This paper discusses some of the effects of state borders in Europe using examples from the Hungarian-Austrian, Hungarian-Slovakian, Hungarian-Ukrainian borderlands and the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland border region. The study is based on questionnaire surveys and statistical data analysis.

If we focus on population change in borderlands, we often find that if the border acts as a barrier and border-crossing is difficult or impossible, the population starts to decrease on both sides of the border. The main outcome is high levels of migration on both sides of the border. But in other cases, the like Hungarian-Slovakian and Hungarian-Ukrainian borderlands on the non-Hungarian sides, the population was increasing up to 2001, while on the Hungarian sides there has been population decrease, especially on the Hungarian side of the Hungarian-Slovakian border. It was very difficult to get census or other data from Ukraine, and the data from Slovakia does not cover fertility, mortality or migration. However, in these countries the high rates of the population growth may have been mainly due to migration and policies in both these countries which aim to deduce the relative size of the ethnic Hungarian minority population along the border with Hungary.

When physical obstacles are removed from the borderlands, and the economic and political situation improves, we can see that life is not significantly changed in those areas. Only in the Hungarian-Austrian borderland research area are the processes changed much, both in terms of society and in the economy as well, especially on the Hungarian side of this borderland. The population is increasing in this area because of high levels of selective migration within Hungary. The young and qualified people move in. In the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland borderland research area, after 10 years of paramilitary cease-fires the people feel more peaceful, but the proportion of qualified people is less than the norm for Northern Ireland. The apprehension of paramilitary activity has an effect on people’s mobility.