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**Culture as a means of European integration and cross-  
border cooperation. An analysis of the cooperation  
between Italy and Austria.**

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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their  
endless love, support and encouragement.*

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## Acronyms

AEBR: Association of European Border Regions

CD: cultural diplomacy

CLLD: Community-Led Local Development

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EENC: European Expert Network on Culture

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

EC: European Commission

EU: European Union

EUSALP: EU Strategy for the Alpine region

ICR: international cultural relations

MEP: Member of the European Parliament

OMC: Open Method of Coordination

SVP: Südtiroler Volkspartei

TEU: Treaty on the European Union

TFEU: Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

UN: United Nations

## Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a regional organization in which linguistic and cultural diversity is considered as a core value. The European Commission (EC) expressly considers cultural diversity as a representation of the EU's motto "United in Diversity" (Baaij, 2018: 18). It means that in the EU a broad variety of different cultures coexist, but at the same time they contribute to form a common European cultural background. Cultural diversity is a pivotal value of the cultural policy of the EU and intercultural dialogue is an effective tool to boost cooperation between Member States. As a matter of fact, culture is an important driver of European integration. Governments and institutions use cultural attractiveness and cultural diplomacy as an instrument of soft power helping to promote peaceful international relations and economic growth. The EU cultural policy covers cultural heritage, performing arts, traditions, contemporary creations and creative industries. The EU is particularly committed to establish an intercultural dialogue between its Member States. Particularly interesting is the following quote: "Founding a community of people purely on a free-market economy is like building a house on quicksand" (De Tullio 2020). For this reason, cultural programs have been introduced to emphasize a shared cultural heritage and a sense of belonging to a cultural identity instrumental to the European integration. The Commission hopes that cultural activities may contribute to a more inclusive society, to active citizenship and to participatory governance. Culture is an instrument for forming Union citizens, constructing the EU community, and legitimizing the EU integration processes. The aim is to reach citizens' cooperation within program activities. Significant steps have been taken to bring culture into the scope of the European institutions. The European Commission works together with the Member States on the topics relevant for cities and regions, through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

Since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, culture has been seen as a limited but symbolically important policy area. The cultural policy in the EU is a very complex and fragmented one. Indeed, the cultural policy is an area in which an intricate set of actors and negotiations intervene. Over the past decades, it has become a more developed policy area, but its study is still marginal to the political science and European studies research. The theoretical and methodological chapter makes use of the theories of Europeanization

and multi-level governance to understand the impact that Europe may have on the regional and local area in the field of culture. This thesis will deepen the topic of culture that goes beyond the idea of the nation state, but it is able to establish fruitful dialogues between EU Member States. I decided to focus on three different programs of cross-border cooperation between Italy and Austria funded by the European Union. I chose these two countries because I had the opportunity to do a Double Master's Degree with LUISS University in Rome in Italy and the University of Salzburg in Austria.

An agreement for cultural cooperation between Italy and Austria was signed in 1952, but a boost to the cultural relations between these two countries was given by the EU funded projects launched in recent years. I will investigate how actors intervene at different levels in the cross-border cooperation programs between Italy and Austria. The cultural cooperation between Italy and Austria has increased in the European context because it wants to guarantee the preservation of cultural and naturalistic heritage, the cultural dialogue between the two countries on the border, the strengthening of a common EU identity and the protection of the environment. The three different programs are Interreg Italia – Österreich, Euregio Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino and Terra Raetica, that is a Community-Led Local Development program (CLLD).

Interreg is one of the key instruments of the EU to boost regional cooperation. Culture constitutes one of the most popular topics within the project. Interreg Italia – Österreich aims at supporting a sustainable development and a harmonious integration on the border region between Italy and Austria. The priorities of the program are research and innovation, nature and culture, institutions, and community-led local development. Interreg Italia – Österreich main objective is strengthening territorial cooperation and maintaining the quality of life, the competitiveness, and the social cohesion of the area on the border. In the multi-level governance system, Interreg represents the European level.

The European Region Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino is a form of trans-border cooperation that was established in 2011 on the basis of Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006. According to its statute, the main objectives of the Euregio are the strengthening of economic, social and cultural relations between the population and the promotion of territorial development in the fields of education, culture, energy, sustainable mobility, economy. It contributes to the preservation of cultural and naturalistic heritage, the



strengthening of a common identity, an increasing touristic offer, an increasing involvement of the local community and business, and the protection of the environment. The Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino program is a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), therefore it represents the regional level in the multi-level governance system.

Within Interreg, there is the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), which is a bottom-up local development method that engages local actors for the development of border areas with the objective of addressing social, economic and environmental challenges. In the cooperation program of the Interreg Italia – Österreich program, four CLLD areas were approved in the 2014-2020 period: Dolomiti Live, HEurOpen, Terra Raetica and Wipptal. The European Commission has launched the CLLD to facilitate the implementation of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy at the local level by involving relevant local actors, namely local organizations, associations and individual citizens. These projects respond to the necessity to bring decision-making competences regarding projects within the framework of EU regional policy to sub-national levels. The local population is therefore given the opportunity to actively engage in the EU policy process and consequently increase its effectiveness. This direct involvement of the local level in the process of achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy strengthens the multilevel governance system.

The three instruments of cross-border cooperation will be compared, and their relationship will be analyzed. Since processes take place at different levels, players are involved in a multilevel governance system. I chose this case study because it is a clear example of multi-level decision-making in which there is not the prevalence of the European level over the national and the local one. Rather there is an interconnection and synergy in the work of the different levels to reach a common objective.

The thesis will investigate how the different actors at a European, regional and local level intervene in the cultural projects and it will answer to the research question “How different levels affect cultural programs and consequently the interregional cooperation projects between Italy and Austria?”. Within the aims of this thesis there is also to study whether there are some limitations and barriers that the project managers have encountered and why. My first hypothesis is that the management of these interregional projects is not easy, and I expect that the project leaders may encounter some obstacles,

especially for what concerns the multi-level structure that governs them. However, the interviews that I held, made me understand that the long-term and stable cooperation between all the actors involved in these programs builds partnerships in which decisions are taken in the spirit of cooperation. I have interviewed Christian Stampfer, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the region Tyrol (Austria) and Silvia Gadotti, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the Autonomous province of Bozen (Italy).

Moreover, the cooperation programs presented in this thesis involve not only culture, but they are strictly related to other areas and current issues, such as the environmental issue and the identity question. These aspects are particularly relevant in the case of Italy and Austria. Indeed, in the area on the border there are relevant naturalistic sites that are worth protecting, such as the Dolomites, UNESCO World Heritage site. The environmental argument has a pivotal importance because nature is a primary source for tourism and the economy of the area on the border between Italy and Austria. For this reason, it must be protected also through the cultural activities funded by the European Union. Moreover, the identity issue is a very hot topic in South Tyrol because of its history and bilingual nature. In order to give a fuller picture of these topics, the fifth chapter will include also an historical overview of South Tyrol and the identity issue.

Eventually, some borders and problematics in the management of cross-border cooperation will be identified. I will try to put forward concrete proposals to overcome these challenges in the cooperation between different levels of governance.

# Chapter 1 - Theory and methodology

## 1.1 Methodology

This thesis intends to answer the following research question: “How different levels affect cultural programs and consequently the interregional cooperation projects between Italy and Austria?”. My research will be a qualitative one and the methodology used will be descriptive and comparative.

The hypothetic answer provided to the first question could expect the actors of European level predominate over those at regional and local level. However, this hypothesis will be tested and reconsidered by studying the case study of the three different cooperation programs between Italy and Austria.

In order to ask this question, first of all, I will ground the research on a theoretical framework and then I will test my hypotheses by making a comparative analysis. The theoretical framework includes the theories of Europeanization and Multi-level governance. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the cultural policy represents an example of Europeanization and the intervention of policy makers of different levels in the cultural field represents an example of multi-level governance. Differences and similarities between the three cultural projects will be sketched out.

The interview held to Christian Stampfer and Silvia Gadotti, representatives of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the region Tyrol and the Autonomous Province of Bozen, will have crucial importance for answering the research question. The research is mainly analytical and qualitative. Besides the interview, I have consulted statutes, program documents, reports, and newspapers articles on the topic, and specifically on the three projects.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of the study of this thesis, it is needed to present two political science theories: Europeanization and Multi-level governance.

### 1.2.1 Europeanization

From the late fifties and the following forty years, European studies mainly focused on the formation of a new European polity and the description and explanation of the European integration process with little space for the analysis of the relationship between regional and domestic political regimes (Graziano and Vink 2013: 33).

The study of Europeanization emerges in the second half of the nineties because of two reasons. The first one is the need to move forward a new stage in the EU studies after four decades of neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. The second one is related to the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty that gives more relevance to the EU policies and institutions. Some policies fields, such as agriculture, cohesion, economics, and environment became increasingly linked to the evolution of EU decision making. Especially after 1992, political sociologists and political scientists have realized that the European Union has become a significant part of national politics. As a matter of fact, it is rare to find national policies that are not connected somehow with the European ones. From the 90s, comparativists started to study the effects of supranational institutions on national policies in order to understand the impact of European integration on domestic policies. The first definition of Europeanization was provided by Landrech in 1994. He defined it as an “incremental process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making” (Landrech 1994: 69).

Radaelli (2003: 30) maintains that Europeanization consists of “Processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies.” I believe that this definition is the most convincing and reflects the real nature of Europeanization.

Europeanization does not have to do only with politics, but also with history, society, culture, and economics. It is a process of structural change that affects different actors and institutions. The Europeanization approach usually goes beyond the European centered orientation of classic integration theories (Graziano and Vink 2013: 33). Since the late eighties, a lot of domestic policy areas have been affected by Europeanization.

It is important to distinguish between Europeanization and Communitarization. While Europeanization is also described as “the penetration of the European dimension in national arenas of politics and policy” (Börzel 1999 in Littoz-Monnet 2013), “Communitarization refers to the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance” (Littoz-Monnet 2013).

The impact of Europeanization presents profound disparities with respect to regional integration. Indeed, the impact of Europeanization is not foreseeable, and it is generally incremental and irregular over time and between national and subnational locations. The effects of Europeanization are not necessarily permanent or irreversible (Featherstone 2003) and the “language of dependent and independent variables and the logic of regression analysis” (Olsen 1996: 271) does not fit in the Europeanization process.

Extremely interesting is the social constructivist conception of Europeanization highlighted by Delanty and Rumford (2005). This theory focuses on the different ways in which society is constructed under conditions that are not reducible to or fixed by institutional structures. Europeanization in fact cannot be reduced only to national governments that operate under an international functional order. This social constructivist approach takes into account the historical process of modernity and globalization.

According to Featherstone (2003), Europeanization can have four different broader categories, namely an historical process, a matter of cultural diffusion, a process of institutional adaptation and the adaptation of policy processes. The first two interpretations are maximalist and indirectly linked to the impact of the European Union, while the second two are more linked to the actions of the European Union. Europeanization focuses on topics that were usually under-researched, such as the impact of EU institutions and policies on the domestic political systems. Vink and Graziano describe Europeanization as a process of “domestic adaptation to European regional integration” (Vink and Graziano 2007: 7).

Woll and Jacquot (2010) have investigated how social practices build the logic of the European integration. The European Union has led to a reorganization of fields that creates new social arrangements and empowers a variety of actors. They have studied it through a “bottom-level” perspective with local actors, transnational networks and European citizens that give a boost to the process of European integration. The political change is the result of multiple political interactions between the European and the national politics. A multitude of actors are at the heart of the process of European integration. The authors describe different usages of Europe. The political one concerns the way in which national political systems respond to supranational politics and vice versa. Culture has always been considered as a domain of national sovereignty. Culture is in fact an area in which diversities between the member states are obvious not only as far as the anthropological sense is concerned but also for what concerns the institutional forms. Since 1992 Community intervention has been expected only to comply with the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that the European Union would have acted only if the objective in that policy field could not be sufficiently fulfilled by the Member States (Littoz-Monnet 2013). However, despite the difficult nature of the EU cultural policy, it is evident that the governance of the policy has increasingly shifted towards the European level (Littoz-Monnet 2013). It will be explained in the next chapter with more details. Europeanization research builds on the neo-functionalist variants, such as the supranational governance and the multi-level governance.

### 1.2.2 Multi-level governance

The European Union is a multi-layered organization in which negotiations and decision-making take place between European Institutions, between Member States and within Member States. The phenomenon of multilevel governance has been known for years, but the term has only been used in the field of political science in recent times, especially in the field of European studies (Benz, 2004).

The term “multi-level governance” describes not only the mere division of responsibilities between the different levels, but rather an integrated, mutual coordination of decisions between all levels. The multi-level governance entails “the dispersion of

authority to jurisdictions within and beyond national states” (Hooghe and Marks 2003: 236).

In the past seventy years, authority has been dispersed by the central state and it shifted both to supranational institutions and subnational jurisdictions. The actors of the multilevel governance system thus include, in addition to the European level, the respective national level of the member states as well as governments and subnational stakeholders at the regional level. Furthermore, economic and social interest groups are counted among the actors (Große Hüttmann & Knodt, 2012). However, this does not mean that the levels are subject to a hierarchical order, but rather that administrative units are responsible for a certain territorial area.

In the European integration sphere, there has always been a controversial discourse for what concerns the authority and the autonomy of the nation-state. On one hand, intergovernmentalists argue that, since cooperation reflects the interests and needs of nation-states, the European Union confers legitimacy and credibility to them, and it exercises very little power. Often it does not take into consideration the sub-national actors, and the state is the only actor able to resist the consequences of integration (Moravscik 1991). On the other hand, other academics support the multi-level governance, considering relevant also other actors different from the nation-state. Hooghe and Marks (2001, 2003) described the multi-level governance as a twofold typology of governance. “Type 1” is a more stable and hierarchical structure in which there is a limited dispersion of authority in a few levels, while “Type 2” presents a mode of governance with power distributed through the supranational, national and sub-national level. Type 2 works at numerous territorial levels with a mix of polycentric authorities. The work of sub-national authorities is still understudied and the extent to which they should acquire more voice in the international arena is controversial. Cross-border regional cooperation through culture implies a dispersion of governance in the different jurisdictions of the multi-level governance. This type of multi-level governance belongs to Hooghe and Marks’s type 2.

In the EU different actors usually link up with other organizations to form networks. The emergent network-polity has turned culture into a set of resources to be deployed to reach a durable political and economic integration. Thus, the governance in the cultural field has a multi-level nature. Supranational institutions exert their own influence in the EU

cultural policy. The leading institution is the Commission that tries to do what it can within the legal limitations of the competence and plays an important role in setting the supranational cultural policy agenda. The process that led to a shift to the Communitarisation of the cultural sector involved aspects of intergovernmental negotiations and supranational centralization. A broad realm of actors operates with interconnected relationships at national, regional and local levels of government. Complex relationships extend to the supranational level since it is not always clear to what extent the EU should be involved in the jurisdiction of the cultural policy. The cultural policy of the EU transcends all levels. Since there is a great number of actors involved and their interconnectedness is not always very clear, this policy is particularly complex and fragmented. Indeed, it is not a very centralized policy, and it is an instrument in the hands of different actors. EU supranational institutions (the European Commission and the European Parliament), regional supranational-institutions (Association of European Border Regions, Committee of the Regions) and sub-national authorities are building alliances that go towards a multi-level governance.



