



## Germany, a border too far?

*Motivations and barriers of Dutch inhabitants of the border region for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter in Germany*

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** - Over the years, expatriating has received increasing scientific attention. A specific form of expatriating which has not been the subject of many studies is cross-border commuting. Furthermore, the few studies only mapped the actual movements of cross-border commuters and disregard the motivations of them to consider a job in the neighboring country. Thus, scientific research lacks to point out the decisive motivations for inhabitants of the border region to consider a job in the neighboring country. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) will be used to emphasize that individuals can have different forms of motivations and barriers for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. It is essential to explain this phenomenon, since there is a low number of Dutch cross-border commuters to Germany. This study therefore aims to generate a more in-depth and specific insight in the perceptions and motivations of Dutch inhabitants of the border region and Dutch cross-border commuters regarding working Germany. Lowering the barriers for Dutch inhabitants of the border region will enhance cross-border commuting and stimulate working abroad. Consequently, the level of unemployment in the Netherlands could be decreased.

**Methodology** – Nine Dutch inhabitants of the border region and eleven Dutch cross-border commuters - working in Germany - took part in this study. The inhabitants of the border region also had a connection with Germany, varying for example from Germany as residence to working with German colleagues. This decision has been made to assure the participants' affinity with the research theme. By means of in-depth interviews, complemented with a card-sort exercise, it was examined which barriers and motivations played a decisive role in the decision process of (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany.

**Findings** – The results of this study revealed that motivations to become a cross-border commuter to Germany displayed the entire continuum of the Self-Determination Theory; both controlled and the autonomous/self-determined motivations play a role in the decision process. However, the more autonomous and self-determined motivations were rated as more decisive. The interviewees had several motivations for becoming a cross-border commuter: the identified regulated (e.g. possibility for personal growth), integrated regulated (e.g. working atmosphere in Germany) and intrinsic motivations (e.g. adventure of working in Germany) were decisive for the participants for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. Dutch inhabitants of the border region named several barriers for not becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. The study emphasizes the importance of the barriers that form an obstacle because individuals perceived a lack of the basic psychological needs competence, autonomy and relatedness, which are needed to be self-determined motivated. In particular, the barriers focusing on a lack of autonomy play a decisive role to reject a job in Germany. Uncertainties and anxiety for working in Germany, bureaucracy and hierarchy in Germany, the working atmosphere in German corporations and a lack of participation within the organization were often mentioned as barriers.

**Conclusion** – It can be concluded that the decision to (not) become a cross-border commuter is complex. Various motivations and barriers played a role in the decision process. This study made the first steps into discovering motivations and barriers that influence Dutch inhabitants in their choice for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. Further research is needed to fully understand the motivations of Dutch inhabitants of the border region for working in their neighboring countries.

## 1. Introduction

A large number of measures have been implemented by the European Union (EU) in order to eliminate the borders as barriers, in order to create economic benefits (Bloemhoff, Lourijsen, Smulders, & De Gier, 1993). An example of a recent measurement of the EU is the development of a system of electronic exchange of information between national administrations, which makes it simpler for people working in another EU country to transfer their social security rights. This softened legislation between EU countries makes it easier for inhabitants of the Netherlands to work in their neighboring countries. However, despite all these actions, the border between the Netherlands and Germany is still being perceived as a barrier by Dutch job seekers and employees (Weterings & Gessel-Dabekaussen, 2015).

Expatriate research has focused on employees who are assigned to an international assignment by their parent company (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005), the exact movements of the expatriates (Alshahrani & Morley, 2015; Lidgard, 1994) and some studies examined the motivations of expatriates for working abroad, mostly in another continent or other culture (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012; Miller & Cheng, 1978; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Richardson & McKenna, 2003). Various scholars have emphasized that much more research is needed to discover individual motivations to expatriate and especially to commute to the neighboring countries (Weterings & Gessel-Dabekaussen, 2015). This study answers this call by qualitatively studying the decision process of Dutch inhabitants for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany.

It has been proven that expatriation is a complex process (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007), which is hard to capture with quantitative research. The complex character of expatriating is one of the reasons why this research theme requires extensive qualitative researches (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002). Qualitative research provides depth and detail in this research area, which quantitative research cannot offer.

This depth and detail is needed, because expatriate literature is incomplete. It does not pay attention to specific contexts. It is possible that working in a neighboring country may involve quite different motivations than in the case of a 'regular' expatriate (Weterings & Gessel-Dabekaussen, 2015). This study qualitatively examines the perceptions and motivations of Dutch inhabitants of the border region for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. This study extends and complements previous expatriate literature by focusing on a specific group of potential cross-border commuters, namely the Dutch inhabitants of the border region.

The aim of this study is to receive a deeper insight in the motivations and barriers of Dutch employees in the border region for (not) working in Germany and to introduce the Self Determination Theory (SDT) in the expatriate literature. Expatriate literature has thus far not explored the full range of motivations that expatriates can have to decide accepting a job abroad. Especially motivations and barriers for cross-border commuting are underexposed. SDT will be used to emphasize that individuals can have different forms of motivations to become a cross-border commuter. SDT distinguishes four different forms of extrinsic motivation, which allows a more specific understanding of cross border commuters motivations.

To conclude, it is important and relevant to explain the low number of Dutch inhabitants of the border region working in Germany. Stimulating working abroad may have a positive effect on the level of unemployment in the Netherlands. If these motivations could be mapped, measures could be taken to

eliminate the identified obstacles, which would alleviate the friction on the labor market. This way, the level of failure of cross-border commuting can be reduced.

This study is especially relevant for this context, because for a Dutch inhabitant in the border region the step to become a cross-border commuter is much lower than to become an expatriate. When the willingness to work in Germany improves among Dutch inhabitants of the border region there will be a more efficient exchange of knowledge and it will stimulate cooperation between neighboring countries. Employees will be more likely to find the job that perfectly matches them. To realize these aspects, it is essential to discover the main motivations for working in the neighboring countries, as it will map the largest barriers and motivations for potential cross-border commuters. Therefore, the following research question has been composed:

*‘What perceptions about cross-border commuting to Germany are held by the Dutch inhabitants of the border region and how do these explain the low number of Dutch cross-border commuters in the border region of Germany?’*

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Expatriate literature distinguishes several motivations as influencers in the choice for becoming an expatriate (Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Hechanova et al., 2003; Huling & Nolan, 1997; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994; Richardson & McKenna, 2003). In this framework both the motivations for becoming an expatriate as the aspects that could influence the decision for not becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany are discussed.

In the first section (2.1) of this framework positive aspects for expatriating are described. Several scholars agree that the adventure of expatriating and career considerations are important motivations for becoming an expatriate (Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Mallon, 2005). In the next section (2.2) some barriers that are often mentioned in the literature are discussed.

For this specific context the existing motivations in the literature are incomplete. Therefore, at the end of the theoretical framework the self-determination theory will be introduced. SDT will be used to emphasize that individuals can have different forms of motivations to become a cross-border commuter. Finally, in this theoretical framework the fundamentals of SDT and the role of this theory in relation to this study are discussed (2.3).

### **2.1 Motivations for expatriating**

The motivations for becoming an expatriate can vary for every person. Literature shows two elements that function often as a motivation for becoming an expatriate. These are the adventure for expatriating and career considerations. These two motivations are discussed in this section.

#### **2.1.1 Adventure of expatriating**

Richardson and McKenna (2002) conducted in-depth interviews with 30 British expatriate academics working in universities in New Zealand, Singapore, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates and identified several broad categories of motivations to expatriate. The motivation of adventure and challenge refers for some to the possibility for traveling and to see more of the world, while other were looking for a new experience or desired a new adventure (Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Mallon, 2005).

#### **2.1.2 Career considerations**

Expatriation could lead to improvement of career prospects (Miller & Cheng, 1978; Stahl et al., 2002; Tung, 1998). Expatriates often perceive their international experience as an opportunity for personal and professional development and career advancement (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004). In addition, Drobnic et al. (2010) uses data of the European Quality of Life Survey 2003 and state that the prospects for career advancement are higher in Dutch corporations than in German corporations, which might therefore influence people to look for a job across the border.

Several studies showed that earning and saving financial resources is consistently ranked as one of the most essential aspects of a high quality life and could be a motivation for working in another country (Clark, 2005; Haller & Hadler, 2006). Literature shows that the majority of expatriates took 'some financial incentive' in to account in their decision to start working abroad (Dickmann et al., 2008; Richardson & McKenna, 2003). However, several scholars claim that the influence of financial incentives in the decision to start working abroad is overestimated (Dickmann et al., 2008; Selmer &

Lauring, 2013). In addition, Peterson and Van Iterson (2015) believe that policies promoting job and financial security will be positive received especially among German employees.

Expatriate management research mainly focuses on the problems and risks associated with the expatriate family (Selmer & Leung, 2003; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). An assignment or a career abroad leads often to uprooting families to another country or expatriates living away from their families (Hechanova et al., 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Richardson & Mallon, 2005). Dickmann et al. (2008) conducted a survey among assignees who returned from an assignment abroad between 1998 and 2004 and discovered that disruption to family life and work/life balance issues are considered important by (ex-)expatriates. For a cross-border commuter family issues play a different role, because the commuter will not, in the first place, move to the border country.

## **2.2 Barriers for becoming an expatriate**

Every individual can perceive their own barriers for becoming an expatriate. However, multiple scholars agree that anxiety for becoming an expatriate, the working attitude and the language barrier could hinder the process for becoming an expatriate. These three barriers are discussed in this section.

