

Promotion of legal accessibility
along the Slovak-Hungarian border

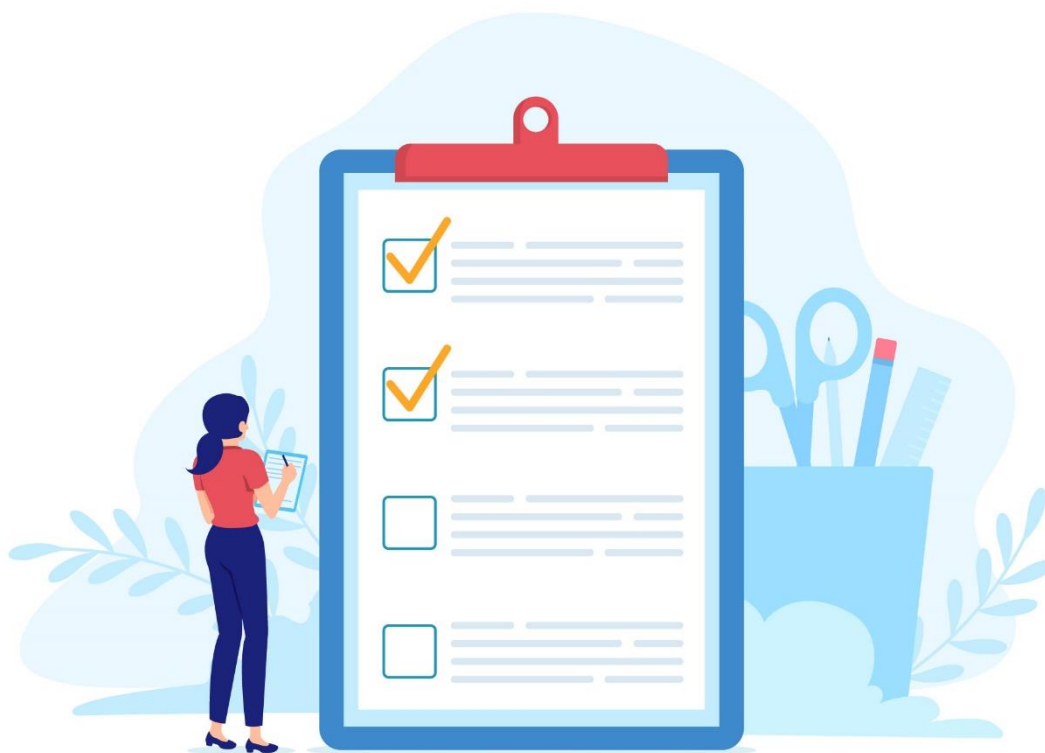


Obstacle monitoring

Questionnaire survey

REPORT

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1 Introduction

About the #ACCESS project

Along the common border between Hungary and Slovakia, integration has made tangible progress thanks to EU accession. Not only has foreign trade between the two countries increased spectacularly since 2004, reaching a record level of €17 billion in 2022, not only has the number of road border crossings open 24 hours increased (from 6 before the regime change to almost 40), but also cross-border commuting for labour market purposes affects the border region's population by the tens of thousands, while more than 1,000 Slovak students attend Hungarian schools and nearly 20,000 Slovak citizens are already living in Hungary. Cross-border urban districts similar to those in Western Europe have developed in the Bratislava and Košice areas, and shopping tourism has become part of everyday life for residents since the opening of the Schengen area in December 2007: around 75% of the turnover of some Hungarian cross-border shopping centres is generated by Slovak customers.

All these phenomena underline the importance of the strategic project '**Promotion of legal accessibility along the Slovak-Hungarian border**' (#ACCESS). The project will last from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2029, and the two implementing partners, the Budapest-based Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) and the Košice-based CESCI Carpathia aim to identify and remove as many legal and administrative obstacles as possible that hamper border movements and the lives of border residents.

Obstacle monitoring

The first phase of the project is based on "obstacle monitoring", which will involve a systematic collection of obstacles experienced by citizens living along the border. Questionnaire survey, interviews, an online helpdesk and workshops of territorial reference groups in cross-border urban areas will be used to obtain the necessary data. The legal background will be identified through interviews with relevant authorities and analysis of relevant legislation.

Questionnaire survey

In order for the #ACCESS project to achieve its goal of promoting Hungarian-Slovak cross-border cooperation, the legal and administrative problems that people living in the border area experience in their cross-border activities need to be identified. The questionnaire survey was a particularly important part of this exploratory and data collection work, as it was a direct channel not only to gain insight of decision-makers or various interest groups, but also to reach a much wider audience and provide an opportunity to express their own views.

Main objectives of the survey:

- a comprehensive assessment of the geographical and temporal pattern of cross-border activities;
- identifying legal and administrative obstacles encountered in cross-border activities;
- an assessment of the quantity, depth and quality of legal and administrative obstacles encountered in cross-border activities.

2 Methodological overview

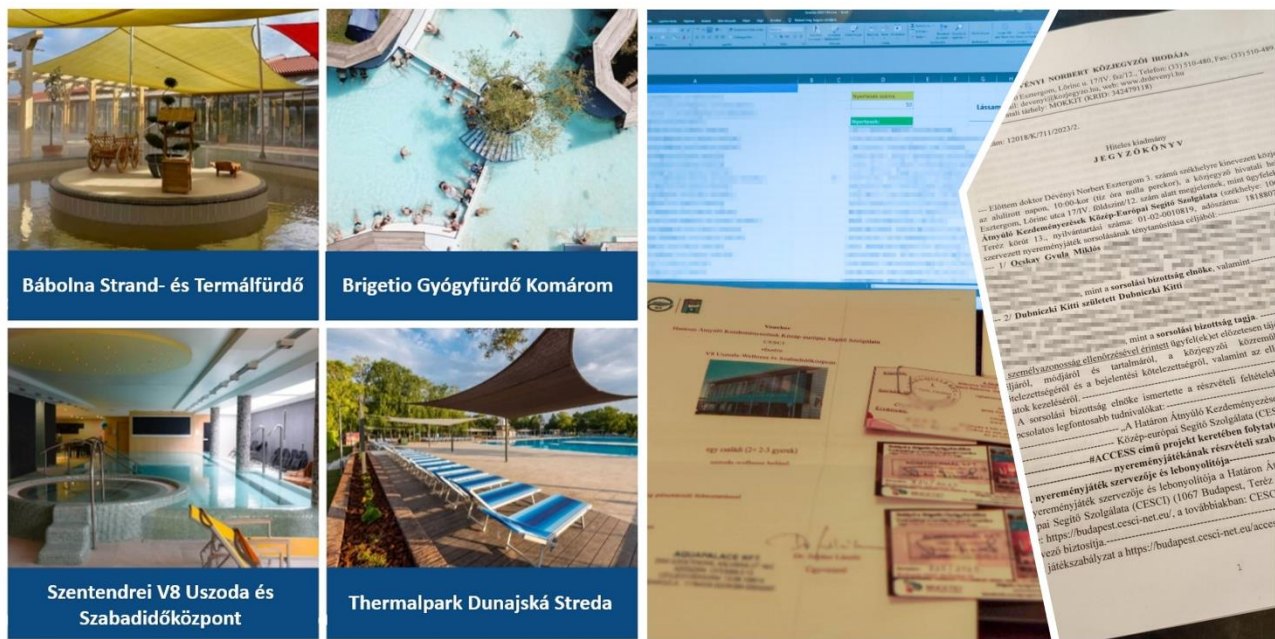
In order to obtain as much information as possible, a questionnaire survey was conducted on five topics relevant to the Slovak-Hungarian border region. These are cross-border shopping, employment, learning, permanent settlement on the other side of the border and the implementation of cross-border projects.

The survey was conducted from November 2023 to January 2024. The territorial focus for the collection of experiences was the Slovak-Hungarian border area (based on a 30 km zone in both directions from the border). We deviated from this basic logic in two cases: for the residential mobility, where only those who had moved to Hungary were addressed, and for the questionnaire for former beneficiaries of the programme, where the territorial delimitation was, as appropriate, the whole programme area. To ensure successful information collection, the questionnaires were mainly available online, but also promoted in several ways: paper leaflets were distributed in relevant locations; an online campaign was launched; direct emails and social media platforms were used; and a two-round prize draw was launched among those who filled the questionnaires.

The main platform for the questionnaire was the online questionnaires, which were made available on the project website. The five questionnaires, published in both languages focusing on different topics, were designed separately, so that each respondent only had to answer the questions relevant to him or her. Filling in the questionnaire took only 10 minutes, allowing even those with only basic computer skills to take part in the survey. This ensured that we reached a wide spectrum of audience and included different demographic groups.

To encourage participation, the project partners also organised a lottery draw for those who completed the questionnaire. The prizes were drawn in two rounds, first in November 2023 and then at the end of the project in January 2024, to maintain the incentive to participate throughout the duration of the survey. A total of eleven winners were selected in Esztergom, in the presence of the notary Norbert Dévényi, from 317 respondents in the first draw and 893 in the second draw, from Esztergom, Košice, Nová Stráž, Rajka, Trhová Hradská and Velký Blh. The winners won tickets to the spas of Bábolna, Komárom, Dunajská Streda and Szentendre.

Figure 1: Lottery draw related to the survey



Leafleting was a key element of the #ACCESS project's questionnaire strategy, serving as a traditional yet effective way to promote the project and reach a wide audience. The project partners worked closely with local municipalities and community venues to distribute the flyers to as many people as possible, ensuring the project's visibility among people living in the border area. The leaflets were distributed mainly in shopping centres and public institutions, allowing them to reach directly those people who may be most affected by the obstacles to cross-border mobility and cooperation. With the help of project partners, shoppers in the border region had the opportunity to fill in the survey on nine different days in Balassagyarmat, Encs, Esztergom, Győr, Kazincbarcika, Komárom, Mosonmagyaróvár, Ózd, Salgótarján and Szécsény. Flyers targeting cross-border commuters were personally distributed in the following municipalities: Abaújvár, Bezenye, Bódvaszilas, Büttös, Feketeerdő, Gönc, Göncruszka, Hegyeshalom, Hernádszurdok, Hidasnémeti, Hídvégardó, Hollóháza, Kéked, Komjáti, Levél, Mosonmagyaróvár, Pányok, Rajka, Telkibánya, Tornyosnémeti and Zsujta.

Figure 2: Field leafleting for the survey



Direct email (links to the questionnaires were sent to almost 4,000 regionally and thematically relevant email addresses) and social media (almost 150 regionally relevant Facebook groups were contacted) provided additional channels to reach the audience. Online PPC campaigns (Google and Facebook ads) also played an important role in promoting the project, ensuring that the questionnaires reached the widest possible audience of potential respondents.

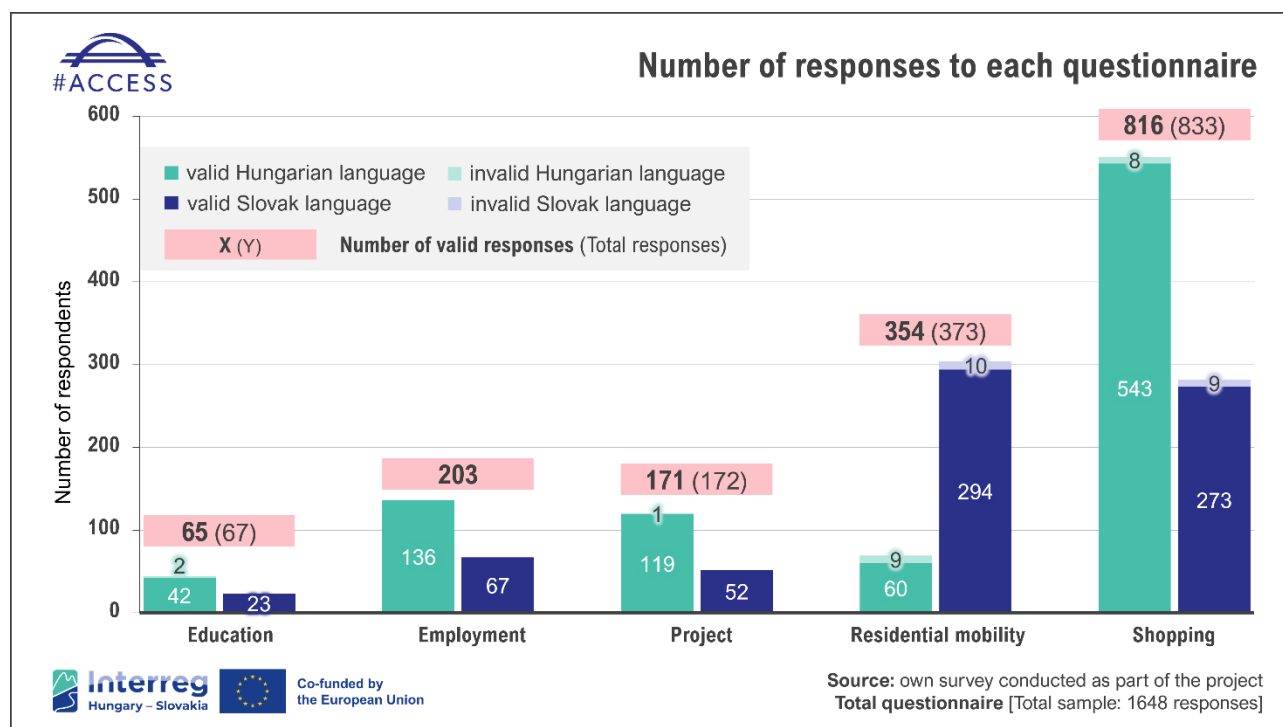
In parallel with the above methods, the Joint Secretariat was also involved in order to distribute the questionnaire on previous cross-border projects to project promoters, thus ensuring that those who have already been involved in cross-border projects could also contribute their experiences to the success of the survey.

3 Description of the full sample

In the framework of the #ACCESS project, a total of 1,648 questionnaires (of which 1,609 were valid) were completed by respondents living on both sides of the Hungarian and Slovak borders, which shows a significant interest in the topic of cross-border mobility and cooperation. The number and distribution of respondents across the different questionnaires varies (Figure 3). The lowest number of respondents, probably for demographic reasons, answered the questionnaire on education (67 responses, of which 65 were valid), while the highest number of respondents answered the questionnaire on shopping (833 responses, of which 816 were valid).

The questionnaires were available in Hungarian and Slovak, but it would be a mistake to convert the number of Hungarian and Slovak questionnaires directly into territorial data. The Hungarian-language questionnaires were more popular and generated a higher response rate than the Slovak-language version, which may be related to the ethnic demographics of the border area. Except for the housing issue, approximately twice as many people completed the questionnaire in Hungarian than in Slovak. Significantly more people answered the questionnaire on housing in Slovak, as the primary target group for this questionnaire were people moving from Slovakia to Hungary. This topic seems to be the most relevant after the topic of shopping, in terms of the total number of responses.

Figure 3: Number of responses to each questionnaire

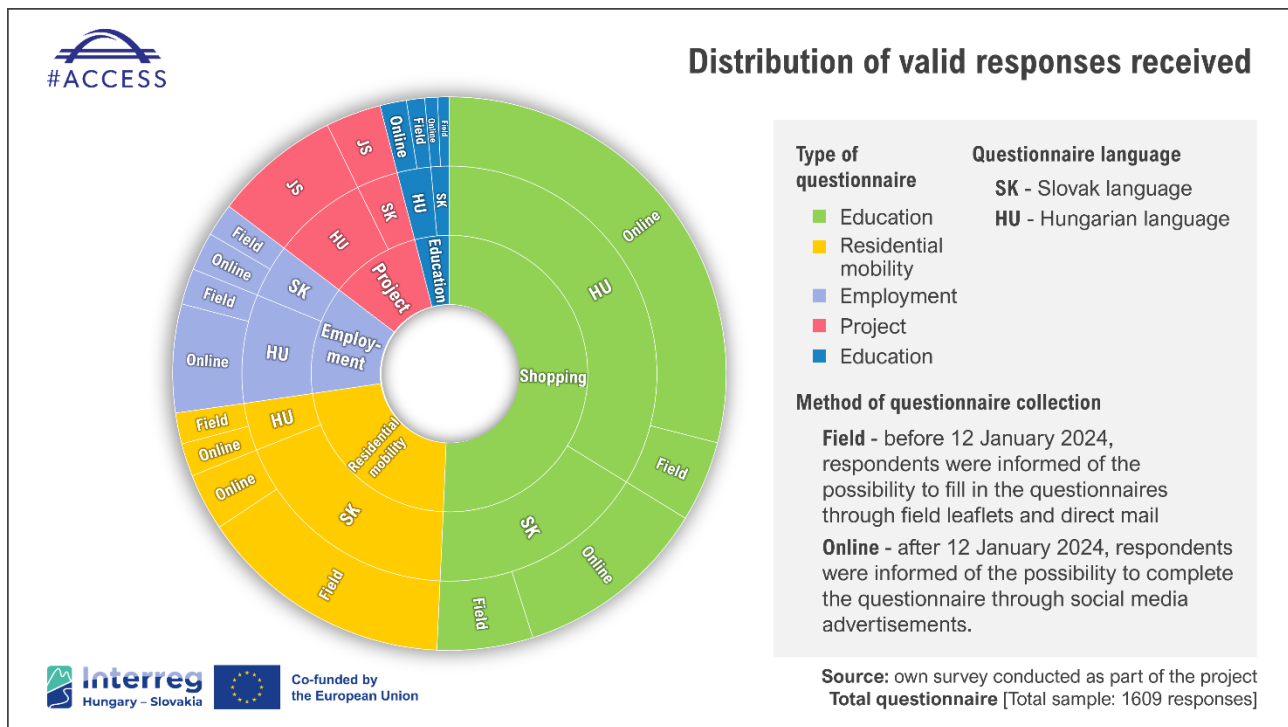


Once the raw data were received, the database was cleaned and some responses had to be filtered out. For example, two responses to an education questionnaire where students living and studying in the same country answered the questions, i.e. there was no cross-border commuting. In the case of the housing questionnaire, 19 responses had to be excluded because the respondents had not moved from Slovakia to the municipalities concerned in Hungary. As for the questionnaires on shopping, 17 answers were disregarded, since the information provided did not identify cross-border shopping activity and the answers did not contain any obstacles or relevant information. A duplicate

was also submitted in the questionnaire responses on projects and was therefore deleted. The analysis is based on 1,609 valid completions.

