

Chapter 3

Development in the Border Areas as Part of the European Integration Process

Jaroslav Dokoupil, Tomáš Havlíček and Milan Jeřábek

Abstract Border regions play an important role in the history of the European integration process. On the borders of the “Inner Six”, the first formal cross-border institutions were formed over 55 years ago; they aimed to reduce the weaknesses of border regions in competition with core areas. In the process of historical development, Euroregions cover a significant part of the borders, and not only in Central Europe. The topics of border regions’ development and cross-border cooperation became an important part of European regional policy. In the context of regional policy, financial tools to support border region development were set in the form of individual programmes (CBC PHARE, INTERREG, Phare CREDO, Tacis CBC, CARDS, MEDA, Cíl 3, EÚS). Czech border regions underwent a fundamental change after joining the European Union in 2004, which applies the four freedoms, including the free movement of people. What is the Czech borderland residents’ reflection on joining the European Union? Residents have not experienced significant changes in living standards in the border regions after joining the European Union; however, the changes for the better outweigh the changes for the worse. Overall, joining the European Union has brought positive changes to the Czech borderland; there are minor differences between its different sections. In terms of the residents’ identity, there are noticeable differences in the identification of the population in the border areas with the concept of a European: there is a significantly higher proportion of identification in neighbouring border regions than in the Czech regions.

J. Dokoupil (✉)

Department of Geography, University of West Bohemia, Plzeň, Czechia
e-mail: dokoupil@kge.zcu.cz

T. Havlíček

Department of Social Geography and Regional Development,
Charles University, Prague, Czechia
e-mail: tomhav@natur.cuni.cz

M. Jeřábek

Department of Geography, Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia
e-mail: jerabek@sci.muni.cz

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3.1 Cross-Border Issues as Part of Regional Policy and Regional Development

The history of the European integration process is very rich, with borders and border areas playing a major role. Except for the period of medieval empires, when the efforts of rulers to expand meant taking control of new territories and thereby shifting the boundaries and border areas, an intense integration process in Europe in terms of signing international agreements occurred after the Second World War. The basis was a new organisation of states, including state borders, according to the results of the negotiations of statesmen at international conferences (Cairo and Tehran in 1943, Yalta and Potsdam in 1945).

The experiences of war, conflicts and the post-war economic situation were the impetus for starting integration efforts in Europe. The gradual fulfilment of the objectives of the “Inner Six” (France, Germany, Italy and Benelux), where the goal was to promote a common market among the countries involved, changed the situation in the border regions of these countries. They often become disadvantaged, underfunded regions with a peripheral status, affected most by the cancellation of customs and passport controls on borders. National borders act as legislative and mental barriers to the development of border regions; they remain as “historical scars” in the parts involved in the integration of the EU.

The first seeds of cross-border regions—the Euroregions—and the first cross-border cooperation initiatives evolved at the borders of the “European Six” (Lezzi 1994). A united Europe has existed for more than 55 years on the basis of the Treaties of Rome of 1957; the oldest cross-border region—the EUREGIO—on the German–Dutch border will celebrate 60 years of existence in 2018. Formal cross-border cooperation has existed for more than 50 years, and informal cross-border contacts and cooperation have existed for centuries on the borders of Central Europe.

Cross-border cooperation is one of the most important aspects of the process of integration in Central Europe; on one hand, it weakens the identity of the state, and on the other hand, it co-develops a new form of regional identity with a spill-over effect on the cross-border level. Thanks to cross-border cooperation in regional development in borderland areas, integration is being applied as an extremely important component of the socio-economic territorial system (Jeřábek et al. 2004). “Common growth” in border regions must be seen as a continuing process that is associated with the idea of cross-border integration. The gradual disappearance of internal EU borders is a precondition for fundamental changes in many border regions. The border regions have seen a “shift” from their remote position on the national level towards a central position in the context of an integrated Europe

(Schabhüser 1993). This development was further enhanced by the introduction of the Schengen Agreements at the end of 2007 in the eastern part of Central Europe (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia).

The implementation of “unity in diversity” logically includes both advantages and disadvantages. While in a positive sense, we can talk about the freedom of movement of people, services, goods and capital, and the adverse effects are represented by different structures, competencies and legislation. Besides the so-called hard factors, there are also the so-called soft factors, including, mentality or human resources in a broader sense. It is surprising that cross-border cooperation has not had any “universal” legal base including defined competencies. Specific alliances, forms and arrangements remain quite flexible and are usually formed ad hoc, depending on objective and subjective conditions. Associations conceived on a national/nationwide basis form the overarching cross-border structures.

