

## TURKEY AND THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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### Abstract

Consideration of the report on the IPA-CBC territorial cooperation programme between the EU and Turkey is the starting point to study about reconstructing the process that brought territorial dimension to the centre of the EU “foreign policy”. At the present time, the Union's relations with the third countries can be classified according to geographic criteria: either as territorial cooperation with neighbouring countries; international cooperation in the other cases. The political process pointing at the regional dimension within the enlargement, integration and neighbourhood policies is analysed through EU documents, thus showing the change in the meaning of “border” due to decentralization, cohesion and territorial cooperation on different scales.

*Keywords: cohesion, cross-border, integration, neighbourhood, territorial cooperation, Turkey, Europe.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

National borders are changing their significance and regions are considered new fields for cooperation. The main objective of this paper is to reconstruct the process that brought territorial dimension to the centre of the “foreign policy” of the EU (IPOL-REGI\_ET(2007)397237). At the present time, the European Union's relations with the rest of the world can be classified according to geographic criteria: territorial cooperation with neighbouring countries; international cooperation in the other cases. The political process pointing at the regional dimension within the enlargement, integration and neighbourhood policies has been interpreted through the documents produced by the EU, expressing the change in the meaning of “border” due to decentralization, cohesion and territorial cooperation on different scales (Cappellin and Batey, 1993; Batt, 2003; Paasi, 2009). The effects of these processes are reflected in both internal and external dimensions of the EU.

The Euro-Mediterranean area represents the limit to the possible enlargement of the Union, in fact the Treaty on European Union states that any European country may apply for membership if it respects the EU's democratic values. The question is how can the EU increase its influence in a polycentric world having size limitations? The role of cooperation and cohesion with neighbouring countries is the instrument to expand and stabilize the area of

influence of the EU. In parallel with the process of great enlargement to the East (2003), in fact, the debate on the Turkey's accession would also rekindle this (access to negotiation was opened in 2005). The examination of the course of relations between the European Union and the Euro-Mediterranean region, in particular with Turkey (Christensen, 2009), has been used to show this phenomenon, in which the concept of "proximity" refers both to spatial contiguity and sharing of common interests and values (Rehn, 2006).

The State, identified as the epicentre of regulation and sharply demarcated, has been influenced by the process of globalization, thereby generating profound changes through the manifestation of territorial links established by the integration processes (Brenner, 2003). This is particularly evident in recent European history. The territorial projection of that choice, perhaps obliged by the search for "non-belligerent" responses to meeting needs, has triggered processes of cooperation and co-opting that have made sustainability objectives common, so that, consequently and implicitly, the resources have become common and their efficient management convenient to all parties involved. Thus, the concept of 'border' has changed from a "limit" to become a "place for mediation and meeting". This new sensibility involves all territorial scales and justifies the consequent reflection on what European identity is or how the EU intends to build it (Kahler, 2009).

As a consequence, it is possible to understand how the path that led to the establishment of the principle of subsidiarity (Maastricht, 1992), implying the progressive involvement of regional and local authorities within the EU, has been retraced in the case of external territories, overcoming cooperation toward a greater cohesion through territorial cooperation (Allegri, 2009). The shift from the geographic theme of distance to that of proximity as well as the involvement of regional authorities facilitates a dilution of the dichotomy internal/external of the European Union and produces three main effects: overcoming the rigidity resulting from the involvement of the State levels; a greater sharing of the *acquis* of the Union; and diffusion of stability and safety.

In this article the process from cohesion to territorial cooperation within the Union is reconstructed, highlighting the link between the changes that occurred in the programming of structural funds and spatial planning topics, connecting to the main lines of research on these issues (Bennett, 2004; Faludi, 2004; Schout and Jordan, 2007; Adams, Cotella and Nunes, 2012). Secondly, how these modifications (i.e. changes in the structural funds objectives and enlargement) within the Union are analysed and how this involves relations with Mediterranean countries, in particular with Turkey. The choice of this country is due to the double opportunity of reflecting both on the change of vision from border to central country with multiple regional identities (Davutoğlu, 2008), and on the issue of territorial cooperation and territorial cohesion in the different steps of Turkey's relations with the EU.

A deductive methodology was used to examine the main regulations concerning the structural funding programmes, as regards their objectives of territorial cooperation and cohesion<sup>1</sup>, thus showing the importance of the territorial determinant within the development processes led by regional policies. These in turn are dedicated both to internal consolidation through the application of rebalancing and regional convergence tools, and to the EU enlargement processes. This dual movement constitutes the beginning of a reflection on subsequent changes of external relations. As an actor in the global multi-polar system, the EU is involved in major strategic decisions that also implies and creates territorial links (Dühr, Colomb and Nadin, 2010). These links are an expression of the networks to which the future role of the EU should be tied, especially in its relations with Turkey.