The donut chart below (Figure 4) simultaneously shows the distribution of the #ACCESS project questionnaire responses, categorised by survey topics (education, labour mobility, projects, residential mobility, shopping), mode of completion (on-site, online or shared by the Joint Secretariat) and the language of completion (Slovak or Hungarian).

Figure 4: Distribution of valid responses received



The chart above shows that the questionnaire on shopping was the most popular, especially the online form of questionnaire. While the online form was more popular among both Hungarian and Slovak respondents, the proportion of Hungarian respondents completing the questionnaire was more impressive, even though numerically more respondents completed the questionnaire in Hungarian than in Slovak. There are apparent differences in completion preferences for the different topics, but no language correlation can be found within these. While the questionnaire on housing was proportionally more likely to be completed as a result of field leafleting and the one on shopping as a result of the online campaign, there is no significant difference in the quantity of field and online completions for the questionnaires on employment and education. In the case of projects, the responses were received through the Joint Secretariat, as this questionnaire was targeted at parties involved in cross-border projects.

4 Results of the survey

4.1 Cross-border residential mobility

The #ACCESS project's questionnaire¹, which focuses on residential mobility, was launched with the intention to identify and improve the living conditions of Slovak citizens living in Hungary based on authentic information. The individual experiences of those who have moved have highlighted the specific challenges that have a significant impact on the daily lives of individuals and families who regularly cross the Hungarian-Slovak border. Focusing on Slovak citizens who consider Hungary as their home, we encountered multiple legal and administrative obstacles.

The survey was designed by the project team to get a more accurate picture of which settlements in Hungary are most affected by the phenomenon of relocation, and the self-reported proportion of those who have moved to a new place of residence with a legal housing status (specifically, whether they have an official address in Hungary). These baseline data are key to outlining demographic and geographical patterns of cross-border residential mobility and to identifying specific needs in terms of legal and administrative background. At the same time, the survey also looked at the timing of the move to Hungary.

The questions also covered the composition of Slovak households in Hungary, including the variety of services (from education to health) that are needed by families of different compositions. The questionnaire also focused on understanding how often residents return to Slovakia and for what reasons, in order to better understand the difficulties they face in their daily lives.

The main aim of the questionnaire was to identify the specific challenges that Slovak citizens face after moving to Hungary (e.g. language barriers, administrative difficulties, transport challenges and access to various services).

Sample of responses to the questionnaire focusing on residential mobility

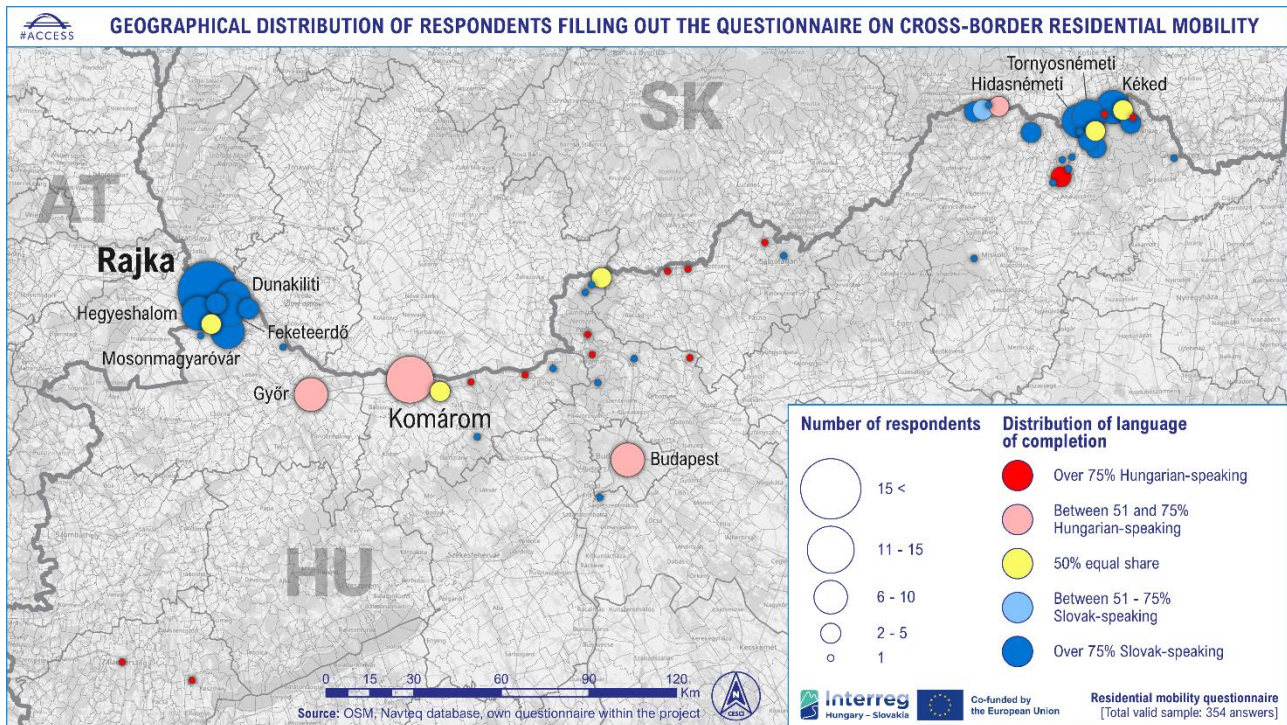
A total of **354 valid responses** were received to the housing questionnaire, which targeted **people who had moved from Slovakia and settled in Hungary**. Based on their territorial location (*Figure 5*), the **municipalities around Bratislava** are over-represented, with 68% of respondents (239 persons) living there. Rajka plays a special role, as more than half of the total sample (205 respondents, 58%) is covered by this municipality. The second largest group of resettled Slovak citizens who responded to the questionnaire live in **municipalities close to Košice**, where 17% (61) of the responses were received. Among these, Hidasnémeti stands out as the municipality with the third highest number of respondents (10) in the total sample. **Komárom and its surroundings** are also notable, with 14 respondents (4% of the total sample). After Rajka, Komárom received the highest number of responses (12). The 40 other unclassified responses are distributed among other municipalities in Hungary, with the capital, and Győr accounting for the largest share (8-8).

In terms of **language distribution**, responses in Slovak predominate (294; 83%), mainly related to settlements in the vicinity of Bratislava and Košice (e.g. Rajka, Hidasnémeti, Mosonmagyaróvár). The Hungarian language responses (60; 17%) were more from the central part of the border area (e.g.

¹ The questions of the questionnaire can be found in Annex: *6.1.a Questionnaire focusing on residential mobility*

Komárom, Győr, Budapest), but there were also more Hungarian language responses from Rajka, Hidvégardó, Encs and Hidasnémeti.

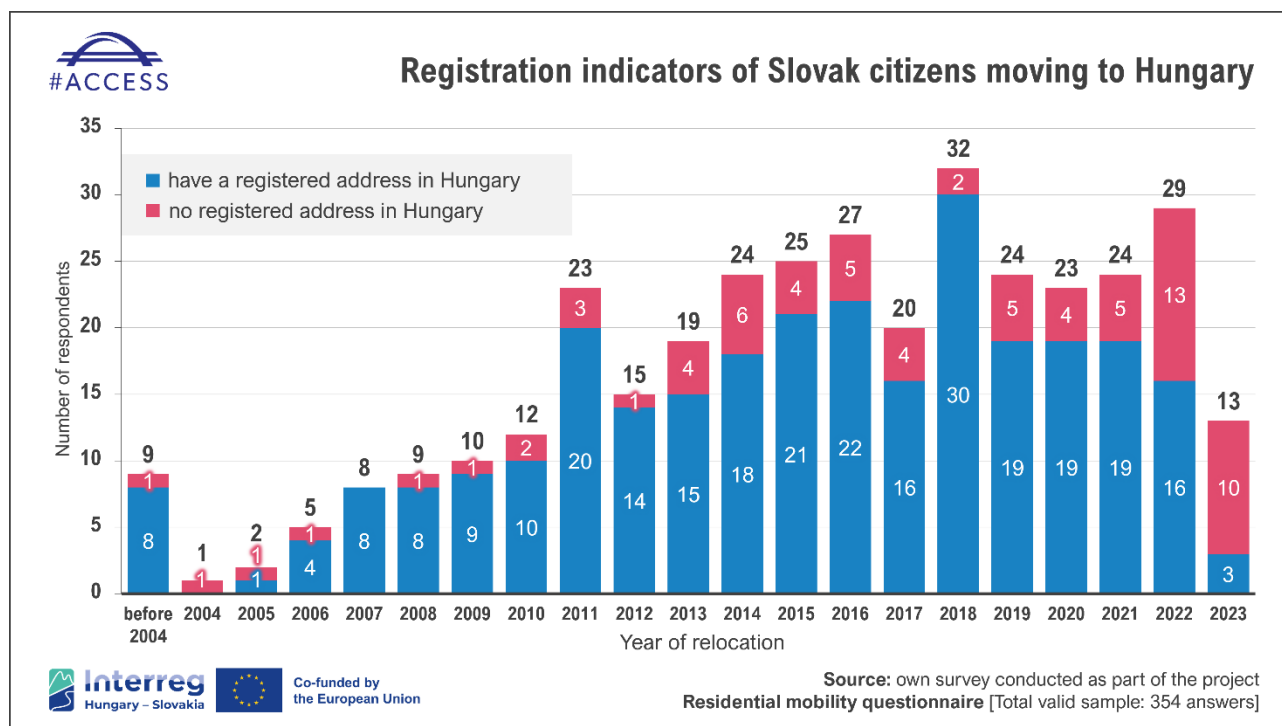
Figure 5: Geographical distribution of respondents filling out the questionnaire on cross-border residential mobility



Among the respondents, **moving to Hungary** (Figure 6) - except for the years with a spike in 2011 and 2017 - increased almost steadily until 2018, when it peaked at 32 persons/year. During the COVID- 19 pandemic period, the number of surveyed movers stabilised at around 25 persons/year, before returning to pre-crisis levels in 2022. The willingness to relocate was highest in the period 2014-2018 (36% of relocated people; 128 persons), compared to a slight decrease in the period 2019-2023 (32%; 113 persons), which was also affected by the pandemic. A much smaller proportion of respondents had moved before 2014.

The vast majority of survey respondents (79%; 280 people) have a **registered address in Hungary**. However, half of the respondents who have not yet obtained official documents (21%; 74 people) are relatively new movers (having moved in the period 2019-2023). This is presumably not due to a lack of willingness to register, but rather to the administrative difficulties of obtaining a Hungarian address card.

Figure 6: Registration indicators of Slovak citizens moving to Hungary



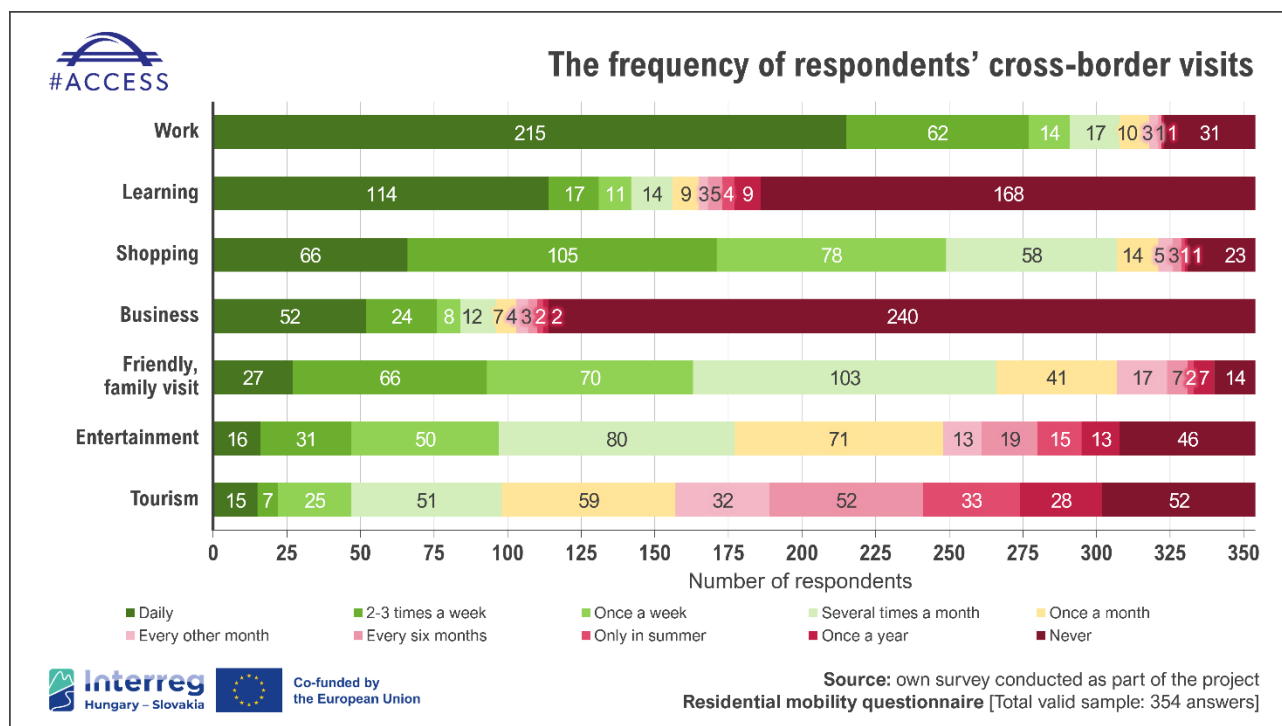
The most common reason for crossing the border among the 354 respondents (Figure 7) are visits to friends/family (96% of respondents), shopping (94%) and work (91%), while business (32%) and education (53%) are the least frequently mentioned reasons for crossing the border (the latter due to the low participation of school-age people in the survey).

In terms of the frequency of commuting, daily cross-border trips are most common for work (61%), study (32%) and business (15%), while cross-border trips several times a week are most common for shopping (30%), and several times a month for visiting friends/family (29%) and for leisure (23%). This is followed by tourism (17%), for which the majority cross the border once a month. Crossings less frequent than monthly do not dominate in any of the activity categories, with only tourism showing a slight divergence.

Under the EU law, 82% of survey respondents are considered cross-border commuters, based on data for employment purposes².

² "A person who works in an EU country other than the one in which they live and to which they return daily or at least once a week."
Source: https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/work-abroad/cross-border-commuters/index_en.htm

Figure 7: The frequency of respondents' cross-border visits



In addition to the activities listed, respondents could also indicate **other reasons**, of which visits to health facilities (doctor) (41 out of 78) and, to a much lesser extent, transporting children to educational institutions and official business (9-9) stand out. Other reasons given include sports, visiting the airport or attending a funeral.

Barriers to residential mobility

Respondents mentioned barriers to settling on the other side of the border in relation to ten pre-defined questions (Figure 8). The most problematic issue was transport, with more than half of the respondents (63.8%) encountering obstacles in this area. There were also a significant number of difficulties (one third of the responses received) with administrative matters (36.7%) and language skills (34.5%), but a significant number of respondents also found it difficult to settle in a neighbouring country due to a lack of knowledge of the law (22.6%) and health care system (16.4%). For other issues raised (e.g. real estate, penalties, education, etc.), less than 12% of respondents experienced a barrier.

