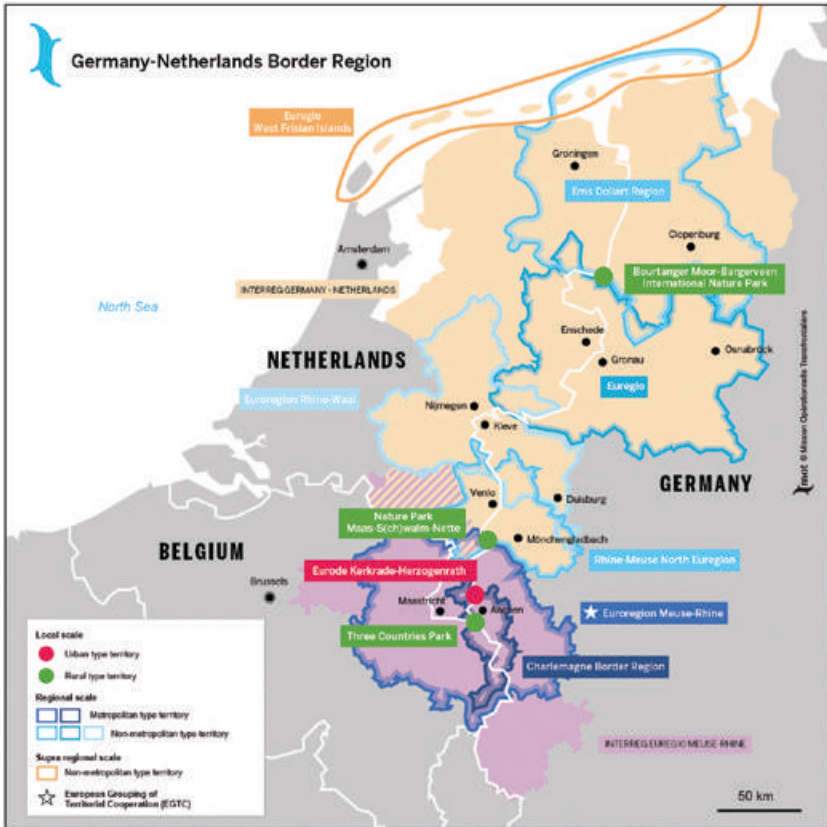


Euregio (Gronau)



The Euregio in Gronau is a Dutch-German joint body that covers, on the German side, parts of the Federal *Land* of Lower Saxony (the rural district of the County of Bentheim, the urban district of Osnabrück and parts of the Emsland) together with parts of the Federal *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia (Münsterland) and, on the Dutch side, the districts of Twente and Achterhoek with sections of Noordoost-Overijssel and Zuidoost-Drenthe. It includes 129 towns, communities, and Waterschappen (water boards)—104 on the German side and 25 on the Dutch side. Euregio is located between the major conurbations of the Rhine-Ruhr area and the Dutch Randstad area. The local economic

structure is characterised by agriculture and a preponderance of small and medium-sized companies, plus cross-border tourism.

The Dutch-German border arose in medieval times, even though there was uncertainty as to where exactly it lay until the 18th century. The independence of the Netherlands in 1648 finally defined the territorial boundaries, which became the national border between Germany and the Netherlands upon the founding of the German Reich in 1871. However, business interlinking and exchanges did not decrease due to the economic mono-structure of the textile industry in the region. A decomposition of the region only arose as a result of the conflicts of the 20th century and the mutual resentment of the population, which were only overcome incrementally after the Second World War.

Euregio was founded in 1958 in the German town of Gronau making it the oldest cross-border association. It was created as a joint-initiative between the communities, urban areas and rural districts on both sides of the border. In 1971, the first cross-border commission with its own budgeting authority was set up – the so-called Mozer commission named after its initiator, the German-Dutch politician Hans Mozer – the aim of which was bringing together people on both sides of the border, both in social and cultural terms. This was followed by committees for the economy, the labour market and spatial development. An organisation structure was set up in parallel, a cross-border parliament was installed in 1978 in the form of the Euregio Council and a joint business office was set up in Gronau in 1985.

Euregio has not only belonged to the founding members of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) since 1971, but it was the model for cross-border collaboration at the Dutch-German border and other areas. However, up until today, the Euregio name without any geographical indicators is reserved for this first Dutch-German Euregio between the Rhine, Ems, and Ijssel.

Since its very beginning, Euregio has been involved in the Interreg program. Its cross-border regional program for action from 1987 became the blueprint for the Interreg program of the European Community. Euregio organises the management and administration of the Interreg funds for the Euregios in the Dutch-German border area. The ambitious goal of Euregio is to integrate the region into “one” coverage area, through an ever-increasing degree of interlinking at the economic, political, social, and cultural levels, in which the border no longer has a separating effect.

Claudia Hiepel

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