In economics, specifically in regional economics, the border regions “suffer” from the general centre-periphery principle, which is reflected in a certain imbalance or concentration in central areas. This is a general feature of all parts of Europe, which is reflected in the internal borders, as well as the external borders of the EU, where it has a greater intensity (Griebel 2010). Traditionally, we encounter especially poor transport infrastructure, fewer job opportunities, low human resource potential and more difficult living conditions. However, in their transformation, or convergence, these weaknesses offer a greater opportunity for these areas “at the intersection” in terms of further joint development thanks to an innovative approach. From a variety of different disciplines, we can randomly select, for example, administrative structures, legislation in the field of regional policy and land use planning, transport systems, cross-border education, tourism, environment and nature conservation, and mutual knowledge and understanding.

A borderland can be defined as “a moving area” which underwent fundamental changes after World War II in Western Europe (Komlosy 2003) and in connection with the changes which took place in the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe. A new quality here is in the removal of border barriers and a shift from a “back-to-back” lifestyle towards a common “face-to-face” life. What the residents of borderland areas encounter in their daily life is usually perceived only as a (general) European theory by the “inhabitants of inland regions”. Therefore, regional to local levels are more emphasised, in addition to a variety of techniques, steps and measures on the European or national level, in order to ensure the success of cross-border cooperation and increase the living standard in border regions.

The issue of border areas is included in EU regional policy, named the economic and social cohesion policy in the current programming period. The basis of the regional policy itself dates back to the 1930s, which was the period of the Great Depression. It was partially implemented in individual countries at that time, and after the establishment of the European Economic Community (1957, renamed the European Community in 1967) it was not directly enshrined in the agreements that were signed (Fiala and Pitrová 2003). The debate on the need for a European regional policy was raised along with the UK’s joining this integration in 1973. But the main integration documents did not express the need for a common regional

policy. It was the “European Charter of Regional Planning” of 1983, which has only a recommendatory character for Member States, which first defined the balanced socio-economic development of regions as one of the main goals. The document listed the overburdened/congested regions, rapidly developing regions and underdeveloped regions, including peripheral regions.

However, the separate Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985 to eliminate border controls between the participating countries (Germany, France and the Benelux countries). The agreement was not part of the European Community law, but its coming into force was conditioned by ratification by the participating countries.

The main objective of the Treaties of Rome—to establish a single market on an integrated territory—had a particularly negative impact on peripheral border regions. The signing of the Single European Act in 1986 was the first major amendment to the Treaties of Rome. The concepts of economic and social cohesion were introduced as part of the determination of the new powers in the EU. Cross-border cooperation received support as of 1990 in the form of the INTERREG initiative, which is the oldest and the most widespread initiative (the Community initiatives were included in special programmes set up by the European Commission to address specific issues related to the whole territory of the EU, complementing the EU programmes or facilitating their realisation). Why was INTERREG developed? Primarily in support of border regions which are disadvantaged compared to central areas and often underfunded in their peripheral position. When the single market is applied, state borders become barriers to the development of European regions; they remain “historical scars”, with a negative impact on border regions. The support from the INTERREG initiative is aimed at the territory situated directly on the borders or in areas adjacent to this territory (NUTS III).

The INTERREG initiative was implemented over the course of the three previous programming periods. In 1990–1993, INTERREG I provided support to 31 operational programmes on both the internal and external borders of the European Union focused on transportation and communication, the environment, trade, tourism, rural development and education. In 1994–1999, INTERREG II provided support to 59 programmes focused on all border regions along the internal and external borders. INTERREG II was divided into three areas—INTERREG IIA in the area of cross-border cooperation, INTERREG IIB on the construction of energy networks and INTERREG IIC on international activity in spatial planning. In 2000–2006, INTERREG III was also implemented in three areas. INTERREG IIIA supported cross-border cooperation between neighbouring authorities, which should lead to the development of cross-border economic and social centres using joint strategies of sustainable development. INTERREG IIIB supported international cooperation between national, regional and local authorities in order to support a higher degree of territorial integration of large European regional groups. INTERREG IIIC supported international cooperation leading to the improved effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development and cohesion on the basis of networking, especially in regions that are growing slowly or undergoing

transformation. The results of the INTERREG III programme were notable; 18,000 kilometres of roads, railways, roads and trails were built or repaired, 63,000 agreements were signed to improve cooperation across borders and 12,000 cooperative relationships and networks were established. Yet the effect of cooperation was evaluated as poorly measurable, and the programmes were not strategic enough, having too large scale. This had implications for the preparation of cross-border cooperation in the current programming period.