Figure 8: Difficulties in moving to and living in Hungary

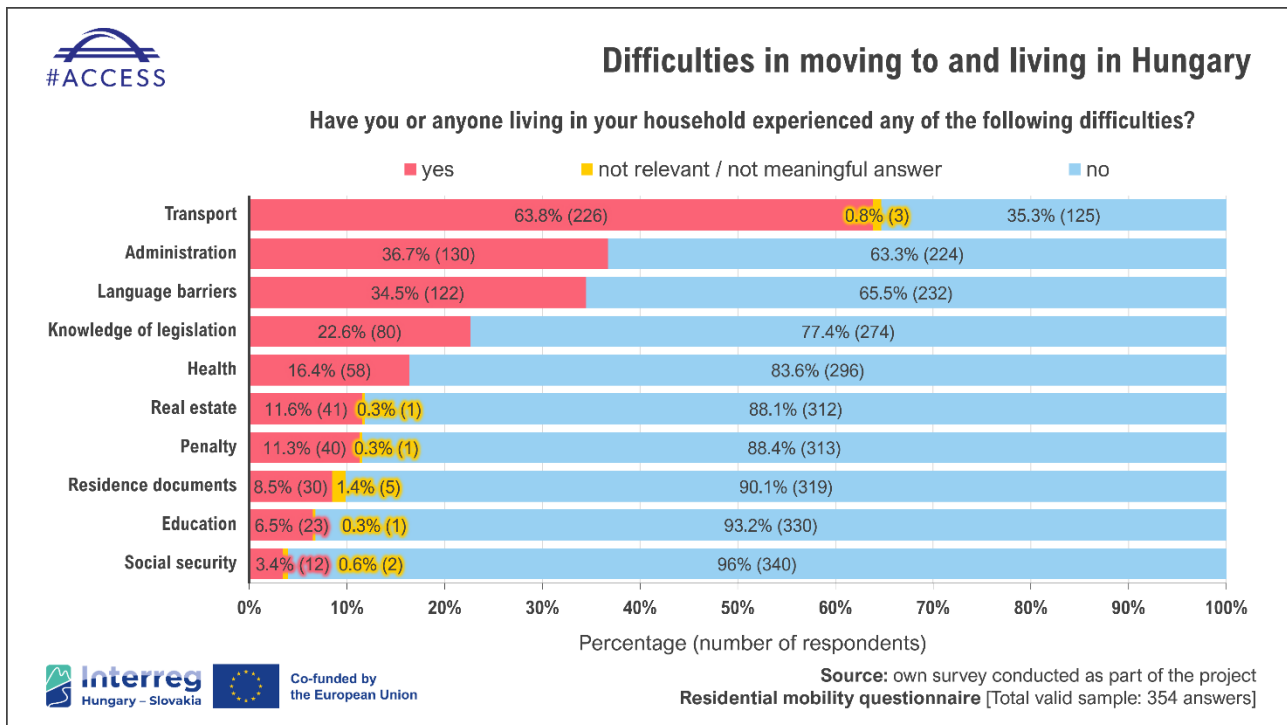
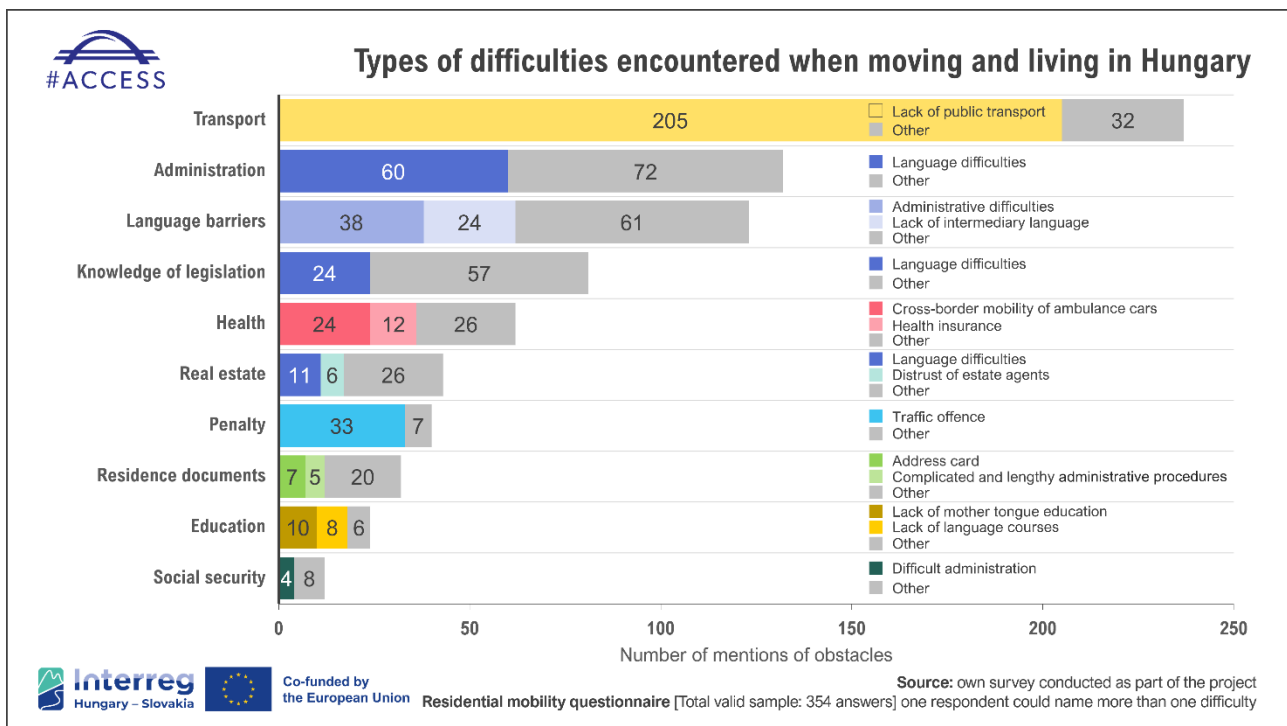


Figure 9: Types of difficulties encountered when moving and living in Hungary



Among the topics (Figure 9), **transport** (237 mentions per barrier³) is the most stressed, with 86% of barriers relating to inadequate public transport (lack of or inadequate frequency and timetables). Difficulties due to the absence of the 801 bus, which used to operate between Bratislava and Rajka,

³ A respondent may have indicated more than one barrier within a topic, so the total number of barriers mentioned may exceed the total number of valid completions within a topic.

account for the vast majority of the reported obstacles. Respondents consider that the bus service should be reopened, at least to the first inhabited municipality on the Slovak side (Bratislava outskirts) and extended to other municipalities in Hungary (e.g. Dunakiliti, Feketeerdő, Mosonmagyaróvár). While the majority of workers are able (or forced) to use private cars to make up for the missing public transport links, those belonging to age groups with lower mobility (children and pensioners) are unable to cross the border and need the help of people of working age. A local problem in Rajka (but also in other municipalities with newly developed settlement areas) is that the centre of the municipalities (and therefore the railway station and other services) is far away from the outlying parts of the municipalities, and is difficult to reach. In addition to public transport, the poor state of border infrastructures (border crossings and roads) was highlighted by many respondents, as well as traffic jams, cash-only ticketing, temporary border control practices and the lack of motorways in the central part of the border region.

In the field of **handling administrative tasks**, respondents mentioned 132 obstacles, almost half of which (45%) were due to language barriers. To overcome this, respondents mostly seek help informally (from bilingual neighbours and friends) or choose to use translation software. The foreign language competence of office workers is poor, and communication in intermediary languages (English or German) is often not possible. Language difficulties are considered more complex by using monolingual forms and websites which also require an interpreter/translator to fill in and use. Many highlighted the difficulty of dealing with utility providers and the lack of preparation on the part of local authorities. Bank transactions, obtaining documents (social security, housing, birth registration, census), enrolment in educational institutions and administration during construction works are major difficulties for residents who do not speak the country's official language. In some cases, even with the appropriate language skills, the language of administration is difficult to understand, as the two countries have significantly different types of documents. Other administrative difficulties - but not language barriers - include costly withdrawals and international transfers, and customer services not accepting foreign telephone numbers when signing a contract.

The **language barrier** (123 mentions) was also mentioned as a separate issue, with the two most frequently mentioned challenges faced by those who settle down in the neighbouring country was handling administrative formalities and tasks (31%) and the lack of an intermediary language (20%). The related difficulties include those listed in the previous paragraph. Many also complained of integration difficulties, as language barriers prevented them from building good relations with neighbours and participating actively in the community activities of the settlement. To overcome this, there is a willingness to learn the official language, but municipalities do not currently provide free language courses for newcomers.

Among the obstacles arising from **lack of knowledge of the law** (81 mentions), language difficulties rank first (30% of the obstacles mentioned), as law and local regulations are available in the official language of the country. Lack of legal knowledge was identified in the field of construction rules, municipal regulations, transport rules, the procedure for starting a business, claiming compensation and registering a marriage were mentioned.

Among the **barriers to accessing healthcare services** (62 mentioned), the lack of cross-border movement of ambulance cars is the biggest difficulty (39% of the obstacles mentioned). This is a particular problem in cases where the telephone operator automatically connects you to the emergency services of the other country when you call for help, but ambulance cars are denied to cross the border to provide help (as this is prohibited by the legislation in force). Some people reported problems with their new address card because they could no longer make full use of the

health services in their previous place of residence. There were more complaints about the lack or quality of health services, specifically in cases where more and better services are available on the other side of the border. In addition, the different institutional system, slow administration, discrimination and the need to obtain prescribed medicines (issued in Slovakia) in another country (Hungary) have also caused problems. A particular problem is the lack of knowledge of procedures for cross-border healthcare, which means that a significant number of people do not even try to seek care locally, and prefer visiting their doctors in their previous country of residence.

Language barriers are also the most significant challenge (26%) in the area of **property purchase and construction** (43 mentions). In addition to translating contracts and permits, dealing with property developers and agencies has also created more problems than expected (overpricing, language barriers, poor building condition, etc.), which has further increased the lack of trust. Other difficulties encountered included communicating with the authorities, obtaining documents/permits, obtaining a mortgage, looking for and purchasing property and recording ownership. There were also examples of discrimination, where foreigners were discriminated against, when they were not allowed to sell the property or were offered to sell it under different terms.

In the case of **penalties** and fines (40 mentions), the main negative experiences were related to traffic offences (83% of registered obstacles), with speeding and unauthorised use of the motorway being the most frequent reasons. According to the responses in the questionnaire, other penalties were imposed on respondents only for temporary border controls or for unauthorised construction and tax payments. It can be concluded that this is not a question of obstacles, but of non-compliance with laws and rules.

In relation to obtaining the **necessary documents for residence** (32 mentions), the lengthy administration and the importance of having an address card (specifically due to the border controls introduced during COVID-19) were highlighted. Respondents' experience was that lack of residence documents can also be a problem when applying for a telephone number, applying for a loan, registering a child and using health services. However, even having it does not guarantee the smooth run of official business (e.g. bank transactions).

42% of the **barriers to education** (24 mentions) were due to the lack of mother tongue education. Many complained that the public schools in their municipality do not have bilingual teachers and educators, so they prefer to enrol their children in public schools in other municipalities (on the other side of the border). However, in the absence of a residence address, the successful admission of a child (to a school in another municipality) is not guaranteed, nor is free education ensured. The opening hours of kindergartens in small municipalities are limited, and commuting parents are unable to pick up their children in time and therefore do not take advantage of the local educational facilities. In addition, one third of the barriers to education relate to the lack of (free) language courses and the difficulty of learning the official language, which local authorities do not pay enough attention to help the integration process.

Social security administration was the area with the fewest obstacles (12 mentions), mainly related to time-consuming and non-transparent administrative processes. The feedback also shows that there have been precedents of social security being denied to relocated persons due to a lack of communication between the two countries.

In addition to the ten problem areas listed, respondents were also able to identify **other obstacles, such** as communication with authorities, inconvenience caused by temporary border controls, integration difficulties and lack of services. The infrastructural and cultural conditions of the newly

built-up parts of the settlements were identified as a problem, as pavements, public lighting or garbage collection were not yet fully developed, but the social characteristics/behaviours of urban life were introduced in the rural environment.

4.2 Cross-border shopping mobility

This #ACCESS questionnaire focused on the shopping habits of residents living near the Slovak-Hungarian border, offering insights into the cross-border dynamics of consumer behaviour⁴. The survey mapped the direction, volume, frequency and patterns of cross-border shopping flows, which helped to understand the extent to which the Slovak-Hungarian border influences everyday decisions and preferences regarding where to buy goods and services.

The study also addresses the challenges that consumers face when using cross-border commercial services. The questionnaire targeted to identify specific barriers to the shopping experience through questions on product quality, invoicing, cross-border transport of goods and post-purchase complaints.

Sample of responses to the questionnaire focusing on shopping mobility

A total of 833 people completed the questionnaire on shopping mobility. After cleaning the data, we were able to process a total of 816 responses. In the case of excluded responses, the respondents did not realize cross-border shopping. Some respondents indicated another country (e.g. Austria) as the place of their shopping and some respondents indicated the same country as both place of residence and place of shopping. The vast majority (almost 70%) of responses came from the respondents residing in Slovakia.

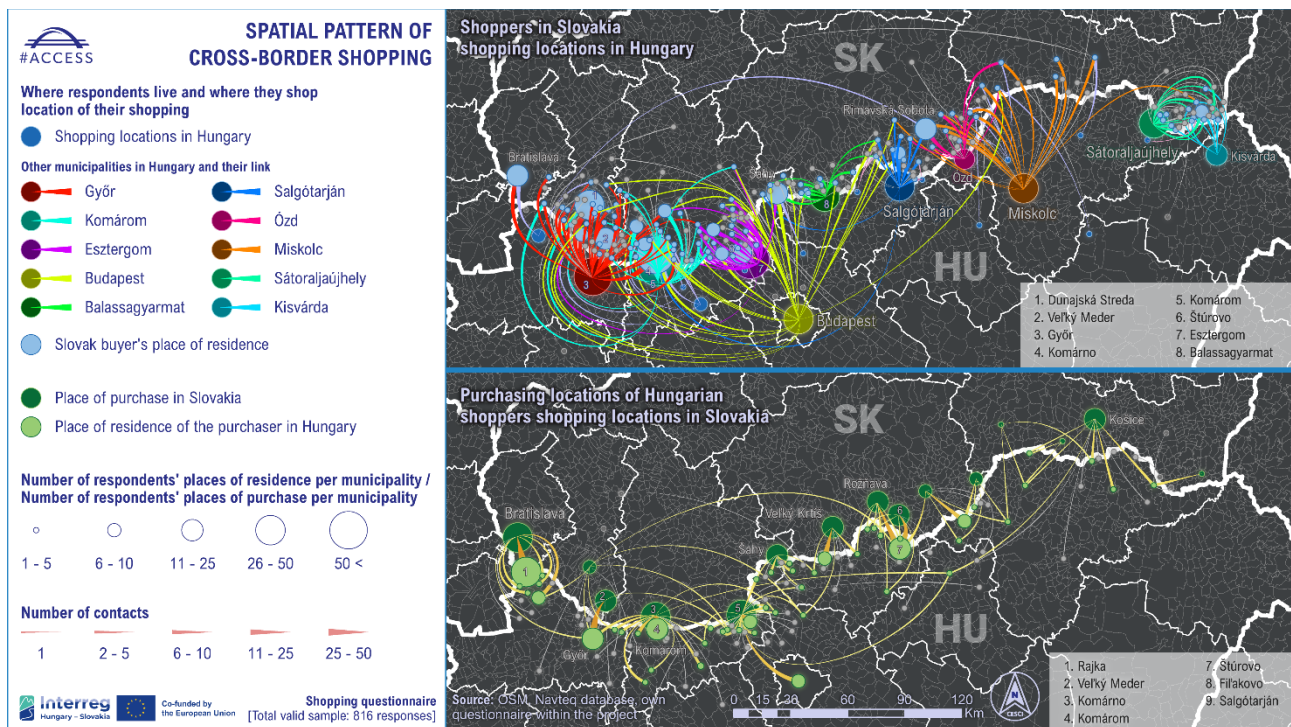
The spatial pattern of cross-border purchases (*Figure 10*), several characteristic centres, networks and directions can be identified from the responses received. On the Slovak side, more than 200 different municipalities were mentioned by respondents as the **starting point** (i.e. place of residence). A particularly high number of respondents reported cross-border shopping habits from Komárno (>50 respondents), Dunajská Streda (>30 respondents) and Štúrovo (>20 respondents). On a smaller scale (between 15 and 10 respondents), but also more important sending municipalities according to the responses received are Šahy, Rimavská Sobota, Bratislava, Veľký Meder, Gabčíkovo and Filákov. Among the Hungarian respondents, Rajka, Győr, Salgótarján and Komárom became dominant as places of residence (with a response rate of 30-10), but more respondents (>5) also completed the questionnaire from the Hungarian municipalities of Balassagyarmat, Ózd, Esztergom, Budapest and Mosonmagyaróvár.

On the Hungarian side, Győr, Komárom and Esztergom are absolutely outstanding as cross-border **shopping destinations** (with between 150 and 100 mentions). Budapest, Salgótarján, Sátoraljaújhely and Miskolc were also mentioned by many respondents (between 40-50 mentions) as shopping destinations. In addition, there were three other locations out of the nearly 40 destinations mentioned where the number of mentions exceeded 10: Balassagyarmat, Ózd and Kisvárd. Respondents residing in Hungary named nearly 25 different shopping destinations in Slovakia, of which three had between 40 and 50 mentions: Štúrovo, Komárno and Bratislava. There

⁴ The questions of the questionnaire can be found in the Annex: *6.1.b The shopping-focused mobility questionnaire*

are a further seven locations in Slovakia that were mentioned by 10-20 respondents: Veľký Meder, Lučenec, Veľký Krtíš, Šahy, Košice, Filákov and Rimavská Sobota.