### **2.2.1 Anxiety for expatriating**

According to several scholars the negative dimensions of risk, anxiety, fear for the unknown, and uncertainties is understood as a caveat to have an 'adventure' and the flexibility to explore a career across international boundaries (Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Hechanova et al., 2003; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). A few scholars state that transience and risks were disadvantageous elements of switching jobs to another country (Osland, 1995; Richardson & Zikic, 2007).

The insecure character inherent to the existence of an expatriate makes it difficult to form social relationships and get involved in any meaningful interaction with either host nationals or other expatriates pursuing their own international careers (Richardson & Zikic, 2007; Strömberg & Karlsson, 2009; Tews, Michel, Xu, & Drost, 2015; Toh & Srinivas, 2012). A high level of expatriates experience isolation and anxiety in the past and/or for the future (Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Selmer, 1999; Ziebertz, 2008).

A notable difference in social relationships at the working place comparing Germany with the Netherlands is the stricter separation between work and private life (Drobnic, Beham, & Prag, 2010; Peterson & van Iterson, 2015). Although the close cultural distance between the Netherlands and Germany it is not excluded that Dutch cross-border commuters experience this difficulty as well. Namely, Selmer (1999) conducted a survey among 343 business expatriates from Britain, France, the Netherlands, USA and Sweden and found that it is not guaranteed that close cultural distance makes it easier for physical, psychological or emotional adjustment in comparison with large cultural distance.

### **2.2.2 Working attitude**

According to the GLOBE study Germany scores high on the dimensions uncertainty avoidance and assertiveness in comparison with other countries (Dorfman et al., 2012). The high level of uncertainty avoidance in Germany leads to the assumption that German individuals in a corporation attach more value to rules, bureaucracy, hierarchy and social norms (Szabo, 2002). In addition, Sehnert (2014) interviewed self-initiated 22 expatriates from the Anglo cluster and found that processes and procedures in German corporations were reportedly harder to change, which may impede creativity

and innovation. Brodbeck et al. (2000) conducted 112 questionnaires in 22 European countries and found that the concepts of leaderships differ in the Netherlands and Germany. Authority plays an essential role in the German labor market. The leader has the leading role in the organization and is responsible for the key decisions. In contrast with the situation in the Netherlands the employees have much more influence and are more involved in the organization

The higher level in assertiveness in Germany implies that Germans at the workplace are more confrontational, aggressive, assertive and less friendly, less generous and have lower tolerance to mistakes in their interactions with others.

Literature shows that participation and flexibility within the foreign organization are recognized as important factors by expatriates (Black & Stephens, 1989; Lan, 1996). Smulders, Kompier and Paoli (1996) found out that the participation in decision making was relatively high in the Netherlands and relatively low in Germany.

### **2.2.3 Language barrier**

A location factor that influence the decision to accept an international offer is the difference in language (Dickmann et al., 2008). Language skills were positively related to general adjustment in a country (Hulinger & Nolan, 1997). Hulinger and Nolan found that the lack of language skills could lead to isolation among expatriates. Additionally, it made it difficult for expatriates to communicate and understand the local culture. Obviously, this aspect could influence Dutch inhabitants in the border region in the decision of accepting or declining a job offer in the border region of Germany.

Literature states that the decision process of becoming an expatriate is full of difficulties, dilemma's and complexities (Hechanova et al., 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007). The specific context of a cross-border commuter to Germany needs extensive qualitative research to discover the different types of motivations and barriers for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter.

## **2.3 Self Determination Theory**

Because of the specific context of a cross-border commuter, the motivations for cross-border commuting could differ from the motivations to expatriate. Qualitative research is needed to clarify the motivations and barriers of (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. Expatriate literature distinguishes extrinsic and intrinsic motivations as influencers in the choice for becoming an expatriate (Hechanova et al., 2003). However, an individual is not only intrinsically or extrinsically motivated for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. There are many other motivations that play a role, which makes the decision process complex (Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007). The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Deci and Ryan (1988) is an empirically derived theory of motivation and takes the different levels of extrinsic motivation into account. Therefore, this study follows the principals of SDT and categorizes the different motivations of Dutch inhabitants in the border region for becoming a cross-border commuter on the proposed continuum of SDT.

### **2.3.1 SDT continuum**

The self-determination theory provides a more nuanced image of the range of possible motivations Dutch inhabitants of the border region could take into account in their decision for becoming a cross-border commuter. SDT distinguishes four different types of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

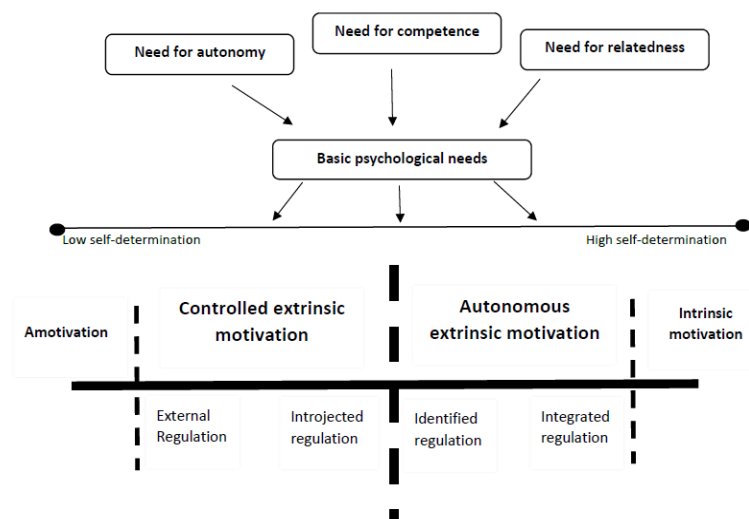


Figure 1. Self-determination continuum

SDT conceptualizes motivation in terms of a continuum from controlled to autonomous motivations. An individual who is progressing along the continuum, their motivations become more self-determined and less controlled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), amotivation is at the far end of the continuum. This concept refers to a lack of any impulse or any motivation for a particular behavior.

Just to the right of amotivation in the continuum, is a category that represents the least autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation, a category that is labeled 'external regulation'. Such behaviors are performed to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward. People act in a way to meet external expectations, this way they receive a reward or they avoid a punishment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this form of regulation the degree of autonomy is low. An individual has the sense that he or she has no choice or influence regarding a decision.

Introjected regulation is the second type of extrinsic controlled motivation. Introjection describes a type of internal regulation that is still quite controlling because people perform such actions with the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego-enhancements or pride. Ego enhancement refers to a form of introjection, in which an individual performs an act in order to enhance or maintain self-esteem and feeling of worth (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, 1982). Behavior comes from the person himself, but the behavioral regulation is not quite accepted as a part of their own personal value structure.

A more autonomous or self-determined form of extrinsic motivation is identified regulation. Here, the individual has identified with the personal importance of a behavior and has thus accepted its regulation as his or her own. This particular activity contributes to the achievement of a higher purpose.

Finally, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation. Integration occurs when identified regulations have been fully assimilated to the self. This occurs through self-examination and bringing new regulations into congruence with one's other values and needs. The more one internalizes the motivations for an action and assimilates them to the self, the more one's extrinsically motivated actions become self-determined. Intrinsic regulation differs from the identified regulation because the person can identify himself with the norms and values of the activity. In



contrast to the other forms of extrinsic motivation the driving force of identified regulation is personal values instead of an internal obligation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This form of extrinsic motivation is closest to intrinsic motivation. Personal values are used as a driving force, it will enhance self-determined motivation according to the SDT. In Figure 2 examples are illustrated to what extent the different forms of extrinsic motivation could play a role in the choice of Dutch inhabitants of the border region in their choice for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter.





Controlled extrinsic motivated	Autonomous extrinsic motivated
<u>External regulation</u>  <p>'I would rather not work in Germany, but my company is moving across the border. I will lose my job if I refuse to come.'</p>	<u>Identified regulation</u>  <p>'I prefer working in the Netherlands, but this job in Germany will give me the opportunity to reach my main goal of my professional career.'</p>
<u>Introjected regulation</u>  <p>'I would rather not work in Germany, but if I do not accept this job offer I will regret it the rest of my life.'</p>	<u>Integrated regulation</u>  <p>'The job in Germany matches with my personal norms and values. This job will fulfill my needs. That's why I would really like to work in Germany.'</p>

Figure 2. Types of extrinsic motivation applied on this research situation

### 2.3.2 Fulfillment of the basic psychological needs

As discussed above, SDT focuses on to what degree an individual's behavior is self-motivated and self-determined. However, an individual can only be entirely self-determined motivated if the three basic psychological needs are fulfilled. According to Deci and Ryan (1988) every human being has three basic needs, which form the basic psychological needs namely autonomy, competence and relatedness. These basic psychological needs operate across cultures, gender and time (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2003).

Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) describe the need for autonomy as the need to experience volition and the possibility to act in accordance with their integrated self. The need for competence concerns the feeling and desire to be effective in several situations (White, 1959). The third basic need has all to do with the feeling of involvement. People feel involved if they can build meaningful relationships, feel mutual respect from each other and if they are able to rely on each other. In addition, SDT proposes that the fulfillment of these three psychological needs will facilitate self-determined behavior (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004).

