing different remunerations for firefighters of the same fire brigade. Even though the establishment of the CPS contributed to increased awareness raising on this issue among the responsible authorities, the issue remained unsolved.

These challenges led to some minor delay in the foreseen timing of establishing the CPS. four months after signing the intention agreement a request for prolonging the grant support was requested. A second request for prolongation was issued fourteen months after the intention agreement. Furthermore, only eight out of the eleven firefighters from Nieuw-Namen joined the fire brigade in Kieldrecht in the end (Pauwels and Van Mieghem, 2015).

#### **4.2.4 More effective service delivery at local level**

Combining the two fire brigades led to an improved basic fire service in the border area. This example illustrates the establishment of a CPS contributing to more effective service delivery at local level in an area with relatively low population density and population decline. It furthermore shows the establishment of a concrete service following an overarching cross-border regional convention.

### **4.3 Aan-Z local cross-border home-care**

Aan-Z is a public organisation responsible for the provision of home-care in the neighbouring municipalities of Assenede (Belgium) and Terneuzen (the Netherlands). Aan-Z offers a large variety of services such as elderly-care and home-care.

The current organisation is a continuation of cooperation agreement between mayors on both sides of the border in 1981. Since then, the provision of elderly and home-care has been subject to many changes. This example illustrates the relevance of continuous monitoring services delivery and finding practical solutions to address changes.

#### **4.3.1 Maintaining high quality service delivery by joining forces**

In the 1980s, the mayors of Assenede and Sas-van-Gent observed a common issue on securing qualitative of home-care service for elderly in their municipalities. In both countries municipalities were given more competences in this field by their respective national authorities (Ex et al., 2003). Being both relatively small municipalities at the fringe of their country they had the difficulty in finding sufficient capacities to deliver elderly care respecting all quality standards.

The possibility of receiving a grant to support elderly care at local level from the Dutch national government initiated a cross-border cooperation that later resulted in a CPS. One of the requirements for the grant concerned a minimum threshold for the target group in the area. The mayor of Sas-van-Gent could not comply with this criteria alone, but managed with the support of its Belgian neighbour.

Since 1981, the cross-border delivery of home-care services illustrated different advantages of cooperation. Firstly, cooperation made service delivery more cost efficient. Secondly, the service could rely on a large pool of human resources. Thirdly, the quality of service delivery was increased due to exchange of experience between Belgian and Dutch staff. Solutions and practices on elderly care were shared across the border.

#### **4.3.2 Practical solutions in the absence of cross-border regulatory frameworks**

Initially the cooperation for home-care was based on voluntary actions and local cooperation agreements. The local authorities were encouraged by their respective national governments to cooperate on the provision of elderly care. The encouragement and cooperation might have been inspired by the recently concluded Madrid convention (1980) that provided a legal frame for the establishment of cross-border regions (Van der Velden and Lataster, 2017).

Despite the conclusion of European frameworks for cross-border health care, many legal and administrative differences for the provision of cross-border home-care remain.

In particular financing and reimbursement frameworks challenge home-care with equal service delivery on both sides of the border. Meaning that the services provided by Aan-Z slightly differs for Belgian in Dutch clients, following the competence of local authorities in each country. For example, Belgian patients receive vouchers to reimburse for cleaning

services, allow Belgian clients from Aan-Z to making use of additional support. In the Netherlands, this kind of additional services cannot be issued in the form of vouchers. Aan-Z had good experience with these vouchers for cleaning services giving more freedom to the clients. Since this service could not be implemented in the Netherlands due to different rules, Aan-Z decided to issue their own vouchers for their Dutch clients.

### **4.3.3 Central management to overcome imbalances in service delivery**

Introducing practical solutions by Aan-Z has become easier since the establishment of a cross-border body with own legal personality. Initially, service provision was organised separately to comply with different regulations in the two countries, leading to two organisational structures, one on each side of the border.

Since the early 2000s stakeholders of Aan-Z have been in contact with representatives from the BENELUX Union to discuss different organisational structures. Eventually, a GOL (common public body – see Box 3-2) has been established. Aan-Z functions as an independent public body with the municipalities as their main shareholders. The GOL Aan-Z is located in the Netherlands and following the BENELUX regulation subject to Dutch law. In practical terms this implies that staff of the cross-border body is subject to Dutch labour and social security law.

Centrally managing home and elderly care services has various advantages. The single juridical entity allows to administer own financial means and is subject to financial control by third parties (Ramon et al., 2014). This change in organisational structure impacts the service delivery and the management. Firstly, it became easier to provide the same service on both sides of the border from the organisation's own financial means. For example, good practices from one side of the border could be introduced in the full area, by-passing nationally organised rules for reimbursement. Secondly, the management of the service became more efficient. Central management allowed for a single employment policy and simplified the administration of the services, for example only one financial report has to be submitted instead of two.