## Chapter 2 - The multi-level governance and Europeanization in the cultural policy of the European Union

Although the EU does not have any direct competence on culture, it is strongly committed to ensuring the protection of cultural heritage and cultural diversity which are key elements in cultural identity and expression. There is wide recognition of the economic role of the cultural sector and its potential for promoting social cohesion, unity and tolerance. The cultural policy of the EU transcends all levels. Since there is a great number of actors involved and their interconnectedness is not always very clear, this policy is particularly complex and fragmented. Indeed, it is not a very centralized policy, and it is an instrument in the hands of different actors. The cultural policy of the EU aims not only at boosting a European identity, but also at defending local cultural expressions and economic interests. This chapter investigates the EU cultural policy from a governance perspective. It will analyze how Europeanization of different levels of governance affects policy choices and especially the case of cultural policy. It will deal with the institutions and the actors involved in the everyday processes. Moreover, it intends to explain to what extent the Europeanization and the integration process had impacts the governance within the EU cultural policy.

### 2.1. A historical overview

The European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1951 by the 6 founding fathers with the objective to safeguard economic and geopolitical stability. In the Treaty of Rome of 1957 there were only “fleeting” references to culture (Mattocks 2017). For instance, in Article 36 of the Treaty of Rome there is a general reference to national treasures that have “artistic, historic or archaeological value”. The preservation of culture was left behind in favor of economic and political paradigms. From the 70s with the economic crisis that was underpinning the European integration process, there was the start of the will to strengthen the cultural and “human” dimension of the Community (Calligaro 2014). In the following years the European Community started to engage in the cultural sector thanks to the Commission that framed culture in economic terms (Mattocks 2017). At that time, in fact, the focus was on the industrial and economic aspects of the

production, consumption and distribution of cultural goods. Firstly, this intervention did not have any legal grounding. From the 80s, EU cultural ministers started to meet and organizing cultural programs, such as the European Youth Orchestra in 1976 and the European City of Culture in 1985 (Mattocks 2017). Thus, there was a coming-together of the Member States and an introduction of symbolic initiatives before any formal competence for the EU in this field. However, the framework of intervention in economic terms needed to have legal grounding. A step forward was taken also by the European Court of Justice that pronounced judgements on subjects, such as copyright or book trade (Mattocks 2017). At that time an improvement of the cultural action was considered useful to boost the popular support for the Union and consequently for the European integration process. This was explicitly expressed in a series of high-profile reports. For example, the Report on European Union by Leo Tindemans of 1975 put forward several proposals to implement a Europe of citizens, fundamental rights and consumers' rights. In addition, in 1985 the Adonnino report argued that culture could “contribute to support the advancement of Europe, “which “can and must be sought” in order to “strengthen and promote EC identity and its image both for citizens and for the rest of the world” (Mattocks 2017). The report recommended some developments concerning television, the access to museums and cultural events and a Euro-lottery to make Europe come alive for Europeans (Mattocks 2017).

These intergovernmental cultural initiatives paved the way towards a more formal introduction of culture in the 90s. The legitimacy of the EC in the cultural field increased and it became a mainstream discourse within the EU institutions. The policy framing in the EU started to go beyond the economic argument in order to create a sense of community that was considered as fundamental for the integration process. A European culture was sought to guarantee the solidarity that the Union needed.

Article 128 of the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992, has created a formal competence for the EU in the cultural area. Culture is enshrined now in the title XII of the TFEU under Article 167. This latter establishes that:

1. The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
2. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:

- improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,
  - conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
  - non-commercial cultural exchanges,
  - artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.
3. The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.
4. The Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.

This article added a social and cultural dimension to the European Union in order to make it an “even closer Union”. The increasing will to expand the cultural agenda of the EU strive to garner the support of the Europeans as part of the European integration project.

## 2.2 Competence

In the founding treaties there is none strict and clear explanation of what culture was, leaving their definition at the discretion of the Member States. It could be defined in fact according to their national and local sensibility. We speak about an open-ended definition of the cultural and creative sector. There is an open debate on the appropriate level of governance that should operate more in the cultural field. Since 1992 Community intervention has been expected only to comply with the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that the European Union would have acted only if the objective in that policy field could not be sufficiently fulfilled by the Member States (Littoz-Monnet 2013). Indeed, culture has always been considered as a domain of national sovereignty. Culture is in fact an area in which diversities between the member states are obvious not only as far as the anthropological sense in concerned but also for what concerns the institutional forms. The cultural policy is an unsettled universe “that encompasses such varied issues as patronage, national heritage, artists’ rights and intellectual property, the cultural industries, public education, pornography and censorship, entertainment markets, and cultural tourism” (Littoz-Monnet 2013). These differences raise questions on the cultural policy of the EU and its possible implementation. Even more surprisingly, the EU intervention has favored the liberalization of the cultural industries’ markets and imposed only minimal common standards.

In the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) put forward in 2009, there is reference to the cultural area and the competences of the EU in the field. In particular, Article 3 TEU establishes that one of the fundamental aims of the Union is to “respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and [...] ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced”. The introduction of cultural competence did not aim at establishing a common cultural policy, but “to bring to the forefront Community efforts rooted in the protection and promotion of Member States’ diverse cultural systems (Psychogiopoulou, 2006, p.583). Article 6 TFEU recognizes that the EU can only “carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States”. Indeed, the EU Member States are responsible for their own policies in the cultural field. The Commission can only help them to address common challenges, such as the identity issues, environmental issues and the impact of digital technologies. The EU cultural governance is mainly accomplished with voluntary cooperation through a series of programs that have uneven impacts on the national and subnational levels (Mattocks 2017).

Culture is a policy area in which “diversities between Member States are particularly obvious – not only are peoples’ cultures, in an anthropological sense, very different, but institutional forms of managing this area are also specific to each country – and anchored in national cultural styles” (Littoz-Monnet 2007:2). The EU can operate in the cultural policy area without superseding the powers of the nation state.

Article 167(5) TFEU establishes that:

- “In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article:
  - the European Parliament and the Council acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States,
  - the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.”

Then, there was an evolution of this policy thanks to Treaty reforms, decisions and resolutions adopted at the Community level. Culture is now a functional policy area in the EU. It means that the EU has a narrow and specific remit that can be divided in 3 basic

powers: encouraging and facilitating cooperation between MSs, promoting the incorporation of culture into other areas of EU jurisdiction and cooperating with MSs on cultural action (European Commission website, EU competences in the field of culture). Article 167(1) TFEU states that the European Union the EU “shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore”. Since EU actions in the cultural policy field must respect the principle of subsidiarity, it mainly encourages the cooperation between Member States. The European integration process occurs at a supranational level through law, whereas at an intergovernmental level it occurs through coordination. The coordination of the Member states in the framework of this policy follows some different ways and the Open Method of Cooperation (OMC) is one of the new forms of cultural cooperation explored in recent years. It is an intergovernmental policy coordination that had already been used in different policy areas and it was applied also to culture starting from 2008 (Psychogiopoulou 2017: 266). It is voluntary and brings together Member States in a series of working groups in order to share best practices on themes that have been agreed upon in the Council of Ministers’ triennial Work Plan for Culture. The OMC aims at putting all the Member States on a path towards the achievement of the common objectives, while respecting the difference of them and the different arrangements and values. For instance, Voices for Culture, the structured dialogue between the EU and the cultural sector, wants to boost the exchange between the sectors thanks to transnational platforms and the biennial Forum for Culture (Voices of Culture website). These initiatives involve stakeholders of the cultural sector and policymakers to discuss important topics related to the field. Moreover, in this dialogue between different parties involved, there is the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC). It includes experts of the sector that contribute to the improvement of cultural policy development in Europe.

### 2.3 Different actors involved

In a multi-level governance system, actors operate at supranational, national and subnational levels that are interconnected. There is not only a vertical cooperation, but also a horizontal cooperation and interconnection between supranational institutions at the European level. It is important to analyze the commitment and work of these latter as far as culture is concerned.

The EU institution involved the most in the cultural policy is the European Commission. It has been a driver of cooperation in the field of culture since 1992. The Commission has the power of policy initiation, and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG-EAC) is the body that has the administrative function (Mattocks 2017). It is composed by two units: the first one called “Cultural diversity and Innovation” and “Creative Europe programme” and the second one called Commission’s Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. The work of the Commission in this field has been particularly successful in advancing cultural cooperation to foster competitiveness and economic growth. This DG has collaborated also with the DG Internal Market, the DG Regional Policy and external actors. The involvement of participants different from those of the traditional realm has spread more effectively the promotion of culture and its strategic role in the broader economic challenges. Sassatelli (2006) claims that the networking with NGOs and cultural networks gave more credence to the policies of the Commission. Besides the DG-EAC, other DGs work in the cultural realm. For example, the DG Internal Market is in charge of copyright issues and the DG Regional policy can give regions budgeting privileges for cultural projects (Mattocks 2017). This makes the cultural policy even more fragmented.

For what concerns the European Parliament, culture is represented in the standing Committee on Culture and Education, which is composed by 31 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Mattocks 2017). The Parliament recognizes the crucial role of culture in the integration process, and it claims that its work should go beyond the mere symbolic role, but culture should have its specificity and special laws that regulate it. However, even though the European Parliament has tried to expand its cultural program, its action has not been very successful. Indeed, the proposals put forward by the European Parliament and the Commission have been often obstructed by the larger Member States in the Council of Ministers.

Within the Council of Ministers, the Council responsible for the cultural policy is the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (EYCS). This Council can only provide a framework for cooperation for the Member States, since this policy area is responsibility of the member states. In addition, the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) prepares the work of EU ministers for culture. This parallel work reflects the multi-level nature of the Council. Over the years the Council played a role in the development of some first cultural initiatives at the intergovernmental level, such as the European City of Culture in 1985 by the Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri (Mattocks 2017). The Council is an intergovernmental institution and since it is highly respectful of subsidiarity, it cannot be considered as an agenda-setter in the cultural field.

Other actors that intervene in the cultural policy of the European Union are the Committee of the Regions that represents the regional interests and provide the EU policymakers with a local perspective on the legislation that affects regions. The Committee of the Regions is consulted for all the cultural policy proposals (Mattocks 2017). In the Committee of the Regions there is a Commission on Education, Youth, Culture and Research (EDUC). However, the Committee of the Regions is not a decision-making body, but only an advisory one.

Almost thirty years after the Maastricht Treaty, the involvement of the EU in the cultural sector has increased with initiatives, actions, and programs. However, even if the cultural policy has been clarified in some documents, such as the Agenda for Culture, the EU cultural policy is still fragmented. Governments usually approve a set of cumulative decisions and they rarely make single decisions. For this reason, programs often result undefined.

Patel (2013) claims that in the EU cultural policy there is a paradox, since on the one hand, it is considered as crucial for European integration, but on the other hand, it is constrained by subsidiarity and its competence still belongs mostly to the national governments. Culture is a competence “that entered the arena of EU jurisdiction under a complex and contradictory conditions” (Sarikakis, 2007, p.14). Since the EU can only supplement the Member States’ action and not override them, the EU action in the field requires constant justification. Therefore, it is very difficult to develop robust cultural projects at the European level. Regional and local actors remain extremely important in the cultural policy area. EU supranational institutions (the European Commission and the

European Parliament), regional supranational-institutions (Association of European Border Regions, Committee of the Regions) and sub-national authorities are building alliances that go towards a multi-level governance. Transferring competence in the cultural field completely to the European Union is not viable because the Member States have different cultures, and they would not accept a harmonized legally binding EU cultural policy. They want to maintain their own degree of discretion. According to Mattocks (2017), the EU cultural programs have had uneven and modest impacts in the different Member States. However, it is needed to point out that some initiatives have encouraged the cooperation between two Member States. The Open Method of Coordination represents an opportunity for intergovernmental exchange and learning (Mattocks 2017). National, regional and local actors work together to accomplish and fulfill the objectives of the programs. The cultural programs of the European Union have deepened a sense of a common European identity that goes beyond the idea of national identity. For instance, the European Capital for Culture or the Heritage Days have raised the cross-border mobility and visibility of artists.

## 2.4 Programs and cultural diplomacy

The EU activities in the field of culture encompass a wide range of actions that support, coordinate, and supplement the national ones. These actions are put forward within the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. The cultural priorities of the EU were set out by the 2007 document Agenda for Culture (Mattock 2017), and they include the following main points: the cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, the conception of culture as a catalyst for creativity and cultural diplomacy. In the supporting measures, it is possible to find some initiatives, such as Creative Europe, EU prizes, European heritage days and the heritage label. Supplementary measures of the EU in the field of culture are the European Capital of Culture and the audio-visual policy.

2018 has been the European year of cultural heritage and the 2018 European Agenda for culture for social cohesion supports the creation of jobs and growth in creative industries and fosters the international dimension of culture and cultural relations. It proposes concrete initiatives to promote cultural inclusion and urban regeneration enhancing the mobility of artists and cultural professionals. It aims at developing better synergies



between culture and education and ensuring that artists and creators can live off their work. The 2014-2020 programming has been funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a budget of nearly 1.5 billion euros (European Parliamentary Research Service 2019). The budget for the 2021-2027 period will provide more money for culture than the previous budget a total of 1.8 billion euro. However, there is the need to increase flexibility and simplified procedures to make it easier for cultural agents whether big or small to continue creating art, films, dance performances and music that binds us all together as European citizens.

Cultural diplomacy is a soft power that encourages “the exchange of ideas, information, art, language and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding” (Waller 2009: 74). The main goal of cultural diplomacy is to induce cooperation between the two nations, facing common challenges and prevent conflicts with the target country. The European Union has put in recent years much effort in creating an EU strategy for cultural policy. The former High Representative Federica Mogherini has defined the EU as a cultural superpower. (Carta and Higgott 2020: 20). There have been even more references to culture that is able to foster both domestic and international resilience of the Union. Hence, culture is imbricated with other many sectors and both domestic and international priorities. Culture is a key element to address major global challenges and to give relevance and spread the European values internally and externally (Carta and Higgott 2020: 2). In the EU Member States organize their own domestic and international cultural policies, but they closely relate to the common EU strategy (Carta and Higgott 2020:3). The existence of different cultural policies stem from various material and immaterial cultural heritages, institutional structures and resources (ibid). The Commission has delivered in 2007 the “Agenda for culture in a globalising world”, in 2016 the Joint Communication “Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations”, and in 2017 “Conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations”. As it can be noted from the titles of these documents, the international cultural relations should be approached strategically. Indeed, culture has a strategic role in fostering the European cohesion and integration and in leading the other international powers by example. The EU is a shaping and proactive actor that is able to influence the external environment by example with its policies.