The Cohesion Fund has always been dedicated to the development of networks and it is interesting to notice that the Turkish territory was already considered as part of the system of European corridors in the report of the first round table on European Regional Planning Concept (CoE, 1980). This fund led to the use of 'networks' as a metaphor concerning the aspects of territorial cooperation with Turkey. In this paper the historical links between EU

and Turkey are reconstructed, paying particular attention to major CBC programmes involving Turkey and two European countries: Greece and Bulgaria. These examples emphasize the importance of examining territory at a subsidiary scale, in order to disseminate the principles of democracy from below, confirming the importance of the public in the environmental/social sphere, and to put into practice ESPD principles (Doucet, 2006).

The reconstruction of the link between balanced development, planning of structural funds and territorial cooperation serves the purpose of highlighting the role of Europe in facilitating and fostering relations based on the principle of subsidiarity and geographical proximity in the implementation of territorial cooperation.

## **2. INTEGRATION AND EUROPEAN REGIONAL POLICY**

The process of integration can be considered the parent of other EU policies. Initially structured into pillars – justice and internal affairs, police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, common foreign and security policy – it developed transversal competences so as to transform the Community into a Union. This shift was achieved through processes that involved subsidiary scales of territorial government. The role of regional policy on decentralization and cohesion was crucial as a process to promote and “to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and by mitigating the backwardness of the less favoured”, as written in the preamble of the Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, a declaration already present in the Treaty of Rome of 1957.

Regional policy, therefore, represented the *passé-partout* that, due to the application of the principle of subsidiarity, involved local actors for the achievement of the EU development goals, measured by convergence and competitiveness. In fact, the marriage project-programme-plan materialized in the dialogue between European, national and regional/urban levels. Indeed, the application phase of economic policies benefited from the urban connotation of Europe, which promoted forms of integration and interpenetration of organizational models of government (Salone, 2005). These innovations disarticulated the hierarchical structure and conjugated the dimensions of economic development with spatial planning, thus triggering the debate on the strategic role of territorial organization at European level (Lash and Urry, 1994; Kunzmann, 1996; Faludi, 2007).

These considerations were derived from the debate on the relations between space and power and the birth of a new regionalism. Ohmae (1993) used the expression “Regional States” to describe how regional entities had replaced national states as organizing economic units within the global economy. It was recognised how these kinds of regions were connected to some particular cities (Scott, 1996; Sassen, 2006), creating cities as “regional centres”. The process of rescaling state powers led to a “new regionalism” through a functional view of the region, based on the concept of the network. From this perspective, the network was the result of the combination of market-driven self-regulation and actions of government in an area of common interest. The following step led to the known formulation of polycentric spatial development, as defined in ESPD (1999) and ESPON 1.1.1 (2005) (Albrechts, Healey and Kunzmann, 2003).

Finally, in Europe, the reflection on the functional region refers to the institutional definition given by AER (Assembly of European Regions) in 1996, according to which the region is “the territorial body of public law established at the level immediately below that of the state and endowed with political self-government” (AER, 1996). EU Cohesion Policy as presented in the first multiannual financial framework, also known as Delors I package, established the above-mentioned scenario.

The process of enrichment and modernization of this policy, started in 1986 with the Single European Act, is also recognizable in the subsequent succession of treaties: Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice, until the Treaty of Lisbon, which expanded the European vision including territorial cohesion. In the framework of integration, which started a process of transfer of competences upwards within the European Community/Union, the stress was placed on how, thanks to cohesion, an instrument of cooperation simultaneously existed, which facilitated the horizontal union through the organization of competences on a regional scale, in order to start and/or support local development processes. The passage of the identification of regional levels on which the objectives of European structural funds fall and the consequent possibility of collaborative actions between regions show the link between cohesion and cooperation, which generates synergies at various territorial scales.

During the different stages of enlargement, there was a need to modulate the available tools for balancing regional development within the Union, starting with a process of consolidation/adjustment of policies and objectives. The experiences and results achieved in these areas eventually suggested the possibility of exporting such a model to the new border territories of the Union. In fact, the birth of the Barcelona process in 1995 supports this reading of the cohesive/inclusive course of spaces unrelated to accession. Therefore, cohesion policy and cooperation identify the geographical distribution of Community action that has been changing in relation to the objectives gradually achieved within the European Union. The initiatives and Community programmes implemented by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund, indeed, have had interwoven stories until the structuring of territorial cooperation within the pre-accession/neighbourhood policy.

