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CALL FOR PAPERS

Cross-Border Regions and the Future of European Integration: Governance, Mobility and Regional Transformation

Conference

Lund University, Sweden

19-20 November 2026

Conference theme

Cross-border regions have long occupied a distinctive place within the European integration project. From the Öresund and Upper Rhine regions to the Benelux, Alpine and Irish borderlands, they have often been understood as laboratories of European integration – spaces in which the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital becomes embedded in everyday economic and social life. Through dense networks of commuting, trade, infrastructure, governance and institutional cooperation, cross-border regions have reshaped territorial relations in Europe and challenged traditional assumptions about the boundedness of the nation-state.

Recent crises have nevertheless exposed both the resilience and the fragility of these integrated regional spaces. The COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary reintroduction of internal border controls, geopolitical instability, energy insecurity and renewed concerns with sovereignty and security have demonstrated that processes of European integration that once appeared stable can be rapidly disrupted. At the same time, the continued functioning of many cross-border regions has depended upon highly integrated labour markets, transport infrastructures, governance arrangements and social relations that transcend national borders. These developments have highlighted the tensions between mobility and territoriality, openness and security, and integration and fragmentation that increasingly characterise contemporary Europe.

They have also brought cross-border regions into sharper focus within European governance and law. Recent reforms to the Schengen Borders Code explicitly recognise the social and economic functioning of cross-border regions in decisions concerning the reintroduction of internal border controls and require Member States to designate territories that they consider to constitute cross-border regions. Together, these developments suggest that cross-border regions are no longer simply spaces of policy coordination or administrative cooperation, but increasingly recognised territorial formations within the evolving legal and political order of the European Union.

Against this backdrop, the conference starts from the proposition that **cross-border regions provide a distinctive lens through which the evolving territorial dimensions of European integration can be analysed**. Bringing together scholars from regional studies, economic geography, European studies, political geography, legal geography, law, sociology, political science, planning and related disciplines, the conference seeks to advance interdisciplinary dialogue on how law, governance, mobility and

regional economic transformation are reshaping cross-border regions and, in turn, informing broader debates about the future of European integration.

A selection of papers from the conference will be invited for submission to a proposed special issue in a leading interdisciplinary regional studies journal.

Themes and topics

We welcome both conceptual and empirical contributions. Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

1. Cross-border regionalism and European integration

Cross-border regions constitute key sites through which changing forms of European territorial organisation can be observed. They provide important insights into how economic, social and political relations are reorganised across national borders, while also revealing the tensions between functional integration, territorial governance and renewed bordering. As such, they offer an important lens through which to understand wider transformations in European integration.

This theme explores how cross-border regions are reshaping and being reshaped by wider transformations in European integration. We particularly welcome contributions that examine changing forms of regionalisation, the rescaling of governance and territorial authority, and the tensions between functional integration and renewed bordering practices. Contributions may engage with conceptual, comparative or empirical perspectives on the evolving role of cross-border regions in Europe's political and economic geography.

Possible topics include:

- The changing role of cross-border regions in Europe
- Functional integration beyond the nation-state
- Cross-border regionalisation and territorial transformation
- Differentiated integration and uneven territorial development
- The rescaling of territory and governance
- Regionalism, sovereignty and territorial fragmentation
- Cross-border regions as laboratories of European integration
- Comparative perspectives on European border regions

2. Governance, institutions and territorial coordination

The governance of cross-border regions depends on complex forms of coordination across local, regional, national and European scales. Recent crises have highlighted both the possibilities and limitations of existing governance arrangements, while also generating new forms of territorial coordination and institutional experimentation.

This theme examines how governance structures, institutional capacities and regulatory asymmetries shape the development and resilience of cross-border regions. We welcome contributions addressing both formal and informal governance arrangements, as well as the role of public authorities, regional actors and transnational networks in managing cross-border challenges. Particular attention may be paid to the governance implications of crisis management, territorial coordination and multi-level governance in integrated regional spaces.