States have different approaches to cultural diplomacy: it can be a top-down or a bottom-up approach. On one hand, the top-down approach centralises cultural diplomacy activities around the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of culture. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach relies on quasi-independent agencies, such as Cultural Institutes and steer CD indirectly. Cultural diplomacy wants to shape and channel relations between national cultures that cross borders. While international cultural relations (ICR) occur spontaneously, cultural diplomacy provides ICR with a structured framework. Like any external policy, the cultural diplomacy entails the area of geographic competence and thematic priorities. The attempt of the CD is bridging domestic and international EU cultural activities (Carta and Higgott 2020: 7).

Furthermore, the EU different actors usually link up with other organizations to form networks. The emergent network-polity has been instrumental in the development of European integration. A relevant example is the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) that is the network that englobes all 27 EU member states national institutes for Culture.

## Chapter 3 – Territorial and regional cooperation in the European Union

Before presenting the history of cooperation between Italy and Austria in the cultural sector, it is important to discuss the macro-topic of territorial and regional cooperation. It is interesting to study and analyze how actors relate in the cross-border cooperation.

### 3.1 Territorial and regional cooperation

Cross-border cooperation activities recognized under Regulation 1082/2006 are fundamental to emancipate regional and local communities vis-à-vis the nation-states. Local and regional authorities have started to engage in the local and regional cooperation since the end of the Second World War in order to solve problems with a local cross-border nature without turning to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs for issues with a local nature. These issues were practical, and they mainly involved frontier workers, security issues or land-use planning. Over the decades, a set of different legal framework was deployed to facilitate cross-border cooperation. The first supranational institution that dealt with it was the Council of Europe that is a non-EU institution (Nadalutti 2013). In 2014 the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities has been ratified by 39 Member States of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe Portal). The Committee of the Regions, in collaboration with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), drafted in 1980 the Convention of Madrid. The Convention contains a part with the legally binding regulations and a second part with a series of “model agreements” for local levels and inter-state levels that aim at facilitating cross-border cooperation. After 1980, the AEBR lobbied the Directorate General of the EU Commission in order to establish a European Regional Policy, aiming at providing the sub-national authorities with a European legal framework for cross-border cooperation (Nadalutti 2013). AEBR’s proposal was rejected by the Commission because it did not have the financial means and the powers to take action. In order to make the Madrid Convention stronger, two protocols were introduced in 1995 and 1998. The first one replaced optional clauses with compulsory ones and has encouraged the establishment of institutions for trans-frontier cooperation. The second one stated that all

the decisions that have been taken by territorial authorities had to be implemented in conformity with the legal system of the state. Thus, the final decision remained in the hands of the states. Nonetheless, the Convention of Madrid can be considered as a bottom-up mobilization supported by the transnational institution of the AEER. On one hand, the joint work of the Council of Europe and the AEER was significant, and the Convention of Madrid rendered the AEER a relevant political player in the field of cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, the Commission did not take any action and it resulted to be very weak in fostering trans-frontier cooperation. The cross-border cooperation had still only high levels of bilateral negotiations between two states. In addition, the rules set up by the Madrid Convention did not have a univocal legal impact on the different national legal systems. In the early 2000s local authorities complained about their little power in coping effectively with cross-border issues and they called for the need to have a legal instrument on the area of decentralized cross-border cooperation (AEER Annual Report).

Regulation 1082/2006 is the first European Union legal basis for territorial cooperation, and it recognizes the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC). It is now worth analyzing the process that led to the adoption of the Regulation within the European Union and the roles that were played by the Commission and the European Parliament. It aims at bestowing EU normative ideas and values to territorial co-operation, facilitating the interaction between partners and guaranteeing continuity. The EGTC enables local and regional authorities, member states, associations, and any public body to team up in cooperation groupings with a legal personality. The EGTC allows the public authorities of the Member States to organize themselves and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement that has to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. However, Member States must agree on the participation of potential members in their respective countries (EGTC website).

The AEER and the Committee of the Regions deeply supported the Commission and the European Parliament in the drafting and adoption of Regulation 1082/2006. The consultative role of the AEER and Committee of the Regions in territorial cooperation issues is officially recognized in Article 265 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Different bodies and associations lobbied and worked for the adoption Regulation 1082/2006. The process that led to its adoption and the intervention of different

supranational, national and sub-national entities highlights the multi-level governance approach of the EU polity.

The number of Euroregions has increased over the years thanks to the development of the basic legal structure and conditions for decentralized cross-border cooperation. Currently there are more than 185 border regions or cross-border associations (Nadalutti 2013). 26 of them have a legal status of EGTCs. They contribute not only to the territorial cohesion, but also to the social and cultural cohesion. The European Parliament has stressed the fact that the EGTC have “the best capacity to bring the different cultural and linguistic communities closer to each other, promote peaceful coexistence in a diverse Europe and make European added value visible to the citizen” (Nadalutti 2013). Moreover, they are able to build Europe at a territorial level thanks to the involvement of the EU citizens.

### 3.2 Border regions that overcome barrier obstacles

Borders between Member States have been created by history and politics. Border areas are defined as the 25km buffer zones located on the border between two countries. In the European Union 62 border regions have been identified. 45 of them are land and 17 are maritime border regions (European Commission report 2016). These areas have some potentials and some obstacles. The main types of potential are shared management of natural resources, regional competitiveness related to product innovation, industrial and cultural attractiveness, market integration including labor market, human and social capital available in cross-border regions and integrated delivery and development of public services in urban cross border areas. Among the main obstacles there are socio-economic disparities in economic structures and behaviors, physical obstacles, which limit access across borders, cultural obstacles, including linguistic barriers, cultural differences and lack of trust in people living beyond the border, normative and institutional obstacles due to different organizations, procedures and rules.

According to the final report of the European Commission titled “Collecting solid evidence to assess the needs to be addressed by Interreg cross-border cooperation programs” (2016), the 28 border regions between the founding Member States and the ones that joined the Union before 2004, have fewer obstacles than the other border

regions. The border between Italy and Austria faces the physical obstacle of the mountains (European Commission report 2016: 55). Border regions are extremely differentiated in terms of their needs, therefore each of them requires different policy approaches. Some of them need specific measures on governance and others require new investments. Some border regions require both of them. In 2018 the European Parliament pointed out that the potential of the EGTCs had not been fully exploited. This is due in part to the reservations of the local and regional authorities and in part to their fear to transfer competences. (European Parliament resolution 2018/2054). In particular, the organization has not always led to the creation of concrete programs. Notwithstanding some shortcomings, decentralized cross-border cooperation has important added values for what concerns different aspects and dimensions. These latter are political, institutional, socio-economic and socio-cultural. Physical, administrative and regulatory obstacles represent a fragmentation in the EU integration. For this reason, cross-border cooperation needs to develop in parallel a progressive elimination of border obstacles and establishment of functional relations. Effective measures to overcome these barriers are recognizing the common elements, such as common identity and history, and facing the same problems, such as the preservation of the nature against climate change. Article 174 of the TFEU states that “in order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion”. As far as the political aspect is concerned, it involves a substantial contribution towards the development of European integration. The cross-border cooperation programs based on EU funds make the two Member States involved to know each other, build trust and get together in order to implement subsidiarity and partnership. For what concerns the institutional added value, it entails the active involvement of citizens and political and social authorities on both sides of the border. They build structures that are able to work efficiently both in a vertical and horizontal functioning partnership with different areas of responsibility. They draft programs and projects, receive, and administer funds. The socio-economic added value refers to the participation of actors from the social and economic sector, namely chambers of commerce, companies, trade unions, associations, social and cultural institutions, tourism agencies and environmental organizations. These programs contribute to develop the fields of transports, infrastructures, education, research, tourism, and environment.

Strictly related to this last one, there is the socio-cultural added value. Cultural cross-border cooperation has a crucial role in establishing a good environment for business, services and trade and fostering the regional development. The cultural cooperation contributes to disseminate knowledge about the geographical, historical and socio-cultural component of the cross-border region. It includes the overview of the cross-border region in publications, teaching materials and maps, and the diffusion of extensive knowledge and equal opportunities of the languages and dialects spoken on the border.

### 3.3 Management of cross-border programs

As we have seen in the previous paragraph, elaborating cross-border strategies generate relevant added values for the territorial cohesion of the Member States in the European Union. Setting a strategic framework of cooperation represents the base of these cross-border programs. The starting point is understanding the functional interrelations and identifying the main border-related problems and opportunities of development in the cooperation area. The programs frameworks are multi-thematic, and they cover not only aspects related to trade and business, but also culture and society. The elaboration of the projects includes a first phase of territorial situation analysis, a second phase of policy program and application framework and a third phase of implementation of activities that guarantee the political anchorage and sustainability of cross-border development strategies (Association of European Border Regions 2012). In defining a cross-border territorial development strategy, policy makers should follow some over-arching principles. The programs should have a participatory bottom-up approach. The process of elaboration of the strategy should involve a wide range of stakeholders, regional and local policy makers, and politicians from the European, national, regional, and local level. In order to maintain momentum in all the phases of the cooperative bottom-up process, a strong leadership is needed. For this reason, the board in charge of the organization of the program should be limited to a small group of strategic actors. These latter could be a wide range of people: local and regional administrations that have a legal competence for spatial planning and territorial development, chambers of commerce, industry or agriculture, labor market agencies, trade unions, employers' associations, private and public transport organizations, universities and education institutions, agencies for

tourism promotion, institutions managing natural resources and environmental organizations, cultural organizations at regional and local level.

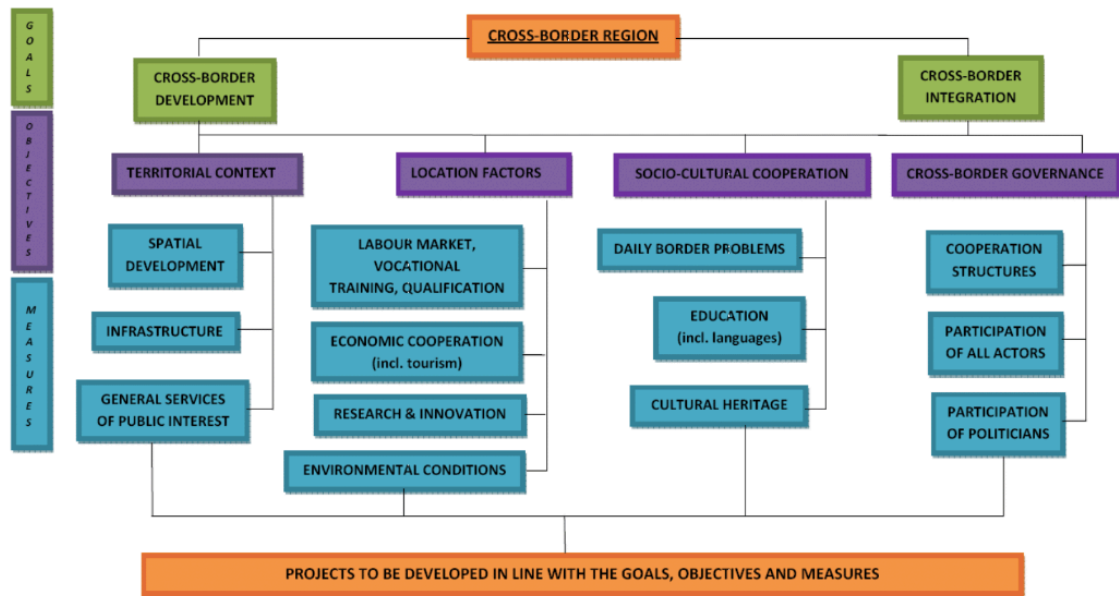
A cross-border territorial area should be inward-looking and outward-looking (Association of European Border Regions 2012). It means that it should be focused on the cross-border area, but it should also take into account macro-societal development trends and the EU policies with territorial effects on the cross-border area. The territorial analysis of the strategy should consider not only the themes for territorial development in the current present-time perspective, but also the ones in a medium and longer perspective. They should analyze and make an assessment of the data and facts in the recent past and elaborate future prognoses using scenario methods. It is very important that the strategy has a strong political anchorage, so that it remains useful and valid over time for the wide group of stakeholders involved in the cooperation area.

The territorial analysis is the fundamental starting point for a cooperation area and it has to take into consideration some basic characteristics of the border area, such as the territorial conditions, the main features of human presence, demographic characteristics and future evolution, endowment with basic infrastructures of general services of public interest, economic activities, socio-cultural settings, natural and cultural heritage use, environmental and energy use, general governance context and the intensity of cross-border cooperation.

In particular, the effects of the EU-level policies and EU programs supporting cross-border cooperation should be analyzed and taken into consideration. A successful decentralized cross-border cooperation requires an internal partnership between a range of local and regional stakeholders of both sides of the border and external partnerships with national governments. The active support of politicians at local, regional, national, and European level is needed in this type of multi-level governance projects. Generally, these programs benefit from the active participation of the citizens living in the border area because they desire that cross-border cooperation would create solutions to day-to-day life problems that result from the systematic differences caused by the border effects. The following figure represents the decentralized cross-border development strategy with its goals, objectives, and measures.



Fig.1: Decentralised cross-border development strategy



Source: Association of European Border Regions, Practical Guide for the elaboration of cross-border territorial development, Ulysses Help Desk, 2012, pag. 52.

Territorial cooperation programs involve different types of actors of two different neighboring countries and its goal is to solve joint problems and to encourage shared development prospects. These programs are motivated by the still existing “territorial non-integration” among EU Member States sharing borders. Since the 1990s increasingly motivated inhabitants and policy-level stakeholders support decentralized cross-border cooperation initiatives, such as Interreg or the European Territorial Cooperation Objective.