The barriers perceived by the Dutch inhabitants in the border region for not working in Germany can be explained by the lack of fulfillment of one or more of these basic needs. For example, if a Dutch inhabitant expects to perceive less autonomy in a German corporation, this barrier lacks on the basic need of autonomy. Therefore, he or she will not be motivated to start a career in Germany. This study will use the self-determination continuum and the need-fulfillment of the three basic needs to categorize, discover and measure the different motivations and barriers that play a role for Dutch inhabitants in the border region in their decision process for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to the neighboring country Germany.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1 Research design**

The purpose of this study was to explore, to describe and to explain the possible motivations and barriers of Dutch cross-border commuters to Germany and Dutch inhabitants in the border region for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. To answer the defined question, it was vital to understand the individual motivations and perceived differences between working in the Netherlands and Germany. First of all, in order to explore the possible motivations for commuting, the researcher had to become familiar with the research theme. Therefore, this study started with some interviews with experts followed by an in-depth interview method to obtain data.

Relatively little qualitative research has been conducted on the different types of motivations for expatriating. Even less research is focused on those types of motivations and barriers of inhabitants of the border region for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. Due to the increasing internalization of expatriate research and the rapidly diversifying nature of employees within foreign corporations, context is an essential variable in understanding research outcomes (Richardson & Zikic, 2007).

In order to get in-depth insight into the perceptions and opinions of the Dutch cross-border commuters and the Dutch inhabitants of the border region in their possible motivations for working in Germany, this qualitative research focuses on a single cross-border commuting context, through the technique of in-depth interviewing. This type of interviewing gives the researcher the opportunity to discover the views and challenges of the participants (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012).

Cross-border commuting is a complex process (Hechanova et al., 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007), qualitative research that provides depth and detail is needed in this research area. In the current study, a qualitative approach has been chosen, because a much more detailed image could be built up about why inhabitants of the border region act in certain ways and their perceptions and attitudes against cross-border commuting to Germany.

#### **3.2 Interviews with experts**

Firstly, introduction conversations were held with four experts of cross-border commuter themes in the Netherlands and Germany. These professionals work for the UWV, Arbeitsagentur für Arbeit or the Dutch-German company EUREGIO, and provided insight in the dilemmas that are relevant for potential commuters, as they provide professional advice to these people on a daily basis. The experts highlighted several possible motivations and barriers for Dutch inhabitants of the border region in their choice for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. The barriers that were mentioned often by the four experts were: family and traveling distance, financial incentives, uncertainties about the differences in legislations between the Netherlands and Germany (these uncertainties are mostly about the interest of their mortgage, social services and retirement arrangements), the language barrier and the application procedure in Germany. The main opportunities mentioned by the four experts were about the low rate of unemployment in Germany. They stated that considering a job in Germany is an ideal chance to prevent unemployment. The experts emphasized that challenge and adventure were aspects for commuting to Germany. Another motivation according to the experts was that for some professions a move to Germany is financially attractive. This knowledge was used to compose the format of the topic list and the questions of the face-to-face interviews.

### 3.3 Research sample

After the interviews with the experts, semi-structured in-depth interviews took place with 11 cross-border commuters and 9 inhabitants of the Dutch border region. The sampling procedure was based on a combination between purposive and snowball sampling method, which allowed the researcher to minimize the risk that participants were unfamiliar with the topic.

Three Dutch inhabitants of the border region were purposively selected by the researcher, since they were situated in the personal network of the researcher. These three participants proposed other Dutch inhabitants of the border region, who were suitable candidates for this study (snowball sampling). The Dutch inhabitants of the border region had to meet some criteria to join the research sample. They had to have a connection with working in Germany and had to live or work in an area of maximally 40 kilometers adjacent of the border. In order to access suitable Dutch cross-border commuters for the study, Euregio provided contact details of two participants who already gave permission to cooperate with the study. Subsequently, snowball sampling was used to expand the research sample. At the end of the interviews the researcher asked the participants if they could name possible and suitable individuals in their network who would like to join the sample. Almost all interviewees knew other Dutch colleagues or acquaintances who work in Germany in their network. Individuals who were willing to participate were selected using purposeful sampling, in order to allow for a range of professions. To achieve this objective participants were asked about their occupation and their experience with working in in Germany beforehand.

The main aim of the researcher was not to randomly select individuals from all Dutch inhabitants in the border region (population) to create a sample with the intention of making generalizations, but to focus on particular individuals that are of interest which will be best able to answer the research question. The researcher chose two specific categories for the study.

*Sample 1. Dutch cross-border commuters; Dutch inhabitants of the border region who work in Germany*

The first sample in this study consisted of Dutch employees who already worked in a German corporation. They have been through the complete decisions-making cycle. They were able to tell precisely which aspects they took in consideration by their choice to work in Germany. Therefore, a clear image could be established about the positive and negative factors that Dutch habitants in the border area experienced in their choice for a job in the neighboring country Germany.

*Sample 2. Dutch employees and job seekers that live or work in an area of maximally 40 kilometers adjacent to the border*

The second sample consisted of job seekers and employees in the Dutch border region with a connection to Germany. This decision has been made to assure the participants' affinity with the research theme. The participants had to live or work in an area of maximally 40 kilometers adjacent to the border of Germany, to ensure that cross-border commuting is a feasible alternative.

The final sample comprised 9 Dutch inhabitants of the border region and 11 Dutch cross-border commuters. 18 of the participants were married or in a relationship and 2 were single. The average age of the cross-border commuters was 44,9 with a standard deviation of 6,2. In comparison the average age of the Dutch inhabitants was 46,1 with a standard deviation of 9,9. Cross-border

commuters' working experience in Germany varied between 1 year and 19 years. Various professions were represented in the sample: some participants worked in the sector health care, while another had a job in the music industry. After 20 interviews the point of saturation occurred (Girei, 2013; Rakow, 2011). All interviews took place in February or March 2016. Most of the interviews took place in the homes of the interviewee. Some took place in the working environment of the participant. This way, the interviewee felt comfortable to give an honest answer to the questions. An overview of the participants in the research sample is illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Research sample*

Interview	Gender	Time in Germany (in years)	Occupation	Industry	Participant proposed by
Sample 1. Cross-border commuter to Germany					
1.	M	2	Engineer	Information technology	Euregio
2.	M	9	Physiotherapist	Health care	Participant 1
3.	F	1	Dermatologist	Health care	Participant 2
4.	F	3	Executor	Telephony	Participant 1
5.	M	19	Crane operator	Oil industry	Participant 4
6.	M	18	Insurer	Insurance	Participant 3
7.	M	10	Engineer	Information technology	Euregio
8.	M	3	Production assistant	Textile	Participant 7
9.	M	4	Advisor	Livestock	Participant 10
10.	M	10	Salesman	Livestock	Participant 7
11.	M	8	Conductor	Music	Participant 8
Sample 2. Dutch inhabitants of the border region					
12.	M	-	Accountant	Publisher	Researchers' network
13.	F	-	Teacher	Education	Researchers' network
14.	M	-	Teacher	Education	Participant 13
15.	F	-	Entrepreneur	Communication	Participant 12
16.	M	-	Application manager	Education	Participant 12
17.	F	-	Project leader	Government	Participant 20
18.	F	-	Secretary	Government	Participant 20
19.	M	-	Production assistant	Automobile	Participant 13
20.	M	-	Planner	Geography	Researchers' network

### 3.4 Instrumentation

Perceived motivations for working in the border region of Germany were examined by semi-structured in-depth interviews. The topic list for these interviews included six main topics with corresponding example questions, which are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.***Topic list and example questions of the in-depth interview*

Topic	Example question
1. Professional bond with Germany	Have you ever considered to start a career in Germany?
2. Expectations	To what extent are you sufficiently informed about all obstacles and opportunities of working in Germany?
3. Motivations	What are the most important points when considering a job?
4. Experiences in German working field	What do you experience as negative and positive aspects of working in Germany?
5. Differences	What are the main differences between your job in Germany compared to a job in the Netherlands?
6. Final questions	To what extent does fear of the unknown play a role in your decision to (not) become a cross-border commuter to Germany?

This topic list offered guidance, but it was essential that a natural conversation took place between the researcher and the respondent. All topics were derived from the interviews with the experts or from the literature review. During the interview, the interviewer was flexible with regard to the exact order of topics to ensure a smooth conversation. All interviews lasted between forty and seventy minutes. An essential part of the in-depth interview was the card sort method. This method has been used as a probing method. It gave the participant an ideal opportunity to expand their possible scale of motivations. During the first topics, the participants shared their first thoughts and motivations for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. After that, the card sort task allowed the participants to think about other important aspects that could play a role in their choice of considering a job abroad.

Card sorting is a categorization and classification exercise (Coxon, 1999). As part of the interview, the participants were given several cards varying from more controlled motivations (financial successes, job security, reputation and status of the job, traveling distance to the workplace, tangible rewards for job performances) to cards with more autonomous motivations (contributing to the community, opportunities for personal growth, meaningful relationships with colleagues and with the manager, enjoyment in the job, competence in the job and affiliation with the corporation). The card-sort method has used the distinction of Vansteenkiste, Lens and Deci (2006). They made a distinction between controlled and autonomous work goals. These work goals were supplemented with the motivations and barriers discussed in the theoretical framework and motivations and barriers named in the interviews with the experts.

Participants were asked to order the cards in two groups. One group of cards were perceived as the most important motivations for their job decision, and one group of cards that were perceived as the

least important motivations in the decision process. The chosen cards were discussed and the participants explained their choices comprehensively.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

This study uses both inductive as deductive analysis elements. Firstly, this study uses existing expatriate literature and retest this literature in a new context, which makes it a deductive analysis (Burnard, 1991; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kershaw, 1998). There was an inductive element in this study as well. This study tried to find new motivations for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany, since little is known on this specific topic of cross-border commuting. These 'new' motivations could be the source of a new theory.