The services provided by Aan-Z depend largely on written frameworks defining the competences of local authorities in the fields of home and elderly care. Since the establishment of the CPS the tasks and types of services delivered have changed (Box 4-3). In particular increasing fragmentation of the competences at local levels impacts on the work of Aan-Z. The provision of health care services and thus also home-care is more decentralised and privatised in the Netherlands than in Flanders. Whereas previously Aan-Z provided equally as much care in their Flemish territories as in their Dutch territories, the balance changed gradually to 5% of all services provided in Belgium and the rest in the Netherlands in 2018. The core tasks in Belgium include the care of people aged 55 or older and persons with disabilities. For the Dutch municipality of Terneuzen Aan-Z provides care for a larger target group, not restricted by age. These new imbalances raise demand to rethink future cross-border service provision by Aan-Z.

### **Evolving competences in health care for Dutch local authorities**

Health care responsibilities for Dutch municipalities have evolved since the establishment of Aan-Z. The following presents a few milestones in this evolution.

- Since 1988 Dutch municipalities are responsible for 1) social re-activation, social prevention and person-oriented guidance and assistance (Ex et al., 2003);
- Since 1997 local authorities also responsible for financial part (Ex et al., 2003);
- Since 2006 health care insurances are provided by private organisations only. The national government only regulates the type of care that is considered as basic and that every insurer is required to reimburse. Furthermore, it recommends a price level for this basic insurance and sets a threshold for “own-risk” payments. To meet the needs for people with less financial means, it introduced a tax compensation based on income levels;
- Since 2015, Dutch local authorities are responsible for social assistance (WMO), the care for long-term illness and persons with disabilities.

#### **4.3.4 Single cross-border infrastructures for better service delivery**

The production base for the functioning of the CPS has been improved since the establishment of the cross-border structure GOL. Due to the establishment of the joint cross-border public body it was easier to implement coordinated infrastructure systems in support of the service delivery. For example, it was easier to administer one central phone number for clients and one software package for service provider, allowing better coordination of the service provision between the colleagues in Flanders and the Netherlands.

#### **4.3.5 Continuous monitoring and adapting to change for efficient service delivery**

The example of Aan-Z illustrates the advantages of providing cross-border health care. Even though service provision is subject to frequent regulatory changes at national levels, CPS provision allows a coordinated way of working. This makes the services delivery more efficient and effective. Firstly, central management of elderly and home-care makes the service provisions in the area relatively cheaper. Secondly, good practice from one side of the border can be easier transferred to the other side of the border. Both benefits of the CPS contribute to providing more qualitative elderly and home-care in the region.

The development of the CPS furthermore illustrates the challenges to overcome when providing this kind of services. The service provision is subject to regulatory changes in the two countries. According to the director of the service this is not a barrier for cooperation but rather a chance. When establishing and implementing a CPS she recommends “to go for it” one will find regularly new challenges, but there are always practical solutions possible to deal with them.

In support of this attitude, CPS development benefits from policy-makers with a passion for cross-border cooperation. Furthermore, different stakeholders need to be committed to support CPS development. Ideally, one or a few of these stakeholders act as initiator for

cooperation. These persons generally see the need and benefits of CPS provision and have the networks to involve other relevant stakeholders.

## 5 Further cross-border public service development

The Euregio Scheldemond, as regional stakeholder for this study, has prioritised two different fields for exploring the possibilities of CPS development, namely

- nautical management for North Sea Port; and
- home-care in cross-border villages.

Together with relevant players from the region these topics have been discussed for assessing the potential for CPS developing and to deduct the necessary steps to take for their establishment. The two topics have different starting points regarding the needs for CPS and legal and administrative background in support of CPS development. This leads to different conclusions and recommendation for further assessing the possibilities of CPS, despite both assessment being rather explorative of nature.

Exploring the possibilities for nautical management for the North Sea Port deepens the services provided by the port authority. North Sea Port can be considered as a recently established CPS (see Table 3–1) This recent development has created a window of opportunity to explore for more possibilities that can serve as support to deliver harbour activities.

The proposal for home-care in bi-polar villages<sup>1</sup> addressed the need of increasing ageing and depopulation in the parts of the Euregio covered by the EGTC Linieland van Waas and Hulst. This sub-area of the Euregio Scheldemond hosts several bi-polar villages. The assumption is that CPS could support coordination of service provision and therewith increase the quality of service levels of these villages and make the services cheaper.

### 5.1 Nautical management for North Sea Port

North Sea Port includes the harbours of Vlissingen, Borsele, Terneuzen and Ghent. Joining forces allowed creating comparative advantage against other harbours in close proximity, such as Antwerp and Rotterdam. It also allowed better coordination for the ships going to Ghent. These ships need to pass a canal crossing Dutch territory. The newly established cross-border harbour management of North Sea Port is curious to enlarge its cross-border activities.

Currently the port authority has three main tasks:

- effective, save and efficient management of maritime traffic;
- taking responsibility for nautical and maritime safety in the region;
- promoting the development, construction, management and operation of the port area.

In line with these tasks the possibilities for CPS in the fields of civil protection and disaster management have been discussed at a workshop on 21 June 2018 at the Port Company in Ghent, Belgium.

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<sup>1</sup> Bi-polar villages are villages or settlements that are split by the border. This is a term used by the people in the Euregio.