### **3. SPATIAL PLANNING: COHESION**

The political realization of the role of spatial planning moved along a path that led to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) of 1999. The idea of regional planning within Europe had been proposed as a consequence of the reflections of the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe in 1958. Many traces of this theme can be found within the conferences promoted by the Council of Europe, which consolidated this direction in a first report entitled “Regional Planning: European Problem” (Strasbourg, 1968). It was the search for the formation of a unity that stimulated reflections on the need for a common regional planning policy; reflections that were resumed afterwards by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT).

Thus far, it has been established that a connection exists between balanced/sustainable development and cohesion in Europe, with a territorial nature stressed in the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter (Council of Europe, Torremolinos, May 1983). The problem of planning on a European scale, in fact, became even more important by the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, due to the creation of a Single European Market and the other political changes taking place within the Community. These same changes were also behind the hindrance of some of the processes of accession on several occasions, including the case of Turkey.

The search for a larger role for Europe in the field of territorial development policy was, indeed, the main innovation emerging from the documents published by the European Commission, Europe 2000 and Europe 2000+ (CEC, 1991; CEC, 1994), later confirmed in the principles proposed by the informal Council of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning at Leipzig in 1994. This expansion of role would result in the elaboration of a spatial planning draft: the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (Resolution 226 of 20/07/1998). This political document was the result of consensus and cooperation among member states, with collaboration considered essential to overcome the institutional weakness of the Union, resulting from the absence of specific competences in the subject.

The union answered this “lack of competence” with a consolidation of the bond between spatial planning and the privileged fields of action of the Community initiative INTERREG at transnational and interregional level, also linked by the reform of the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund, especially from the perspective of enlargement. Moreover, there was an explicit reference to the need for introducing regional planning at community level, considering that the intergovernmental dynamic had exhausted its possibilities for action (Paragraph 20 - Resolution on regional planning and the European Spatial Development Perspective, Official Journal C 226, 20/07/1998 P. 0042). In fact, regarding the same topic, it is argued (in Paragraph 22) that the Council “*welcomes the Commission proposal to maintain Interreg, with particular regard to cross-border cooperation; considers that its financial allocation should be consolidated and that it is therefore necessary to go beyond the present predominantly bilateral form of cooperation and promote the creation of joint management bodies for the programmes in which greater participation by the regional and local authorities can be ensured*”.

From the Leipzig political principles, which oriented the following works and linked spatial planning to Structural Funds – competitiveness, sustainability, cohesion – the adjustments to the objectives of the funds also originated<sup>2</sup>. Competitiveness, occupation and cooperation, therefore, are the results of the territorialization process of development policies. Furthermore, the formal adoption of ESDP highlights the growing interdependence of countries, which undermines the basis of the expression of a sovereign state government: the territory. The problem of legitimization and repartition of powers, consequently, was addressed in parallel by structuring the guidelines according to the principles of subsidiarity and the implementation of governance systems. The European Parliament report of 1998 (PE 224.312/fin. A4-0206/98) states: “*The idea of regional planning implies a basic political option, namely intervention by government to obtain the best possible distribution of social and economic activities in its territory, with the ultimate aim of increasing the welfare and standard of living of its citizens.*

*So far, the idea is universally accepted and practised throughout the Member States. It implies that the public authorities should be empowered to correct economic trends, anticipate social and economic change and, ultimately, endeavour to make the most of the advantages of their particular region and offset its handicaps.*

*Even at national level, this exercise involves securing a difficult political and social consensus, by calling into play not only questions of the regional and institutional division of powers but also purely ideological issues. It is thus hardly surprising that suspicions should be aroused and progress slow when the idea of regional planning reaches the European domain”.*

In the same document transnational, cross-border and interregional levels are reiterated as representing examples of European cooperation in the field of spatial planning. So, it is possible to dissertate on a further classification that sees cooperation as a prerequisite of cohesion. The European spatial planning agenda was intended, therefore, as political message that: “*sketches the framework for an integrated European regional planning policy based on a search for consistency through coordination between territories (geographical), sectoral policies (horizontal) and levels of government (vertical)*” (PE 224.312/fin. A4-0206/98).