### 3.4 Interreg Europe

Interreg Europe is an EU flagship scheme that aims at fostering the cooperation across borders at national and regional level and consequently guaranteeing the benefit of all EU citizens. It was created in 1990 and it has shown that borders are not dividing barriers. Indeed, it brought Europeans together to face common challenges and to create new opportunities of development. The program involves countries, regions and communities in the European Union with 60 cross-border programs, 4 interregional cooperation programs and 15 transnational cooperation programs. 10 cooperation programs with accession countries, 15 cooperation programs between EU and neighboring countries (Interreg 30 years website). There is the will to create a sense of community from the young age and for this reason the Interreg Volunteer Youth was launched in 2017. Interreg Europe wants to create an environment for sharing solutions for common problems and help regional and local government to develop better policies. All the government investment and innovation efforts should have a more integrated and sustainable impact on the place and on the people's life. Interreg main goal is to pave the way for regions to give their full potential for the social, economic and environmental progress. Interreg Europe provides local and regional public authorities with opportunities to share ideas and experience on public policy, improving strategies for their communities and citizens. Interreg Europe assists three types of beneficiaries: public authorities, managing authorities and intermediate bodies in charge of the European Territorial Cooperation or the Investment for Growth and Jobs programs and agencies, non-profit organizations and research institutes. Organizations that work with Interreg have to be based in one of the 27 member states or in Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Interreg supports financially any activity that falls under one of the following four categories: research and innovation, SME competitiveness, low-carbon economy and environment and resource efficiency. At the heart of Interreg there are the three C of cooperation, collaboration and community engagement. Interreg Europe can co-finance up to 85% of project activities that are carried out by policy organisations from different countries united in a partnership and want to work together for 3-5 years for a common interest. Each partner region must elaborate an action plan, set up a stakeholder group and be active in the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform. Interreg Europe launches calls for proposals and the partners

can apply to have the funding for their projects. The continuous learning through peer reviews, thematic workshops and capacity building events is a fundamental part of Interreg. Lorenzo Sabatini, lead partner of the Agency for the development of the Empolese Valdelsa, claimed that “If regions represent the bricks of Europe, the interregional cooperation, by a joint exchange of knowledge and mutual learning process, represents their cement. Interreg Europe deals with policy instruments and regional strategies - the backbone of the cooperation”. (Interreg Europe document 2018)

## Chapter 4 – Cooperation between Italy and Austria through culture

For what concerns the cross-border cooperation area between Austria and Italy, the historical legacy, the general ethno-cultural and linguistic settings, the main cultural heritage and natural assets are extremely relevant. This chapter provides a brief overview of the three cross-border cooperation programs between Italy and Austria. I decided to focus on Interreg that has a more European character, Euregio Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino that has a more regional character and Terra Raetica that has a more local character.

### 4.1 Territorial cooperation between Italy and Austria

Relations with the neighboring countries represent a regional priority for the foreign policy of Austria (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria, European and International Affairs). It has with Italy not only common borders, but geographical similarities, longstanding historical links, and close cultural exchange. Cross-border cooperation is part of the European integration process in the framework of European regional cooperation programs. In particular, Tyrol has a special importance for the Austrian foreign policy. Indeed, Austria wants to safeguard the cultural, ethnic, economic and social existence of the German-speaking population in South Tyrol.

The Alps constitute a treasure for Europe in terms of natural resources, cultural heritage and tourism. In particular, the Dolomites have an outstanding universal value and they have recognized as a World Heritage Site in 2009 (WHC UNESCO website). Therefore, there is the widespread need to protect them. A more comprehensive program whose objective is the protection of the Alps is the EU Strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP) that includes 7 countries. The EU Strategy for the Alpine region is a macroregional strategy endorsed by the European Council that is supported by some funds including the European Structural and Investment Fund. It concerns Austria, Italy, Germany, France, Slovenia, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, and 48 regions in total. It aims at addressing common challenges that Member States located on the same geographical area are facing and strengthening cooperation between them, in order to achieve an economic, territorial and social cohesion. EUSALP is needed because this area presents a great degree of

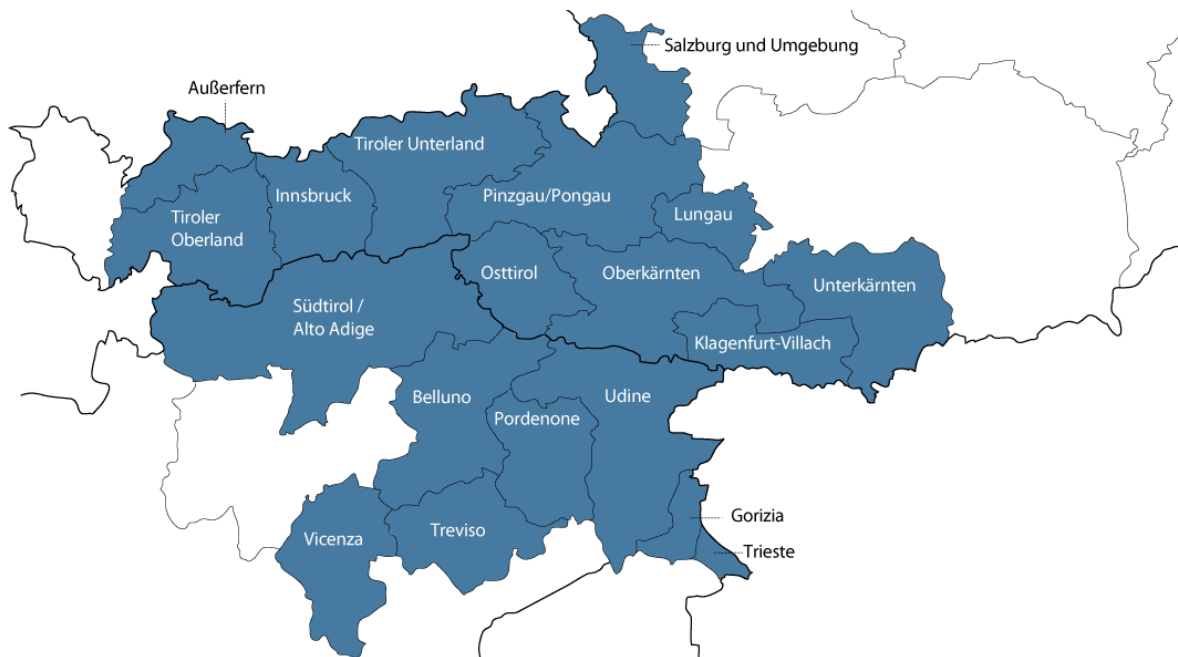
linguistic and cultural diversity and contrasted social and economic trends. The main challenges for the area are the climate change, the demographic trends, such as the ageing of people and the new migration models and its specific geographical position as a transit region. The macroregional Strategy for the Alpine region represents an opportunity to boost cross-border cooperation and to identify common goals to pursue.

Cross-border regions deal with day-to-day border problems that are caused by historical legacies and socio-cultural and linguistic differences. Border areas develop comprehensive cross-border territorial development strategies that are multi-thematic, and short-term, medium term or long-term oriented. This is particularly true for the border between Italy and Austria, more precisely between Tyrol and South Tyrol.

#### 4.1.1 Interreg Italia - Österreich

Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 and Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council lay down specific provisions for the support of the European territorial cooperation through the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund and the European Social Fund for Rural Development. These regulations represent the basis for the elaboration of Interreg. Interreg is one of the key instruments of the EU to support regional cooperation across borders. Within this project, culture constitutes one of the most popular topics. Interreg V Italia – Österreich 2014-2020 is a cooperation program that aims at facing the most important cross-border challenges between the two countries by enhancing their potentials. Since the Interreg 2014-2020 is the fifth period of Interreg Italia – Österreich, it is called Interreg V. The regions involved in the Interreg V Italia-Österreich are Kärnten, Salzburg, Tyrol, Autonomous Province of Bozen, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The territory is mostly rural with a high mountain range. The border length is of over 400 km and the total area of 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Border Orientation Paper). There are seven border crossings, and the main crossing point is Brenner. The main urban areas are Innsbruck, Salzburg, Bozen, Vicenza, Treviso, Pordenone and Trieste. The population of the area is 5.5 million: 1.8 million in the Austrian border regions and 3.7 million in the Italian border regions (Interreg website). The following picture shows the area covered by Interreg Italia – Österreich.

Fig. 2: Area of the Interreg V-A Italy-Austria 2014-2020



Source: Interreg V-A Italy – Austria 2014-2020 website.

Resolution No. 1067 of 16 September 2014 made the Autonomous Province of Bozen as the managing authority of the "Interreg V-A Italy-Austria 2014- 2020" cooperation program. The administrative authority has the task of setting up a Joint Secretariat that is in charge of all the administrative procedures and a Monitoring Committee. The collaborators have a perfect knowledge of Italian and German, as well as English, in order to communicate and collaborate with all the bodies involved in the cooperation program (regions/Länder, European bodies such as the EC, beneficiaries and proposers, the public). The selection of the administrative authority and general participation in the program was agreed in Tyrol by means of a government resolution. In addition, at local level there are 6 Regional Coordination Units, equal in number to the regions involved in the cooperation program (Autonomous Province of Bozen - South Tyrol Resolution of the Provincial Council no. 666). They act as a bridge between the program and the territory, providing information on the opportunities provided, but also supporting the project partners in the bureaucratic issues necessary to manage first project proposals and then actual projects. The Cohesion Agency supports and regulates the program at national

level, the European Commission at community level. All the above-mentioned bodies actively participate in the programming and ongoing management of the program.

According to Silvia Gadotti of the European Integration Office at the Autonomous Province of Bozen, the project planning in the area within the Interreg program has always had a good quality. She argued that:

“the very well-organized and busy management apparatus, made up of people with a lot of experience in the same field, contribute to solving many difficulties and problems in the implementation of project proposals. Competent and efficient bodies at the central and local levels allow for excellent collaboration among those involved and good support for beneficiaries in the development of project proposals and the subsequent management of operations. Project planning in the area has always been high and of good quality”.

The program has the objective of supporting a balanced and sustainable development and a harmonious integration of the border region between Italy and Austria. The program is funded for a total of 98 million euro both by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and some national public contributions (Interreg website).

Between 2014 and 2020 more than 1 billion euro was devoted to cultural heritage and arts within Interreg Europe. Also within Interreg Italia – Österreich, culture constitutes one of the most popular topics. Interreg Italia – Österreich is funded for a total of 98 million euro both by the ERDF and some national public contributions. The Office for European Integration at the Autonomous Province of Bozen-South Tyrol wrote in the paper “Cooperation program Interreg V-A Italia-Österreich” (2015) that around 16 million euros would have been raised with national funds for the period 2014-2020.

The program has four main priorities, namely research and innovation, nature and culture, institutions, and community-led local development. Firstly, the cross-border cooperation should involve the research institutes and strengthen the clustering of companies. Secondly, it should boost the protection of the natural and cultural heritage in order to increase the touristic offer and attractiveness. Thirdly, a closer institutional cooperation is desired for sectors, such as education, social work, health, civil protection and risk prevention, rescue services and public security. Fourthly, it encourages the participation

of the local actors in the governance through a bottom-up approach with the Community-led local development.

Interreg Italia – Österreich proved to be able to guarantee the preservation of the cultural and naturalistic heritage in the area on the border. Relevant examples are the Church of Saint Margherita in Vigo di Cadore in Veneto in Italy (ITAT 4028), the Castle Heinfels and Altfinstermünz in Tyrol in Austria. They are buildings of exceptional historical, environmental, pictorial, architectural and cultural value. They are located in two alpine valleys and their historical ties are documented back to 1300. Interreg V Italia – Österreich has contributed to the restoration of the roof and the frescoes of the Church of St. Margaret, using traditional materials and techniques of the Byzantine era. In the Heinfels Castle, Interreg V Italia – Österreich has contributed to the restoration of the frescoes and the wall surfaces in the Chapel of Saint Laurentius. The Venice and Innsbruck Cultural Heritage Offices have been involved in the project with a reciprocal exchange of historical and artistic content.

Altfinstermünz, situated in a valley bottom of the Inn River, has been an important border fortification and customs station in the border triangle of Austria-Italy-Switzerland. The late medieval castle of Altfinstermünz has been included within the framework of the Interreg IIIB project Via Claudia Augusta. The project operators have set themselves the goal of making the historic castle complex accessible again to interested visitors (local population, schools, tourists). The renovation and restoration of historically high valuable parts of the building aim at making the fortifications accessible to the public, in particular to children and young people, and thus to enable a joint reappraisal of history and the raising of awareness. Interreg V Italia – Österreich pursues the cultural valorization of these places with the objective to enhance their artistic potential and contribute to the cultural and touristic progress of the areas.

Another interesting project created in South Tyrol is the Lichtbild Project, a images collection of inestimable value from a social-historical-cultural point of view. This initiative made it possible to digitally process and make available to the community a large photographic heritage that bears witness to the history of the Autonomous Province of Bozen. The type of processing carried out for these photos is extremely innovative and very meaningful for this period of digital transition.



The private sector has always been a fundamental beneficiary of Interreg Italia – Österreich program. Indeed, Interreg V Italia – Österreich finances projects to which an entity that qualifies as an enterprise can participate as a beneficiary, as project leader or as project partners. An enterprise is any entity engaged in an economic activity, regardless of its legal form. In particular, the program wants to include entities engaged in craft or other activities on an individual or family basis, and activities on an individual or family basis, partnerships or associations regularly carrying out an economic activity. In the case of a supplier of goods or services, public procurement rules have to be applied. In the case of grant recipients, the European state aid rules must be respected. In both cases, the specific rules of the Programme on eligibility of expenditure must be applied.

The managing authority has approved a document that sets out the conditions and the modalities under which companies can have access to these State funds. This document is *INTERREG V-A Italy-Austria Cooperation Program 2014-2020 - acknowledgement of the "Scheme for the granting of State aid to enterprises pursuant to Commission Regulation No 651/2014"*. The fund aims at helping mostly small and medium-sized enterprises. A small and medium-sized enterprises that employ less than 250 people and that do not exceed 50-million-euro annual turnover and 43-million-euro annual balance sheet total.

Article 10 of the document establishes that:

“aids for cooperation costs incurred by small and medium-sized enterprises participating in European territorial cooperation projects

1. Aid may be granted for the cooperation costs incurred by SMEs taking part in European territorial cooperation projects.
2. The following costs shall be eligible
  - (a) costs of cooperation between the different organizations, including personnel and office costs in so far as they are related to the cooperation project;
  - (b) costs of cooperation-related advisory and support services provided by external service providers and consultants;
  - (c) travel expenses, equipment costs and investment expenditure directly related to the project, depreciation of tools and equipment directly used for the project.
3. The services referred to in paragraph 2(b) shall not be continuous or periodic and shall not form part of the enterprise's usual operating ordinary running costs of the undertaking, such as tax consultancy, legal advice or advertising.
4. The aid intensity shall not exceed 50 % of the eligible costs.”

The contribution from the resources of the Program shall be granted in accordance with the relevant European provisions, and in particular under the "de minimis" regime, within the meaning of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1407/2013 and pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 651/2014, that declares certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 TFEU.

Article 31 of the document "INTERREG V-A Italy-Austria Cooperation Program 2014-2020 - acknowledgement of the "Scheme for the granting of State aid to enterprises pursuant to Commission Regulation No 651/2014" is extremely interesting for this thesis because it deals with grants in the fields of culture and the preservation of the cultural heritage. It includes not only tangible cultural heritage but also intangible cultural heritage, such as traditions and dialects. These grants are given for both investments and for the improvement of the functioning. Article 31 aims at making the cultural heritage more accessible to people, with a great attention to people with disabilities. At the center of this provision there is the technological transition and the promotion of cultural projects and sites. For investment aid, the aid does not exceed the difference between the eligible costs and the operating result of the investment. The operating result is deducted from the eligible costs ex ante, based on reasonable projections, or through a recovery mechanism. For operating aid, the amount of aid shall not exceed what is necessary to cover operating losses and a reasonable profit over the relevant period. This shall be ensured ex ante, on the basis of reasonable projections, or through a recovery mechanism. For aid amounts not exceeding 1 million euro, the maximum aid amount is 80% of the eligible costs. For the publication of music and literary works, as defined in paragraph 2(f), the maximum amount of aid shall not exceed either the difference between the eligible costs and the discounted revenue of the project or 70% of the eligible costs. Revenues shall be deducted from the eligible costs ex ante or through a recovery mechanism. Eligible costs shall correspond to the costs of publication of music and literary works, including copyright, translation costs editing and other publishing costs (proofreading, correction and revision), page make-up and pre-press costs and printing costs.