### **5.1.1 Enhanced coordination for civil protection and disaster management**

The main potential CPS discussed are related to nautical management. Nautical management considers activities related to the navigation of ships between the docks at the harbour, through navigation channels to open sea. All these steps would need follow maritime safety rules, including traffic rules and rules regarding the good transported. In other words, how to ensure civil protection and disaster management in the harbour area.

New public services could improve coordination and the flow of communication for nautical management. A potential CPS could for example contribute to better coordinate efforts on communicating details on ships and vessels along the entire navigation channel. Currently ships report to the nearest authority and the information on the ship and its freight is forwarded along the ship's route. Faster knowledge on the ship's details along the full route supports to better anticipation on the security and safety risks. In case of accidents to nearest rescue teams can then be better prepared for the potential risks.

In order to develop the above described services, a few challenges need to be overcome. Firstly, the tasks and competences of the harbour managers for the Belgium areas and for the Dutch areas are not the same. The Belgium harbour manager is officer of the judicial police and assistant officer of attorney, meaning that he has legal possibilities to fine ship owners, arrest them or confiscate the ship and its freight in case it does not comply with safety, security and environmental requirements. The Dutch counterpart does not have these rights.

Secondly, relevant authorities need to invest in infrastructure. A coordinated communication system for nautical management requires a surveillance system along the canal that could keep track ship's location. Unfortunately the port authority is not owner of land in the full area. The port authority is only responsible for shipping lanes and some docks. The canal and infrastructure such as bridges and water locks are owned by various partners. Furthermore, in Belgium the canal is classified as national main transport route and in the Netherlands not, which leads to different priority settings.

### **5.1.2 Relevant aspects and open questions to be clarified**

Different aspects are already in place for overcoming the above outlined challenges for further CPS development. Different existing legal and administrative frameworks support the development of CPS in the field of nautical and maritime safety.

**Common Nautical Treaty.** The common nautical treaty for the Euregio Scheldemond has been concluded in 2005. This bilateral interstate agreement ensures safe and secure shipping in the Scheldt estuary (from Antwerp until the North Sea). It considers a full nautical chain approach from arrival until docking and vice-versa (SG BENELUX, 2011). In the frame of this treaty the Common Nautical Authority has been established. This joint Flemish-Dutch authority performs daily nautical management. This authorities ensures a logical nautical sequence of ships on the navigation channels in the Scheldt and draws up of a preventative and remedial contingency plan for the Western Scheldt area.

**Disaster protocol and firefighting protocols.** Two protocols concluded at the level of the Euregio Scheldemond support CPS development in the areas of civil protection and disaster management. These are the disaster protocol and firefighting protocol described in Chapter 3. Both protocols form the legal framework that supports cross-border cooperation regarding the envisaged nautical and maritime safety issues.

**Existing CPS and projects in the region.** Various current initiatives including ESIF projects and CPS can serve as examples for developing a CPS related to nautical management for North Sea Port.

- ENIGMA+ is the current communication system used by the stakeholders of North Sea Port;
- The MIRG initiative (see Table 3–1) for fire and rescue services for vessels at sea is an example that could be transferred to smaller geographic levels, such as the geographical area and waterways of North Sea Port;
- Joint fire stations such as in Kieldrecht – Nieuw-Namen could be initiated for better coordination along the border, going beyond the neighbour support offered under the frame of the firefighting protocol.

To sum up, different aspects and initiatives are in place to establish a new CPS in support of North Sea Port and its activities or to better coordinate the current tasks of this CPS in a cross-border setting. The main challenges and potentials for CPS development for North Sea Port are summarised in Figure 5–1. This figure depicts the possibilities for CPS along the main border dimensions in the area.

Figure 5–1 *Nexus model illustrating the main challenges and potentials for CPS development for North Sea Port*

Current problems and future challenges	Border effects	Current potentials and future opportunities
Low awareness on the current bi-lateral agreements, protocols and conventions for civil protection and safety	Political	North Sea Port itself already emerged to a CPS, support from Euregio and available agreements for different CPS
Cross-border shipping lanes and navigation channels not always the priority of the common nautical administration; harbour in different geographic locations	Physical	Cross-border shipping lanes, navigation channels and supporting governance structures for joint management
Ageing population and population decline challenge sufficient labour; competition from neighbouring harbours (Antwerp)	Economic	Increasing economic development increases the demand for harbour activities, including nautical and maritime safety
Recognition of competences related to diplomas for joint staff (diplomas are mutually recognised)	Socio-cultural	Long-cooperation tradition and absence of language and cultural barriers

### 5.1.3 Potential next steps

Stakeholders of the North Sea Port agreed to continue the discussions on possible CPS. North Sea Port will organise a meeting towards the end of 2018 to get a better common understanding on the needs and possibilities. The meeting will take the existing legal and administrative frameworks as well as current CPS and projects as basis to discuss possibilities to either further the cross-border tasks of North Sea Port, to initiate a new CPS or to establish a new CPS. The level of involvement of North Sea Port stakeholders depends on their capacities. Due to the recent merger, they currently mainly focus on improving internal structures. Nevertheless various possibilities could be imagined.