All 20 interviews in this study were fully recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed with the coding software Atlas.ti. The analysis of this study consisted out of three phases; preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the preparation phase the transcripts were specified into much smaller categories (Burnard, 1991). More specific, all transcripts were studied and answers that seems to relate to a possible motive were highlighted. These meaningful units of analysis were accompanied by 1068 separate fragments (Cavanagh, 1997; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mortelmans, 2007).

In the 'organization' phase, the researcher worked towards more specific and detailed categories. The fragments were combined, linked, removed and placed together in categories. For example, several cross-border commuters mentioned the challenge of working in Germany as a decisive aspect to become a cross-border commuter to Germany. All these separate and similar fragments were placed together into the category 'Learning, exploring and experiencing new things'. Some fragments could not be categorized as a real motivation or barrier, for instance 'having a feeling of being on holiday while driving in Germany' or 'having the feeling that the neighbors are looking out for each other in German neighborhoods'. Since they were not relevant for the research theme, the researcher chose to remove these fragments. The aim of this phase was to reduce numbers of categories by merging some of the ones that were similar into broader categories (Burnard, 1991).

The researcher distinguished the categories in motivations as extrinsic regulated (motivations where the participant felt they had no choice, low autonomy or were motivated for a reward or to avoid punishment), introjected regulated (motivations where people perform actions with the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety), identified regulated (motivations where an individual has identified with the personal importance of an action and has thus accepted its regulation as his or her own), integrated regulated (most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation occurring through self-examination and bringing new regulations into congruence with one's other values and needs), and intrinsic motivated (motivations where the separable outcome is not the driving force, but the action itself is and where individuals are moved to do something for the fun or challenge of it). This phase resulted in a total of 6 motivations to become a cross-border commuter.

The barriers named by the inhabitants of the border region were analyzed a similar way. The fragments that represented a barrier were combined, linked or placed together in categories. These categories were distinguished in the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs competence, autonomy and relatedness. These elements were perceived as barriers since they lacked at least one basic need. This analysis led to two competence barriers, two autonomy barriers and four relatedness barriers. For

example, a Dutch inhabitant had the perception that he could not influence the decisions in a German corporation, which represents a lack of the basic need autonomy.

Finally, the reporting phase was all about reporting the analyzing process and the results. The analysis process and the results are described in sufficient detail (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this way, the findings of the research became a presentation of the collected data and a comparison of those findings with previous work (Burnard, 1991). This phase led to a total of 15 main motivations, which could be partly divided in the earlier mentioned categories of the self-determination theory. To guarantee the validity of this studies categorization process, another coder independently coded three transcripts. Subsequently, the calculated Cohen's kappa was .77. The calculated kappa was more than sufficient, since this study strived for a number of at least .70 (Burnard, 1991; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## 4. Results

The motivations for becoming a cross-border commuter are described in section 1. By means of the self-determination continuum the motivations of the cross-border commuters are categorized in the different types of motivations. The questioned inhabitants of the border region mentioned several barriers to become a cross-border commuter to Germany. These barriers and complaints do not fulfill to one or more basic psychological needs namely autonomy, competence and relatedness, which are needed for a motivation to be self-determined. The barriers of the inhabitants of the border region are categorized in these psychological needs and are discussed in section 2. In the third paragraph the summarized findings are presented.

### 4.1 Cross-border commuters' motivations

The motivations for becoming a cross-border commuter are illustrated within the self-determination continuum. The cross-border commuters have different types of motivation, varying from introjected regulated to intrinsic motivations. These different types of motivations are discussed in this section.

#### 4.1.1 Introjected regulated motivation

The two introjected regulated motivations recognized among cross-border commuters are financial incentives and the appreciation of quality at the German workplace. The level of autonomy in this type of motivation is relatively low. The majority of the cross-border commuters stated that in German corporations the financial conditions were much better than in the Netherlands and therefore functioned as a motivation to become a cross-border commuter. Some cross-border commuters stated that quality of working activities are rewarded and appreciated much more in Germany. The cross-border commuters perceived this as a motivation to start a career in Germany. They stated that it enhances the self-esteem of the individual and improves the quality of the working activities.

##### 4.1.1.1 Financial incentives.

An important introjected regulated motivation to become a cross-border commuter are financial considerations (Richardson & McKenna, 2003). The financial incentives were taken into account in order to enhance the individual's self-esteem or feeling of worth. This is a characteristic of a introjected regulated motivation. Participants in this study perceived financial incentives not as a part of their own personal value structure, but realized that these are important in their personal lives. The majority of participants mentioned that, to a certain extent, financial implications played a role in their decision to become a cross-border commuter. Some commuters stated that working in Germany is beneficial (27 codes) for their financial situation. This cross-border commuter stated that in order to avoid a feeling of guilt he could not reject the offered amount of money in Germany:

*'I did not have to think long to start a career in Germany. In my situation the high wages in Germany were one of the reasons to accept a job in Germany. A crane operator earns much more in Germany. All together I earn 2000 euro's more a month in Germany than I did in the Netherlands. I am a divorced man and I would always regret and feel guilt to my children if I rejected this job. I want to give my children the opportunity to study and to have a good life. Therefore, money is needed.'* – Crane operator in Germany, interview 5.

The majority of the participants agreed that financial incentives were important for their decision to become a cross-border commuter, but admitted that it never will be the decisive factor in their



decision process. In this context, this study supports the contention of various scholars about the nuanced role of financial incentives in the decision for an expatriate (Dickmann et al., 2008; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Selmer & Luring, 2011). An example of this statement was the citation of the following commuter:

*'I earn more money in Germany, but for me that is not important at all. In Germany I receive much more opportunities. They have a higher budget for my music lessons. That is more important for me than my own salary.'*— Conductor and music teacher in Germany, interview 11.

#### **4.1.1.2 Recognition and appreciation.**

Several cross-border commuters emphasized the importance of the quality of working activities in German corporations. Several participants perceived that the quality of work is more rewarded and valued in German corporations, than in the corporations in their home country (19 codes). Successes are valued higher in the German working life. The commuters experienced these rewards as enhancing for their feeling of worth and self-esteem. Subsequently, participants attached importance to recognition and rewards in their professional lives and perceived this as a motivation for working in Germany. This cross-border commuter excluded that he will ever work in the Netherlands again:

*'I feel much more appreciated and accepted in my job in Germany. I will never work in the Netherlands again, because my qualities are rewarded more in Germany.'* – Insurer in Germany, interview 6

#### **4.1.2 Identified regulated motivation**

A more autonomous or self-determined form of extrinsic motivation is identified regulation. Dutch cross-border commuters were motivated for working in Germany, because they recognized the personal importance of the activity. A Dutch cross-border commuter, who works in Germany because he sees this career path as relevant for his future and can be described as identified regulated motivated. This particular activity contributes to the achievement of a higher purpose (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Identification involves a conscious acceptance of the behavior as being important in order to achieve personally valued outcomes. The most important motivation, in this section, is the possibility for personal growth (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Several participants mentioned the chances for personal growth in Germany (17 codes):

*'I recommend everybody to start a career in Germany, at least for a few years. Working abroad will develop you to a great extent, on a working and personal level.'* – Insurer in Germany, interview 6

A few cross-border commuters were motivated to start a career in Germany, simply because they saw their job in Germany as a contribution to achieve a higher purpose. A participant stated that he decided to accept his job in Germany, because this would help him to achieve his ultimate career goal:

*'In a few years I would really like to start my own company. To realize my dream this job in Germany gave me the opportunity to learn aspects, which I need to successfully start my own company.'* – Advisor in Germany, interview 9

#### 4.1.3 Integrated regulated motivation

The most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation. A cross-border commuter is integrated motivated when identified regulations have been fully assimilated to the self. In order to be integrated motivated a cross-border commuter should be driven by personal values in their choice to accept a career move to Germany (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The only integrated regulated motivation mentioned by the participants of this study was the working atmosphere at the German workplace. The working atmosphere refers to the expected and perceived atmosphere between colleagues and the social behavior at the workplace in a German corporation. The majority of the participants described this theme as an aspect that has been fully assimilated to their selves (Dickmann & Harris, 2005). Namely, the commuters perceived the positive working atmosphere as decisive in their choice for becoming a commuter. The cross-border commuters stated that in order to be effective the working atmosphere should match with their personal values. This value is often perceived as driving force to consider a career in Germany.

Most of the cross-border commuters perceived a pleasant collaboration and atmosphere at the German workplace (15 codes). Aspects that have been mentioned were the jovial bond with German colleagues and the feeling that German colleagues would really stand up for colleagues. The diversity on the German workplace was evaluated as beneficial for the quality of the working activities. A few interviewees claimed that the most ideal composition of a working team should exist out of Dutch and German employees. Sehnert (2014) agrees that diversity in German organizations have positive outcomes for the collaboration. Cross-border commuters could create divergence within an organization and different kind of people are one of the keys for effective working activities (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). A participant told that the combination of Dutch and German colleagues enhances the creativity within a team:

*'The collaboration between Dutch and German employees produces surprising ideas' -*  
Conductor and music teacher in Germany, interview 11.

According to the participants German employers take good care of their employees. The rights of the employees are well respected by German employers. According to these participants, the employers in Germany are more focused on the interests of the employee instead of those of the organization. A cross-border commuter agreed with this statement:

*'In my opinion, a German employer takes good care of his employees. His focus is more employee driven. Before I worked in Germany I had this assumption and I found it to be correct.'*  
– Engineer in Germany, interview 7.