Article 32 deals with aids for the pre-production, production and distribution of audiovisual works. The percentage of aid for the production of audiovisual works does not exceed 50 % of the eligible costs. The aid percentage may be increased to 60 % of the

eligible costs for cross-border productions, financed by more than one Member State and involving producers from more than one Member State, and to 100 % of the eligible costs for difficult audiovisual works.

Furthermore, funds are allocated also for a coordinated and harmonious cooperation in the field of research. For example, the RE-CEREAL had as its objective the strengthening of cross-border cooperation between universities, testing centers and companies, through the establishment of a network of partners with multidisciplinary skills such as genetics, agronomy, chemistry, nutrition and food production. Dr. Schär companies (Italy and Austria) have put together their know-how in the field of cereals and food production in order to establish a network able to share competences and to promote the genetic improvement and selection activities, as well as to enhance of nutraceutical components in bread, pasta and cookies.

#### 4.1.2 Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino

The Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino is an EGTC between Austria and Italy. It covers an area of 26,255 km<sup>2</sup> including 572 municipalities with 1,695,130 inhabitants. It has a budget of 2,900,000 euro.

Fig. 3: Euregio Tyrol - South Tyrol – Trentino in the map.



Source: website of Europaregion.

Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol -Trentino finances and manages around 20-25 projects on a yearly basis. Projects are mainly focused on culture, education, research, youth, economic and social affairs, mobility and environment. This EGTC funds and manages the Euregio Mobility Fund and the Euregio Science Fund for university students and teachers. It also finances the congress center called European Forum in Alpbach in Austria. This building hosts a great number of cultural, youth and mobility initiatives financed by the EGTC.

Since Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995, the region of Tyrol, South Tyrol and Trentino have always been closely connected with each other and they had a joint liaison office in Brussels. At the end of 2009, the joint office of the European Region was established in Bozen, following a decision of the three provincial governments. In 2011, the cooperation in the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino was raised to a new institutional level with the foundation of the joint EGTC. This legal form was established to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation for public entities, such as universities, municipalities and provinces.

The active engagement of citizens and further development of cross-border cooperation at all levels is the basic idea of Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. In this context the local level has a special importance and the utilization of the manifold synergies between local and regional level is fundamental. Cooperation aims at solving problems in the

immediate border region and increasing the visibility of the region through a concerted approach and joint public relations work.

The Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino is a form of trans-border cooperation that was established in 2011 on the basis of EU Regulation 1082/2006. The purpose of the EGTC is to foster and facilitate trans-border and interregional cooperation between Tyrol, South Tyrol and Trentino. According to its statute, the main objectives of Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino are the strengthening of economic, social and cultural relations between the population and the promotion of territorial development in the fields of education, culture, energy, sustainable mobility, economy. It contributes to the preservation of cultural and naturalistic heritage, the strengthening of a common identity, an increasing touristic offer, an increasing involvement of the local community and business, and the protection of the environment. In the multi-level governance system, the European Region thus represents the regional level.

It represents a fruitful exchange between the different cultures and mentalities of the three regions. It represents a step forward the cultural, political and economic integration, and the idea of a unified Europe. Euregio covers all important areas of life of its citizens, including culture, education, youth, science and research, tourism, transports, health care, environment and energy policy.

#### 4.1.3 Community-led Local Development projects

In the framework of the Interreg Italia – Österreich, local structures of cross-border cooperation have been established.

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a bottom-up local development method to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas and to address social, economic and environmental challenges (Interreg website). The CLLD areas distinguish themselves for their deep roots in the local and regional environment. In the management of these projects the governance is participative among the different levels. The European Commission has launched the CLLD approach to facilitate and guarantee the implementation of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy at the local scale by involving relevant local actors, including local organizations and associations, as well as

individual citizens. These projects respond to the necessity to bring decision-making competences regarding projects within the framework of EU regional policy to sub-national levels. The local population is thus given the opportunity to actively engage in the EU policy process and thus increase its effectiveness. This direct involvement of the local level in the process of achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy strengthens the multilevel governance system. In the cooperation area of the Interreg Italia – Österreich 2014-2020, four CLLD projects were approved: Dolomiti Live, HEurOpen, Terra Raetica and Wipptal.

The area called Terra Raetica is on the border area between Italy, Switzerland and Austria (Terra Raetica website). It was once home to Rhaetian tribes and today it is gaining new importance because the regions in the border triangle are moving closer together again. In addition to the common cultural history, the region is particularly characterized by its original natural and cultural landscape. Terra Raetica includes two national parks, four nature parks and a UNESCO biosphere with an extremely important natural value. These protected areas and the ten nature experience facilities of the region make the natural features of the Terra Raetica tangible for locals and guests. The Terra Raetica Small and Medium Projects Fund is implemented and managed by the Interreg Council Terra Raetica. The program operates on the basis of the so-called "Open Call" system. This means that applicants, after the publication of the Public Call, can continuously submit their project proposals as long as funds are available. The activities must have a cross-border impact in the eligible area of Terra Raetica and contribute to the implementation of the CLLD strategy in terms of content and indicators. The relation between project costs and impact is also relevant. The minimum requirement is that there is one project partner from Italy and one from Austria. In addition, at least three of the four cross-border cooperation criteria must be met. They are joint planning, joint implementation, joint personnel and joint financing. The project partners cooperate in both project planning and project implementation. Additionally, they should collaborate on funding or staffing. Project proposals can be submitted by local, regional, and national authorities and organizations (e.g., local communities, public agencies, and services). Institutions, organizations, associations and NGOs from the fields of nature conservation and preservation, environment, spatial planning, public transport, culture and tourism are particularly welcomed. However, also other project promoters that can contribute to the

implementation of the CLLD strategy and are eligible for funding according to Interreg program requirements. The recommended project duration is a maximum 36 months.

It is strongly emphasized that all beneficiary project partners should be in continuous contact with their respective regional contact persons of the Interreg Council Terra Raetica during project development and project submission. The project must be coordinated in detail regarding its relevance to the Terra Raetica strategy. It is also necessary, in accordance with the bottom-up approach, to involve other regional actors. If this is not done, the project cannot be approved by the Interreg Council Terra Raetica. Applications for Terra Raetica funded projects must be submitted bilingually in Italian and German, with the exception of the project summary, which must be submitted in Italian, German and English. In case of discrepancies, the language of the Lead Partner will prevail. In the case of applications for Terra Raetica Small Projects, the German language is sufficient.

The aim of the CLLD approach is to bring regional development to the local level and thus to create cross-border governance structures for the participatory and citizen-oriented implementation of the program.

During the 2014-2020 period, a broad group of companies received funds from Interreg V Italia – Österreich. An example is the project that aims at the reduction of the fall factor for the users of via ferrata within the CLLD Dolomiti Live (Dolomiti Live website). The companies involved in it are Micado Smart Engineering GmbH, Dolomiticert Scarl and South Tyrol Alta Pusteria mountain rescue Service. Interreg has supported the program with 196.221,41 euro in total. It covered the 70% of the project in Italy and the 50% of the project in Austria. It lasted from 01.02.2017 to 01.02.2019. The project is based on the observation that the practice of mountain sports is increasing and the equipped paths and via ferratas in the Dolomites are being used more and more, especially by tourists. With the increase of mountaineers, it is inevitable that the number of accidents and interventions of rescue teams will also increase, which entails enormous costs. For this reason, the project goal is to reduce mountain accidents resulting from unintentional falls on sections of equipped trails and via ferrata with a fall factor of 2 or higher. In order to pursue this project goal, new products or technical solutions must be found and developed in the Alpine region.

## 4.2 How the three different programs work together

After that all the instruments have been individually described in detail, the relationship between the actors involved will now be examined. The different programs have often interrelated and worked together.

Firstly, the Interreg program does not have a hierarchical superiority over the EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino or the CLLD programs, rather it creates the strategic and financial framework for other actors in the multilevel governance model. It forms a framework with the provided financial resources for the implementation projects and the achievement of their objectives. In particular, CLLD are direct partners of Interreg Italia – Österreich.

Secondly, Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol -Trentino is participating in some CLLD projects of the current Interreg Italia Österreich. Silvia Gadotti from the European Integration Office of the Autonomous province of Bozen argued during the interview that “We manage CLLD as a specific axis integrated in the program (Interreg Italia – Österreich) and several Euregions are also beneficiaries of our projects”. For example, the three Tyrolean CLLD regions Dolomiti Live, Terra Raetica and Wipptal work closely together with the EGTC. The CLLD regions pursue the goal of strengthening of cross-border cooperation at the local level, while the EGTC pursues it at the regional level. Both initiatives can benefit from each other through an exchange of know-how as well as an intensive cooperation. Thus, the CLLD regions have elaborated their cross-border development strategies in coordination with Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino and they are supported in the implementation aspect by the General Secretariat of the EGTC in Bozen. In a decision of the EGTC Board of 12.07.2017 (No. 8/2017), additional measures for the consolidation and further development of the cooperation between the Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino and the three CLLD regions (Dolomiti Live, Terra Raetica and Wipptal) were defined. For example, in the future the CLLD regions will have the possibility to use the logo of the European Region in their public relations. Furthermore, the representatives of Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino will start participating in the meetings of the CLLD regions in order to strengthen the mutual flow of information about project activities between the Europaregion and the three Interreg



Councils. A mutual support in the ongoing joint communication and cooperation in the context of events and information materials are further measures that will contribute to an expansion of cooperation.

In the interview, I asked Christian Stampfer, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the region Tyrol, how the management of Interreg works and how actors at different levels intervene in the Interreg program. He replied by saying that at the program level, the long-term and stable cooperation between all the actors involved results in a partnership where decisions are taken in the spirit of cooperation. Bozen is the administrative authority, and it works as a mediator and coordinator. It is extremely committed to the further consolidation of a good cooperation climate. At project level, there are already long-standing cooperation partnerships between the actors of EGTC and CLLD. In individual cases, assistance by the participating regions is still required to find partners, but usually no longer, because the cooperation has become established. He also added that Interreg interacts with the CLLD since they are core actors and their immediate strategic partners. Interreg is a tool to strengthen cross-border cooperation for these actors.

Moreover, Mr. Stampfer argued that for the next programming period 2021-2027, CLLD will be strengthened and also financially upgraded for a functional cooperation in a larger spatial context. All the program documents are under preparation and can only be published after formal approval by the European Commission.

## Chapter 5 – Current issues and future challenges for the cultural cross-border cooperation between Italy and Austria.

As it has been argued in the previous chapters, the concept of culture does not have a unified meaning, but it includes a repertoire of meanings, such as skills, habits and styles (Carta and Higgott 2020: 5) and it is strictly connected to other subjects. Most things that relate to culture are impersonal and abstracts, namely the national cultures and identities. Moreover, a broad realm of topics strictly related to the cultural projects, namely the identity question and the environmental issue.

### 5.1 The environmental issue

At the heart of the European Union priorities there is definitely the protection of the environment and the fighting against climate change. In order to tackle this problem, the EU has elaborated the European Green Deal that wants to transform the current threatening challenges into opportunities of growth especially for a more resource-efficient and competitive economy.

The environment has also been a priority of Interreg Italia - Österreich since its establishment. For instance, Interreg V-A Italia - Österreich 2014-2020 has funded important projects in the nature and culture field, such as the GLISTT Project, which monitors and describes the effects of climate change at the level of glaciers throughout the program area, highlighting weaknesses and possible measures of intervention to save them. Silvia Gadotti of the Autonomous Province of Bozen stated that for the period 2021-2027 the focus on climate will have to characterize more than one third of all the projects eligible for funding. Among the Interreg Italia - Österreich main goals, there is the protection of natural resources and their sustainable management with the aim of increasing the tourist attractiveness of the area. For instance, Interreg V-A Italia - Österreich is working towards the reduction of the environmental impact of transport used in the tourism sector (Border Orientation Paper Italy – Austria). Tourists are encouraged to take public transport or non-polluting means of transport, instead of private vehicles to avoid excessive traffic peaks. Some projects have developed and connected touristic routes of various kinds: cross-border hiking, cultural and thematic routes, and bicycle paths. For example, Alpe Adria Project of Interreg IV Italia – Österreich has allowed for

a bicycle connection from the mountains of Austria to the seaside of Venice. In addition, interventions aimed at improving biodiversity and geodiversity will be supported in the program area. This objective will be achieved by increasing the networking of different protected areas (nature reserves and national parks) and promoting common strategies.

The protection of the environment is enshrined in Article 19 of the document “INTERREG V-A Italy-Austria Cooperation Program 2014-2020 - acknowledgement of the "Scheme for the granting of State aid to enterprises pursuant to Commission Regulation No 651/2014”. This article establishes that there are some investment aids that enable enterprises to go beyond Community standards for environmental protection or to increase the level of environmental protection in the absence of such standards. Aid shall not be granted for investments made in order to enable undertakings to adapt to Union standards already adopted but not yet in force. The aid percentage shall not exceed 45 % of the eligible costs.

Moreover, Article 23 presents grants for the use and production from renewable resources. This article wants to encourage people to use more and more renewable energies and diminish the impact of fossil fuels in the environment. In the document “Border Orientation Paper Italy – Austria”, there is the need to strengthen the field of energy transition, especially in hydro potential. The Alps in fact are a common resource with a high natural and cultural potential. Climate change exposes the cross-border areas to dangerous effects, such as forest fires, biodiversity loss and soil erosion. Cooperation on the climate protection can have benefits for what concerns natural tourism and especially winter tourism. Joint learning and building of a basic knowledge about the topic can have added value.

Nonetheless, Christian Stampfer, during the interview we had, stated that even if the environmental issue is very alarming, it is hardly ever accepted in the framework of Interreg Italia – Österreich because the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) already provides a great amount of funds for it. However, he also claimed that environment protection and climate change prevention will become more relevant in the new programming period 2021-2027.