**Deepening and broadening tasks of North Sea Port.** In line with the current tasks of North Sea Port, more emphasis could be on nautical management. To do so, this would benefit from increased awareness on the current challenges and issues at the Common Nautical Authority and the owners of infrastructure along the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal.

**Initiator of a new CPS.** Stakeholders from North Sea Port may initiate a new CPS that could also be of their benefit. As relevant stakeholder for business development, civil protection and disaster management the port authority could initiate the establishment of various CPS. For example joint fire and rescue services, enhanced communication and safety system for transport across the border, a common business centre for economic cooperation, or improved public transport connections.

**Partner in establishing new CPS.** Not all of the above mentioned examples are in line with the Port authority's main tasks. Therefore they may also consider being a partner in establishing this kind of CPS. In this case other stakeholders would need to take the initiative to establish these CPS in support of North Sea Port. Possible initiators could be the Euregio as well as regional and local authorities of the Euregio Scheldemond.

## 5.2 Home-care in bi-polar villages

The Euregio Scheldemond hosts several bi-polar villages. These are villages that stretch across the border and are split by it. Inhabitants of these villages cross the border for their daily activities. Although CPS provision may further support the cross-border flows and an integrated way of living in these cross-border villages, not many CPS specifically serve these villages.

As illustrated in Chapter 3 different CPS support the integrated territorial development in these border villages, such as mutual assistance in cases of emergency and fire, bus connections, the GIP (chapter 4.1) and the joint fire station (chapter 4.2). In addition people living close to the border make use of each other's public services. Pupils are for example registered in schools across the border and some patients make use of the Belgian health care system – the other way around is more difficult.

In response to these daily cross-border interactions the possibilities for CPS have been explored during a workshop in Sint-Gilles-Waas on 21 June. More specifically, the

possibilities for establishing a CPS for home-care services for the benefit of the bi-polar villages were discussed among representative. The focus was on the three bi-polar villages in the eastern part of the region, the territory covered by the EGTC Linieland van Waas and Hulst, namely Nieuw-Namen – Kieldrecht, Clinge – De Klinge and Koewacht.

### **5.2.1 Possibilities for increased coordination of home-care services**

In particular bi-polar villages in the region of the EGTC are expected to face territorial challenges the next years. Firstly, this part of the Euregio Scheldemond is expected to experience population decline as depicted in Map 3-2. More specifically this population decline is driven by ageing and a diminishing labour force. Map 5–1 depicts the old-age dependency ratio per municipality in the Euregio Scheldemond. This is the share of population of 65 years and older by the share of population aged 20-64. Coastal areas and the southernmost region of Zeeland have a high share of elderly. In particular smaller and rural places are expected to experience negative impacts of ageing the next years. This implies a loss of labour force and increasing need for public services such a home-care.

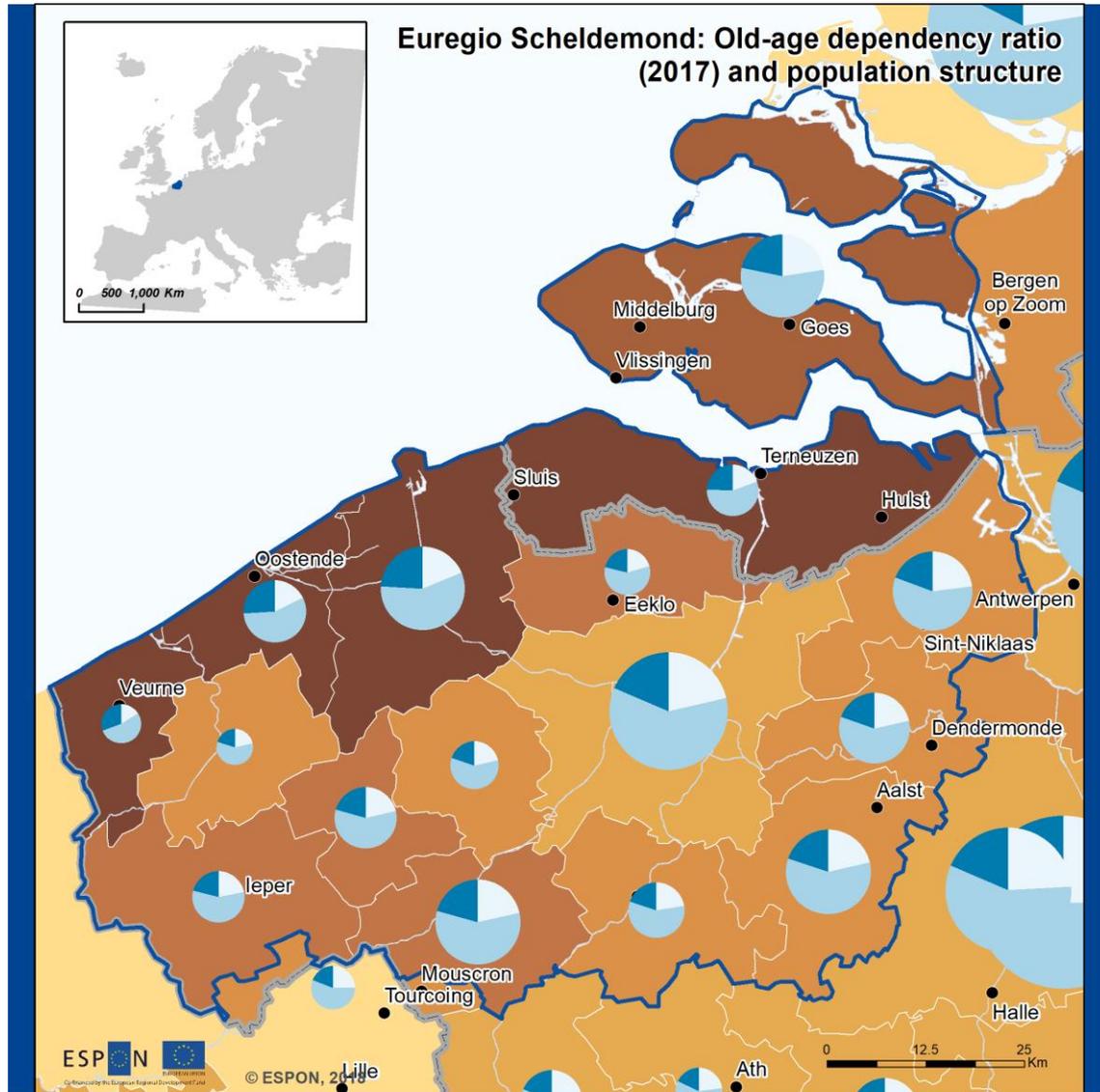
Secondly, the distance to domestically organised public services is relatively large along the national borders of the Euregio Scheldemond, as depicted by the relative distance to health care services in Map 5–2. The relative distance to public service may increase in the future. Due to population decrease local and regional stakeholder may decide to cluster public service provision in the larger places, allowing more efficient service provision.