A new situation occurred in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. These countries declared their interest in joining the European Union right at the beginning of their transformation (Jordan 2004). This is why a new initiative—CBC PHARE—was established. Its purpose was to support cross-border cooperation between border regions of the European Union and Central Europe. By co-financing joint projects under the INTERREG initiative, CBS PHARE aided the border regions of Central Europe in preparing applications for receiving EU funding allocated for them. Moreover, CBS PHARE helped to overcome the specific problems of border regions in Central Europe, occurring as a result of their peripheral position among Member States, and also supported the establishment and development of cooperation networks on both sides of the border. A similar role was played by other initiatives, such as Phare CREDO (established in 1996) for projects on the borders between Central Europe and the countries founded after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Tacis CBC (established in 1996) for cross-border projects in the countries of the former Soviet Union, CARDS (established in 2000) to support the cross-border cooperation of the Balkan countries, and MEDA (established in 2000) for supporting cooperation with non-member countries in the Mediterranean (Spain-Morocco, Greece-Turkey).

The European Union saw the greatest enlargement in its history in 2004. The ten new Member States included eight states in Central and Eastern Europe that were undergoing transformation at that time, as well as Cyprus and Malta. These countries' accession to the European Union significantly changed the situation in the EU border regions. The functioning of the EU's "four freedoms"—the free movement of goods, capital, services and people—had an immediate impact on border regions. The positive impacts for residents and businesses in border regions included profiting from the economic imbalance in neighbouring regions, while the negative impacts were associated with an increase in cross-border competition. The horizontal enlargement of the European Union in 2004 established the functioning of the "four freedoms" and introduced the so-called transitional periods for the free movement of workers in the EU-15 countries.

The current 2007–2013 programming period can be characterised as a new stage in the development of regional policy, as a policy of economic and social cohesion. A major emphasis in the context of the renewed Lisbon Strategy focused on issues of competitiveness and job creation. The objective is to make Europe more attractive for investors, as well as to make knowledge and innovation the drivers of growth in such a way as to ensure that our policies allow businesses to create more jobs and better jobs. Under the new definition of the objectives of economic and social cohesion, the so-called Objective 3 defines the "European Territorial

Cooperation”, covering the area of support that has been provided by the initiative of the INTERREG Community so far. Some regional politicians are talking about the INTERREG IV initiative. Objective 3 includes cross-border and supranational programmes and networks financed by the European Regional Development Fund. These are 53 cross-border programmes and 10 programmes of cooperation with EU candidate countries, and there are programmes of cooperation with non-EU countries—Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. As part of the economic and social cohesion policy (the Cohesion Policy), a total of 6.5 billion Euro was earmarked for European territorial cooperation, which is over 2% of the entire Cohesion Policy budget. This is five times more funds compared to 1990, when targeted funds for cross-border cooperation under INTERREG I were earmarked for the first time. The target regions for supporting European territorial cooperation include border regions, supranational cooperation areas and networks. The key issues concerned include innovation, the environment, risk elimination, the accession of new countries, education and culture. Most funds (77.6%) for European Territorial Cooperation are directed to cross-border cooperation.

The main objectives of cross-border cooperation include eliminating the negative effects of the existence of national borders, strengthening territorial cohesion among European regions, devising solutions to common problems by creating space for the existence of cross-border regions, and utilising common potential, as well as strengthening ties and cooperation between people across borders. The fulfilment of the objectives that have been outlined will help strengthen European integration, because border regions can be considered as a “laboratory of European integration”, where the inhabitants encounter the reality of integration on a daily basis. In order to achieve the objectives that have been defined, similar principles of economic and social cohesion (a seven-year budget—5 + 2 years, programme management, etc.) were adopted as in the case of other programmes. The criteria for success include joint implementation of cross-border projects, when the focus of support is determined by agreement between national, regional and local partners on both sides of the border, and the joint management structures that are responsible for the programme as a whole.

The signing of the Reform Treaty on 13 December 2007 in Lisbon at the European Council Meeting (the Lisbon Treaty) significantly contributed to strengthening the cross-border cooperation programmes. The Lisbon Treaty amends the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, and it aims to reform the institutions of the European Union, as well as its functioning.