## 5.2 The roots of the identity issue in South Tyrol

In order to fully understand the issue related to identity on the border between Italy and Austria, it is important to give a brief historical overview of the area of South Tyrol. South Tyrol was part of the Habsburg Empire until 1919 when it was annexed to Italy under the Treaty of Saint-Germain after the First World War (Kleinert 2012). Fascism started a process of forced Italianization and following an agreement with the national socialistic regime, it put forward the so-called “Opzione”. It meant that all German-speaking people could choose between two options: either stay in Italy and accept to be Italianized or to depart for Germany and leave all their properties. From 1939, almost 86% of the German-speaking population decided for emigration, but actually only 75.000 people moved to Germany (ibid). Among those who voted for remaining in Italy, there were the future supporters of Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP), the party that governed South Tyrol from 1945. After the Second World War, SVP tried to limit the consequences of the fascist nationalistic policies also supported by Austria. Austria wanted to provide South Tyrol with the highest possible level of autonomy. In occasion of the De Gasperi – Gruber Agreement signed in Paris in 1946, Austria presented the interests of people from South Tyrol that spoke German. Italy granted autonomy rights to that area and including in it also Trentino. In this way the German-speaking people were put again into a minority position. However, this agreement left room for different interpretations and South Tyroler who were not satisfied with the agreement, appealed to the United Nations (UN) (ibid). The 1960 and 1961 UN resolutions invited Italy and Austria to start the works to interpreter in a unique manner the agreement of 1946. In 1969, after years of negotiations, the so-called “South Tyrol Package” was approved. It consisted of 137 measures to strengthen the autonomy of South Tyrol. With this agreement Austria exercises a protective function vis-à-vis Italy for the Ladin and Austrian minorities. A calendar of operations was introduced with the aim of implementing the 137 measures and consequently settling the dispute between Italy and Austria. Later on, in 1972 a new Statute of Autonomy was approved with the Decree 670 of the President of the Republic of 31<sup>st</sup> August 1972. The negotiations lasted till 1992, when the package was implemented and Austria and the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) agreed to the settlement of the dispute with Italy. This dispute was officially settled when Austria and Italy handed over of identical declaration to the UN Secretary-General. In the same year, the so-called

“Proporzionale etnica” was introduced. This a measure that guarantees the balance between the German-speaking inhabitants and the Italian-speaking inhabitants in the public administration.

Austria continues to exercise a protective function towards the autonomy of South Tyrol, and there are regular political and economic exchanges between Vienna, Bozen and Innsbruck. After almost 30 years after the settlement of the dispute, the autonomy of South Tyrol is functioning as it was desired. The autonomous status brought a set of advantages. Moreover, the German-speaking ethnic group has benefitted from the accession of Austria to the European Union from 1995 and the Schengen Agreement rendered the separating aspects of the national border less dividing. The introduction of the same currency contributed to dismantle the financial and economic barriers. Therefore, the joint membership to the European Union of Austria and Italy has given South Tyrol more benefits. Indeed, as it has been discussed in the previous chapters, South Tyrol and Tyrol are cooperating in a multitude of fields, such as transport, research, education, culture, tourism, and environment.

### 5.3 The multi-level governance and the language issue in South Tyrol

Language represents an important part of culture, and it shapes the identity of a person. Considering that, it is worth analyzing how bilingualism is managed in South Tyrol. Italy protects linguistic minorities with appropriate regulations. Bilingualism is enshrined in Article 6 of the Constitution, which recognizes the protection of minority languages in the national territory. Particular forms of protection are provided for by the special statutes of the South Tyrol region for the German and Ladin languages, Aosta Valley for the French language and of Sicily for the Albanian language. As far as South Tyrol is concerned, Art. 8 of the Statute of Autonomy (1972) specify that the toponymy of the autonomous province must be bilingual. Art. 19 of the Statute specifies that education in must be taught in the Italian or German according to the mother tongue of the pupils. Moreover, Art. 59 specifies that regional and provincial regulations and laws must be published in the "Gazzetta Ufficiale" in Italian and German. In particular, Art. 99 states that: "In the region the German language is equal to the Italian language, which is the official language of the state. The Italian language is used in legislative acts and in those

cases in which the present statute provides for bilingual drafting”. Article 100 clarifies that the German-speaking citizens of the province of Bozen have the right to use their own language in the public administration and judicial offices ration situated in the province or having regional competence.

The topic of the language protection is also at the center of the European Union priorities, since it is strongly committed to guarantee the diversity and the protection of every language spoken in the Union. Indeed, the EU is one of the most institutionally multilingual polities in the world. The official languages are currently 24 and they are indicated in Article 55(1) TEU. In addition, other 60 minority languages are recognized and protected by the Union jointly with the Council of Europe on the basis of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The respect for linguistic diversity is one of the fundamental values of the EU and it is protected under the Treaties. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) states that the EU “shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity”. Any discrimination on the ground of language is prohibited under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. The cultural policy study cuts across a set of different disciplines, namely anthropology, sociology, languages, geography, economics and law. The cultural policy plays an important role in the nation-state identity formation and consolidation. The cultural policy of the EU challenges the idea of culture linked to a nation-state, which is the most common level of analysis associated to the cultural policies (Sassatelli, 2006).

The European Parliament explained in the Facts Sheet of the European Union on language policy that “languages are an integral part of the European identity and the most direct expression of culture”. Likewise, the Commission considers languages as a bridge that links different cultures and fosters mutual understanding and solidarity (COM 2005, 596 final). The language policy of the EU is a multi-level policy because it entails the EU level, the national level and often also the regional level (Szul 2015:68). Even if the EU has a limited influence on policies on education and language, because they are responsibility of the Member States, it has particularly at heart the safeguard of linguistic diversity and the promotion of languages learning. Indeed, the EU institutions have often underscored their engagement to language diversity protection in proclamations, communications, press releases and on their websites.

German and Italian are the languages used in all the interregional programs presented so far. For example, all the documents and websites of the programs are available in German and in Italian. The Interreg Italia – Österreich program finances measures for the enhancement of cultural and linguistic heritage which include also the minorities of the territory, such as the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol. Silvia Gadotti from the European Integration Office of the Autonomous province of Bozen said that “the German language and culture remain fundamental and prevalent in the territory of the province of Bozen. The cooperation with the Austrian territory is clearly facilitated by these similarities, which make the partnership between the South Tyrolean area and the Austrian Länder particularly strong and incisive at the level of the program as a whole”. As far as the of multilevel governance in the question of identity is concerned, its effects are double-edged. On one side, multilevel governance can transform national minorities into regional majorities and intensify their demand for autonomy. On the other hand, multi-level governance can give regionalists some of what they aimed to and consequently weaken their appeal. However, for what concerns cultural programs in which different actors intervenes, none of the political parties demonstrated to be against them. Both independentist parties and pro-European parties are in favor of cross-border programs focused on culture and natural protection. This can be observed in the political programs. For example, in the document of the governmental agreement between Südtiroler Volkspartei and Lega Salvini for the legislature 2018-2023 there is a chapter titled “For a common Europe of the regions” which expressly refers to the Euregio project and it supports it. In addition, the independentist party PATT also supports the European initiatives to give South Tyrol more value in the European context. (PATT website).

Both Christian Stampfer and Silvia Gadotti agreed on and argued that Interreg Italia – Österreich has never encountered any oppositions or political pressures by the political parties in Tyrol and South Tyrol.

Moreover, Silvia Gadotti has sustained that Interreg Italia – Österreich has created a sense of belonging to the EU especially in those areas in which it was not so deeply rooted, such as in small towns close to the border or in alpine isolated areas. These latter have got to know the considerable advantages of the European "source" of funding and benefited from them.

## 5.4 Challenges that must be overcome and the future of cross-border cooperation

As we have seen, cross-border cooperation between Italy and Austria is not limited to the Interreg program. It also builds on policies, such as cross-border mobility, legal instruments such as treaties, bilateral agreements, EGTCs and funding different from those of Interreg. There is scope for greater sharing of services and resources in cross-border regions and to intensify the cooperation between citizens and institutions. Silvia Gadotti maintains that “There is already an excellent level of cooperation, which obviously needs to be nurtured and refined in the near future”. Notwithstanding the overall very good functioning of the program, there are some issues that should be properly addressed.

The Commission Communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions" has highlighted that there are many different types of obstacles to cross-border cooperation (Border Orientation Paper Italy – Austria). The obstacles shared by the population living on the border area between Italy and Austria are: cultural differences (37%), language differences (69%), accessibility (40%) and administrative and institutional obstacles (59%) (ibid). A strategy for addressing these obstacles is needed and must be put in place.

As the Interreg programs are instrumental to effective cross-border cooperation, they should seek to address these particular obstacles and make use of the common potential to facilitate cooperation in this wider context.

The orientations for the cooperation between Italy and Austria for the period 2021-2027, defined in the “Border Orientation Paper Italy – Austria”, include several points. First of all, the border regions should identify key obstacles and unused potential by using the Cross-Border Review as a starting point, bringing the relevant actors together (e.g. authorities at national, regional and local levels, enterprises, users, etc.) in order to facilitate the process of finding ways to reduce these obstacles or exploit the potential. Secondly, there is the need to increase the current relatively low level of economic integration measured by border crossings through increasing integration by removing administrative barriers. Thirdly, a support in the implementation of the existing structures and entities, such as EGTCs is recommended. Silvia Gadotti from the European Integration Office of the Autonomous province of Bozen believes that the administrative



structure of Interreg Italia – Österreich cannot be changed, but people working in it can be the real value added of the program. In the interview, she stated that “The organizational apparatus cannot be modified too much, but exchanges of experience, periodic meetings and effective collaboration between reliable, competent and capable people solve any problem at its point of origin. The real added value is in the people”.

Interreg, Euregio and CLLDs resulted to be able to bring Member States together for what regional and cultural cooperation are concerned. However, Christian Stampfer, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the region Tyrol, stated that during the Covid-19 pandemic, he witnessed a step back in the European integration process. He said: “We saw the opposite of this (European integration process) in the pandemic, when every state acted without any European spirit and thus rebuilt borders that had apparently already been overcome. Unfortunately, we still have too little Europe and too much nation state.”.

We have experienced an example of restriction of the free movement of persons in case of health issues in the past months during the first spread of the Coronavirus. It had a strong impact on the Schengen agreement and to the principle of free movement of persons. In March, Austria closed its borders with Italy and banned people from entering unless they could show a clean bill of health. Indeed, the free movement of persons is not an unlimited right. As a matter of fact, Article 21 TFEU provides that the right of EU citizens to move and reside freely in the Member States is “subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaties and by the measures adopted to give them effect”. All restrictions on the free movement of persons can be justified on the basis of legitimate public interests. Article 45(3) TFEU expressly allows for limitations justified on grounds of public policy, public security or public health. Justifications for restrictions are also explained in the Directive 2004/38, that codifies and complements Community law on the freedom of movement. Article 27 of the Directive acknowledges the power of the Member States “to restrict the freedom of movement and residence of Union citizens and their family members, irrespective of nationality, on grounds of public policy, public security or public health”.

As far as public health is concerned, Article 29 of the Directive 2004/38 determines that only diseases with epidemic potential will justify measures restricting free movement.

On this topic Christian Stampfer stated that:

“Interreg can definitely do little about the closure of borders and the construction of barriers, especially with low funding, but it can only promote cross-border cooperation from below - bottom up - but this basis is important. It is recognized at national level that there are people in border regions whose living conditions are massively impaired by the erection of barriers in the borders”.

Notwithstanding the general consent towards cross-border cooperation and its good functioning, one must admit that some problems and barriers still persist. According to the study “Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions”, legal and administrative barriers persist. For this reason, a focus on addressing these obstacles can have added value. For instance, the political party Team K calls for a planification of guidelines in the field of culture in South Tyrol, where culture is still divided according to the language. Alex Ploner, councilor of the party Team K at the provincial council of Bozen, stated that “South Tyrol needs a clear vision and viable strategies for its cultural industry. The pandemic has shown the weaknesses of the sector, including the lack of a common vision and coordination of those working in it. Our proposal went exactly in this direction, promoting transparency and cooperation between cultural operators and public authorities, with clear rules and measures” (Team K website).

Furthermore, Christian Stampfer was asked if he encountered some limits in the realization of the program Interreg, especially related to fragmented multi-level governance of the EU and he answered that the main problem is and remains the complexity of processing. He thinks that there is a need for optimization for further cooperation between the different levels that could be solved through the introduction of the European Border Mechanism at EU level. He believes that general EU or national level should intervene more strongly in those programs where cooperation does not work well, allocating funds to the programs according to quality criteria. However, he stated that this cannot be applied to Interreg Italia – Österreich because it is functioning in a good manner. The Border Orientation Paper Italy-Austria has admitted that “the border area has a strong potential to continue cross-border co-operation projects in the area of tourism and natural and cultural heritage”. Programs related to natural and cultural heritage within a strategic context, involving stakeholders within a multi-governance

context are required to continue a cross-border cooperation. For this reason, authorities are encouraged to use the different available tools to support functional areas and to cooperate with the relevant macro-regional key stakeholders.

## Conclusions

The diversified and difficult nature of culture comes with policy challenges. Since art and creativity are almost borderless, the decision on what to include and prioritize in the cultural policy is highly controversial. Besides economic and social elements, culture is a fundamental element to guarantee pacific relations in the geographical areas of the European Union. Regional cooperation based on culture had started at first with bilateral agreements between two states, but then it was fostered by the support and the funding of the European Union. The cultural policy of the EU aims not only at boosting a European identity, but also at defending local cultural expressions and economic interests.

As it has been widely discussed in the empirical chapters, Europeanization could not be fully reached in the field of culture because of competence matters and the will of the Member States to keep their discretion in the field of culture. However, the Open Method of Coordination aims at putting all the Member States on a path towards the achievement of the common objectives, while respecting the differences between the Member States and their different arrangements and values.

The European Union has led to a reorganization of fields that creates new social arrangements and empowers a variety of actors. In the cultural field, national and regional actors take into account the main principles and guidelines of the European Union and they do not act in competition one with each other. The long-term and stable cooperation between all the actors involved in these programs builds partnerships in which decisions are taken in the spirit of cooperation. There is a general climate of trust between the actors at different levels. The different levels are not subject to a hierarchical order, but there are various administrative units that are responsible for a certain territorial area. The synergy of the work of the different levels makes the multi-level governance in the cultural policy particularly efficient. The most efficient way to foster integration is through the community-led activities. Indeed, it is clear that regional and local actors remain extremely important in the cultural policy area.

The programs funded by the European Union represent a relevant opportunity for regions to benefit from them, under the economic and social point of view. It has been explained that interregional projects funded by the European Union are extremely relevant in encouraging connections between two countries that share a border. Cooperation programs are able to boost the development of collaboration networks between areas

close to the border and in general between the participating regions, promote the territory in its specificities and peculiarities, protect natural, environmental and hydrogeological resources of the area, and enhance the historical and cultural heritage. A special attention to the identity issue and minorities and to the protection of the environment are included in the European, national, regional and local levels. Interregional projects are able to boost the cooperation between regions of cross-border countries and consequently make the relations between the two neighboring countries even more consolidated and long lasting. Thanks to the interview held with the representatives of Interreg Italia - Österreich, it has been shown that this program has fostered the relations between Italy and Austria in recent years. Interreg, Euregio and CLLDs resulted to be able to bring Member States together for what regional and cultural cooperation are concerned. Interreg, that represents the European level, does not have a hierarchical superiority over the EGTC Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino (regional level) or the CLLD programs (local level). It rather creates the strategic and financial framework for other actors in the multilevel governance model, forming a framework with the provided financial resources for the implementation of the projects and the achievement of their objectives.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic made in some cases the borders between the Member States uncrossable. Every state acted without any European spirit, rebuilding those borders that had apparently already been overcome. The first phase of the pandemic showed that there was too little Europe and too much nation state. Later on, actors at the European, national and subnational levels have realized that relations between countries have to be encouraged not only through economy, but also through culture in order to guarantee social cohesion in the areas on the border.