The territorial trends illustrate different current challenges and future potentials for CPS development in the bi-polar villages. Cross-border coordination can support efficient delivery of public services in the bi-polar villages. Instead of providing the services twice in geographic proximity, the service can be jointly provided. The EGTC mentioned the bi-polar villages as examples cases for this type of cooperation in their strategic vision (DHV, 2009).

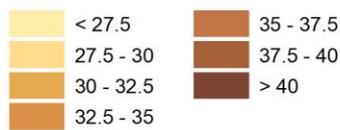
Following the above-described trends and the strategic vision by the EGTC two hypothesis can be defined.

1. Cross-border coordination can make public service provision more efficient.
2. With the support of CPS provision bi-polar villages will be less sensitive to the territorial trends of the region such as ageing and a diminishing labour force.

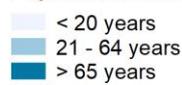
These two hypothesis have been the basis for exploring the possibilities of home-care CPS for the bi-polar villages. Home-care was selected as relevant example as it is closely related to the above describe territorial challenges such as ageing and the diminishing labour force. In particular the health care sector may experience an increasing imbalance in demand and supply.



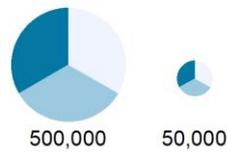
**Old-age dependency ratio (%)**



**Population structure**



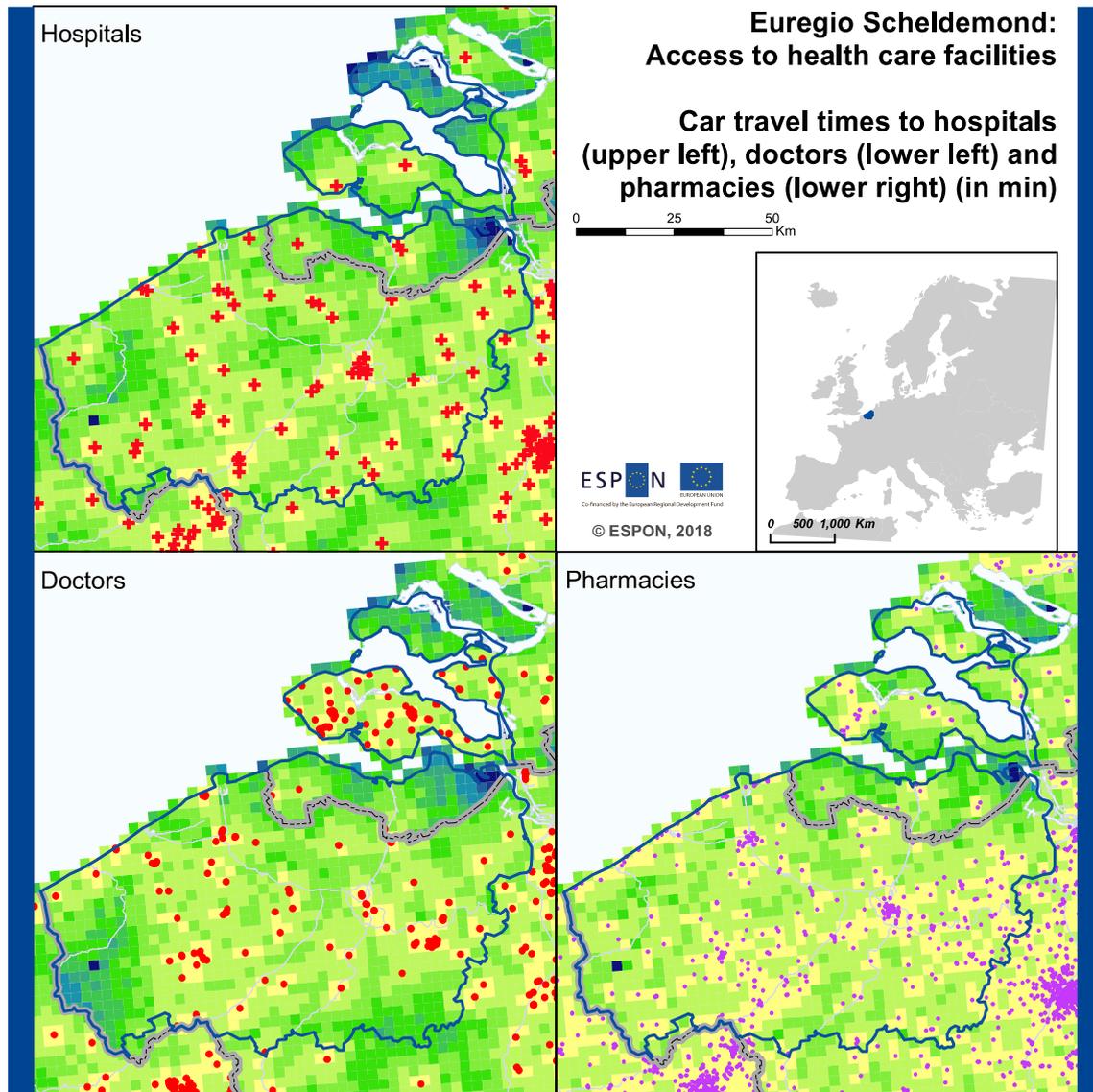
- Case Study region
- National border
- Sea, lakes



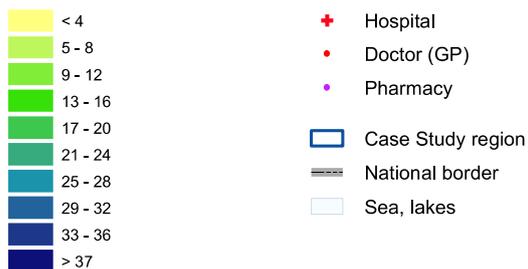
Level: NUTS3 (2013)  
 Source: ESPON CPS  
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018,  
 Eurostat (demo\_r\_pjangrp3), 2018,  
 Spatial Foresight, 2018  
 CC - UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

Old-age dependency ratio is the ratio between population older than 65 years and population aged 20-64 years (in %)

Map 5-2 Health care provision in the Euregio Scheldemond



**Car travel time (min) to next facility**



Local level: grid (2.5x2.5 km)  
 Source: ESPON CPS  
 Origin of data: TCP International, 2018, based on  
 ESPON PROFECY, 2018, OpenStreetMap, 2018  
 Spatial Foresight, 2018  
 CC - UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