Possible topics include:

- Multi-level governance in cross-border regions
- Institutional coordination across borders
- Regional governance in response to crises
- Cross-border cooperation and policy innovation
- Euroregions and new governance arrangements
- Informal governance and crisis coordination
- Territorial governance and scalar politics
- Public administration across borders
- Governance of integrated regional labour markets
- Institutional barriers to cross-border integration

3. Mobility, labour and regional transformation

The everyday functioning of many cross-border regions depends on highly integrated systems of mobility, labour circulation and social interaction. Cross-border commuting, integrated labour markets and transnational social relations have become central features of many European border regions. At the same time, recent crises, changing work practices and evolving mobility regimes have transformed the experience and organisation of cross-border mobility in important ways.

This theme explores how mobility, labour and regional economic transformation reshape the social and economic geographies of cross-border regions. We particularly welcome contributions examining changing commuting practices, hybrid work, social reproduction across borders and the role of mobility in regional resilience and transformation. The theme also invites perspectives on the lived experiences of integration, including identity, belonging and the everyday negotiation of borders.

Possible topics include:

- Cross-border mobility, commuting and labour markets
- Hybrid work and changing mobility practices
- Regional innovation systems and cross-border economic development
- Labour market integration, skills and regional resilience
- Mobility infrastructures and accessibility
- Identity, belonging and the everyday experience of integration
- Migration, re-bordering and changing mobility regimes
- Cross-border production networks and regional transformation

4. Law, regulation and spatiality

Law and regulation play a central role in shaping the territorial organisation of Europe and the functioning of cross-border regions. While borders may appear increasingly open and permeable, cross-border integration remains deeply conditioned by legal frameworks, regulatory asymmetries and institutional arrangements operating across multiple scales. Recent developments in EU law and governance, including reforms to the Schengen Borders Code, have also contributed to a growing recognition of cross-border regions as distinct territorial and functional spaces within the European legal order.

This theme examines the relationship between law, regulation and the production of cross-border space. Rather than treating law simply as the institutional framework within which regional integration takes place, the theme invites contributions that examine how legal and regulatory systems actively constitute, organise and transform cross-border regions. We particularly welcome contributions engaging with legal geography, spatiality in EU law and the role of regulation in structuring mobility, governance and regional integration.

Possible topics include:

- EU law and cross-border regions
- Legal geographies of European integration
- Law as a constitutive force in regional integration
- Schengen, free movement and bordering practices
- Regulation, proportionality and territorial governance
- The constitutionalisation of cross-border space
- Spatiality and territoriality in EU law
- Regulatory asymmetries and institutional fragmentation
- Crisis governance and emergency bordering
- Legal dimensions of cross-border labour mobility

Submission guidelines

Researchers from across the social sciences, law, humanities and related interdisciplinary fields are warmly invited to submit proposals for papers.

Submissions should include an **abstract** of no more than 300 words, a short **biographical note** of approximately 100 words and up to five **keywords**. We welcome contributions from academics, early career researchers, doctoral candidates, practitioners and policymakers working on questions related to cross-border cooperation, regional governance and territorial transformation.

Please send submissions to marja-liisa.oberg@jur.lu.se with the subject line *CFP Submission – Cross-Border Regions Conference*.

Important dates

Abstract submission – **10 September 2026**

Notification of acceptance – **18 September 2026**

Conference – **19-20 November 2026**

The organisers will cover flight/train tickets and two nights' accommodation in Lund for accepted presenters (one presenter per co-authored paper).

A selection of papers presented at the conference will be invited for submission to a proposed special issue. Full papers for special issue consideration will be due in **May 2027**.

Organisers

The conference is organised within the research project "Conceptualising Cross-Border Regions in the European Union's Legal Order: From Covidfencing to Constitutionalisation" (*Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, 2023-2025*).