Respecting the “Lisbon Strategy” is reflected in the planned EU development concepts for the next planning period until 2020. The Cohesion Policy is becoming a tool for the Europe 2020 Strategy. European Territorial Cooperation with the same structure should be one of the two key objectives of the Cohesion Policy, governed separately by the European Commission and should be empowered in financial terms. On the basis of the experience of the previous programming periods, the programmes must be more strategic and more tightly focused,

with improved links to other EU instruments. The elements of the joint implementation of programmes and projects will also be strengthened, with measurable results being emphasised, and the implementation system must be improved too.

Considering the development of border regions and cross-border cooperation, the forthcoming Europe 2020 Strategy should include:

- cross-border concepts of spatial planning and development,
- the creation of cross-border infrastructure,
- economic growth/development strategies to complement national development strategies,
- new cross-border business relations between producers and suppliers,
- new possibilities of cooperation for small and medium-sized businesses,
- the creation of a cross-border labour market
- bilingual cross-border vocational training,
- the creation or improvement of cross-border public transport,
- cross-border concepts and projects in the field of tourism,
- larger catchment areas for trade and services,
- the efficient use of public funds,
- joint research and innovation,
- additional synergies and spin-off effects,
- long-term cross-border environmental management and environmental protection,
- cross-border cooperation as a model for “new Governance”.

3.2 A Reflection on Czechia’s Joining the European Union by the Inhabitants of the Czech Border Regions

The situation in the Czech border regions changed significantly following Czechia’s joining the European Union in 2004. The aforementioned “four freedoms” of the EU brought tough business competition to border regions on one hand, but also profit resulting from the economic imbalances in the neighbouring regions on the other. Cross-border shopping tourism has brought and continues to bring profits to the inhabitants of border regions, as well as traders. The EU’s “four freedoms” have facilitated cross-border cooperation on the Czech border. The importance of cross-border cooperation is reflected in one of the hypotheses of the grant project “*Czech border regions after Schengen: an independent, oscillatory and/or transit area?*” Cross-border cooperation as an instrument for the convergence of Central European regions includes both material aspects (improvement of living standards in the peripheral regions), as well as socio-psychological aspects (facing up to historical experience and the establishment of a balanced neighbourhood) (Chromý 2003; Zich 2003).

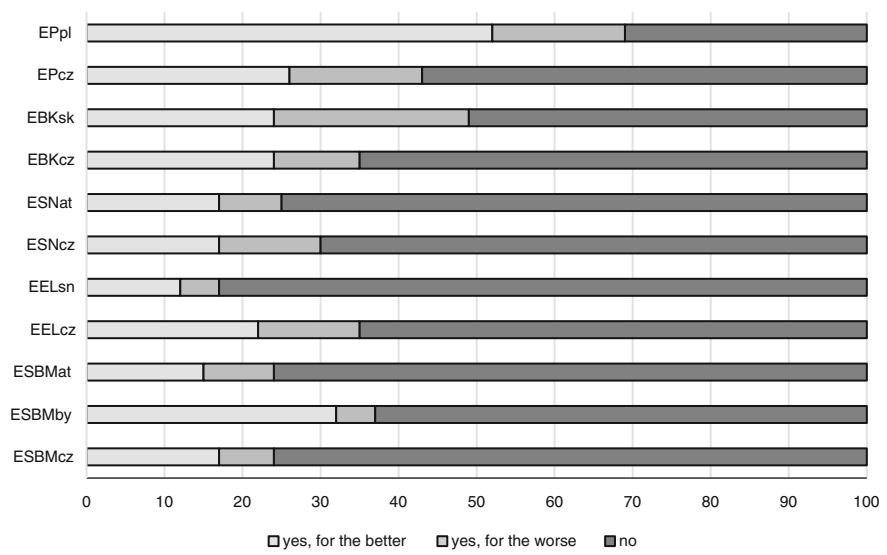


Fig. 3.1 Has your living standard changed since 2004 (the Czechia’s joining the EU)? *Source* our data research. *Note* short terms see Table 1.1

284 So how do the inhabitants of border regions on the Czech border perceive
285 Czechia’s joining the European Union? 3,300 respondents—residents of border
286 regions—were asked in a survey whether their living standards had changed after
287 2004 (the Czechia’s accession to the European Union) and whether Czechia’s
288 joining the EU was positive or beneficial for their border region.