**5.2.2 Establishing a common understanding by assessing differences and similarities in home-care provision**

A first step in exploring the possibilities for cross-border home-care provision for the bi-polar villages is to establish a common understanding of the current service provision and the needs for coordinated action. The following differences and similarities in home-care provision across the border form a basic framework to establish a common understanding and for the definition of a common need.

**Different definitions and terminology for the same tasks.** The tasks of home-care providers in Belgium and the Netherlands are similar although the terminology differs. In both cases home-care considers basic nursing and monitoring the patients. The aim in both cases is to keep patients as long as possible at home. This implies that the home-care providers on both sides of the border work in larger networks of various experts to being able to provide the care needed.

The similarity in service provision tasks is an added value in case of establishing a CPS. It supports a common understanding on the tasks and needs addressed by the CPS.

**Different stakeholders involved in support of home-care provision and fragmentation of stakeholders in Flanders.** In both countries home-care is a competence of local authorities, however the organisation of home-care provision involved different players. On the Belgian side there are more players involved in home-care provision than in the Netherlands. In Belgium, home-care is provided by a variety of players following the differentiation of the health care insurers. This implies that in a single municipality different home-care providers are active and that neighbours can make use of home-care provided by different organisations or individuals. In the Netherlands, home-care is more clustered. One organisation in the southernmost area of the Zeeland province (Zeeuws-Vlaanderen) provides 90% of the home-care in the region.

The asymmetry in governance models for domestic home-care provisions is a challenge to overcome when establishing a CPS. It requires mapping of the relevant players to consider in the establishing and implementation phases of the potential CPS.