Parallel to this direction, in the years between 1992 and 1995, the link between cooperation and cohesion with Mediterranean countries also took shape. In the Recommendation 7 (1994), regarding the topic of proximity relations with the Mediterranean area, the Council of Europe (forerunner or prompter of the Commission) recommends that the Commission of the European Union “*attributes the highest priority to regional/spatial planning in transfrontier regions inside and outside its territory, and develops operational concepts in this respect, in close co-operation with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), particularly with regard to Eastern Europe and the southern Mediterranean*

*countries*” (Recommendation 7, 1994). The considerations contained in the annex of the aforementioned report are equally indicative: “Guidelines for regional/spatial planning in the greater Europe”.

Based on the principles and evolution generated from the Leipzig Conference of 1994, therefore, the resulting form of organization was the vision of a balanced and polycentric space, with equal opportunities of access to infrastructural networks as well as to knowledge, ensuring the protection of cultural and environmental heritage. Looking long term, the ministers responsible for territorial policies emphasized the need to boost the relations of cooperation, as a natural expression of cohesion, both with European third countries and with Countries of the Southern Mediterranean (Gillespie, 2003; Lavenex, 2004).

#### **4. TERRITORIAL COHESION AND THE MEDITERRANEAN**

The territorial issue is an innovative aspect in policies related to Mediterranean countries; the transition from a bipolar world to an increasingly multi-polar reality is a frequently underlined theme. This section highlights the link between the will to promote polycentric dimensions within European space, as an application tool of the cohesion policy, and suggests the possible projection of the same interpretative scheme on a global scale.

In brief, it is possible to reconnect the threads that, from a dual structure – internal and external of the Union – show a convergence through the evolution of cohesion and neighbourhood policies. With the adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Union responded to some impulses related to its setting: from the fall of the Berlin wall to the adoption of the single currency. The domino effect influenced the practices of integration, leading to a more structured accession policy (Copenhagen criteria, 1993). These spatial impacts are documented in the fluctuating outcomes of the enlargement process that some countries such as Turkey have experienced.

As a consequence, important changes can be read in the modifications of the structural funds regulations; in the Agenda 2000 document in support of social and economic cohesion; in the Lisbon European Council announced objectives (March 2000) which proposes a strategy aimed at making Europe “*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world*” by 2010; in the Göteborg European Council (June 2001), that introduced in the strategy the centrality of environmental protection and the need to follow a more sustainable model of development.

It would then seem that the problems of socio-economic disparities, as amplified by the enlargement process, requires answers that transcend national boundaries, so arriving at the completion of Cohesion Policy, which acquired the pillar of territorial cohesion: “...*Based on articles 2, 6, 16 and 158 included in the EC Treaty, territorial cohesion has been considered as the third dimension of Cohesion Policy ...*” (Territorial Agenda of the European Union, 2007). What emerges is that development and economic evolution of countries are determined by structural factors: institutions, democracy, knowledge, etc., i.e. balancing factors of globalization, that make it easier to supply basic needs such as raw materials, savings, capital goods. Territorial cohesion has not received any official definition and according to John Bennett (2004) is a policy objective that can contribute to the harmonious and balanced development of the Union. In addition to these considerations, the European experience of peaceful development, started with the process of economic integration, was reproduced in the Mediterranean area as a disincentive to conflicts and also as a natural extension of European integration (Kramsch and Hooper, 2004).

So, Community social policies at regional level were redirected in order to become more effective, integrated tools, thus welding through the funds the three dimensions of cohesion, which by its very nature does not have a predetermined boundary. This is what happened with the extension of the INTERREG programme and specifically relating to the cross-

border, transnational and interregional cooperation, enriched by the modifications occurred with the PHARE, TACIS and MEDA initiatives within the framework of more developed tools in pre-accession and neighbourhood policy, rewritten since 2006. It is the Regulation 1082/06 that indicated the importance of European territorial cooperation along with the objectives of convergence and competitiveness.

In this framework of transformation of the EU, made possible by the overcoming of nationalist tendencies and movement towards a shared vision implemented in integration, the relations of Europe with its changing borders as well as the consciousness of its own limits are inserted. In geographical terms, the Mediterranean Sea is the natural southern border of the continent and so an element of separation, but also a place subject to the common use of marine space. Besides, the concept of a Mediterranean region is related both to a physical and climatic oneness, characterized by common elements but also variable in their manifestation in spatial/temporal terms, and to an absence of oneness in their socio-economic features.

The changes in the perception of such space from oneness to fragmentation can be retraced starting from Reclus who, in 1876, identified the Mediterranean geographic region by stressing its homogeneous character based on the nature of international trade that created a particular kind of identity, up to J. Béthemont (2003), who, on the contrary, stressed the lack of oneness<sup>3</sup>. A possible compromise between those positions had been represented by the political vision of Europe in the Mediterranean area, induced both by themes of security, already developed in the Cold War period, and development, facilitating a functionalist interpretation of the region.