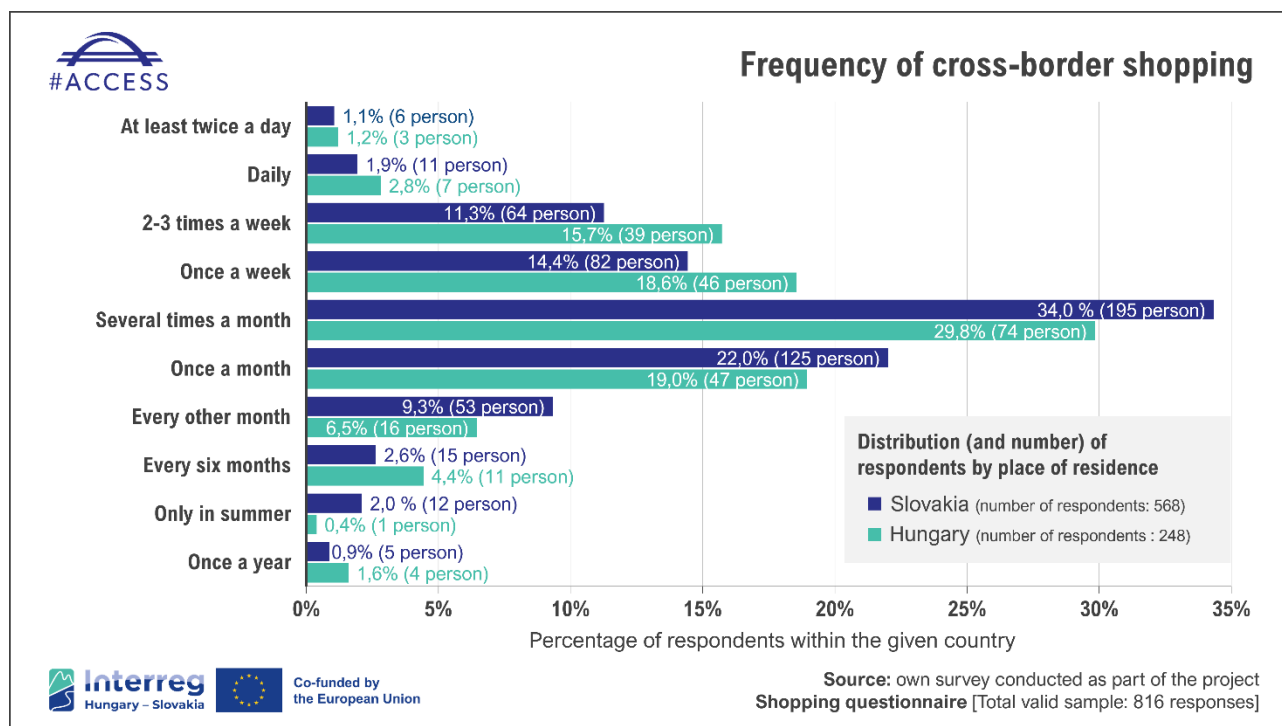
Figure 10: Spatial pattern of cross-border shopping



The spatial pattern of cross-border shopping mobility is dominated by the metropolitan areas and the cross-border metropolitan catchment areas (above all: Győr, Budapest, Miskolc, Bratislava functional areas), the border towns with a cross-border catchment area of medium size (mainly Sátoraljaújhely, Salgótarján, Balassagyarmat, Ózd), and the twin cities and city pairs (Komárno and Komárom, Esztergom and Štúrovo). Budapest has the most extensive catchment area: from Dunajská Streda to Filákov, it attracts customers from many municipalities, including those further away from the border. Győr (from Bratislava to Nové Zámky) and Miskolc (from Rimavská Sobota to Košice) also have a significant catchment area. Those moving from Hungary to Slovakia tend to come from shorter distances, preferring to move between city pairs, on urban axes, between the nearest towns, and there is less density at the residential level, with small towns less affected. In contrast, Slovak residents mainly in the areas of Bratislava, Győr, Komárom, Esztergom-Parkány, Balassagyarmat and Sátoraljaújhely-Bodrog interregional areas also transit to Hungary through a wider, often wide circle of small settlements, with shopping centres marked on the map.

Regarding the frequency of cross-border shopping (Figure 11): the highest proportion of respondents cross the border several times a month to go shopping (Hungarian residence: 29.8%; Slovak residence: 34.4%). 82% of Slovak residents and 83% of Hungarian residents cross the Slovak-Hungarian border at least once a month for shopping. A low proportion of respondents cross the border very often (several times a day, daily) and very rarely (every six months, in summer, once a year). Mobility patterns differ slightly by place of residence, with a high proportion of Slovak residents crossing the border several times a month, while Hungarian residents have a higher proportion of shopping trips than their Slovak counterparts, with 2-3 times a week and once a week.

Figure 11: Frequency of cross-border shopping



Barriers to shopping-related mobility

The experience of those who completed the questionnaire (816 respondents) suggests that shopping across the border requires a minimum of difficulty for citizens of the neighbouring country. The share of those experiencing difficulties does not exceed 10% in any of the five areas listed in the questionnaire (Figure 12), with transport of goods (7.5%) and other challenges not included in other categories (7.8%) being the most problematic. A significant proportion of respondents did not answer some questions - the highest proportions under the items "transport of goods" and "quality of goods" - while in other cases the answer given was either not relevant or not relevant to the respondent (these form the category "not meaningful"). Overall, the vast majority of respondents (at least 68% in each category) did not experience any problems when shopping in a neighbouring country.

The majority of the **obstacles to the transport of goods** (66 mentioned as obstacles) concern the lack of international delivery, which represents 61% of the registered obstacles (Figure 13). The majority of stores are only willing to deliver products ordered online to domestic destinations, despite having a presence in both countries, and delivery costs would be cheaper if the shortest route (crossing the border) were chosen. However, when international delivery is possible, the high postage costs discourage consumers to realise a cross-border purchase (18% of cases cited as a transport barrier). For on-site purchases, the delivery of the product is a regular problem for consumers, as the only way to deliver a large purchase is by car or taxi, due to the lack of public transport. For this reason, the majority of respondents can afford to buy limited quantities and smaller products (mainly food). Border controls during the COVID19 pandemic also restricted cross-border shopping.

Figure 12: Difficulties in crossing the border for shopping

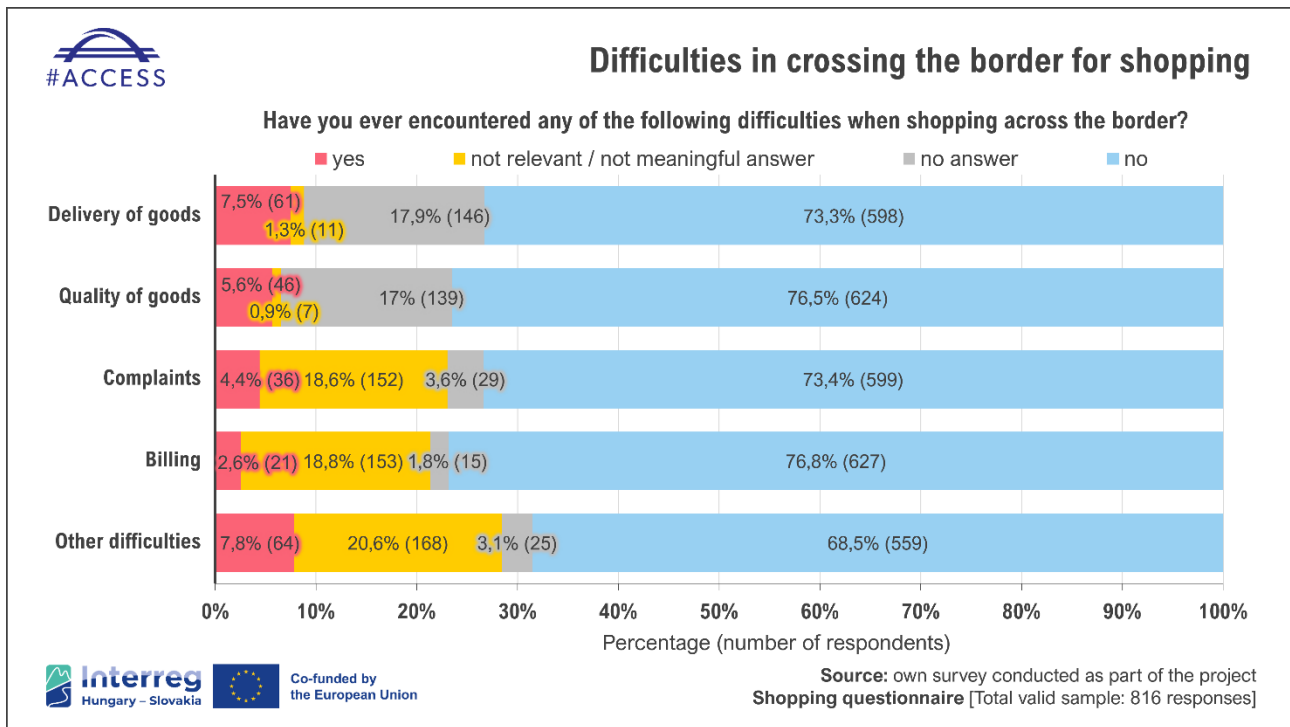
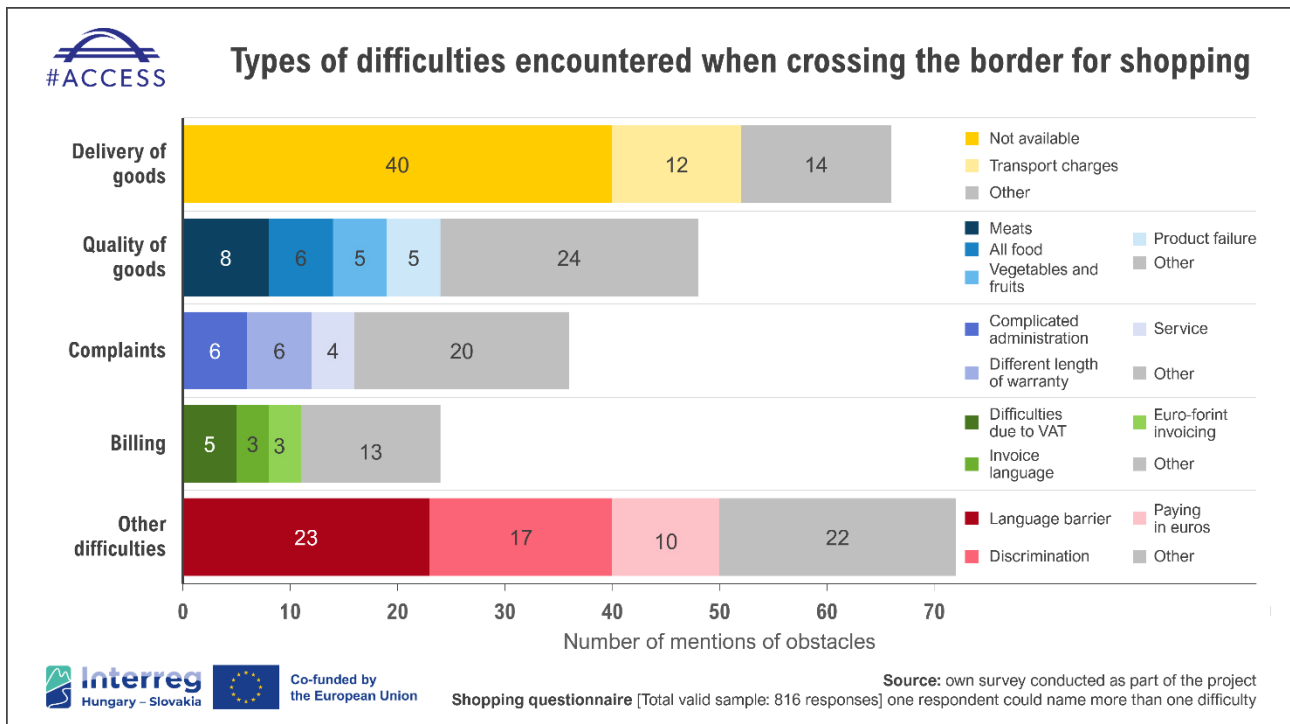


Figure 13: Types of difficulties encountered when crossing the border for shopping



Difficulties due to the quality of the goods (48 mentions) are most common in the case of meat products (17% of the cases mentioned as a barrier) and fruit and vegetables, but also product failure is not uncommon. Perceptions of the quality of food and the range of products vary from person to person, but in several cases, problems with expiry dates and the intentional sale of spoiled/defective products deterred respondents from the cross-border shopping. A specific case was the quantity

restriction on the purchase of basic foodstuffs, which was a particular inconvenience for those who buy foodstuffs less frequently but in larger quantities.

36 respondents reported obstacles related to **complaints about** products of unsatisfactory quality, most often due to complex and lengthy administrative procedures and different warranty/guarantee periods. If the repair of the products is not requested at the place of purchase, but in a store of the same company in another country, servicing is not possible. In addition, language barriers, the behaviour of the store staff, lack of communication (feedback), loss of money on returns (due to the different exchange rate) and the need to provide an address to register a complaint were also difficulties.

The most common **difficulties related to invoicing** (24 mentions) were the issuing of the invoice, differences due to the different VAT systems in the two countries, and the invoicing process (whether the product is shown with or without VAT) (21% of the difficulties reported within the topic). Other inconveniences included the language of the invoice, the currency of the invoice, possible mis-invoicing and refusal to pay by card.

When **other problems** encountered during the purchase were mentioned, 72 other cases were recorded. The majority of these were due to language barriers (32%), possible discrimination (24%) and the use of a different currency (14%). Language barriers include monolingual product labels and lack of language skills of the sales staff; in terms of discrimination (despite other language skills), only the use of the official language and restrictions on foreign customers (no discount prices, e.g. petrol) are mentioned; while the use of different exchange rates is mentioned in terms of currency. Respondents also objected to the quantitative restrictions on basic foodstuffs (which have now been abolished) and the refusal to participate in loyalty schemes. In the latter case, it was not possible to register with a foreign telephone number or address. Loyalty cards are only valid in stores in the country where they were issued, not for the same company in a neighbouring country.

4.3 Cross-border labour mobility

The main objective of the cross-border questionnaire on labour mobility⁵ within the #ACCESS project was to identify the obstacles faced by cross-border commuters. By understanding the experiences of these individuals, the project aims to propose solutions that will facilitate the flow of labour between the two countries, ultimately contributing to the economic integration and growth of the region. The questionnaire aims to gather first-hand information from those who face these challenges on a daily basis.

The survey categorised the duration of employment into endpoints of less than half a year and more than 10 years, allowing a comprehensive analysis of how barriers may develop or persist over time.

The survey focuses on the specific difficulties that cross-border workers may face, including language barriers, administrative difficulties in accessing employment, possible lack of public transport, access to health services and lack of familiarity with the rules and regulations of the host country.

⁵ The questions of the questionnaire can be found in the annex: *6.1.c Questionnaire focusing on labour mobility*

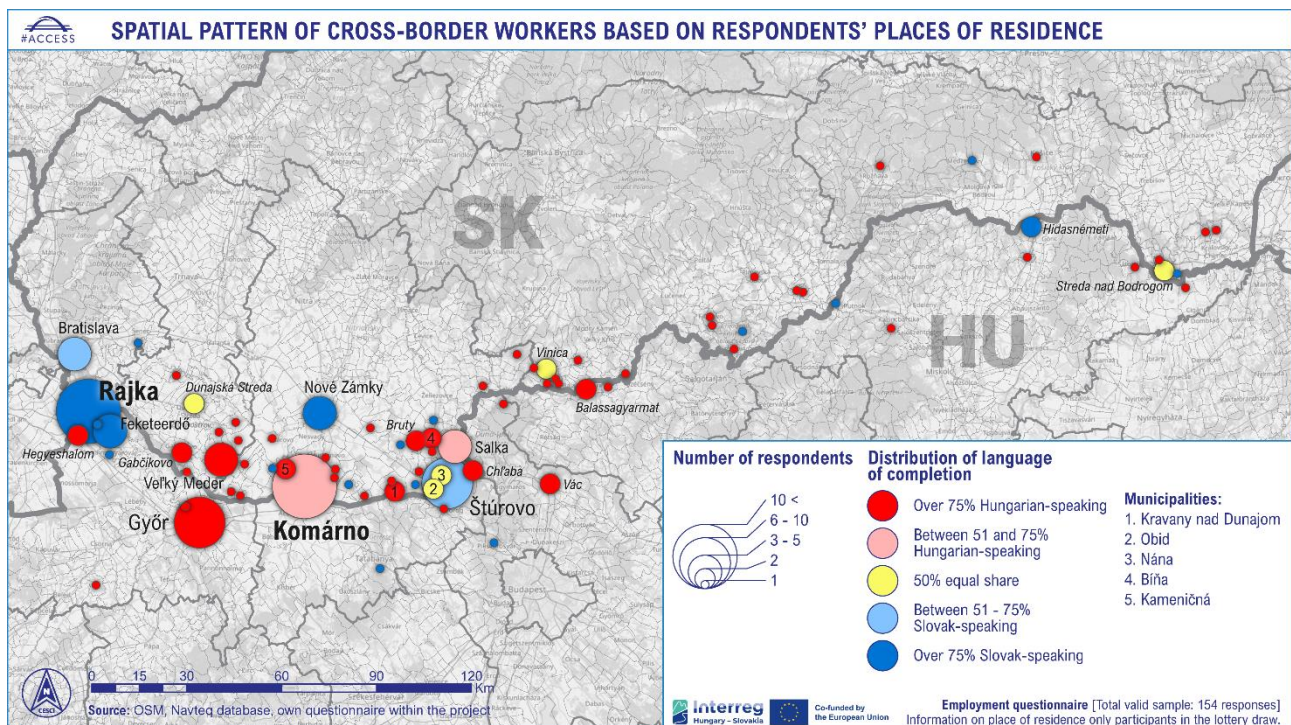
Sample of responses to the questionnaire focusing on labour mobility

The relevant sample size is 203 persons. Below, this sample is analysed first by the distribution of workers based on place of residence (*Figure 14*) and then by commuting time (*Figure 15*).