**Different competences required for performing the same tasks.** Following the legal frameworks detailed in Box 3-2 diplomas are mutually recognised in the BENELUX. However, in practice employers and job seekers experience some challenges due to different competence required at the job and different skills required through the different school systems (see Box 5-1). This difference also impacts the possibilities for cross-border home-care. In case of a joint service provision stakeholders have to agree on how staff requirements to perform home-care tasks in both countries.

*Box 5-1 Difference in theory and practice on the effects of mutually recognised diplomas*

**Mutually recognising school diplomas differ in theory and practice**

In theory employees can easily apply for a job across the border, in practice there are still some challenges. This is mainly due to different school systems and competences acquired during studies (WES, 2014). For example, health care and nursery education in the Netherlands and Flanders is differently organised. Comparable studies based on diploma recognition have for example different target groups – in the Netherland care studies aim at adults and elderly and cover child care in separate studies. In Belgium, all target groups are covered by similar studies. Also, Dutch students are usually trained to work independent while Belgium students are trained to work under supervision (WES, 2014).

### Different legal frameworks perceived as barrier for cross-border service provision.

Even though the general public assumes there are limited or no restrictions, current legal frameworks for cross-border health care is complex and creates several border obstacles and administrative challenges (SG BENELUX, 2018). For example, many Dutch patients make use of Belgian health care. Their health insurances allow this and ensures smooth reimbursement. Reimbursement for planned health care is more difficult for patients that are insured in Belgium. At the same time different norms and standards for health care provision apply.

Stakeholders in the region are aware about the main legal differences concerning cross-border health care provision, including home-care provision. In particular the ways for financing health care and health care reimbursement outside the administrative boundaries question the possibilities for cooperation among stakeholders.

Figure 5–2 illustrates the main current and future challenges and opportunities for the establishment of a home-care CPS. It summarises the main observations on the possibilities categorised along four key border effects, political-administrative, physical geographic, economic and social-cultural border effects.

Figure 5–2 Nexus model illustrating the main challenges and potentials for CPS development for home-care in bi-polar villages

Current problems and future challenges	Border effects	Current potentials and future opportunities
Asymmetry in responsible authorities Different tasks / definition of home care challenge decision-making processes	Political	Political will and support at lower gov. levels and support from EGTS and Euregio at strategic level support initiatives
Relatively low population density and small towns and relatively low accessibility lower economic possibilities of service delivery	Physical	No natural obstacles and low density of population favour coordinated actions for service delivery
Ageing population and population decline challenge sufficient labour to cover the increasing demand for home care	Economic	Increasing labour migration and cross-border working requires finding solutions.
Different terminology used for home care practices	Socio-cultural	Long-cooperation tradition and absence of language and cultural barriers

### 5.2.3 Next steps for exploring the needs and possibilities of cross-border home-care

Different development paths for cross-border home-care provision for the benefit of bi-polar villages can be imaged. Stakeholders wish to continue the discussion and share more experiences on home-care provision in their country. The EGTC Linieland van Waas en Hulst took the initiative to organise and host this meeting in the autumn of 2018. Continuing the discussions contributes to formulating a shared and common interest for the establishment of the CPS.

In case stakeholders agree on a common needs to be addressed by a CPS and have a common understanding of the tasks of the CPS a range of other functional characteristics of CPS need to be considered. This includes the establishment of a legal and administrative

framework, agreeing on the use of infrastructure and the organisational structure of the CPS. For all these functional characteristics there are various solutions possible. Stakeholders in the region can use different examples from the region and from across Europe to get inspired on the possibilities of CPS development.

The example of Aan-Z (section 4.3) illustrated possibilities to deal with some legal and administrative challenges. Following the experience of Aan-Z, different legal requirements, norms and standards do not need to be a barrier for CPS development, it only requires frequent adaptations to new standards and practical solutions. Enhanced coordination of home-care provision for the benefit of bi-polar villages can firstly focus on regular exchange of experience and knowledge. The following includes a non-exhaustive list of first ideas for regular exchange:

- current and future needs for home-care in the area;
- mapping players active in the area, including the different health care experts;
- working methods applied, including the use of innovative or new methods for home-care;
- approaches to recruit staff and keep the competences up-to-date.

These actions can gradually be expanded by joint use of infrastructures, or concluding agreements to better match service areas and the exchange of staff.

The example of GIP Scheldemond (section 4.1) illustrated the possibility of operating a CPS through a cooperation network. This allows different partners to maintain their main principle tasks, but with a common branding towards the clients. Internally a cooperation agreement may support the exchange of good practices and knowledge for the benefit of service delivery. Furthermore, joint infrastructure may support efficient service provision. The list of possibilities for CPS is non-exhaustive and demands on the needs and demands of the stakeholders in the region.

### **5.3 Assessment of future CPS development in general**

Exploring the possibilities for CPS development for North Sea Port and for home-care in bi-polar villages illustrated the possibilities for future CPS development in the Euregio Scheldemond.

In general, the border aspects of the Dutch-Flemish border result in more opening than closing effects that are favourable for the establishment of CPS and may have contributed to the already considerable number of CPS in the area. In particular, closing socio-cultural border effects are low and there is a relatively long cooperation history in comparison to other European border regions. Furthermore, demographic change and frequent cross-border crossings of people, goods and services are drivers for future CPS development.