Some participants stated that they experienced that German employers and colleagues were accepting or even pleased when a Dutch colleague was hired at their company. One of the reasons for this was that Dutch colleagues could bring different insights in the organization. A few participants stated that German employers and customers were very loyal to them. This was an asset of working in Germany:

*'My German employer would never abandon me. I can make many mistakes and my employer has my back. I have proven my contribution and value in the past. Therefore, he protects me no matter what.'* – Salesmen in Germany, interview 10

A benefit of the working atmosphere in Germany mentioned by some participants was the stronger feeling for collectivity. They mentioned that the individual's interests are subservient compared to the main goal of the organization. Everyone and everything will have to adjust to 'the bigger picture'. A participant stated that no individual is more important than the organization as a collective:

*'German organizations think much more with a collective mindset. The individual has to adjust to the majority. That is something that is different in a German corporation.'* – Engineer in Germany, interview 1.

Noticeable, this is in contrast to the literature. According to Dorfman et al. (2012) Germany scores low on the dimension societal collectivism. They stated that the institutions in Germany reward and encourage collective actions less than other countries do. The views of participants of this study contrast with this finding, as they claimed that German organizations value collectivity more than other cultures do.

#### **4.1.4 Intrinsic motivation**

A Dutch cross-border commuter who is intrinsically motivated should consider a career move, because he feels it is interesting or enjoyable to do (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this study the two motivations that could be labeled as completely intrinsic were "Adventure and excitement" and "Learning, exploring and experiencing new things".

Carbonneau, Vallerand and Lafrenière (2012) distinguish three forms of intrinsic motivation (IM): IM to know, IM toward accomplishment and IM to experience stimulation. Participants of this study perceived two of those types of intrinsic motivation.

##### **4.1.4.1 Adventure and excitement.**

Firstly, several participants were looking for an adventure and for stimulating sensation and excitement, which can be categorized as an intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (29 codes). The importance of an individual's inner desire to find a challenging job or a new adventure has been emphasized by this cross-border commuter (Richardson & McKenna, 2003):

*'I was very motivated to start a career in Germany, because I really needed a new adventure in my life. The international character of a job in Germany is very interesting. It was one of my main reasons to accept my job in Germany.'* – Executor in Germany, interview 4.

##### **4.1.4.2 Learning, exploring and experiencing new things.**

Secondly, participants stated that they would make a career move to get the satisfaction of learning, exploring and trying to experience new things (11 codes). This can be seen as intrinsic motivation to know (Carbonneau et al., 2012). Some cross-border commuters appreciated the higher degree of opportunities within German corporations. They stated that in their professions more opportunities could be found in the neighboring country Germany. For this cross-border commuter this aspect made a career move to Germany attractive:

*'In my profession, there is more potential in Germany than anywhere else in the world.'* – Engineer in Germany, interview 7.

These findings points out the importance of nurturing one's internal desire to explore. This is in line with the results of several studies, which state that inner desire to find adventure and challenge are important aspects for expatriates to expatriate (Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Richardson & Zikic, 2007; Selmer & Luring, 2013). In Figure 3 the entire SDT continuum is illustrated with definitions, motivations and citations.

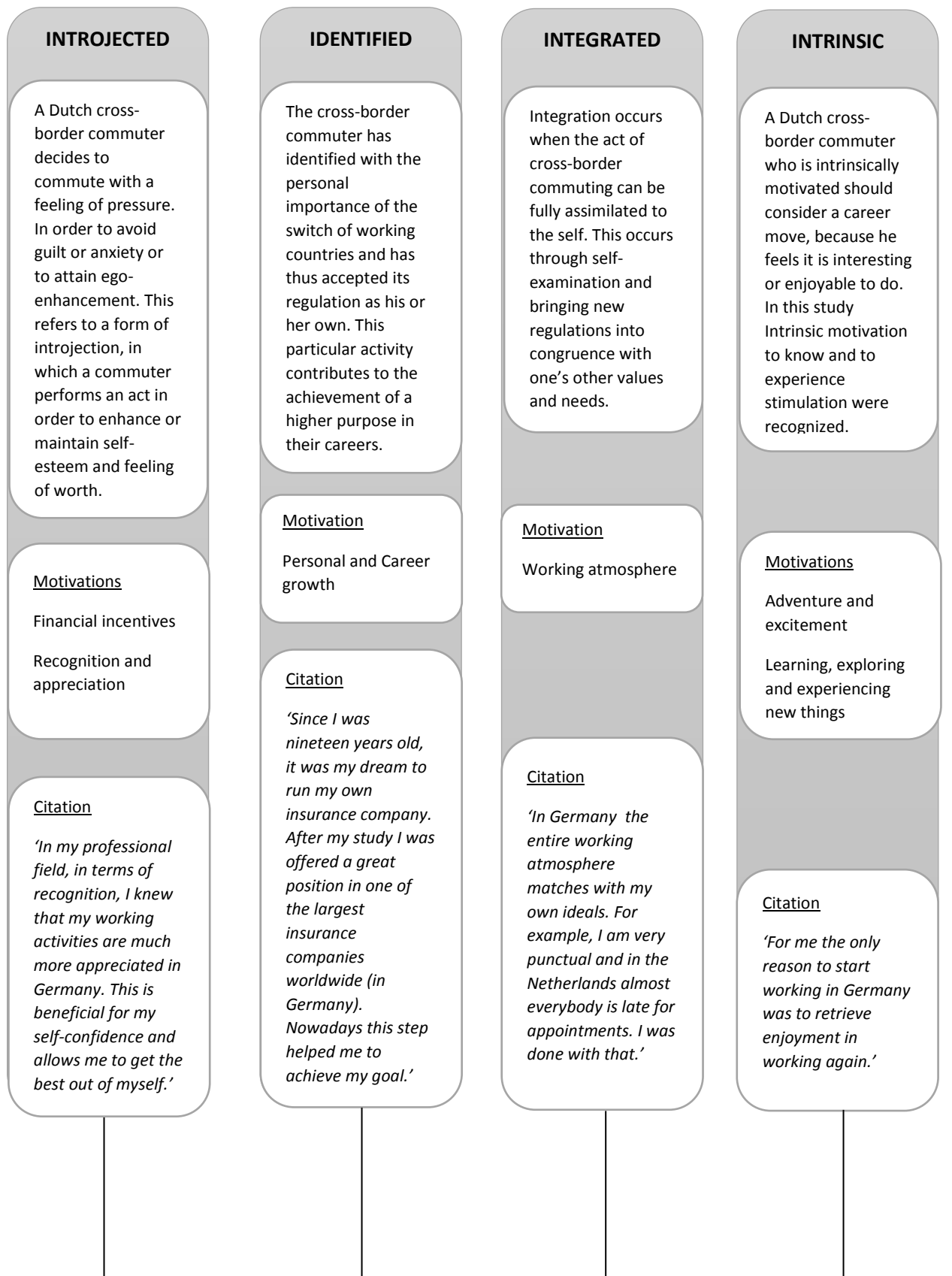


Figure 3. Entire SDT continuum with definitions, motivations and citations to become a cross-border commuter

The results emphasize the importance of the identified, integrated and intrinsic motivations. The majority of cross-border commuters stated that the financial incentives and recognition of working activities were not as important as the identified, integrated and intrinsic motivations in the SDT

continuum. These played a decisive role in their process for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. However, the notion has to be made that social desirability could play a role in the answers of the cross-border commuters. It is possible that participants responded in a manner that will be viewed as favorable by others and by the researcher. Emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivations could be seen as ‘good’ behavior and therefore participants could state those motivations as decisive in their choice to become a cross-border commuter to Germany. Another possibility is that the participants, especially the Dutch cross-border commuters, really believe that the intrinsic motivations were more decisive in their choice to become a cross-border commuter than the more extrinsic motivations. However, the fact that time has passed, could have influenced the importance of the decisions to a more desirable answer. The more time that has been passed, the more the extrinsic motivations could have moved to the background of perceived importance.

## 4.2 Inhabitants of the border region complaints and barriers

In particular, the inhabitants of the border region mentioned complaints and barriers for becoming a cross-border commuter. These barriers and complaints withhold them to be motivated for becoming a cross-border commuter. In addition, because of these barriers and complaints the basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness) are not met and therefore the motivation to be self-determined is hindered.

### 4.2.1 Lack of the basic psychological need competence

The barriers illustrated in table 3 are characterized by a lack of fulfillment in the basic need competence. The inhabitants of the border region are missing feelings and perceptions to be effective within a German corporation.

**Table 3.**

*Barriers mentioned with a lack of the basic need competence*

<b>Lack of Competence</b>		<b>Amount of codes</b>
Language barrier		23
Uncertainties and anxiety		163
<i>Subcodes:</i>		
-	Recognition of Dutch qualifications	9
-	Taxes	9
-	Pension arrangements	31
-	Mortgage interest	10
-	Uncertainties through all the hassle	40
-	Differences between the two legislations	33
-	Anxiety for becoming a cross-border commuter	31

Several participants mentioned some kind of problems regarding the differences in language between the Netherlands and Germany (23 codes). The lack of knowledge and competence in the German language withholds several inhabitants to consider a job in Germany (Hulinger & Nolan, 1997). This motivation scores very low on the basic psychological need competence. The lack of knowledge of the German language leads to a problem regarding the basic need of relatedness. Participants explained that they perceived it as harder to express themselves to German parties. The inhabitants were

cautious to create and sustain relationships with German colleagues. The following participant expected that she could never find a job on her level in a German corporation:

*'It is complicating for a Dutch employee to work in my kind of business in Germany. You have to speak German fluently in PR and Communication. A German candidate has a huge advantage in comparison with a Dutch candidate. The German language stays a barrier.'* – Inhabitant border region, German colleagues, interview 17.