As Christian Stampfer pointed out, the principal goal achieved by Interreg is the growing together of regions that are neighbors and that are connected by a common history. This cooperation leads to the overcoming of the nation-state thinking towards a functional thinking in the sense of a Europe of the regions. The creation of a fertile ground for cooperation is needed because it does not happen on its own, but it has to be nurtured and triggered through a multitude of concrete initiatives. Regions must continue to work for the strengthening of cooperation of neighboring Member States because the danger of retrocession in the European integration process is still threatening. Programs related to natural and cultural heritage within a strategic context, involving stakeholders within a

multi-governance context are required to continue a cross-border cooperation. Fruitful and peaceful relations need to be constantly cultivated to promote the exchange of know-how and good practices in the scientific, technological, and administrative fields, as well as the work in strategic sectors for the specific border area, such as the protection of the environment or the overcome of cultural and linguistic barriers.

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## Interviews

### INTERVIEW 1

Interview to Christian Stampfer, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich at the Department of Regional Development and EU regional policy at the office of the Tyrolean Provincial Government, 02/07/2021. The interview was held in German, but it was translated and reported here in English.

1. Is INTERREG Italia-Österreich able to boost the cooperation between Italy and Austria?

Yes, especially through cross-border cooperation in the course of the 4 CLLD regions of the program - and also in the course of large-scale projects in combination with a touristic valorization.

2. Has INTERREG favored the creation of a sense of belonging to the European Union in your opinion?

Yes, through the strategic cooperations (EGTC, CLLD regions) and the partnership in the projects, Europe becomes visible and tangible for the citizens

1. Has INTERREG given a boost to tourism in the area on the border? Could you please give me an example?

Interreg has supported tourism, especially in niches - e.g. in strengthening summer and cultural tourism (cycle paths, mountain bike paths, high altitude paths, cultural and natural institutions that cooperate).

2. Could you give me an example in which INTERREG has guaranteed the preservation of the cultural and naturalistic heritage in Tyrol?

You could look at the Altfinstermünz and Burg Heinfels.

3. Enterprises of the private sector can benefit from the funds of INTERREG. Could you give me an example of this?

You could look at the projects: Anti Pollen, Fall factor reduction and Feinstaubschutz.

4. How does the management of INTERREG work? How do actors at different levels (supranational-national-regional-local) intervene in the INTERREG project between Italy and Austria?

At program level: long-term and stable cooperation between all actors involved results in a partnership where decisions are taken in the spirit of cooperation. Bolzano as an administrative authority is a mediator and coordinator and extremely committed to further consolidating the good cooperation climate.

At project level: support structures through EGTC and CLLD are planned or there are already long-standing cooperation partnerships between the actors. In individual cases, assistance by the participating regions is still required to find partners - but usually no longer - i.e. the cooperation has become established.

5. Have you encountered some limits in the realization of the program INTERREG? Are they connected to the fragmented multi-level governance of the EU (supranational-national-regional-local level)?

The main problem is and remains the complexity of processing

6. Do you think that there is a need for optimization for further cooperation between the different levels (supranational-national-regional-local)?

Yes - introduction of the European Border Mechanism would be an important step at EU level. In general - but not applicable to INTERREG Italy - Austria: EU or national level should intervene more strongly in those programs where cooperation does not work well - at best also allocate funds to the programs according to quality criteria.



7. Do you interact also with other projects, such as the Euregio Tyrol – Alto Adige – Trentino and the Community-led Local Development projects (CLLD)?

Yes, these are core actors and our immediate strategic partners - INTERREG is a tool to strengthen cross-border cooperation for these actors.

8. The protection of the environment is an achievement that the EU strongly wants to pursue. Is the environmental issue included in INTERREG? Could you give some examples?

Yes - but hardly ever accepted via INTERREG, as EAFRD already provides a great deal of funding here. In the new period, climate protection and climate change adaptation will become more important, as will circular economy and biodiversity. The topic is relevant for what concerns the CLLD.

9. Are the Community-led Local Development projects (Dolomiti Live, HEurOpen, Terra Raetica) more focused on the identity issue or the protection of the environment?

Both are important. I would suggest you to deepen the project Terra Raetica.

10. What are in general the stands of the political parties regarding INTERREG Italia-Österreich and CLLD? Are there any oppositions?

No – at least in Tyrol.

11. What are the main goals achieved by INTERREG in your opinion?

The growing together of regions that are neighbours and that are connected by a common history - and thus also the overcoming of nation-state thinking towards functional thinking - in the sense of a Europe of the regions.

12. Do you have the feeling that the cooperation between South Tyrol and Tyrol needs to be strengthened in the future? Why?

Yes, you can't stop halfway - cooperation doesn't just happen, it has to be encouraged and a climate of cooperation has to exist - INTERREG is an essential part of this - which triggers a multitude of other initiatives.

We saw the opposite of this in the pandemic, where every state acted without any European spirit and thus rebuilt borders that had apparently already been overcome. Unfortunately, we still have too little Europe and too much nation state.

Interreg can definitely do little about this (if only because of the low funding), but can only promote cross-border cooperation from below - bottom up - but this basis is important because it is also recognized at national level that there are people in border regions whose living conditions are massively impaired by the erection of barriers at borders.

13. Are there aspects that you would like to change in the INTERREG program? Have you already elaborated the guidelines for the next program planning period starting from 2021?

The new program is ready - climate protection, climate change adaptation and circular economy will be new.

CLLD is complemented and strengthened (also financially upgraded) by functional cooperation in a larger spatial context.

The EGTCs will primarily address the "border obstacles" in a separate action and strengthen governance between the EGTCs and the CLLD regions.

## INTERVIEW 2

Interview to Silvia Gadotti, representative of Interreg Italia – Österreich in the Department of European integration at the office of the South Tyrolean Provincial Government, 02/09/2021. The interview was held in Italian, but it was translated and reported here in English.

1. Is INTERREG Italia-Österreich able to boost the cooperation between Italy and Austria?

Yes, the program has the capacity to foster and make more profitable the cooperation between the two States involved, promoting the exchange of know-how and good practices in the scientific, technological and administrative fields, as well as working in strategic sectors for the specific border area (natural and ecological resources, protection from natural risks, breaking down of cultural and linguistic barriers, development of innovative processes and projects), just to mention some areas of interest.

2. Has INTERREG favored the creation of a sense of belonging to the European Union in your opinion?

Certainly. It has happened throughout the program area, but especially where the sense of belonging to the EU was not so deeply rooted; think of small towns close to the border, alpine areas and/or in any case isolated due to logistic specificities: thanks to Interreg initiatives they have gained considerable advantages to develop important projects and to know the European "source" of funding.

3. Has INTERREG given a boost to tourism in the area on the border? Could you please give me an example?

Yes, for example in projects that have developed and connected tourist routes of various kinds: cross-border hiking, cultural and/or thematic routes, bicycle paths. The Alpe Adria Project of Interreg IV IT-AT has allowed for a bicycle connection from the mountains of Austria to the sea of Venice.

4. Could you give me an example in which INTERREG has guaranteed the preservation of the cultural and naturalistic heritage in South Tyrol?

Thanks to the Lichtbild Project, it has been possible to preserve, digitally process and make available to the community a large photographic heritage that bears witness to the history of the Province. The result is images of inestimable value from a social-historical-cultural point of view, but also technological for the type of processing carried out.

5. Enterprises of the private sector can benefit from the funds of INTERREG. Could you give me an example of this?

The private sector has always been a fundamental beneficiary of the Interreg ITAT program. The RE-CEREAL project, for example, had as its objective the strengthening of cross-border cooperation between universities, testing centers and companies, through the establishment of a network of partners with multidisciplinary skills such as genetics, agronomy, chemistry, nutrition and food production. Dr. Schär companies (Italy and Austria) have brought their know-how at the level of knowledge and food production in the field of cereals (specifically minor cereals and the so-called pseudocereals), in order to establish a network able to share competences to promote the diffusion of CM and PC, through genetic improvement and selection activities, as well as to promote their use in the food industry and the enhancement of nutraceutical components in bread, pasta and cookies.

6. How does the management of INTERREG work? How do actors at different levels (supranational-national-regional-local) intervene in the INTERREG project between Italy and Austria?

The PC is headed by a Managing Authority based in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, assisted by the Joint Secretariat, which takes care of all the administrative procedures related to the programme as a whole. The collaborators have a perfect knowledge of Italian and German, as well as English, in order to communicate and collaborate with all the bodies involved in the PC (regions/Länder, European bodies such as the EC, beneficiaries and proposers, the public). At local level 6 Regional Coordination

Units (equal in number to the regions involved in the CP) act as a bridge between the program and the territory, providing information on the opportunities provided, but also supporting the project partners in the bureaucratic issues necessary to manage first project proposals and then actual projects. The Cohesion Agency supports and regulates the program at national level, the European Commission at community level (all the above-mentioned bodies actively participate in the programming and ongoing management of the CP).

7. Have you encountered some limits in the realization of the programme INTERREG? Are they connected to the fragmented multi-level governance of the EU (supranational-national-regional-local level)?

The very well-organized and busy management apparatus, made up of people with a lot of experience in the same field, contribute to solving many difficulties and problems in the implementation of project proposals. Competent and efficient bodies at the central and local levels allow for excellent collaboration among those involved and good support for beneficiaries in the development of project proposals and the subsequent management of operations. Project planning in the area has always been high and of good quality.

8. Do you think that there is a need for optimisation for further cooperation between the different levels (supranational-national-regional-local)?

The organizational apparatus cannot be modified too much, but exchanges of experience, periodic meetings and effective collaboration between reliable, competent and capable people solve any problem at its origin. The real added value is in the people.

9. Do you interact also with other projects, such as the Euregio Tyrol – Alto Adige – Trentino and the Community-led Local Development projects (CLLD)?

We manage CLLD as a specific axis integrated in the program; several Euregios are also beneficiaries of our projects (ditto CLLD strategies).

10. The protection of the environment is an achievement that the EU strongly wants to pursue. Is the environmental issue included in INTERREG? Could you give some examples?

The environment has been a priority of the PC since time immemorial. Now even more so, given the objectives of the EC at least in the medium term (from the period 2021-2027 the climate focus will have to characterize more than one third of all projects eligible for funding). We have funded important projects in Axis 2 (Nature and Culture) during the period 2014-2020, for example the GLISTT Project, which monitors and describes the effects of climate change at the level of glaciers throughout the program area, highlighting weaknesses and possible measures of intervention to save the important heritage they represent.

11. Is the identity and linguistic issue of the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol included in INTERREG? Could you give me an example?

The program also finances measures for the enhancement of cultural and linguistic heritage, and in these there are the respective minorities of the territory. However, the German language and culture remain fundamental and prevalent in the territory of the province of Bolzano. The cooperation with the Austrian territory is clearly facilitated by these similarities, which make the partnership between the South Tyrolean area and the Austrian Länder particularly strong and incisive at the level of the program as a whole.

12. Are the Community-led Local Development projects (Dolomiti Live, HEurOpen, Terra Raetica) more focused on the identity issue or the protection of the environment?

Both focuses are fundamental to the initiatives promoted within CLLD.

13. What are in general the stands of the political parties regarding INTERREG Italia-Österreich and CLLD? Are there any oppositions?

No, we have never felt any opposition or political pressure of any kind.

14. What are the main goals achieved by INTERREG in your opinion?

Development of networks and collaborations between areas close to the border and in general between the participating regions, promotion of the territory in its specificities and peculiarities, protection of natural resources, environmental, hydrogeological of the area, enhancement of historical and cultural heritage.

15. Do you have the feeling that the cooperation between South Tyrol and Tyrol needs to be strengthened in the future? Why?

There is already an excellent level of cooperation, which obviously needs to be nurtured and refined in the near future.

16. Are there aspects that you would like to change in the INTERREG program?

Have you already elaborated the guidelines for the next program planning period starting from 2021?

All program documents are under preparation and can only be published after formal approval of the CP by the European Commission.

## Summary

Culture is a facilitator of relations between EU Member States and, consequently, an important driver of European Integration. Governments and institutions use cultural attractiveness and cultural diplomacy as an instrument of soft power helping to promote peaceful international relations and economic growth. The EU is particularly committed to establish an intercultural dialogue between its Member States. For this reason, in recent times, cultural programs have been introduced to emphasize a shared cultural heritage and a sense of belonging to a cultural identity instrumental to the European integration. Culture is an instrument for forming Union citizens, constructing the EU community, and legitimizing the EU integration processes.

In the founding treaties of the European Community there was none strict and clear explanation of what culture was, leaving their definition at the discretion of the Member States. It could be defined in fact according to their national and local sensibility. We speak about an open-ended definition of the cultural and creative sector. There has been an open debate on the appropriate level of governance that should operate more in the cultural field. Since 1992 Community intervention has been expected only to comply with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, culture has always been considered as a domain of national sovereignty. Culture is in fact an area in which diversities between the member states are obvious not only as far as the anthropological sense is concerned but also for what concerns the institutional forms. In the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) put forward in 2009, there is reference to the cultural area and the competences of the EU in the field, in particular in Article 3 TEU, Article 6 and 167 TFEU. Since EU actions in the cultural policy field must respect the principle of subsidiarity, it mainly encourages the cooperation between Member States. The European integration process occurs at a supranational level through law, whereas at an intergovernmental level it occurs through coordination. The coordination of the Member states in the framework of this policy follows some different ways and the Open Method of Cooperation (OMC) is one of the new forms of cultural cooperation explored in recent years. The European Commission works together with the Member States on the topics relevant for cities and regions, through the OMC.