The breakdown of cross-border workers by place of residence⁶ shows that two thirds of commuters come from Slovakia (102 people, 66.2% of respondents who indicated their place of residence) and one third from Hungary (52 people, 33.8%). Most of the respondents commute to work in Hungary are from Komárno (16 people, 15.7% of commuters from Slovakia), Štúrovo (8 people, 7.8%) and Veľký Meder (4 people, 3.9%). The vast majority of workers commuting from Slovakia come from the western border zone between Bratislava and Vinica. Workers from Slovakia mainly commute to Hungary from the border area of Gabčíkovo via Komárno to Salka, while a smaller concentration of commuting is also observed in the Ipeľ segment around Vinica. Only 16.7% of those commuting from Slovakia come from a settlement located east of Vinica.

Mobility from Hungary to Slovakia is partly characterised by a similar geographical distribution as in the opposite direction: only 15.4% of commuters from Hungary come from Balassagyarmat and the municipalities east of it. Only two municipalities have more than five respondents who provided their place of residence: Rajka (18 respondents, 34.8% of all commuters from Hungary) and Győr (6 respondents, 11.5%). Overall (based on the sample), relatively few municipalities are involved in cross-border commuting and the places of residence of commuters are more concentrated: typically in the cross-border agglomeration of Bratislava (Rajka, Feketeerdő, Hegyeshalom), Győr and less dominantly in the cross-border catchment area of Košice, with the centre of Hidasnémeti.

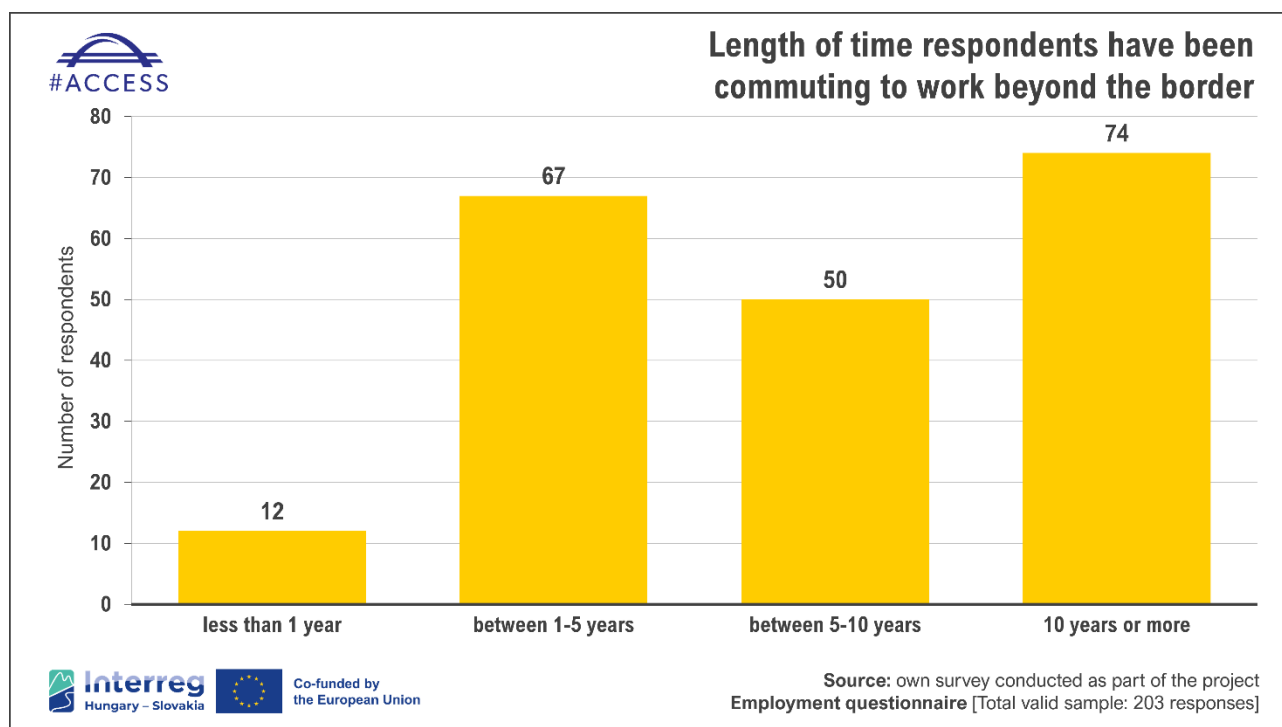
Figure 14: Spatial pattern of cross-border workers based on respondents' places of residence



⁶ Information on place of residence is not available for all those who filled in the questionnaire, only those who participated in the lottery draw (154 people) provided this information.

The absolute majority of commuters (64.9%) completed the questionnaire in Hungarian. Mother tongue is an important factor in cross-border commuting. Apart from Nové Zámky and Štúrovo, and a few small settlements (where only a small number of respondents completed the questionnaire in Slovak), the presence of Slovak-speaking respondents is dominant in the metropolitan areas of Bratislava and Košice. These workers have typically moved from Slovakia to border settlements in Hungary, from where they commute to their workplaces in Slovakia on a daily basis.

Figure 15: Length of time respondents have been commuting to work beyond the border



The vast majority of **respondents** (94.1%) have been commuting to work abroad for at least a year. The largest group of respondents, 36.5% of all respondents, have been working on the other side of the border for a long time, 10 years or more, while the second largest group, one third of all respondents, have been working in the neighbouring country for 1-5 years. According to the language of completing the questionnaire, Hungarian native speakers have been working in the neighbouring country for a shorter time, while Slovak native speakers have been working there for longer. The two largest differences are detected for having worked abroad for 1-5 years (Hungarian: 38.2%; Slovak: 22.4%) and for having worked abroad for at least 10 years (Slovak: 44.8%; Hungarian: 32.4%).

Barriers to labour mobility

Six topics were identified for the challenges faced during commuting to and from work (Figure 16), none of which exceeded 40%. The majority of respondents (39.9%) cited transport difficulties, as it would be impossible or too difficult to reach their workplace without a car. More than 20% encountered obstacles related to workplace administration (24.1%), while others (20.7%) faced problems with lack of knowledge related to legal regulations. Language barrier was a problem only for 5.4% of the respondents. This is presumably due to the fact that the majority of commuters took jobs in their mother tongue.

Figure 16: Difficulties encountered when crossing the border to work

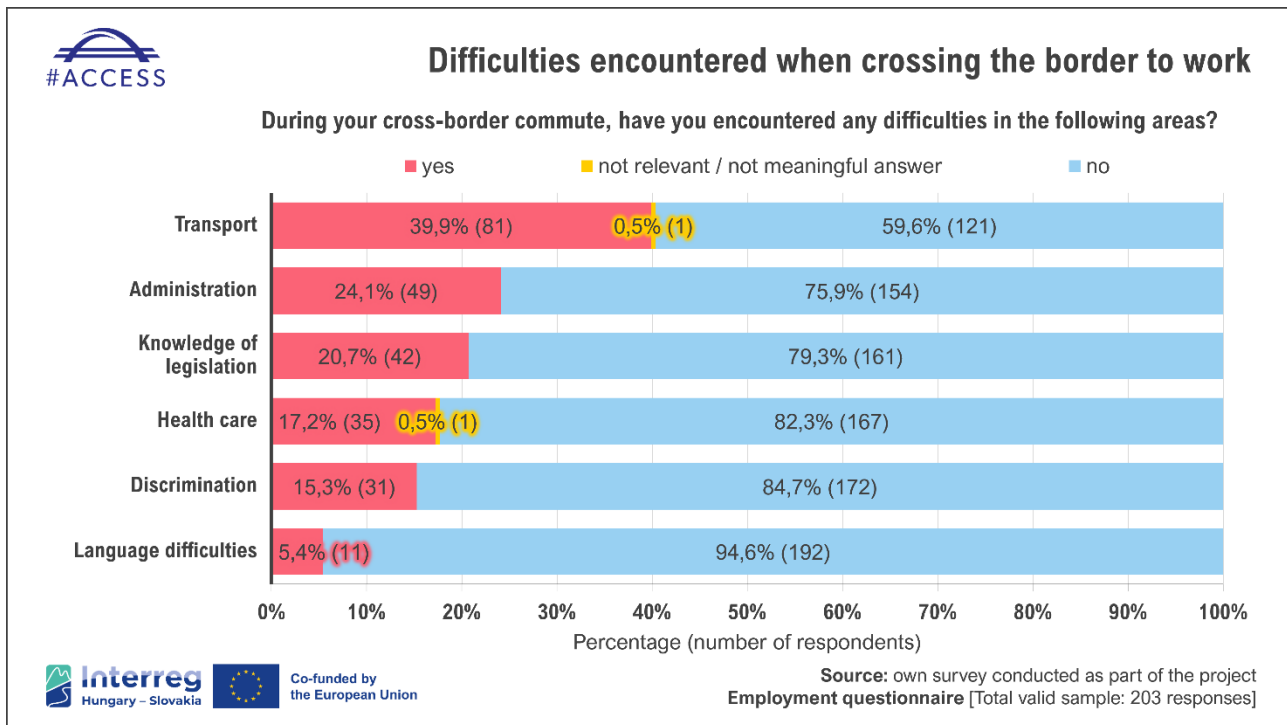
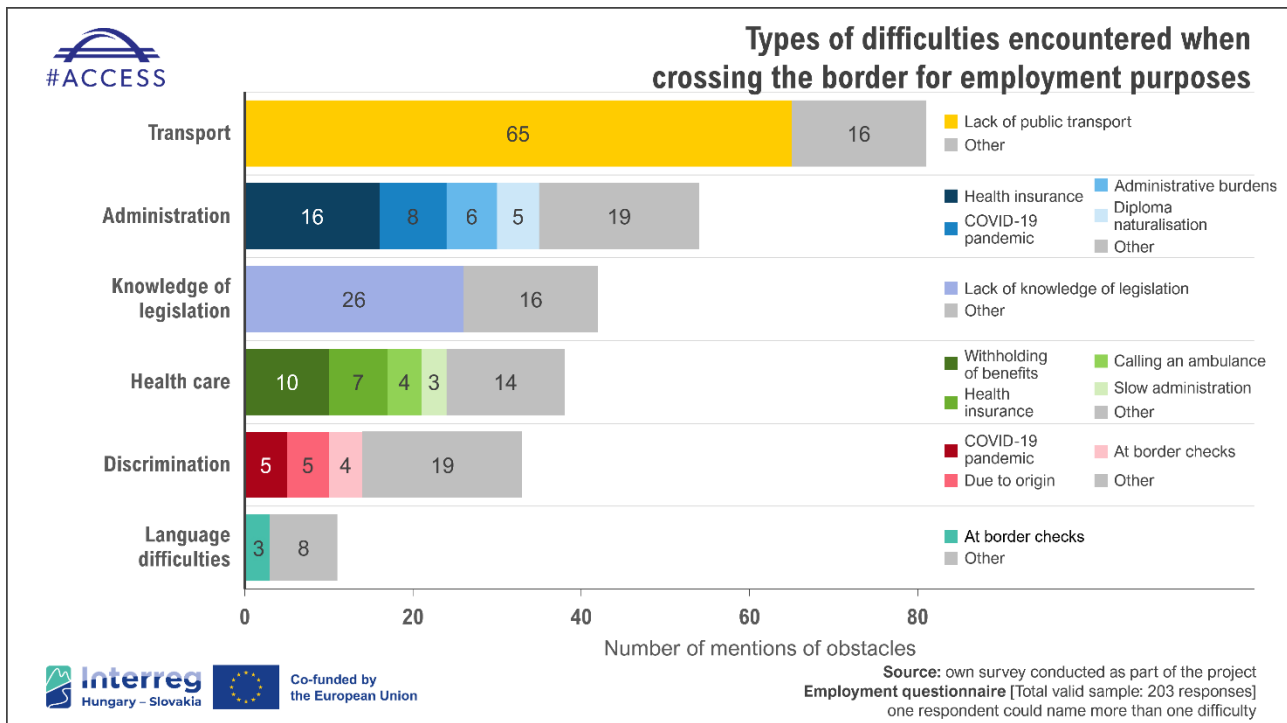


Figure 17: Types of difficulties encountered when crossing the border for employment purposes



In terms of registered obstacles (one respondent could name more than one obstacle at a time), **transport**, including inadequate public transport, was the most frequently criticised (Figure 17). 80% of the transport-related comments refer to the state of public transport, the lack of public transport, inadequate frequency, uncoordinated timetables, long waiting times and few stops being the most

frequently mentioned problems. As a consequence, commuters have to find individual ways (car or taxi) to get to their workplace. The most frequently mentioned missing link concerns the Hungarian catchment area of Bratislava: a significant number of respondents request the reinstatement of the former bus 801 between Bratislava and Rajka and the connection of other Hungarian settlements (Dunakiliti, Feketeerdő, Mosonmagyaróvár). In addition to public transport, respondents also complained about the state of the roads, the density of the road network and road closures, and the fact that their employer does not reimburse their employees for international tickets (only domestic tickets).

The biggest **administrative** obstacle is the question of health insurance (30% of the challenges registered in this area), as it requires an employment contract to obtain an insurance. Some respondents specifically highlighted the difficulties of applying for family allowances, residence cards and certificate of good conduct, but the responses received also suggest that teleworking (accessing a workplace database from abroad), starting a business and having work documents recognised, as well as the naturalisation of certain diplomas, may be a challenge. In terms of administration, several respondents experienced difficulties only during the COVID 19 pandemic, mainly due to the increased administrative burden caused by restrictions and border closures.

A similar problem area is the **lack of knowledge of the law**, with respondents facing difficulties in interpreting legal concepts, lack of official information, entitlement to family allowances, double taxation, transport rules, benefits for minors, sick pay or the Labour Code. For many, the problem could only be dealt with by their contacts, and the information provided by the authorities was not sufficient.

The main barrier to **health care is the** link to primary care (26% of difficulties reported), but taking out health insurance, calling an ambulance (crossing the border is not guaranteed) and slow administration also put off more respondents. Specific problems included the issue of eligibility of minors for treatment (the parent is not automatically entitled to free treatment), administrative burdens and inadequate facilities in health facilities. Due to these uncertainties, many respondents do not even attempt to use health services on the other side of the border, and so for some of them the obstacle has not even been detected.

Discrimination in employment is a particularly sensitive issue. 15% of the complaints related to unequal treatment were related to the COVID-19 period, another 15% were simply related to the origin of the respondent, but also to the way the roadside checks were done or language difficulties. They also perceived the administrative burden, expensive cash withdrawals, difficult access to GPs, the exclusive domestic mailing of documents or simply the lack of a customer-friendly approach as discriminatory.

Language difficulties were mentioned the least as a barrier to employment (11 in total), which was mainly perceived by the complainants when carrying out border controls and issuing documents (e.g. naturalisation).

In addition to these problem areas, **other obstacles** reported **include** losses due to exchange rate fluctuations, lack of clarity in legal procedures (for cross-border workers), denial of entitlement to benefits and the non-recognition of a diploma in a foreign language as an official document proving language skills.

4.4 Cross-border learning mobility

Cross-border access to education goes beyond the need for compulsory schooling, as it also shapes young people's minds and helps bridge cultural divides, thus becoming an effective tool for improving cross-border relations⁷. The target group of the questionnaire consisted of students living in Slovakia and studying in Hungary and students living in Hungary and studying in Slovakia.

The questionnaire identified the logistical and administrative obstacles that students face, which may hinder their academic progress or their daily commute (such as transport problems or the recognition of academic certificates). The questionnaire was designed to explore the motivations behind student mobility (language use, quality of education, family comfort or social contacts) and the challenges related to integration and social inclusion (difficulties in fitting in or overcoming language barriers).