Some cross-border commuters mentioned that although their knowledge of the German language was sufficient, some professional language was perceived as complex. This made it more difficult to participate within the organization. However, most participants stated that these language differences were not decisive in their choice for not becoming a cross-border commuter. These differences were often perceived as a bridgeable barrier.

The other two important barriers related to the basic need of competence are the uncertainties inherent to the existence of a cross-border commuter and the fear for working abroad. The feeling of uncertainty refers to the perceived level of precariousness and uncertainties in their decision to consider or to start a job in Germany. The anxiety of the unknown describes how the participants had perceptions of anxiety and nervousity when thinking about or considering a job in the neighboring country Germany. All of these uncertainties come from a lack of knowledge about cross-border commuting to Germany. Therefore, this barrier scores low at the basic need competence.

Some participants stated that their Dutch diplomas and qualifications should be recognized and acknowledged more rapidly (Weterings & Gessel-Dabekaussen, 2015). Another source for uncertainty and precariousness is all the perceived hassle that comes with a career move to Germany. The majority of the participants noticed that the lack of knowledge about the consequences of working in a foreign country leads to an insecure feeling. This insecure feeling has been mentioned in the following citation:

*'All uncertainties that emerge when you decide to work in Germany, makes me think twice to become a cross-border commuter.'* - Inhabitant of the border region, does business with parties in Germany interview 15.

Some participants indicated that the taxes in Germany are complicated. A participant stated that they were ignorant and had doubts about German taxes and therefore had a preference to work in the Netherlands:

*'Where I have to pay my taxes is clear to me, but when I start working in Germany it remains complicated, because you are dealing with two countries.'* –Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 20.

A further factor that led to uncertainties among participants in the decision to start working in Germany was the fact that they do not receive mortgage interest. A consequence of this fact is highlighted in the following citation:

*'I am single and should I work in Germany, than it would be very difficult for me to buy a house in the Netherlands. This is a reason for me to not immediately consider Germany as a place to work.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 18.

The final two uncertainties of the interviewees are focusing on the differences in legislation and the uncertainties regarding the social security and pension arrangements. Most of the participants were cautious, since working in Germany means that they had to deal with two different legislations. Besides that, most of them stated that they knew their pension arrangements would change in a German corporation. However, they did not know whether this was a positive or a negative event.

The majority of the participants stated that they perceived, or could imagine that others perceived, some kind of fear of the unknown when working in a foreign country (31 codes) (Cooper & Marshall, 1976; O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). The fear for a foreign country in general influences the decision process for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. Most of the questioned inhabitants of the border region admitted that they felt some kind of anxiety by considering a job at a German corporation (Ziebertz, 2008). The following participant had doubts about working in Germany:

*'Fear of a foreign country makes me hesitate to start my company in Germany. I do not know if my working activities will appeal to German people and businesses.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, does business with German parties, interview 15.

This further complements the findings of several scholars, who explain that the risks and transience play an important role in the lives of expatriates (Osland, 1995; Richardson & Zikic, 2007).

#### 4.2.2 Lack of the basic psychological need autonomy

The barriers illustrated in table 4 are characterized by a lack of fulfillment in the basic need autonomy. The inhabitants of the border region are not motivated for becoming a cross-border commuter, because these barriers do not fulfill the need to experience volition and the possibility to act in accordance with the integrated self.

**Table 4.**  
*Barriers mentioned with a lack of the basic need autonomy*

Concept	Amount of codes
Strict hierarchical structure	114
Subcodes:	
- High level of work hierarchy	28
- Interaction with the manager	39
- Interaction with colleagues	19
- Reputation and status	28
Bureaucracy and decision-making	97

A variety of codes has been categorized in the barrier 'strict and clear hierarchical structure within German corporations'. This theme describes the perceived and expected hierarchy and ranks in German workplaces (Sehnert, 2014) and is perceived as one of the most important barriers for not becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. This hierarchy affects the feelings of autonomy among the participants. Some stated that the hierarchical structures not only threatens the basic need autonomy, but the basic need relatedness as well. According to them it is harder to create and sustain relationships with colleagues and supervisors within a German corporation. For some inhabitants of the border region this barrier was dominant in their choice for not becoming a cross-border commuter.



The majority of the participants in this study observed a high level of work hierarchy within the organization. These structures has been mentioned by the following participant:

*'If you want to work in Germany you have to get used to the clear structure. There is always someone above you and always someone beneath you. For me, that is something I could not handle.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, living in Germany, interview 16.

According to the participants, the strict hierarchical level is reflected in the interaction with the manager and with other colleagues. The differences between relationships at the German workplace and the Dutch workplace are summarized in this citation:

*'In a Dutch organization you do not even notice who the manager is. In Germany you should always listen to your boss. He has his own office and when you have saved up enough courage, you can disturb him.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, living in Germany, interview 15.

In addition, some interviewees mentioned the importance of reputation and status in the German workplace (Brodbeck et al., 2000). For several participants this appeared to be a barrier for working in Germany. A questioned production assistant in the Netherlands had a clear opinion about the role of status and reputation in German corporations:

*'In the best scenario, you have a title like engineer in front of your name. Germans will be impressed. That is something they really like. But for me everyone is the same, so I think that is rubbish.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 19.

Another barrier that has been perceived as decisive for not becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany is the bureaucratic structure within German corporations. The bureaucracy is threatening for the basic need autonomy. An individual has the sense that he or she has no choice or influence regarding the working activities in Germany. This bureaucracy expresses in different areas. One of these is that the participants of this study felt hindered in their working activities due to the many restrictions, regulations and norms. The participants stated that it is almost impossible to be aware of all the rules (15 codes). In addition, some inhabitants of the border region stated that the working activities in Germany are following fixed patterns, in order to avoid unpredictable outcomes (9 codes).

Before a decision could be made, it had to go along many layers. One of the downsides mentioned by the participants were the long-lasting processes until a decision could really be implemented (9 codes). This is in line with the literature, which stated that in German corporations the uncertainty avoidance is higher (Dorfman et al., 2012; Sehnert, 2014). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the level the member of a cluster tries to avoid uncertainty by relying on predetermined social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices. This aversion for unpredictability and uncertainty within German organizations has been partly confirmed in this study. This participant explained how this bureaucratic structure formed his daily routine:

*'In Germany, the companies have lots of rules and regulations, much more than the Dutch companies. You will not believe how many people have to agree with your decision. Before you get a decisive answer, you have almost forgotten that you handed in an idea. The bureaucracy is very present.'* – Executor in Germany, interview 4.

Similar to the perceived higher level of bureaucracy in Germany is the punctuality mentioned by some participants. This refers to the feeling that everything in a German organization follows fixed patterns. Some interviewees stated that their working activities were embedded in strict fixed patterns (18 codes). It was difficult to deviate from those patterns. This is in line with the opinion of the following participant:

*'The agenda is maintained tightly in German organizations. If you have a meeting at 9 am, you have to be there exactly at 9 am.'* – Salesman in Germany, interview 10.

According to the inhabitants of the border region the bureaucracy in German corporations leads to a lack of participation and influence within the organization. The barrier 'participation and influence' describes how the participants perceived their working environment in terms of freedom to act and choosing their own way of working (Black & Gregersen, 1990; Lan, 1996). The lack of influence and participation within a German firm, makes them hesitate to consider a job in Germany (46 codes).

Many of the participants expected or experienced a lower level of influence, participation and autonomy in a German corporation in comparison with a Dutch counterpart. This is in line with the study of Smulders, Kompier and Paoli (1996), who found that the participation in decision making was relatively high in Dutch corporations and relatively low in German ones.

The inhabitants of the border region had clear perceptions about the degree of initiative and own contribution within a German corporation. One of the participants expected to have much less influence in a German corporation:

*'If you have an idea, it is much harder to get it realized in a German corporation than in a Dutch one.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, living in Germany, interview 13.

Less autonomy and less freedom to act independently in the German workplace were aspects that have been mentioned by the participants. One of them admitted that the lack of freedom in German corporations is one of the greatest 'deal breakers' for becoming a cross-border commuter:

*'I cannot get used to the lack of freedom in a German organization. I really need that freedom in my job. That is a reason for me to not become a cross-border commuter.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 20.

Noticeable is that almost all inhabitants of the border region perceived these two 'autonomous' barriers as decisive and most important in their choice for not becoming a cross-border commuter.

#### **4.2.3 Lack of the basic psychological need relatedness**

The barriers illustrated in table 5 are characterized by a lack of fulfillment in the basic need relatedness. The inhabitants of the border region are not motivated for becoming a cross-border commuter, because these barriers do not fulfill the need for involvement. They feel that they are not able to build meaningful relationships, feel mutual respect and cannot rely to each other within a German corporation.

**Table 5.***Barriers mentioned with a lack of the basic need relatedness*

Concept	Amount of codes
Working atmosphere	50
Working attitude	53
Disadvantages of Dutch nationality	30
Family considerations	22

The first mentioned barrier that affects the basic need relatedness is the atmosphere at the German workplace. Some of the interviewees perceived an aloof and strict attitude within German organizations (20 codes), which made it hard to build relationships with them (16 codes) (Selmer, 1999; Toh & Srinivas, 2012). The following participant highlighted the type of interaction at the German workplace:

*‘The atmosphere in Germany is less pleasant and loose; slightly stricter. My German colleagues rarely pay attention to me.’* – Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 12.