The cultural policy in the EU is a very complex and fragmented one. The research of this thesis has been qualitative, and the methodology has been descriptive and comparative. I have consulted statutes, program documents, reports, and newspapers articles on the topic and I held two interviews with the representatives of Interreg Italia – Österreich for the region Tyrol and the Autonomous Province of Bozen. This dissertation starts with a theoretical framework including Europeanization and the Multi-level governance. The theoretical and methodological chapter makes use of the theories of Europeanization and multi-level governance to understand the impact that Europe may have on the regional and local area in the field of culture. The study of Europeanization emerged in the second half of the nineties, when comparativists started to study the effects of supranational institutions on national policies in order to understand the impact of European integration on domestic policies. The impact of Europeanization presents profound disparities with respect to regional integration. Indeed, the impact of Europeanization is not foreseeable, and it is generally incremental and irregular over time and between national and subnational locations. The European Union has led to a reorganization of fields that creates new social arrangements and empowers a variety of actors. The political change is the result of multiple political interactions between the European and the national politics. A multitude of actors are at the heart of the process of European integration. Local actors, transnational networks and European citizens have given a boost to the process of European integration in a “bottom-level” perspective. The term “multi-level governance” describes not only the mere division of responsibilities between the different levels, but rather an integrated, mutual coordination of decisions between all levels. Indeed, in the past seventy years, authority has been dispersed by the central state and it shifted both to supranational institutions and subnational jurisdictions. The cultural policy of the EU transcends all levels. Since there is a great number of actors involved and their interconnectedness is not always very clear, this policy is particularly complex and fragmented. Indeed, it is not a very centralized policy, and it is an instrument in the hands of different actors. EU supranational institutions (the European Commission and the European Parliament), regional supranational-institutions (Association of European Border Regions, Committee of the Regions) and sub-national authorities are building alliances that go towards a multi-level governance. The cultural policy of the EU aims not only at boosting a European identity, but also at defending local

cultural expressions and economic interests. It is clear that regional and local actors remain extremely important in the cultural policy area. However, this does not mean that the levels are subject to a hierarchical order, but rather that administrative units are responsible for a certain territorial area. In the EU different actors usually link up with other organizations to form networks. The emergent network-polity has turned culture into a set of resources to be deployed to reach a durable political and economic integration. The Commission proposes concrete initiatives to promote cultural inclusion and urban regeneration enhancing the mobility of artists and cultural professionals. The cultural programs of the European Union have deepened a sense of a common European identity that goes beyond the idea of national identity. Cultural diplomacy is a soft power that encourages the exchange of ideas and aims at inducing cooperation between the two nations, facing common challenges and prevent possible conflicts with the target country. International cultural relations should be structured strategically. Indeed, culture has a strategic role in fostering the European cohesion and integration and in leading the other international powers by example.

Since this thesis will deepen the case study of the interregional cooperation in the field of culture between Italy and Austria, it was necessary also to explain in what the territorial cooperation consists of. Local and regional authorities have started to engage in the local and regional cooperation since the end of the Second World War in order to solve problems with a local cross-border nature. Regulation 1082/2006 is the first European Union legal basis for territorial cooperation, and it recognizes the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC). This legal instrument emancipates regional and local communities vis-à-vis the nation-states. The EGTC enables local and regional authorities, member states, associations, and any public body to team up in cooperation groupings with a legal personality. The EGTC allows the public authorities of the Member States to organize themselves and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement that has to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. Decentralized cross-border cooperation has important added values that are political, institutional, socio-economic and socio-cultural. The cross-border cooperation programs based on EU funds make the two Member States involved to know each other, build trust and get together in order to implement subsidiarity and partnership. The cultural cooperation contributes to disseminate knowledge about the geographical, historical and socio-cultural component

of the cross-border region. It includes the overview of the cross-border region in publications, teaching materials and maps, and the diffusion of extensive knowledge and equal opportunities of the languages and dialects spoken on the border.

Border regions are extremely differentiated in terms of their needs, therefore each of them requires different policy approaches. The starting point of the management of cross-border programs is understanding the functional interrelations and identifying the main border-related problems and opportunities of development in the cooperation area. In defining a cross-border territorial development strategy, policy makers should follow some over-arching principles and the programs should have a participatory bottom-up approach. The process of elaboration of the strategy should involve a wide range of stakeholders, regional and local policy makers, and politicians from the European, national, regional, and local level. A cross-border territorial area should be inward-looking and outward-looking. It means that it should focus on the cross-border area, but it should also take into account macro-societal development trends and the EU policies with territorial effects on the cross-border area. A successful decentralized cross-border cooperation requires an internal partnership between a range of local and regional stakeholders of both sides of the border and external partnerships with national governments.

In the cross-border cooperation between Austria and Italy, the historical legacy, the general ethno-cultural and linguistic settings, the main cultural heritage and natural assets are extremely relevant. This thesis analyzes the interregional cooperation between Italy and Austria through culture in the framework of the European Union. I chose this case study because it is a clear example of multi-level decision-making system in which there is not the prevalence of the European level over the national and the local one. Rather, there is an interconnection and synergy in the work of the different levels to reach a common objective. This thesis investigates how the different actors at a European, national, regional, and local level intervene in the cultural projects. In particular, it focuses on three different cross-border cooperation programs: Interreg Italia – Österreich, Euregio Tyrol - South Tyrol - Trentino and the CLLD Terra Raetica. Interreg Italia – Österreich represents the European level, Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino represents the regional level and the CLLD Terra Raetica represents the local level.

Interreg Europe was created in 1990 and it has shown that borders are not dividing barriers. Interreg main goal is to pave the way for regions to give their full potential for the social, economic and environmental progress. In the multi-level governance system, Interreg represents the European level, since it is a program launched by the Commission and funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It provides local and regional public authorities with opportunities to share ideas and experience on public policy, improving strategies for their communities and citizens. Interreg V Italia – Österreich 2014-2020 is a cooperation program that aims at facing the most important cross-border challenges between the two countries by enhancing their potentials. The regions involved in the Interreg V Italia-Österreich are Kärnten, Salzburg, Tyrol, Autonomous Province of Bozen, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The territory is mostly rural with a high mountain range. Resolution No. 1067 of 2014 of the Council of the Autonomous Province of Bozen, made this latter as the managing authority of the 2014-2020 cooperation program. The administrative authority has the task of setting up a Joint Secretariat that is in charge of all the administrative procedures and a Monitoring Committee. In addition, at local level there are six Regional Coordination Units, equal in number to the regions involved in the cooperation program. They act as a bridge between the program and the territory, providing information on the opportunities provided, but also supporting the project partners in the bureaucratic issues necessary to manage first project proposals and then actual projects. The program is funded for a total of 98 million euro both by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and some national public contributions. Interreg Italia – Österreich has four main priorities: research and innovation, nature and culture, institutions, and community-led local development. Interreg Italia – Österreich proved to be able to guarantee the preservation of the cultural and naturalistic heritage in the area on the border. Relevant examples are the restoration of Church of Saint Margherita in Vigo di Cadore in Veneto in Italy, the renovation of the Castle Heinfels and Altfinstermünz in Tyrol in Austria and the creation of the project Lichtbild, an images collection of the history of South Tyrol. The private sector has always been a fundamental beneficiary of Interreg Italia – Österreich program. The fund aims at helping mostly small and medium-sized enterprises. The managing authority has approved a document that sets out the conditions and the modalities under which companies can have access to these State funds. Within the Interreg functioning

document, special attention is given to culture and cultural heritage that should become more accessible to people, in particular people with disabilities.

The Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino is an EGTC between Austria and Italy. Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol -Trentino finances and manages around 20-25 projects on a yearly basis. Projects are mainly focused on culture, education, research, youth, economic and social affairs, mobility and environment. In 2011, the cooperation in the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino was established on the basis of EU Regulation 1082/2006. This legal form was established to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation for public entities, such as universities, municipalities and provinces. According to its statute, the main objectives of Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino are the strengthening of economic, social and cultural relations between the population and the promotion of territorial development in the fields of education, culture, energy, sustainable mobility, economy. It contributes to the preservation of cultural and naturalistic heritage, the strengthening of a common identity, an increasing touristic offer, an increasing involvement of the local community and business, and the protection of the environment. In the multi-level governance system, the European Region thus represents the regional level.

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a bottom-up local development method to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas and to address social, economic and environmental challenges. The local population is thus given the opportunity to actively engage in the EU policy process and thus increase its effectiveness. This direct involvement of the local level in the process of achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy Project proposals can be submitted by local, regional, and national authorities and organizations. In the cooperation area of the Interreg Italia – Österreich 2014-2020, four CLLD projects were approved: Dolomiti Live, HEurOpen, Terra Raetica and Wipptal. During the 2014-2020 period, a broad group of local companies received funds from Interreg V Italia – Österreich. The aim of the CLLD approach is to bring regional development to the local level and thus to create cross-border governance structures for the participatory and citizen-oriented implementation of the program. This strengthens the multi-level governance system.

From the study of these interregional programs that include also the field of culture, some conclusions have been drawn.

Interreg Italia – Österreich is one of the key instruments of the EU to boost regional cooperation, but it does not have a hierarchical superiority over the other two programs, rather it creates the strategic and financial framework for the involvement of other actors in the multilevel governance model. The research of this thesis showed that the community-led activities are extremely important in the regional cooperation in the sector of culture. This type of activities brings decision-making competences regarding projects within the framework of EU regional policy to sub-national levels and give the opportunity to local communities to actively engage in the EU policy process and consequently increase its effectiveness. As a matter of fact, there is a relevant interconnection between the different programs. For example, Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino is participating in some CLLD projects of the current Interreg Italia - Österreich. The CLLD regions pursue the goal of the strengthening of cross-border cooperation at the local level, while the EGTC pursues it at the regional level. Both initiatives can benefit from each other through an exchange of know-how as well as an intensive cooperation. The CLLD regions have elaborated their cross-border development strategies in coordination with Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino and they are supported in the implementation aspect by the General Secretariat of the EGTC in Bozen. Additional measures for the consolidation and further development of the cooperation between the Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino and the three CLLD regions were defined by the decision No. 8 of the EGTC Board in 2017. In the future the CLLD regions will have the possibility to use the logo of the European Region in their public relations. Furthermore, the representatives of Euregio Tyrol – South Tyrol - Trentino will start participating in the meetings of the CLLD regions in order to strengthen the mutual flow of information about project activities between the Europaregion and the three Interreg Councils. For the next programming period 2021-2027, CLLD will be strengthened and also financially upgraded for a functional cooperation in a larger spatial context. A mutual support in the ongoing joint communication and cooperation in the context of events and information materials are further measures that will contribute to an expansion of cooperation.

The cooperation programs presented in this thesis involve not only culture, but they are strictly related to other areas and current issues, such as the environmental issue and the identity question. Indeed, in the area on the border there are relevant naturalistic sites that are worth protecting, such as the Dolomites, UNESCO World Heritage site. The environmental argument has a pivotal importance because nature is a primary source for tourism and the economy of the area on the border between Italy and Austria. The environment has also been a priority of Interreg Italia - Österreich since its establishment. For instance, Interreg V Italia - Österreich 2014-2020 has funded important projects in the nature and culture field, such as the GLISTT Project, which monitors and describes the effects of climate change at the level of glaciers throughout the program area, highlighting weaknesses and possible measures of intervention to save them. The programming period 2021-2027 of Interreg Italia – Österreich will focus on climate and this topic will characterize more than one third of all the projects eligible for funding. Among the Interreg Italia - Österreich main goals, there is the protection of natural resources and their sustainable management with the aim of increasing the tourist attractiveness of the area.

The language issue and identity issue are a particularly hot topic on the area on the border between Italy and Austria. For instance, in South Tyrol bilingualism is protected under the Italian law. German and Italian are the languages used in all the interregional programs presented so far. The Interreg Italia – Österreich program finances measures for the enhancement of cultural and linguistic heritage which include also the minorities of the territory, such as the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol. The German language and culture remain fundamental and prevalent in the territory of the province of Bozen. The cooperation with the Austrian territory is clearly facilitated by these similarities, which make the partnership between the South Tyrolean area and the Austrian Länder particularly strong and incisive at the level of the program as a whole. As far as the multi-level governance in the question of identity is concerned, its effects are double-edged. On one side, multilevel governance can transform national minorities into regional majorities and intensify their demand for autonomy. On the other hand, multi-level governance can give regionalists some of what they aimed to and consequently weaken their appeal. However, for what concerns cultural programs in which different actors intervenes, none of the political parties demonstrated to be against them. Both

independentist parties and pro-European parties are in favor of cross-border programs focused on culture and natural protection. Italia – Österreich has created a sense of belonging to the EU especially in those areas in which it was not so deeply rooted, such as in small towns close to the border or in alpine isolated areas. These latter have got to know the considerable advantages of the European "source" of funding and benefited from them.

As it has been widely discussed, the management of these projects involve a multitude of different actors at different levels, namely the European, the national and the sub-national one. For this reason, the management of these interregional projects is not easy, and I expected that the project leaders sometimes have encountered some obstacles, especially for what concerns the multi-level structure that governs them. However, the long-term and stable cooperation between all the actors involved results in a partnership where decisions are taken in the spirit of cooperation. Bozen, as the administrative authority, works as a mediator and coordinator and it is extremely committed to the further consolidation of a good cooperation climate. Notwithstanding the general consent towards cross-border cooperation and its good functioning, one must admit that some problems and barriers still persist. The obstacles shared by the population living on the border area between Italy and Austria are: cultural differences (37%), language differences (69%), accessibility (40%) and administrative and institutional obstacles (59%). A strategy for addressing these obstacles is needed and must be put in place. As the Interreg programs are instrumental to effective cross-border cooperation, they should seek to address these particular obstacles and make use of the common potential to facilitate cooperation in this wider context. Moreover, according to the study "Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions", legal and administrative barriers persist. For this reason, a focus on addressing these obstacles can have added value.

Thanks to the interview held with the representatives of the Interreg project, it has been shown that this program has fostered the relations between Italy and Austria in recent years. The three programs discussed in this thesis foster a fruitful exchange between the different cultures and mentalities of the regions involved. Their joint and harmonious work represents a step forward the cultural, political and economic integration, and the idea of a unified Europe. Cooperation programs are able to boost the development of



collaboration networks between areas close to the border and in general between the participating regions, promote the territory in its specificities and peculiarities, protect natural, environmental and hydrogeological resources of the area, and enhance the historical and cultural heritage. A special attention to the identity issue and minorities and to the protection of the environment are included in the European, national, regional and local levels.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic made in some cases the borders between the Member States uncrossable. Every state acted without any European spirit, rebuilding those borders that had apparently already been overcome. The first phase of the pandemic showed that there was too little Europe and too much nation state. Notwithstanding a first period of dispersion, actors at the European, national and subnational levels have realized that relations between countries had to be encouraged. This had to occur not only through economy, but also through culture in order to guarantee social cohesion in the areas on the border. This cooperation leads to the overcoming of the nation-state thinking towards a functional thinking in the sense of a Europe of the regions. Since culture is a multi-layered and interdisciplinary topic, cooperation through culture must be encouraged and triggered in the future through a multitude of concrete initiatives.

Interreg, Euregio and CLLDs resulted to be able to bring Member States together for what regional and cultural cooperation are concerned. Programs related to natural and cultural heritage within a strategic context, involving stakeholders within a multi-governance context are required to continue a cross-border cooperation. For this reason, authorities are encouraged to use the different available tools to support functional areas and to cooperate with the relevant macro-regional key stakeholders. Regions have to continue to work for the strengthening of cooperation of neighboring Member States because the danger of retrocession in the European integration process is still threatening. Fruitful and peaceful relations need to be constantly cultivated to promote the exchange of know-how and good practices in the scientific, technological, and administrative fields, as well as the work in strategic sectors for the specific border area, such as the protection of the environment or the overcome of cultural and linguistic barriers.

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