Most challenges experienced for further CPS development are related to different administrative and legal frameworks. Survey respondents mentioned the presence of incompatible domestic legislations, asymmetry or unclear competences/ responsibilities of policy actors, different national interpretations of transposed EU legislation, a lack of counter

organisation on the other side of the border as well as one-side scarce resource, cross-border flow patterns counteracting cost efficient CPS provision, and unbalanced demand for CPS at both sides of the border as examples of challenges to overcome when developing a CPS

Various legal and administrative frameworks already in place help stakeholders in the region to overcome or address most of these challenges. This includes frameworks concluded at the levels of the BENELUX and Euregio Scheldemond.

Stakeholders in the region can also make use of experience with CPS development in the region. The Euregio Scheldemond hosts CPS in different fields and with several functional characteristics along two borders. The experience from these CPS can function as source of inspiration for the many different solutions for CPS development.

The assessment of possibilities for CPS development for nautical management for North Sea Port and home-care in cross-border villages illustrated two key steps to consider when developing CPS. Firstly, stakeholders need to agree on a common or shared understanding of the needs for CPS. Secondly, the CPS' functional characteristics may be discussed building up on the experience from other CPS in the region and elsewhere in Europe.

Besides the two possible CPS discussed in this report, two other initiatives are being developed in the region. Firstly, a new cross-border nature park will be established soon. The EGTC Linieland of Waas and Hulst coordinates the development of this nature park. Secondly, the hospitals of Ghent and Terneuzen are working on enhanced cooperation, supporting better service delivery and allowing to make better use human resources.

CPS development can also be imagined in other policy fields in the future. This includes cross-border child-care service or services to address the different competence requirements and possibilities of cross-border internships in the region; new public transport services, including railway connections; the establishment of a cross-border business centre; or tourism facilities in the coastal areas.

## 6 Lessons learned, recommendations & transferability

The case study illustrates various possibilities for CPS development in the Euregio Scheldemond. Specific recommendations for the future CPS are provided in the respective sections. Despite different foci of all CPS and potential CPS discussed in this case study a few common lessons can be drawn.

**Individuals drive the developing of CPS.** The development of CPS is often driven by individual persons that see the needs and added value of CPS provision. These individual front-runners have the capacity to set a process and motion and put different stakeholders in contact with each other. Political strategies and visions can support the work of these individuals. Cross-border strategic documents may provide the individual drivers for CPS the necessary background for their initiatives and may help to create commitment for other relevant stakeholders in the region.

In addition, the Scheldemond Fund can be used by stakeholders to launch or advance the development of CPS in early stages. The resources of the Fund can, for example, help to assess the needs for cross-border coordination, or to help financing studies or trainings.

**Increase the awareness on existing frameworks and initiatives.** The Euregio Scheldemond hosts many different CPS, in addition various agreements, administrative and legal frameworks have been concluded the last decennia. The examples as well as the frameworks support CPS development in the Euregio Scheldemond, by addressing some of the most commonly perceived challenges for CPS development. However, not all relevant stakeholders are aware about the possibilities. The Euregio Scheldemond and its stakeholders could proactively and passively increase the awareness of the good practices in their region. For example, domestic service providers could be encouraged to seek cooperation possibilities during different workshops organised in the region where the Euregio presents existing examples and relevant administrative and legal framework. Another example could be the presentation of all CPS initiatives and proposals in the Euregio's webpage, including a short description of the main functional characteristics of these CPS.

**Specific solutions for the functioning of each CPS.** Finally, each CPS demands its specific functional characteristics depending on the needs addressed and on the tasks of the CPS. Different legal framework and asymmetry of stakeholders are among the most frequent experienced challenges to overcome. Solutions to address these challenges can be found in the organisations structures of CPS. Both network-based structures as well as centrally organised CPS can be established. Both types of organisational structures have their advantages and disadvantages to overcoming administrative and legal differences. Many solutions can be found at local and regional levels, without the need to concluding bilateral agreements at national levels first.

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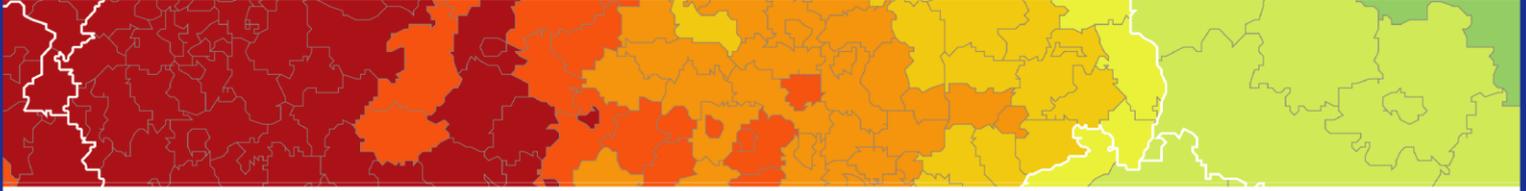
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The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.