Almost half of the inhabitants of the border region (14 codes) expected a more socially working environment in the Netherlands (Peterson & van Iterson, 2015). One former cross-border commuter perceived the consequences of the lack of interaction with colleagues in Germany as follows:

*‘I was socially isolated at the workplace. That was a consequence of working in Germany. In my job in the Netherlands I never felt that way. At one moment I was really desperate to find a job in the Netherlands.’* – Former dermatologist in Germany, interview 3

Another barrier among the participants was about the working attitude within German corporations. The majority of the participants perceived the work attitude and the working mentality as more direct in Germany. Therefore, the inhabitants expected that it would be much harder to fulfill the need of involvement. Some stated that it would be very hard to build a relationship with a German colleague.

Another mentioned aspect of the working attitude was the perception that German employees and colleagues are more focused on their own tasks (11 codes). Additionally, they felt criticized earlier (Dorfman et al., 2012). German colleagues were more protective about their working tasks, which made the working attitude in German corporations more formal and direct according to the interviewees. One participant felt that he was hired to accomplish one certain role and he should not interfere with other tasks:

*‘Everyone protects his own working field and you have to stick to your role. That restrains an effective collaboration. Although I worked in a team, I never felt it that way. That is an aspect I cannot identify with’* – Salesman in Germany, interview 10.

Another form of the harder and more direct work attitude and mentality within a German organization, according to the interviewees is the formality along colleagues (24 codes). The majority of the participants experienced more formal relationships in German corporations (Szabo, 2002). Most of these participants mentioned that in German corporations it is not common to call each other with their forenames:

*'You should never mention the first name of your German boss and German colleagues. You cannot assume that you can interact with others on a first-name basis.'* – Advisor in Germany, interview 9.

Drobnic et al. (2010) found a notable difference in working environment between the Netherlands and Germany. They observed a stricter separation between work and private life in the German working environment. Some participants felt that German colleagues were less caring and more individualistic than Dutch colleagues would be. This has often been called 'a no-nonsense mentality' by the participants (18 codes). Richardson and McKenna (2003) support this view and explain that expatriates often see themselves as outsiders and that could lead to a feeling of isolation within the firm. Furthermore, it is more complex for them to integrate in communities. The following cross-border commuter explains the 'no-nonsense mentality' in plain words:

*'There is a no-nonsense mentality in German corporations. Work is work and home is home. This separation is sacred and can make you feel lonely sometimes.'* – Engineer in Germany, interview 7

The barrier 'family considerations' contains how participants perceive the importance of the distance to and from their (future) German workplaces to their homes and the inherent consequences for the family (14 codes) (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Some of them stated that they felt some kind of guilt and shame towards their partners regarding the education of their children. A job in Germany did not match with their personal value structure, because it was difficult to find a balance between their professional and personal lives. Most of the inhabitants of the border region perceived this as a decisive barrier for not working in Germany.

This barrier has been recognized by some cross-border commuter as well. Some cross-border commuters stated that they often had to go to other places in Germany and on top of that had to travel to other countries. The following cross-border commuter emphasizes the importance of a good balance between working and family life (Dickmann et al., 2008; Richardson & Mallon, 2005):

*'I am often away from my family and from my home. It is difficult to go away from my family. Sometimes I feel guilty towards my wife. Often I have to go to the Southern of Germany and to Great Britain. If I get offered a job in Holland at a fixed location, I would really like to work in the Netherlands, again.'* – Engineer in Germany, interview 1.

The next barrier mentioned by some interviewees in this study was the expected disadvantage because of their nationality, if they would accept a job in the border region of Germany (30 codes). Dutch inhabitants of the border region who expected to have those disadvantages in German corporations, had the perception that they could not be able to be effective and respected within a German team. One of the participants undertook several attempts to find a job in the border region of Germany. He never got an invitation, which he blamed on his nationality:

*'I have applied for jobs in Germany several times, but not once I got invited for a conversation. I have a strong feeling that my Dutch nationality is the reason for this.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, German colleagues, interview 19.

The point of view was that German employers prefer a German employee instead of a Dutch one. In addition, an independent contractor experienced a lot of difficulty to recruit German customers. She

did a lot of recruiting activities, although it did not work among German customers. There always was a degree of suspicion among German individuals.

*'I tried so hard to recruit German customers, as well. But they do not want to work with a Dutchman.'* – Inhabitant of the border region, does business with German parties, interview 20.

A few questioned Dutch inhabitants of the border region expected that their nationality and the cultural differences would lead to an oppressive collaboration with German colleagues. Some cross-border commuters experienced that their nationality stood in the way in creating a meaningful relationship with German colleagues. One respondent stated that he felt like an immigrant worker. Another participant stated that German colleagues almost never showed any interest in his personal life (Richardson & Zikic, 2007). According to another respondent, there was a constant battle between German and Dutch employees:

*'There was a constant battle with German colleagues. Sometimes, I left a Dutch local paper in the canteen. When I came back a German colleague had shredded the paper entirely.'* – Production assistant in Germany, interview 8.

#### **4.3 Summarized findings**

Various motivations are taken into account in the decision for becoming a cross-border commuter. Considering the different types of extrinsic motivation of the self-determination theory, this study found that the more self-determined motivations of the continuum, namely the identified regulated, integrated regulated and intrinsic motivations, played the decisive role for becoming a cross-border commuter.

The career and growth opportunities can be labeled as a identified regulated motivation and is perceived as a decisive motivation among the cross-border commuters. This finding corresponds with the study of Richardson and McKenna (2003), who describe career consideration as a main motivation to expatriate. In addition, expatriating leads to personal and professional development (Dickmann et al., 2008; Stahl et al., 2002).

The findings of this study show that integrated regulated motivations also play a decisive role in the choice for becoming a cross-border commuter. The cross-border commuters mentioned the pleasant working atmosphere as a positive aspect of working in Germany. This can be labeled as an integrated regulated motivation. Noticeable is that the inhabitants of the border region perceived the working atmosphere as negative and therefore as a decisive barrier to become a cross-border commuter to Germany.

Almost all questioned cross-border commuters have the intrinsic motivation in common. The search for an adventure, challenge or the need for experiencing new things has been mentioned as one of the most important motivations to become a cross-border commuter. On the other side, the inhabitants of the border region mentioned the feelings of uncertainty and anxiety as one of the most important barriers for becoming a cross-border commuter.

The inhabitants of the border region mentioned some other important barriers for becoming a cross-border commuter. The inhabitants of the border region mentioned in particular the barriers with a lack of autonomy as decisive for refusing a job in Germany. The participants mentioned as decisive barriers

difficulties coping with the working attitude, the strict hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, and the lower levels of participation within a German organization (cf. Dorfman et al., 2012; Hofstede, 1983; Sehnert, 2014).

Another important barrier mentioned by the inhabitants are the uncertainties and the lack of knowledge about cross-border commuting. Noticeable is that the majority of the questioned inhabitants of the border region is interested in information regarding cross-border commuting to Germany. The inhabitants of the border region stated that they did not know where to find the information and never took time to search for these information. Some questioned cross-border commuters decided to start working in Germany without an extensive research about the consequences and effects such a career move could have on their personal situation (34 codes).

The inhabitants of the border region emphasized the importance of transparency in the regulations and the legislations. A career move to Germany is perceived as a complex decision. Several participants stated that the national government could take a more active role in this process. A few thought that cross-border commuting will enhance when the national and regional governments of Germany and the Netherlands would promote this subject more.

## 5. Discussion

This study investigates which motives and barriers played a key role in the choice for becoming a cross-border commuter. Therefore, a group of Dutch cross-border commuters and a group of Dutch inhabitants of the border region, who made the choice not to become a cross-border commuter, were interviewed. With the application of the self-determination theory, this study creates an extensive image of which types of motivations and barriers play a decisive role in the decision process of becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. Previous –expatriate– literature offered a useful framework to study the choices, experiences and perceptions that play a role in the decision process of (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. However, this existing literature only made the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. This current study extends the expatriate literature by categorizing motivations in different types of motivations and barriers. This study offers several key contributions to the existing expatriate literature.

This study shows that cross-border commuters' motivations can vary between extrinsic-focused motivations and intrinsic or self-determined focused motivations. Despite the fact that previous research does not use well defined categories, the found motivations that are decisive for becoming a cross-border commuter, show characteristics of self-determined behavior (Dickmann & Harris, 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2003). Using the more extensive SDT in this study is therefore an added value to the expatriate literature, since it strengthens the motivations in quality. The grouping of motivations in SDT facilitates the thinking process for realistic measures by emphasizing the importance of certain types of motivations. This study emphasizes the importance of the identified, integrated and intrinsic motivations in the SDT continuum. The majority of the cross-border commuters stated that these motivations played a decisive role in their choice of accepting a job in Germany. The notion has to be made, that it is possible that the motivations of the cross-border commuters are somewhat biased. In other words, the participants could think that the more socially desirable self-determined motivations played a decisive role in becoming a cross-border commuter.

The finding of this study that self-determined motivations seem to be more decisive, has important implications for future expatriates motivation research. Former expatriate research focused on a wide range of possible motivations that could play a role in the decision process. The literature does not make a distinction in the importance of motivations between and within types of motivations. Next to validating this study, further research should focus on making such a distinction and quantifying it. By quantifying the importance of the motivations, one can get a more exact idea of what motivations the most emphasis should be put on for future actions. In line with this, scholars are encouraged to get a deeper insight in the measures, which can positive influence these motivations. Also helpful to get a better insight on this topic would be to interview ex-cross-border commuters for quitting as a cross-border commuter. For example, this study indicates that attracting Dutch employees to Germany by means of a high salary would, particularly in the long term, not turn out to be an optimal solution. In all likelihood, a more effective action would be to invest in a more open and transparent working culture and in measures which focus on the acclimatization of Dutch employees within a German corporation.