Sample of responses to the questionnaire focusing on learning mobility

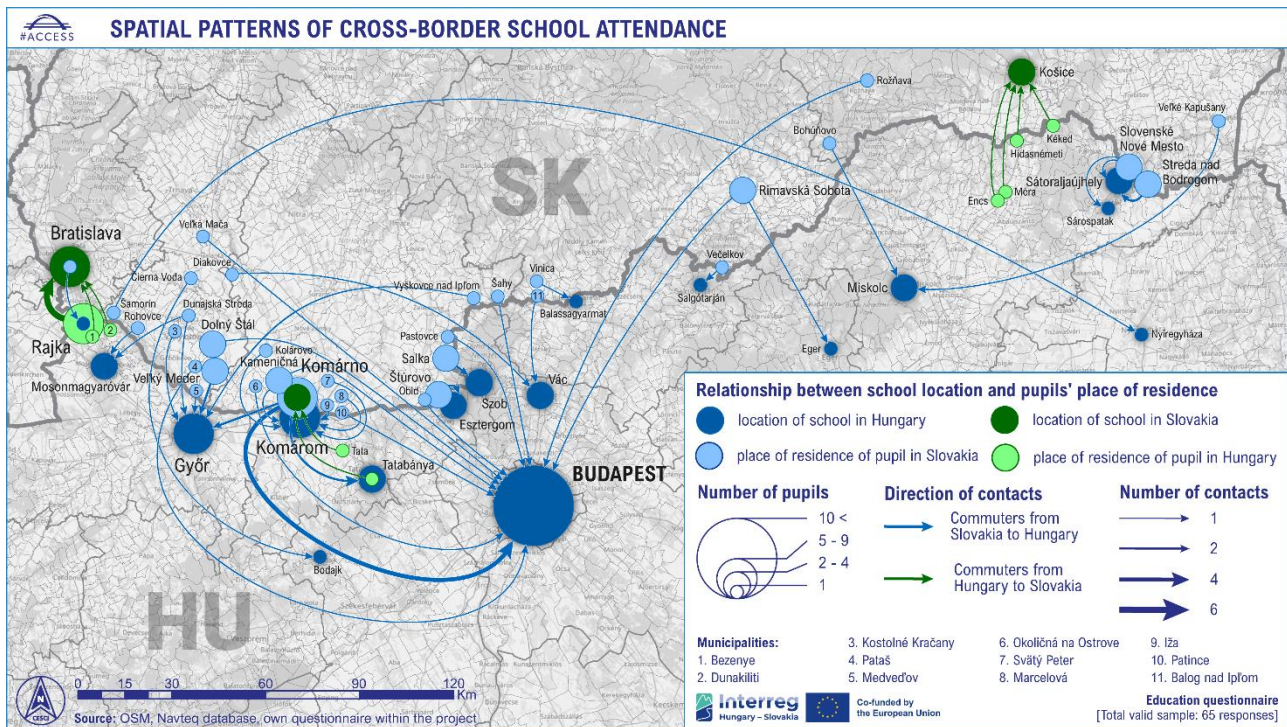
A total of 65 respondents filled in the student mobility questionnaire. All the responses obtained proved to be valid. The direction, intensity and duration of this type of mobility, as well as the reasons for choosing to study abroad, are analysed below.

In terms of learning mobility, the most important commuting activity in the border region is from Slovakia to Hungary (*Figure 18*). About 78% of all school leavers who decide to attend school in the neighbouring country for learning purposes go to a school in Hungary. The direction to Slovakia is therefore relatively rare and spatially concentrated: the cross-border metropolitan areas of Bratislava (Rajka, Dunakiliti, Bezenye) account for 57% of all student residents in Hungary who study in Slovakia. Rajka is an outstanding example for that. Another area with a high degree of cross-border mobility of students is the Hungarian catchment area of Košice (Hidasnémeti, Encs, Kéked, Méra): 29% of all students crossing the border to study in Slovakia reside in this area. The spatial pattern of student mobility is characterised by the predominance of Budapest and the medium-sized and large cities with a significant cross-border catchment area, as well as by a strong East-West imbalance. In the border zone between Balassagyarmat and Sátoraljaújhely, the intensity of student mobility is very low in both directions. In the eastern part of the country, the only other prominent locations are Košice, Sátoraljaújhely, Sárospatak and the settlements of Upper Bodroghöz in Slovakia, in addition to the densely populated areas of the Danube and the Ipeľ river basin. Close student mobility ties have developed around twin cities and large towns, often involving short daily commutes. By contrast, in the central and partly eastern part of the country, in the historical regions of Borsod and Gömör-Torna, longer-distance mobility is more predominant.

Budapest (31%), Győr (16%), Komárom (10%) and Sátoraljaújhely (6%) are the cities most often chosen by Slovak residents to continue their studies in Hungary. 63% of those participating in learning mobility commute to an institution in one of these four cities. 80% is represented by those who commute from Slovakia to a school in the Western border region, just outside Balassagyarmat.

⁷ The questions of the questionnaire can be found in the Annex: *6.1.d Questionnaire focusing on learning mobility*

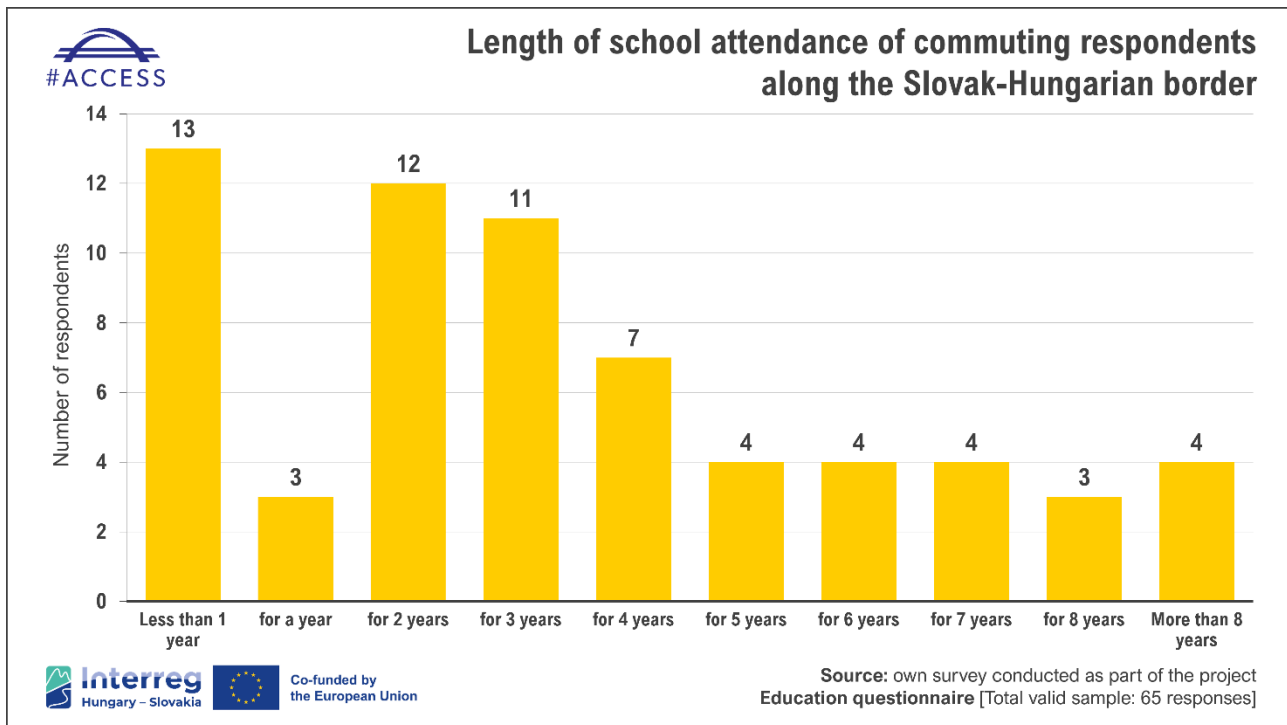
Figure 18: Spatial pattern of cross-border school attendance



Among the main cross-border mobility destinations, Budapest stands out with its wide range of training opportunities, with respondents attending universities in Budapest in particular. The Hungarian catchment area of Bratislava, with its total lack of Slovak language schools, attracts students and pupils from Hungary to all levels of education. The main attraction of Győr is its higher education; respondents are likely (almost) without exception to attend Széchenyi István University. In Komárom, the main attraction for respondents are the secondary schools, with a special focus on complex vocational training. In the metropolitan area of Košice, higher education institutions in Košice are among the main target destinations for student mobility.

Regarding the time span of cross-border commuting for educational purpose (Figure 19), it can be observed that most of the respondents have been attending school abroad for less than 1 year (20%), 2 (18%) or 3 years (17%). Together, these students account for 55% of all respondents, while the proportion of those who have been commuting for 5 years or more is 29%.

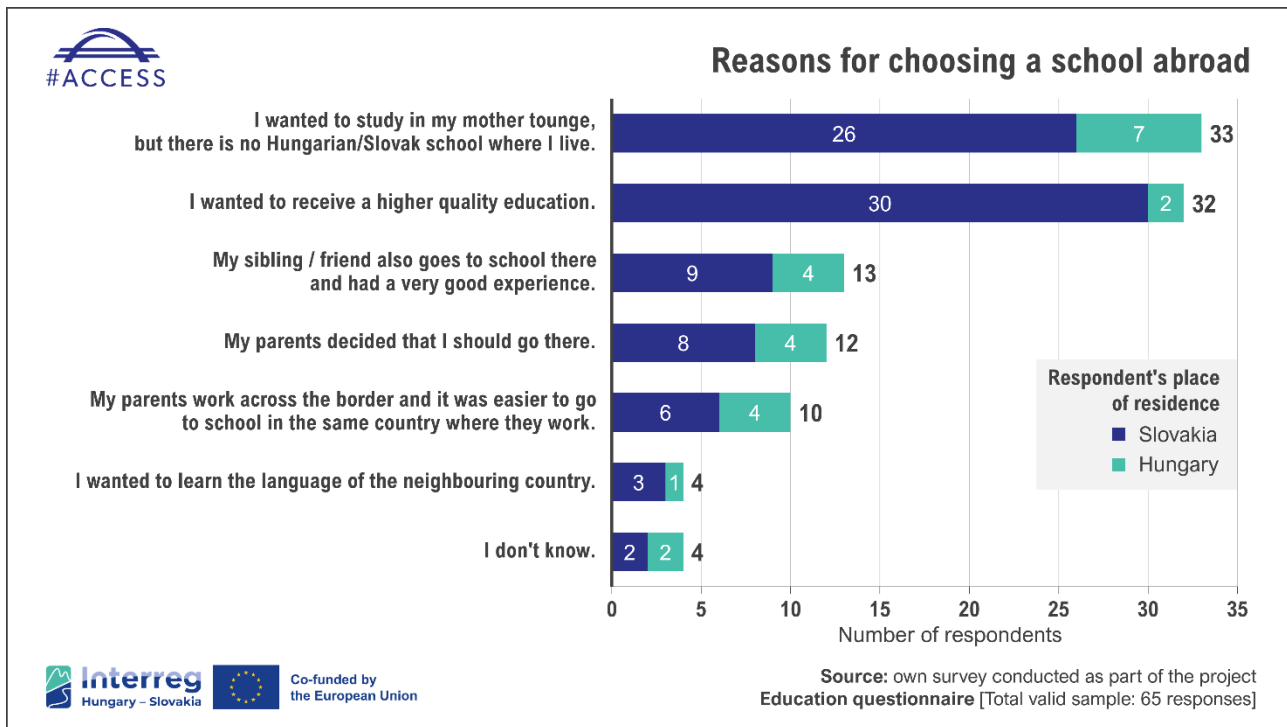
Figure 19: Length of school attendance of commuting respondents along the Slovak-Hungarian border



The main motivating factors of choosing to study in institution on the other side of the border (Figure 20) are mainly the availability of education in the mother tongue (31%) and the quality of education (30%), with other factors, mainly learning in the language of the neighbouring country or not being decisive where to study. For native Hungarian speakers in Slovakia, poor knowledge of Slovak, and the possibility of learning in their mother tongue are the main reasons. Differences in training offer are also often cited as a reason: often there is a lack of a level or type of education locally or in the immediate area that would be attractive to students and parents (such as Hungarian-language higher education or the possibility of arts education across the border).

Reasons for choosing an educational institution according to respondents' place of residence: among those living in Slovakia, the most important factor is the quality of education (HU: 8%; SK: 36%), while among young people living in Hungary and studying in Slovakia, family and experience of friends (HU: 17%; SK: 11%), parental workplace (HU: 17%; SK: 7%) and parental choices (HU: 17%; SK: 10%) play a decisive role.

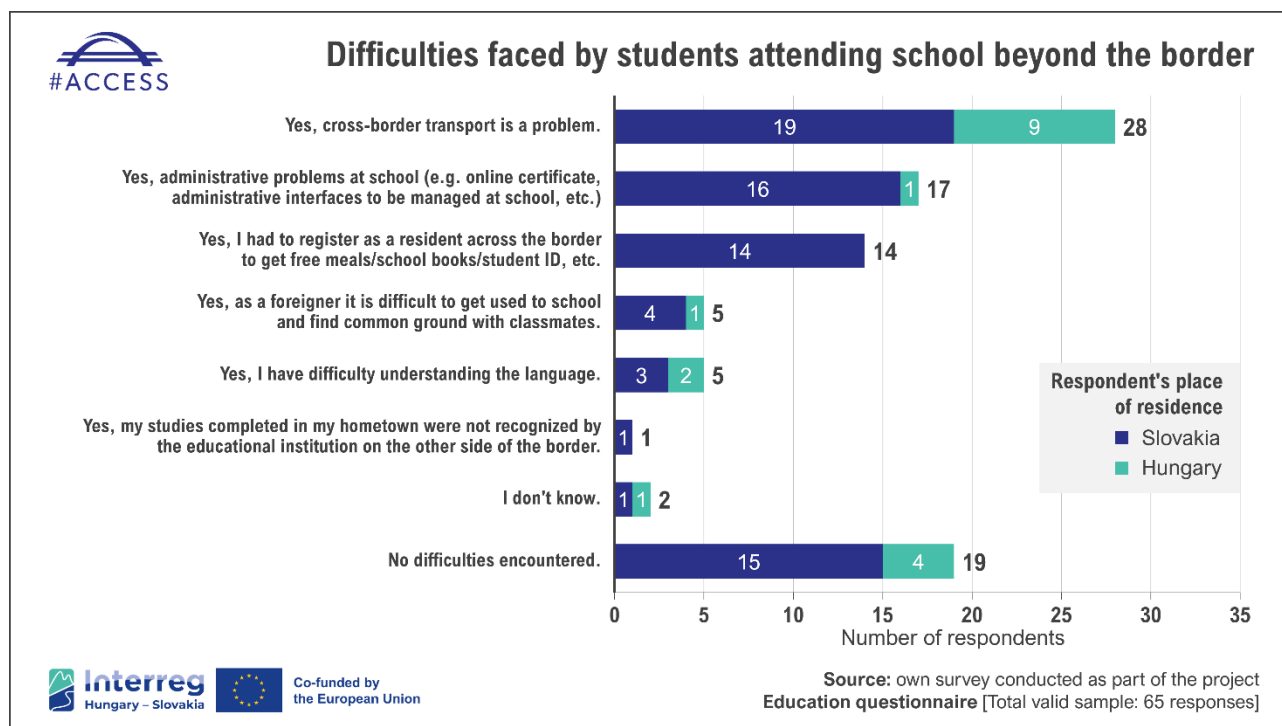
Figure 20: Reasons for choosing a school abroad



Barriers to learning mobility

43% (28%) of the 65 respondents to the survey see **cross-border transport as the biggest obstacle to attend a school on the other side of the border** (Figure 21). This proved to be the most significant barrier for both Hungarian and Slovak students. This is followed by administrative difficulties at school, which affect 26% of the respondents. 22% of the students surveyed have registered as residents on the other side of the border in order to receive free provisions offered by schools (such as meals, textbooks, student ID, etc.). Fitting in (8%), language skill (8%) or getting previous studies recognised (2%) were a challenge for less than 10% of respondents, while 29% had no problems at all.

Figure 21: Difficulties faced by the students attending school beyond the border



In addition to the obstacles listed above, there were others that could be mentioned, such as the extra inconvenience of dormitory accommodation, border controls due to the COVID-19 epidemic, health insurance, issuing documents, dealing with administrative procedures, and the cost of having their academic qualifications (diploma) naturalised, which also represented an extra burden for students living in cross-border region. Specific cases include technical obstacles such as a weak signal of the home mobile phone operator or the unavailability of the online school administration system across the border.

4.5 Implementation of cross-border projects

Within the framework of the #ACCESS project, a special questionnaire for Slovak-Hungarian cross-border project promoters was prepared⁸ to get more comprehensive information on the difficulties and challenges that project promoters face in their initiatives. Focused on those who have already gained experience in cross-border cooperation, the questionnaire can gather basic knowledge that can guide developments and create a more favourable environment for future projects.