289 When analysing the questionnaires in terms of changes in the standard of living
290 after 2004 in various sections of the Czech borderlands, we come to different
291 conclusions (see Fig. 3.1). Generally, changes are felt by a minority of the popu-
292 lation in all the sections that were surveyed. The exception is the Czech-Polish
293 section, where over 50% of the respondents on the Polish side feel there has been a
294 change for the better. The highest proportion of respondents (83%) who do not feel
295 any change is in the German section of the Elbe/Labe Euroregion (EELsn), fol-
296 lowed by the Austrian sections of the Šumava (ESBMat) and Silva Nortica (ESNat)
297 Euroregions and in the Czech section of the Šumava Euroregion (ESBMcz).

298 A positive finding is that the proportion of respondents who feel there has been a
299 change for the better is higher in almost all regions than that of those who feel there
300 has been a change for the worse, except for the Slovak section of the Bílé Karpaty
301 Euroregion (EBKsk), where the proportion of those who are dissatisfied is 1%
302 higher.

303 Analysis of the respondents’ answers regarding the benefits for border regions
304 of Czechia’s accession to the European Union’s brings a positive response

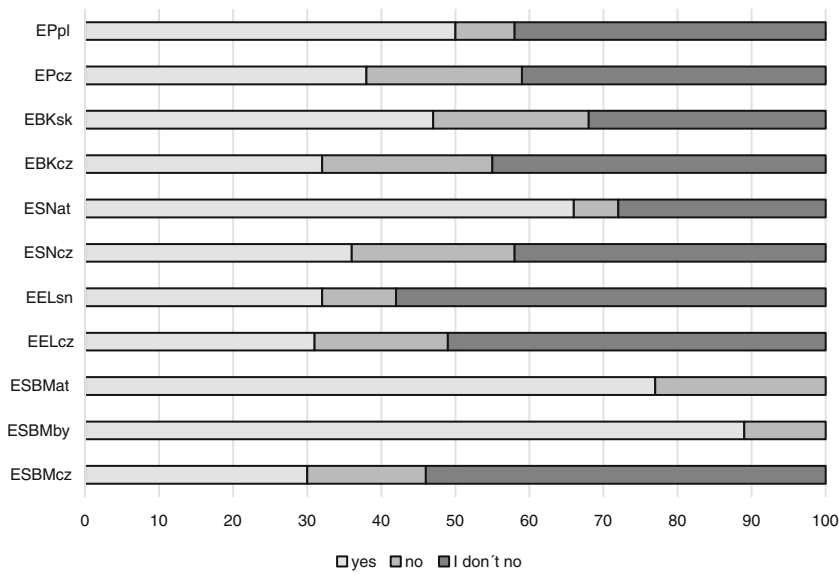


Fig. 3.2 Would you say that the Czechia's joining the European Union was positive/beneficial for your region? *Source* our data research. *Note* short terms see Table 1.1

(see Fig. 3.2). Methodological exceptions are represented by the German and the Austrian sections of the Šumava Euroregion, where the respondents could not answer “I do not know”, which is why the results show overwhelmingly positive benefits. The large share of positive evaluations in the Austrian section of the Silva Nortica Euroregion (ESNat) is interesting, indicating a possible removal of barriers to Czech-Austrian cooperation. The higher proportion of negative evaluations in the Czech sections when compared with the neighbouring regions is worthy of note. Positive evaluations dominate in all the regions that were surveyed, emphasising the benefits for the region, which is promising for the further development of cross-border contacts and cooperation.

When evaluating the identification of the inhabitants of border regions with the concept of European citizenship (EU citizens), there are noticeable differences when comparing the inhabitants of the Czech sections and the neighbouring sections. The identification is generally lower in the Czech sections, if we consider the evaluation using the score 1 or adding up the scores 1 and 2 (see Fig. 3.3). The highest evaluation using the score 1 was provided by 41% of the respondents in the Polish section of the Praděd Euroregion (EPpl). High shares (32%) were also seen in the Slovak section of the Bílé Karpaty Euroregion (EBKsk) and the Austrian section of the Silva Nortica Euroregion. On the contrary, the lowest identification (12%) was in the Czech section of the Labe/Elbe Euroregion (EELcz).