The barriers mentioned differ in a lack in fulfillment of the basic psychological needs competence, autonomy or relatedness. Noticeable is that the most decisive and important barriers for becoming a cross-border commuter among the inhabitants of the border region are related to the basic need of autonomy. The participants described the concern of not experiencing enough volition at the German

workplace. This study creates new opportunities to implement SDT within the 'expatriate' and 'cross-border commuting' literature. Current expatriate studies never used SDT to understand the motivations for expatriating. A SDT continuum gives deeper insight in the motivations for becoming a cross-border commuter. In addition, SDT enhances the understanding of the perceived barrier to become an expatriate as well. Therefore, the use of SDT in future expatriate studies is encouraged.

In addition to the basic psychological need of autonomy that plays a major part in the decision process, two more barriers are perceived as obstacles. These concern lack of competence (the concern that the individual cannot be effective in a German corporation) and relatedness (the concern to be unable to build and sustain meaningful relationships in a German corporation). More specific, this study shows that, although the participants had motivations for accepting a job in Germany, barriers as the high level of hierarchy and bureaucracy (Sehnert, 2014), the working atmosphere, the working attitude (Dorfman et al., 2012) and family considerations (Richardson & McKenna, 2003) would stop inhabitants to consider a career in Germany. These barriers can explain the low number of Dutch cross-border commuters in Germany. In order to enlarge the attractiveness of a career switch to Germany, organizations that are looking for Dutch cross-border commuters should focus on taking actions to eliminate these barriers.

To summarize, the majority of the cross-border commuters were motivated for working in Germany for relatively self-determined motivations. The Regulatory Focus Theory can be a possible explanation for this finding (Higgins, 1999; Higgins, 2014). This theory distinguishes two types of focus: promotion focus and prevention focus. Most motivations of the cross-border commuters for working in Germany can be categorized as promotion focused. Most commuters were motivated by growth and development needs, in which they attempt to bring their actual selves in alignment with their ideal selves (wishes and aspirations of how they would like to be) (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

While some barriers mentioned by the Dutch inhabitants of the border had characteristics of a more prevention focus, which means that the inhabitants were responsive to security needs in which they try to match their actual selves with their ought selves (self-standards based on felt duties and responsibilities) (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

Finally, the complex character of the decision process of becoming a cross-border commuter has been confirmed in this study (Hechanova et al., 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & Zikic, 2007). Focusing on the group of 'cross-border commuters to Germany', this paper signals the need for specialization within the 'expatriate' literature (Weterings & Gessel-Dabekaussen, 2015). This study implies that motivations will vary in different expatriate contexts. Thus, the expatriate literature is incomplete. This study fills one gap by focusing on the motivations and barriers of working in a neighboring country and provides depth and detail in this research area. The participants outline a comprehensive picture of motivations and barriers that potential cross-border commuters will perceive, when considering a job in Germany. It is recommended for other scholars to develop studies that measure the decisive motivations and barriers in other expatriate contexts. Furthermore, it would be valuable to investigate if the various types of motivations and barriers, mentioned in SDT, differ across expatriate contexts.



## 6. Practical implications

Based on the results of this study, there are several implications for Dutch 'potential' cross-border commuters to Germany, organizations and governments to enhance the cross-border commuting to Germany. This study showed that mainly identified, integrated and intrinsic motivations and the barriers focusing on the lack of autonomy influences Dutch inhabitants of the border region in their choice to (not) become a cross-border commuter to Germany.

Embracing the motivations to become a cross-border commuter and dealing with the barriers is the first implication. The list of revealed motivations could be a useful tool for all stakeholders that are involved in cross-border commuting. The motivations provide useful information to clarify individuals perceptions for accepting or rejecting a job in Germany. German employers and Dutch governments could highlight these motivations to become a cross-border commuting and focus on the benefits of commuting. This action is highly suggested, because this could enhance the cross-border commuting to Germany. In addition, almost all participants in the study stated that they would appreciate a more extensive awareness about the opportunities and barriers of working in Germany, which leads to the suggestion that it would be useful to inform potential Dutch cross-border commuters about the differences and barriers of working in Germany.

The higher degree of hierarchy and bureaucracy on the German workplace reportedly labeled as a decisive barrier and as not congruent with the participants personal values. This is an aspect for attention, because these uncertainties among Dutch inhabitants of the border region should be taken away. German employers and organizations, which would like to welcome more Dutch employees in their organization should be transparent and open to the ideas and influence of the Dutch cross-border commuters. Furthermore, they should be willing to discuss the opinions of the commuters and thereby improve the participation in the organization.

Some participants of this study experienced a strict and formal working atmosphere with the colleagues on the working floor. German employers could lower the tensions between the Dutch and German colleagues by supporting socializing. Team building activities could be organized, in order to help employees to come closer to each other (Toh & Srinivas, 2012).

The challenge and adventure in the existence of a cross-border commuter was often reported as beneficial for becoming a cross-border commuter to Germany. This dimension should be exploited by focusing on the challenge and adventure of working abroad could take away the fear for the foreign country. Governmental institutions should inform the Dutch inhabitants extensively on the consequences and opportunities of a job in Germany. In their information sessions they should highlight the challenge and adventure in Germany. The knowledge among Dutch inhabitants of the border region about cross-border commuting to Germany will improve and several inhabitants will acknowledge the opportunities and challenge in the neighboring country. The obstacles perceived by the Dutch inhabitants of the border region will be lowered and a career switch to Germany will be a more attractive option. When Dutch inhabitants are aware of the benefits of working in Germany their barrier will be lowered and German organizations could use this information to seduce Dutch employees to consider working in Germany.

The awareness among Dutch inhabitants of the border region should be improved. The lack of knowledge about cross-border commuting can be lowered with creating advertisements, organizing information sessions and by highlighting the opportunities and benefits of working in Germany.

Sehnert (2014) opts in her study for a specific training for expatriates before they start in an organization. The main aim of this training is to understand the working styles in Germany. Some kind of training will be beneficial in the case for Dutch cross-border commuters as well. In this training the differences in work attitude, working atmosphere and working styles can be explained. It is highly recommended that German corporations help foreign and domestic employees to assure that both sides understand the way of working within the organization. In addition, this could function to comfort and accustom Dutch employees to the German organization. Cross-cultural training will lead to toleration and a higher level of adjustment with the foreign organization (Bozionelos, 2009).

## **7. Limitations and future directions**

A limitation is the skewed distribution in terms of gender within the research sample. The majority of the interviewees was male and in their forties. While, literature shows that differences in gender and family situation influence the choice for expatriation (Tharenou, 2008). Tharenou (2008) states that family factors reduce women's willingness to expatriate. This could be applicable on female potential cross-border commuters to Germany as well. The explanation for the skewed distribution is the use of snowball sampling in this study. The interviewees opted for other often male Dutch colleagues or acquaintances who were available for an interview. This could have influenced the results of this study. It is possible that female inhabitants of the border region have other main motivations and barriers for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter than males have. In general, female Dutch inhabitants of the border region could tend to care more about the social motivations in the choice for (not) becoming a cross-border commuter. Further research on cross-border commuting to Germany should focus on a balance between male and female participants.

The majority of participants in this research sample had an age above 40. This is unfortunate, because this could influence the results as well. Academic research shows that someone's career stage influences the willingness to accept opportunities away from the home region (Morrow & McElroy, 1987; Selmer & Luring, 2011). Furthermore, it has been found that senior employees prefer security in employment, while junior employees have favorable attitudes towards risk-taking in their career (Burns, Reid, Toncar, Anderson, & Wells, 2008; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). A proportional balance in this study between age categories was highly recommended. Unfortunately, this balance is not reached in this study. Most participants were in the latter phase of their professional careers.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study sought to find an explanation for the low number of the Dutch commuting to their neighboring country Germany. This study could draw some clear conclusions. First, the study emphasizes the importance of the barriers that form an obstacle because individuals perceived a lack of the basic psychological needs competence, autonomy and relatedness, which are needed to be self-determined motivated. In particular, the barriers focusing on a lack of autonomy play a decisive role to reject a job in Germany.

Barriers such as the language barrier, family considerations, the strict hierarchy, the higher level of bureaucracy, anxiety and uncertainties for becoming a cross-border commuter, working atmosphere,

working attitude and participation within a German organization are underlined in this study and play an essential role in the decision process of Dutch inhabitants of the border region for not becoming a cross-border commuter.

On the other hand, the importance of the self-determined motivations of the SDT continuum to become a cross-border commuter are underlined in this study as well. The identified, integrated and intrinsic motivations were mentioned often as decisive by the cross-border commuter in their choice to accept a job in Germany. Factors as the pleasant work atmosphere, the challenge and adventure of working abroad and the growth and career opportunities in Germany are perceived as beneficial and decisive for start a career in Germany.

The result section describes the motivations to become a cross-border commuter categorized on the SDT continuum. Furthermore, the cross-border commuters describe the main differences between a job in Germany in comparison with a job in the home-country extensively. Subsequently, the perceptions and barriers of the inhabitants of the region for not becoming a cross-border commuter are presented. This study shows that the process of expatriating is highly complex. This is especially the case in the context of cross-border commuting. This does not mean that the level of Dutch cross-border commuters to Germany can impossibly enhance. This study proves that with the right implementations a career switch to Germany will be more attractive for Dutch inhabitants of the border region!

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