The questionnaire first asked respondents to indicate the programming periods within which they had implemented their cross-border projects, and then focused on identifying potential difficulties encountered in implementing each project. Issues such as coordination of the public procurement processes, obtaining the necessary construction and environmental permits, and coordinating the Slovak and Hungarian technical designs highlight procedural and regulatory obstacles that can delay or prevent projects from being completed. In addition, the questionnaire addresses barriers such as

⁸ The questions of the questionnaire can be found in the Annex: 6.1.e Questionnaire focusing on the implementation of cross-border projects

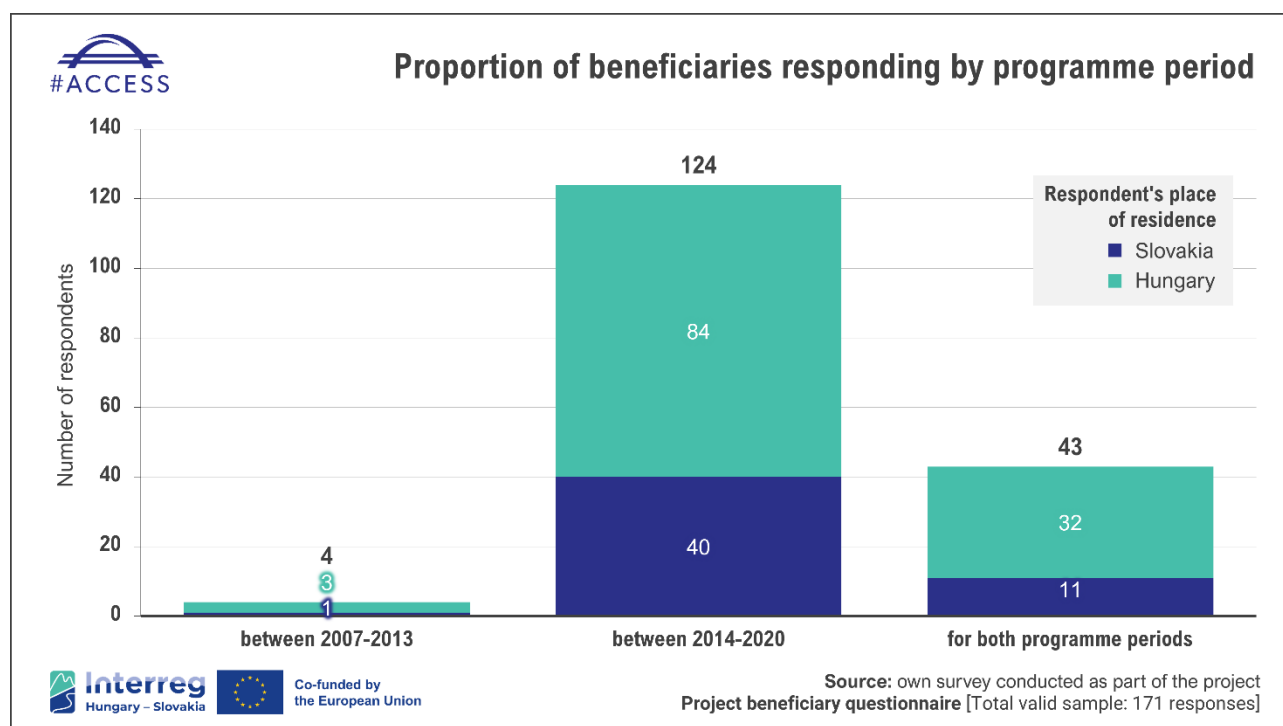
limited access to official cross-border information, challenges in financial reporting and specific disruptions caused by pandemic COVID-19.

Sample questionnaire focusing on the implementation of cross-border projects

The sample of the questionnaire on the implementation of cross-border projects consists of 171 valid answers.

The highest **percentage of beneficiaries responding to the** questionnaire was for the 2014-2020 programming period (72.5%), while very few **beneficiaries** regarding the 2007-2013 programming period participated in the questionnaire survey (*Figure 22*). A relatively high proportion (25.1%) of respondents were interested in both programme periods, with one in four respondents indicating this category. In terms of language of response, the overall sample is dominated by Hungarian responses (70%), while Slovak responses (30%) are well below this proportion. It is important to note that a proportion of residents with Hungarian native language in Slovakia completed this questionnaire in Hungarian, so that the responses do not indicate cross-country differences but rather essentially language differences.

Figure 22: Proportion of beneficiaries responding by programme period



Barriers to cross-border projects

According to project partners implementing the projects, the biggest obstacles encountered during project implementation include the COVID19 epidemic (46% of respondents), public procurement processes (31%) and submission of reports (22%) (*Figure 23*). Only 8% of the respondents experienced some degree of difficulty as a result of different national legislation and building permits, while 5% or less found different official information, environmental permits and technical plans problematic. The majority of responses in the "not understandable" category included responses that were not relevant to the problem (e.g. no technical plan, environmental or building permit was

needed). Across all eight categories, more than half of the project partners did not encounter any obstacles in implementing their project idea.

Figure 23: The difficulties encountered in implementing the project

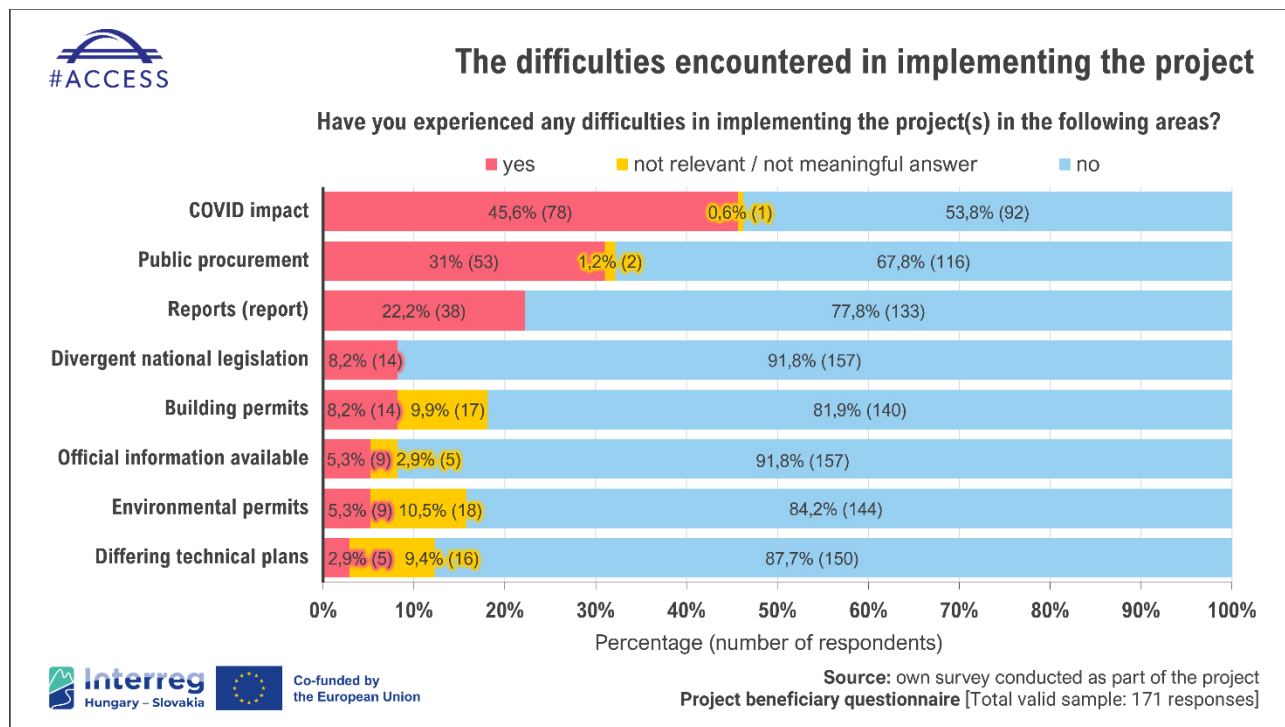
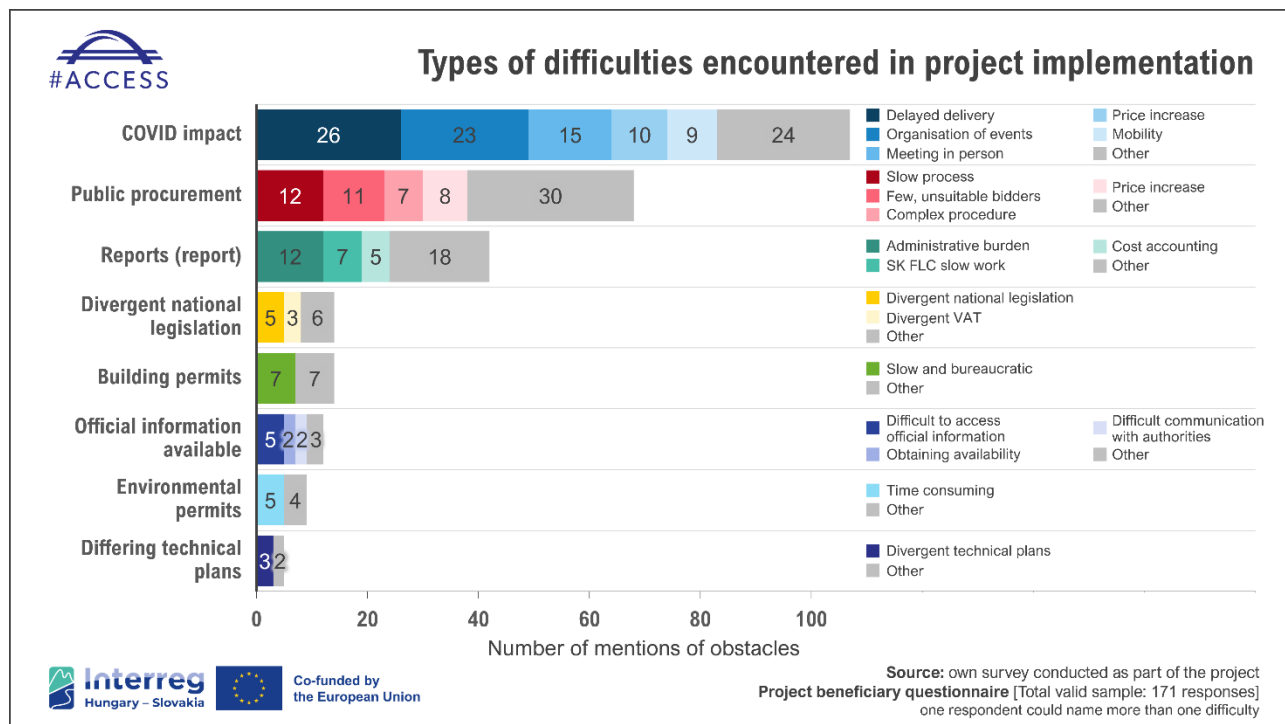


Figure 24: Types of difficulties encountered in project implementation



The challenges posed by COVID-19 (107 mentions) were mainly caused by the extension of project implementation period (24% of the obstacles registered here) and the impossibility or significant modification of the organisation of events (21%) (Figure 24). The two problems often occurred

together, as the delay in the timing of events requiring in-person presence also affected the project completion time. In addition to the difficulties in organising events, the impossibility of meeting in-person accounted for a further 9% of the obstacles reported. In addition, price increases, tightening of cross-border mobility, slowing down of procedures, reduced capacity due to sickness, shortage of building materials, paper documentation and reduced attendance have also set back the success of projects.

Public procurement, the second most mentioned barrier (68 mentions), was mainly due to slow procedures (18%) and lack of potential bidders (16%). Prolonged public procurement processes increased the time needed for implementation, which in some cases also jeopardised the successful implementation of projects. The increase in prices and the complexity of the procedure, which has led some to use procurement consultants (unsuccessfully), has also made it more difficult for partners to procure. Some respondents also complained about double-checking (which could lead to conflicting decisions), different legal requirements, penalties imposed by the procurement expert, problems with the purchase of uncertified equipment, lack of information (concerning the late publication of the procurement guide), lack of pre-financing on the Slovak side, expensive tenders, difficult involvement of businesses, changing conditions and suspicion of restrictions of competition.

The majority of the **obstacles to reporting** (42 mentions) are related to administrative burden (29%), delays in the work of Slovak FLC (17%) and complexity of cost accounting (12%). Due to the bureaucratic nature of the reporting process, many have outsourced the task or tried to alleviate the administrative burden by hiring a new colleague. Other obstacles mentioned by some were the lack of pre-financing in Slovakia, the complexity of the monitoring system, the cumbersome contacts with the programme bodies (re-reporting and completion of missing information), misunderstandings about the measurability of indicators and the mandatory photographic documentation.

The **obstacles resulting from different national legislation** (14 mentions) are manifold, including differences in VAT rates, data provision, competences of building authorities, economic accounting procedures, technical plans and registration systems set up at temporary border controls.

Regarding **building** permits, 14 respondents mentioned obstacles, half of which are due to the slow and bureaucratic procedure; the other difficulties are due to unfavourable decisions (refusal to grant a permit), heritage protection rules and lack of previous experience.

In terms of **information sharing** (12 mentions), the lack of availability of official (statistical) data, communication with (and accessibility of) public authorities, the language barrier and the identification of the legal identity of different organisations were considered as challenges.

As with building permits, obtaining **environmental permits** (9 mentions) has been a problem for project partners because of the time-consuming and administrative procedures involved. In some cases, professional disagreement were also an obstacle to the necessary approvals.

Of the disruptions due **to different technical** designs, 5 were mentioned by the promoters. Discrepancies in technical designs based on legislation and regulations of the two countries were a problem in the implementation of cross-border infrastructure. Furthermore, the ability to modify the plans also differs: while in Hungary work can start with preliminary, conceptual plans - which can easily be changed later - in Slovakia modification of the design documentation is difficult and less common. The majority of respondents either did not need to prepare a technical design or the project partners carried out the design separately, in accordance with the relevant state legislation.

In addition to the eight themes explained, respondents could also list **other difficulties**, with more detailed explanations. The most frequently mentioned were time-consuming reporting and delayed payments, as the time lag in deliverables hampered the progress of the overall partnership. On the Slovak side, the lack of pre-financing had a negative impact on organisations with small budgets, making it uncertain for NGOs to participate in a project. In some cases, the human resource capacity of partners was administratively insufficient, aggravated in many cases by a lack of experience and limited information flow between partners. In addition, exchange rate fluctuations, the use of different currencies, weaknesses in the monitoring system, the possible dominance of the lead partner, strict heritage protection regulations, obtaining official documents across the border, invoicing and VAT payments were listed as additional obstacles.

5 Summary of results for the continuation of the #ACCESS project

The questionnaire survey results show that border residents have experienced difficulties in all of the questions asked, although in varying proportions, **and some of these are legal in nature**. This chapter summarises the difficulties identified in the survey, which could serve as a basis for the continuation of the #ACCESS project.

One of the most cited obstacles is the lack of **public transport**. New services, harmonisation of timetables and simplification of the operation of means of transport would allow public passenger transport across the border to flourish. Although a significant number of respondents criticised the condition of roads and crossing points. Addressing these difficulties is not part of the #ACCESS project's profile.

Responses received indicate that in some cases, there are conditions (e.g. having an address card) for **accessing business services**. There were also several indications from respondents about obstacles encountered in banking transactions (borrowing, instalment payments), product purchases (use of discounts or different rules on product guarantees) and currency exchange (euro-for-ruble exchange rate), where the root of the problem may be both a legal obstacle and difficulties in accessing information. Similar obstacles and uncertainties are encountered when **dealing with official formalities** (e.g. obtaining social security and documents, finding out about legislation and municipal regulations, etc.), **employment** (settling double taxation, starting a business, etc.) and **invoicing**. The responses received indicate that the lack of information on how to address these problems is not only at the level of citizens, but also at the level of administrations.

Closely related to the issue of **social security** are the **obstacles registered in the field of healthcare**, mainly focusing on the treatment of patients across borders, the cross-border movement of ambulance car and the acquisition of medical certificates. These problems could be discussed and addressed by setting up a health working group with a comprehensive approach.

Problems with language skills are evident in all the areas covered. The lack of bilingual signs or the limited use of the language in official contacts is sometimes an enormous obstacle for people living in border areas. The bodies responsible for official administration (offices, utility companies, etc.) are currently not prepared both professionally and in terms of language skills to deal with the problems of people who have moved across the border. The language of administration often causes difficulties even for people who speak the official language, which is made even more difficult by the lack of free language learning facilities. This also hampers the integration of foreign residents and their interaction with the local community. Addressing these barriers is likely to require the implementation of a complex language package (project).

Visiting educational institutions in a neighbouring country has become a common practice in the border region, and even if language difficulties do not prevent students from studying, the tuition fees and other financial obligations, as well as the need to naturalise documents proving their qualifications, place an extra burden on those concerned. There is a need to streamline time-consuming administration and the associated costs, which the #ACCESS project could provide an opportunity to explore. Access to the internal databases of certain workplaces and educational institutions from abroad is not allowed for security reasons, making **teleworking and distance learning** or simply accessing data from home a problem for those living beyond the border. While the #ACCESS project cannot change these internal structures, it can provide an opportunity to formulate simpler technical proposals.

