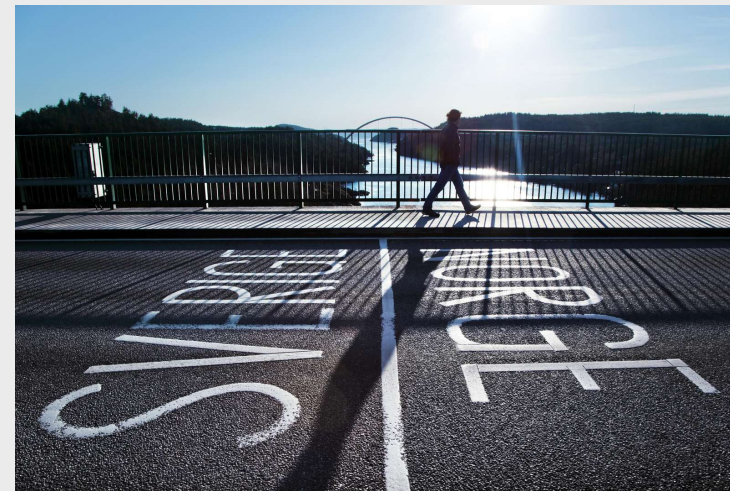
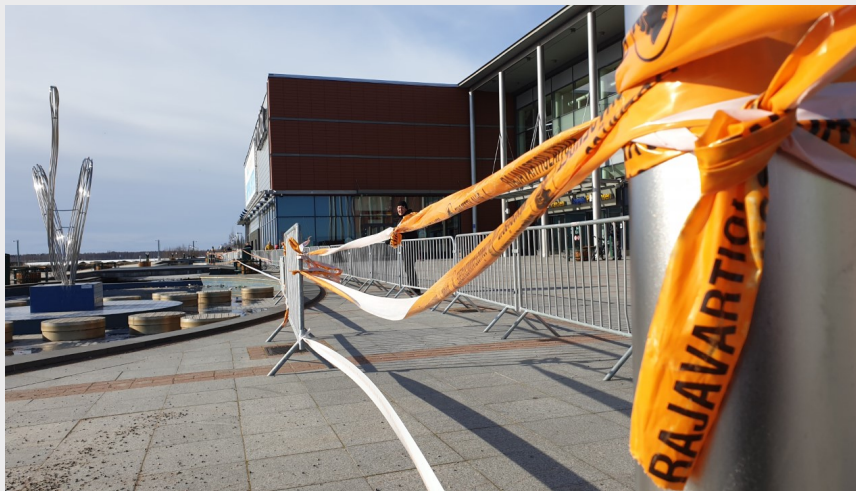


Closed borders and divided communities:

Status report and lessons from COVID-19 in cross-border areas



Pictures by Daniel Falldin and Karin Beate Nøsterud

Policy brief
- you have a chance
to influence!

Policy recommendations: Cross-border committees

- **Re-unite people and rebuild trust:** Peaceful relations are the basis for integration and collaboration.
- **Unite members** into one strong voice to show national authorities the value of working with local authorities on the ground to make the region stronger together.
- **Join voices** across border regions to get your message louder at national, Nordic and European levels. Border communities are in the spotlight as the pandemic (and Brexit) has shown the consequences raising hard borders. Take advantage of this window of opportunity.
- **Find allies at the national level** and ways to influence decision-making. National authorities tend not be aware of the conditions and needs of border communities.
- **Re-invent cross-border collaboration** and engage local residents. Most CB committees were created several decades past, now most people take free mobility as a given. Bring forward issues that touch younger generations.

 **Showcase the added value** cross-border regions represent for the Nordic cooperation.

Policy recommendations: Border municipalities

- **Put cross-border collaboration high on the agenda:** border restrictions have been a reminder of the importance of free mobility, social and business integration. They are now threatened.
- **Plan for a “new normal”:** Rather than ‘bouncing back’ to normal, envision potential new futures. What vulnerabilities were uncovered during the pandemic, and how can they be remedied?
- **Engage in cross-border organisations:** People are the glue of Nordic cooperation, and the inter-personal relationships established in common platforms is invaluable.
- **Engage decision-makers in cross-border matters:** Cross-border issues need political anchoring to ensure sustainable co-existence, rather than solely project based.
- **Invest in skills development:** Skills transfer and knowledge transfer are key to

 Creating stronger communities.

Policy recommendations: National level

- **Guarantee free mobility:** Free mobility is a cornerstone of the modern world, and key to Nordic living. Guaranteeing a dialogue about borders in crises situations provide security for border residents and Nordic peoples alike.
- **Strengthen the commitment to Nordic Vision 2030:** Demonstrate the commitment to Nordic living by following up with clear actions pertaining to the vision objectives.
- **Rebuild and empower the Nordic Institutions:** In a deeply globalised world, supra-national structures (mechanisms and tools) are necessary to address common problems. Nordic countries are each other's best allies. Stronger Nordic institutions may better position the Nordic countries in the global arena and strengthen resilience upon global threats.
- **Strengthen the mandate of the Ministers for Nordic Collaboration:** they have a unique access to the national government and international arena. They can be used more actively to coordinate actions across countries.
- **Consult and empower cross-border organisations:** These para-diplomatic organisations hold valuable information about the nature of cross-border living and their challenges. They also possess large networks across countries and are therefore instrumental in finding solutions to common issues in border areas.
- **Treat global crises as global, not national issues:** Global crises requires common responses. This may prevent asymmetrical repercussions following access to support, remedies, or aid.
- **Develop joint crises strategy for joint communication:** Ensuring communication with neighbouring countries will generate trust in national authorities.
- **Collect and harmonise cross-border statistics and data:** Access to data is necessary for a well-functioning society in its broadest sense, but it can also be crucial for understanding the impact closing borders may have on the frontier worker population in question.

Policy recommendations: Nordic level

- **Move with the changes on the global stage:** The realities and preconditions are changing. Border committees need to adapt in line with the global trends.
- **Strengthen cross-border governance structures:** Invest in cross-border organisations. They are the embodiment of living without boundaries in the Nordic Region. Cross-border actors have found their allies in the supra-national level withing the NCM and EU institutions, however, they are in the void in the national level.
- **Reform Nordic Co-operation structures:** Empower Nordic co-operation platforms by engaging decision-makers and politicians and move from project management to investments in increased institutional capacity for greater political stakeholder engagement.
- **Create a co-operation platform for the good times - and the bad times:** The pandemic has demonstrated the need for Nordic coordination and stronger dialogue. Emphasise the importance of joint strategies.
- **Develop a crises strategy:** Decide what actions should be devised when facing a crises, expect that crises might hit again.