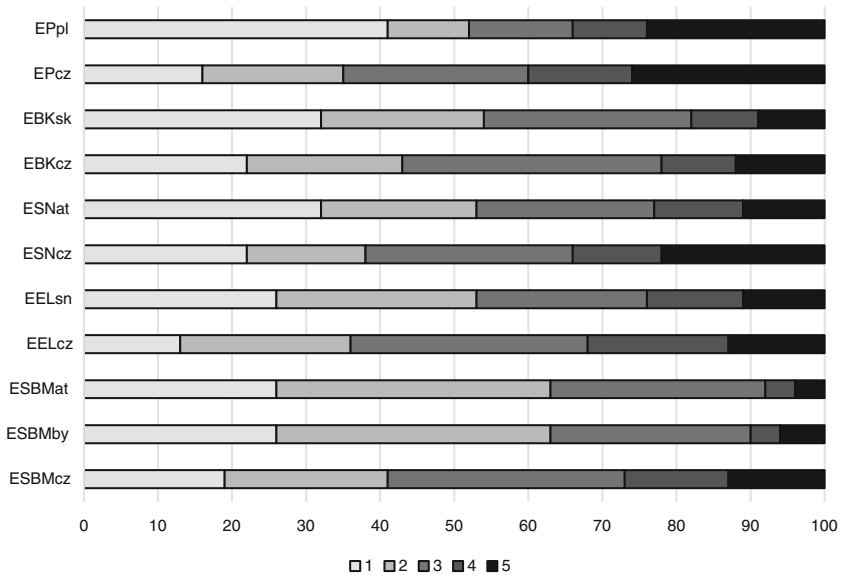


Fig. 3.3 Do you feel like a European (EU citizen)? Fill in using a scale: 1 (the most) to 5 (the least). *Source* our data research. *Note* short terms see Table 1.1

3.3 Conclusion

In the history of the European integration process, border regions play an important role, as they first show the possible issues in the integration of individual states. On the borders of “Inner Six”, the first formal cross-border institutions were formed over 55 years ago, aiming to reduce the weaknesses of border regions in competition with core areas (the oldest cross-border Euroregion on the German–Dutch border is EUREGIO). In the process of historical development, Euroregions cover a significant part of the borders, and not only in Central Europe. The topics of border region development and cross-border cooperation became an important part of European regional policy. In the context of regional policy, financial tools to support border region development were set in the form of individual programmes. The ones specifically for Czech border regions are as follows: CBC PHARE, INTERREG, Phare CREDO, Tacis CBC, CARDS, MEDA, Cíl 3 and EÚS. Czech border regions underwent a fundamental change after joining the European Union in 2004, which applies the four freedoms, including the free movement of people within the Schengen area. The upcoming Europe 2020 strategy also includes many measures regarding further border region development and cross-border cooperation.

What was the Czech borderland residents’ reflection on joining the European Union, identified within the field investigation? Residents have not experienced significant changes in living standards in the border regions after joining the

European Union; however, the changes for the better outweigh the changes for the worse. Overall, joining the European Union has brought positive changes to the Czech borderland; there are minor differences between its different sections. In terms of the residents' identity, there are noticeable differences in the identification of the population in the border areas with the concept of a European: there is a significantly higher proportion of such identification in neighbouring border regions than in the Czech regions.

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Author Biographies

Jaroslav Dokoupil is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography at the Faculty of Economics, the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. He is a member of the Centre for Regional Development Research. He deals with regional geography and regional planning. In terms of his research activities, he focuses on the borderland of Czechia, specifically on the Czech-Bavarian borderland and on peripheral areas and Euroregions in the context of European regional policy.

Tomáš Havlíček is Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Faculty of Science, Charles University in Prague, Czechia. His research is concerned with the geography of religion, geography of border regions and peripheral regions. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the IGU Commission Marginalization, Globalization and Regional and Local Responses, and a member of the Committee of the Czech Geographic

Society. He is also a collaborator for the workgroup on geography of religion for the German Geographical Society. He is also interested in border areas in Europe and in particular the Czech-Austrian borderland. He has published many articles concerning cross-border cooperation in Central Europe.

Milan Jeřábek is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography at Masaryk University in Brno, Czechia. The scope of his research lies in geography of population and settlement, regional planning, regional development and policy, especially geography of border studies. He has led many projects dealing with the study of border and cross-border cooperation. He is also a member of the editorial board of the book series “Geographica” published by the Czech Geographic Society and a co-chair of the professional working group for regional development of the Elbe/Labe Euroregion.