In the context of the Interreg programme, the Hungarian-Slovak border area has a rich history, which has already led to considerable innovation and administrative burden reduction. Nevertheless, project partners still face technical challenges that make it difficult to achieve an ideal **cooperation**. These include problems with VAT payments (e.g. different VAT rates), public procurement processes (use of consultants, lack of tenderers), preparation of reports and photographic documentation, lack of pre-financing, inappropriate partnership (e.g. too many project partners, difficult partnership), complex control processes (e.g. In many cases, partners do not anticipate these pitfalls in project implementation and it is therefore recommended that potential applicants are provided with a guide to make them aware of these difficulties to consider. Such a brochure could be developed under the #ACCESS project.

Unfolding and understanding of these barriers will continue in the framework of the #ACCESS project, complemented by the results of other information gathering (interviews, workshops and the electronic reporting module on the project website). By maintaining and consolidating the resulting multi-source list of barriers, the number and topics of the challenges identified will be further refined before the specific barriers and difficulties to be addressed by the project are identified.

6 Annexes

6.1 The questionnaires

6.1.a Questionnaire focusing on residential mobility

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify the obstacles that hamper cross-border movement of Slovak residents living in Hungary.

Your experience is key to improving the situation in the future.

Thank you very much for taking 15-20 minutes of your time to fill in this questionnaire!

By completing the questionnaire you will be eligible to participate in our lottery draw. If you indicate your intention to participate in the lottery draw at the end of the questionnaire, you will have a chance to win a family spa pass. Among the respondents completing the questionnaire, we will raffle family spa tickets to one of the following spas: Bábolna, Dunajská Streda, Komárom, Szentendre.

The first draw will take place on 30 November 2023, and the second on 31 January 2024.

Information on the progress and results of the competition will be available at <https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/access-kerdoivezes/#hu>. Winners will be informed separately by email.

1) Which of the following municipalities in Hungary do you live in?

- Not on the list
- Dunakiliti
- Dunasziget
- Feketerdő
- Gönc
- Göncruszka
- Hegyeshalom
- Hernádszurdok
- Hidasnémeti
- Hídvégardó
- Hollóháza
- Kéked
- Levél
- Mosonmagyaróvár
- Pányok
- Rajka
- Telkibánya
- Tornanádaska
- Tornyosnémeti
- Zsujta

Specify the settlement not included in the classification

2) Which municipality in Hungary do you live in?

.....
.....

Officially registered address in Hungary

3) Do you have an official address in Hungary?

- No, I only have a Slovak address, but I live in Hungary.
- Yes I already have.
- Yes, but I did not move from Slovakia (= no need to fill in the questionnaire)

Stay in Hungary

4) When did you move to Hungary?

- Before 2004
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011
- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022

5) How many people live in your household?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

- 9
- 10
- More than 10 people

Border crossing habits

6) How often and for what purpose do you cross the Hungarian-Slovak border?

	Work	Learning	Shopping	Entertainment	Business	Tourism	Visiting friends and family
Daily							
2-3 times a week							
Once a week							
Several times a month							
Once a month							
Every two months							
Every six months							
Only in summer							
Once a year							
Never							

7) Do you cross the border for any other purpose than the above? *If so, for what purpose and how often?*

.....

Cross-border barriers

8) Have you or anyone living in your household experienced any of the following difficulties: **language barriers**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, write only "No".*

.....

9) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered any of the following difficulties: **administrative burden**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....

10) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered any of the following difficulties: **property, buying and selling property**? *If so, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

11) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered any of the following difficulties: **transport service gaps**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

12) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered the following difficulty: **lack of knowledge of the Hungarian law and rules**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

13) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered any of the following difficulties: **lack of official documents required to stay in Hungary**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

14) Have you or anyone living in your household experienced the following difficulty: **being punished for an activity**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

15) Have you or anyone living in your household experienced any of the following difficulties: **accessing health services**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

16) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered any of the following difficulties: **dealing with social security**? *If so, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

17) Have you or anyone living in your household experienced any of the following difficulties: **accessing education services**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

18) Have you or anyone living in your household encountered **any other cross-border difficulties**? *If so, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

Lottery draw

19) Do you wish to participate in the #ACCESS survey competition and do you agree to the collection and processing of your personal data by CESCO? *Please read the [privacy policy](#) and the [rules of the competition](#) before responding! To enter the competition, you only need to provide your name and email address.*

- Yes, I wish to participate in the competition and I agree to the recording of my personal data (name and e-mail address).
- I do not wish to participate in the lottery draw. / I do not consent to the recording of my personal data (name and e-mail address).

Details to enter the lottery draw

20) Your name

.....

21) Your e-mail address

.....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and indicating your interest in participating in the competition! Winners will be notified by e-mail.

6.1.b The shopping-focused mobility questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify the barriers that make cross-border shopping between Hungary and Slovakia difficult.

Thank you for taking 10 minutes of your time to fill in this questionnaire!

By completing the questionnaire you will be eligible to participate in our lottery draw. If you indicate your intention to participate in the lottery draw at the end of the questionnaire, you will enter a chance of winning one of our family spa passes.

Those who fill in the questionnaire will be entered into a draw to win a family spa pass to one of the following spas: Bábolna, Dunajská Streda, Komárom, Szentendre.

The first draw will take place on 30 November 2023, and the second on 31 January 2024.

Information on the progress and results of the competition will be available at the following link:
<https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/access-kerdoivezes/#hu>.

Winners will be informed separately by email.

1) The place of shopping

.....
.....

2) Interviewer's place of residence (country)

- Hungary
- Slovakia

3) Interviewer's place of residence (municipality)

.....
.....

4) How often do you cross the border to make a purchase?

- At least twice a day.
- Once a day.
- 2-3 times a week.
- Once a week.
- Several times a month.
- Once a month.
- Every two months.
- Only in summer.
- Once a year.

5) Have you ever encountered any difficulties in the following areas when shopping abroad: **the quality of the goods purchased**? *If yes, please explain the problem.*

.....
.....

6) Have you ever encountered any of the following difficulties when shopping cross-border: **invoicing**? *If yes, please explain the problem!*

.....
.....

7) Have you ever encountered any of the following difficulties when shopping cross-border: **transporting purchased goods across the border**? *If yes, please explain the problem!*

.....
.....

8) Have you ever encountered any of the following difficulties when shopping cross-border: **post-purchase complaints**? *If yes, please explain the problem!*

.....
.....

9) Have you ever encountered any **other difficulties** in shopping abroad that you have **not yet listed**? *If yes, please explain the problem!*

.....
.....

6.1.c Questionnaire focusing on labour mobility

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify the obstacles that hamper cross-border commuting of workers between Hungary and Slovakia.

Your experience is key to improving the situation in the future.

Thank you for taking 10 minutes of your time to fill in this questionnaire!

By completing the questionnaire you will be eligible to participate in our lottery draw. If you indicate your intention to participate in the lottery draw at the end of the questionnaire, you will have a chance to win one of the family spa tickets. The spa tickets can be used to enter the following spas: Bábolna, Dunajská Streda, Komárom, Szentendre.

The first draw will take place on 30 November 2023, and the second on 31 January 2024.

Information on the progress and results of the competition will be available at <https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/access-kerdoivezes/#hu>. Winners will be informed separately by email.

1) How long have you been working on the other side of the border?

- Less than six months
- for Six months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
- For more than 10 years.

2) Have you encountered any of the following difficulties during cross-border commuting: **language difficulties**? If yes, please explain the problem. *If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

3) During cross-border commuting, have you encountered any of the following difficulties: **administrative issues related to employment**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

4) During cross-border commuting, have you encountered the following difficulties: **lack of transport services**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

5) During cross-border commuting, have you encountered the following difficulty: **lack of knowledge of the Hungarian/Slovak legislation**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

6) During cross-border commuting, have you encountered the following difficulty: **healthcare problems**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

7) During cross-border commuting, have you encountered any of the following difficulties: any **discrimination by authorities on the other side of the border because of your foreigner status**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

8) Have you encountered **any other problems** during your cross-border commuting? If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".

.....
.....

6.1.d Questionnaire focusing on learning mobility

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify the obstacles that make it difficult for students to commute across the Hungarian-Slovak border. Now is your chance to help make it easier for you to attend a school on the other side of the border and help others as well!

Thank you for taking 10 minutes of your life to fill in this questionnaire!

If you are over 18 years old, you will be eligible to enter our lottery draw by completing the questionnaire. If you indicate your intention to enter the lottery draw at the end of the questionnaire, you will have a chance of winning one of our family spa passes.

Those who fill in the questionnaire will be entered into a draw to win a family spa pass to one of the following spas: Bábolna, Dunajská Streda, Komárom, Szentendre.

The first draw will take place on 30 November 2023, and the second on 31 January 2024.

Information on the progress and results of the competition will be available at the following link: <https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/access-kerdoivezes/#hu>.

Winners will be informed separately by email.

1) Where is your school located? (country)

- Hungary
- Slovakia

2) Where is your school located? (municipality)

.....
.....

3) Which municipality do you live in?

.....
.....

4) How old are you?

- I am not 10 years old yet.
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22

- I am over 22 years old.

5) How long have you been going to school abroad (in a country other than your country of residence)?

- Less than 1 year .
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 6 years
- 7 years
- 8 years
- For more than 8 years.

6) Why did you choose to go to a school abroad (in a country other than your country of residence)?

- I wanted to study in my mother tongue, but there is no Hungarian/Slovak school where I live.
- I wanted to learn the language of the neighbouring country.
- I wanted to participate in higher quality education.
- My parents are cross-border commuters and it was easier to go to school in the same country where they work.
- My brother/friend also goes there and has had a very good experience.
- My parents decided that I should go there.
- I don't know.

7) Were there any other reasons why you chose to go to school abroad?

.....
.....

8) Have you encountered difficulties as a result of studying on the other side of the border?

- Yes, as a foreigner, it is difficult to get used to school and find a common voice with classmates.
- Yes, I have difficulty in understanding the language.
- Yes, cross-border transport is a problem.
- Yes, I had to register as a resident on the other side of the border to get free meal/school books/student ID etc.
- Yes, my studies completed at the school located at my place of birth were not recognised by the educational institution abroad.
- Yes, administrative problems at school (e.g. online certificate, administrative interfaces to be managed at school, etc.)
- They were not.
- I don't know.

9) Have you had any other difficulties studying on the other side of the border apart from those listed?

.....
.....

6.1.e Questionnaire focusing on the implementation of cross-border projects

The aim of this questionnaire is to identify the obstacles that hamper the implementation of Hungarian-Slovak cross-border projects.

Your experience is key to improving the situation in the future.

Thank you very much for taking 10 minutes of your time to fill in this questionnaire!

By completing the questionnaire you will be eligible to participate in our lottery draw. If you indicate your intention to participate in the lottery draw at the end of the questionnaire, you will have a chance of winning one of our family spa passes.

Those who fill in the questionnaire will enter a lottery draw to win a family spa pass to one of the following spas: Bábolna, Dunajská Streda, Komárom, Szentendre.

The first draw will take place on 30 November 2023, and the second on 31 January 2024.

Information on the progress and results of the competition will be available at the following link: <https://hu-sk.eu/hu/access-kerdoivezes/>.

Winners will be notified separately by email.

1) In which programme period did you implement a project?

- 2007-2013.
- 2014-2020.
- In both programme periods.

2) Have you experienced any difficulties in implementing the project(s) in the following area: **public procurement**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

3) Have you experienced any difficulties in implementing the project(s) in the following areas: **obtaining building permits**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

4) Have you experienced any difficulties in implementing the project(s) in the following areas: **obtaining environmental permits**? *If yes, please explain the problem.*

.....
.....

5) Have you experienced any difficulties in the implementation of the project(s) in the following areas: **differences between the Hungarian and Slovak technical plans**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

6) Have you experienced any difficulties in the implementation of the project(s) in the following area: **availability of official information on the other side of the border** (at national and regional authority level)? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

7) Have you experienced any difficulties in **reporting on the resources used** during the implementation of the project(s)? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

8) Did the implementation of the project(s) encounter any **problems resulting from the COVID epidemic**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If not, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

9) Have you experienced any difficulties in the implementation of the project(s) in the following areas: **differences in national legislation relevant to the project topic**? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

10) Have you experienced **any other difficulties** in implementing the project(s)? *If yes, please explain the problem. If no, please just write "No".*

.....
.....

6.2 Locations of direct enquiries

6.2.1 Flyer sites (shopping)

- Hungary
 - Balassagyarmat (TESCO Hipermarket Balassagyarmat)
 - Encs (SPAR Encs)
 - Esztergom (Praktiker Esztergom)

- Esztergom (TESCO Hypermarket Esztergom)
- Győr (ETO Park)
- Győr (Praktiker Győr)
- Kazincbarcika (TESCO Hypermarket Kazincbarcika)
- Komárom (TESCO Hypermarket Komárom)
- Mosonmagyaróvár (TESCO Hypermarket Mosonmagyaróvár)
- Ózd (TESCO Hypermarket Ózd)
- Salgótarján (SPAR Salgótarján)
- Salgótarján (TESCO Hypermarket Salgótarján)
- Sátoraljaújhely (TESCO Hypermarket Sátoraljaújhely)
- Szécsény (SPAR Szécsény)
- Slovakia
 - Šahy (Billa)
 - Šahy (Lidl)
 - Cash desk (Aupark)
 - Cash desk (Cassovia)
 - Košice (Gallery)
 - Královský Chlmec (TESCO)
 - Lučenec (Kaufland)
 - Lučenec (Stop Shop)
 - Lučenec (TESCO)
 - Veľký Krtíš (Billa)
 - Veľký Krtíš (Kaufland)
 - Veľký Krtíš (Lidl)
 - Veľký Krtíš (Stop Shop)
 - Nitra (Mlyny)
 - Bratislava (Aupark)
 - Bratislava (Avion Shopping Park)
 - Bratislava (Bory Mall)
 - Bratislava (IKEA)
 - Rožňava (TESCO)
 - Moldava nad Bodvou (Lidl)
 - Trebišov (Kaufland)
 - Trebišov (Lidl)
 - Vráble (Lidl)
 - Vráble (TESCO)

6.2.2 CBRM (CBRM)⁹

- Personal distribution of leaflets
 - Abaújvár
 - Bódvasilas
 - Büttös

⁹ In addition to distributing the leaflets, several municipalities have also made digital versions of the leaflets available online on their own websites.

- Feketeerdő
- Gönc
- Göncruszka
- Hernádszurdok
- Hidasnémeti
- Hídvégardó
- Kéked
- Komjáti
- Mosonmagyaróvár
- Pányok
- Rajka
- Telkibánya
- Tornyosnémeti
- Zsujta
- Distribution of leaflets in the office
 - Bezenye
 - Hegyeshalom
 - Hollóháza
 - Levél
- Share flyers (online only)
 - Dunakiliti
 - Dunasziget

6.3 Visual elements used for promotion



Creatives in Hungarian used for popularisation	Creatives in Slovak used for popularisation
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebbé tennék a határ menti emberek életét!</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY sa uľahčil život ľuďom žijúcim na hraniciach.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebbé tennék a határ menti emberek életét!</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY sa uľahčil život ľuďom žijúcim na hraniciach.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebbé tennék a határ menti emberek életét!</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY sa uľahčil život ľuďom žijúcim na hraniciach.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESC CESC CARPATHIA</p>

Creatives in Hungarian used for popularisation	Creatives in Slovak used for popularisation
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebben tudnám az ügyeimet intézni a határ mentén.</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY vybavovanie záležitosti pozdĺž hraníc bolo jednoduchšie.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebben vállalhatnék munkát a határ túloldalán is.</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY práca na druhej strane hranice bola dostupnejšia.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... a határ túloldalán is problémamentesen tudnék vásárolni.</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY nakupovanie na druhej strane hraníc bolo jednoduchšie.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS interreg Hungary - Slovakia Co-funded by the European Union CESCİ CESCİ CARPATHIA</p>

Creatives in Hungarian used for popularisation	Creatives in Slovak used for popularisation
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... a határ túlóldalán is problémamentesen tudnék vásárolni.</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS  Hungary - Slovakia  Co-funded by the European Union  </p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY nakupovanie na druhej strane hraníc bolo jednoduchšie.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS  Hungary - Slovakia  Co-funded by the European Union  </p>
<p>SZERETNÉM, HA... könnyebbé tennék a határ menti emberek életét!</p>  <p>NYERJ FÜRDŐBELÉPŐT! TÖLTSD KI A KÉRDŐÍVET!</p> <p>#ACCESS  Hungary - Slovakia  Co-funded by the European Union  </p>	<p>CHCELI BY SME, ABY študovanie na druhej strane hranice bolo pre naše deti jednoduchšie.</p>  <p>Vyhraj vstupenku do kúpeľov! VYPLŇTE NÁŠ DOTAZNÍK!</p> <p>#ACCESS  Hungary - Slovakia  Co-funded by the European Union  </p>