The lack of an objective reference unit and the initial economic nature of the European Community, indeed, explains the evolution of the relations between Europe and the Southern and South-eastern Mediterranean. As Aliboni says, *“l’esistenza di rapporti collettivi dei paesi europei con quelli a sud ed est del bacino mediterraneo risale alla costituzione della CEE. È con la nascita di quest’ultima che vengono messi in comune i rapporti e gli impegni oltremare di alcuni degli Stati membri (Francia, Belgio, Italia e Paesi Bassi)...in un primo tempo i rapporti coi paesi dell’Africa del Nord e del Medio Oriente si sviluppano individualmente ed empiricamente. Solo nel 1972 la CEE imposta un quadro comune di gestione dei suoi rapporti mediterranei sotto il nome di ‘Politica mediterranea globale’”* (Aliboni, 2000, p. 20)<sup>4</sup>. The idea of a Mediterranean region is then announced as well as the development of institutionalized relations with it.

The identification of this region within Europe has been connected to the political objectives that would be structured in the course of time. Interest in the Mediterranean neighbourhood is essential for the European vision of stability and security, dealing with issues related to the principles of balance between opposed geographic areas at a global level.

Initiatives undertaken over the years are generally characterized by discontinuity and their lack of homogeneity, exacerbated by the global geopolitical dynamics and the instability and precariousness of the peace process in the Middle East. A time of awakening of collaborative actions for stability and solidarity in terms of political and economic security came with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), launched in 1995 and known as Barcelona process. This Act started the institutional structuring of an organic and coherent community policy in the area. Within the Partnership, the Association Agreements have a multilateral orientation with the aim of promoting forms of regional cooperation among the Arab states for encouraging international governance. The European experience of integration through subsidiarity also became an objective in the Mediterranean area, in order to reduce the political and economic gap through a process of empowerment of participants. The will was then to make of the Mediterranean region a real expression of shared values. The Barcelona Declaration was signed by twenty-seven partners: the fifteen EU countries, eleven Mediterranean countries - Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey – and the Palestinian National Authority, only eight of these

having signed the treaties. Since then the European Union has promoted a series of good practices both at institutional and debate level among partners to promote multilateralism and the construction of the Mediterranean region (Aliboni, 2000, p. 85).

The region has then different interpretative scales, due to the peculiarity of being the space where the interdependencies between sectoral policies become visible, because it is “the territorial body of public law established at the level immediately below that of the state and endowed with political self-government” (AER, 1996). In this sense, it is up to the regions to promote territorial cohesion, in terms of role of the territory in equal potential development and reasonable standards of living (Bennett, 2004). Interdependence leads to the consequent “extra-territorialization” of European policies in Wider Europe (Lavenex, 2004).

The difficult and unstable Middle-Eastern situations, however, mark the up and down relations with Europe. A new impetus, in fact, came from the renewed Neighbourhood Policy. As written in the Communication (COM(2003) 104 final) Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours: *“The Euro-Mediterranean partnership offers a strong policy framework for the EU's relations with Mediterranean countries. Since the Barcelona declaration was adopted in 1995 it has formed the basis for a continuing dialogue and cooperation in spite of the political turmoil in the region. As far as the bilateral dimension of EU relations is concerned, the basic framework is similar for both groups of countries: Association Agreements or Partnership and Cooperation agreements, including political dialogue, are accompanied by national Meda/Tacis programmes and agreements on specific issues (readmission, fisheries etc.). The most important difference is that, in the Mediterranean, an explicit regional dimension encouraging the development of intra-regional initiatives and cooperation in a broad range of sectors is included. This policy of promoting intra-regional cooperation consists of three Chapters defined in the Barcelona Declaration supplementing the bilateral framework: the Political and Security Chapter, Economic and Financial Chapter and Social, Cultural and Human Chapter”*. With the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), a significant boost was given to cooperation and to regional and sub-regional integration among Southern Mediterranean countries through the principle of differentiation. The following statement is indeed present in the document: *“The EU should act to reinforce and unite its existing neighbourhood policy towards these regions around two overarching objectives for the next decade or longer:*

*- To work with the partners to reduce poverty and create an area of shared prosperity and values based on deeper economic integration, intensified political and cultural relations, enhanced cross-border cooperation and shared responsibility for conflict prevention between the EU and its neighbours.*

*- To anchor the EU's offer of concrete benefits and preferential relations within a differentiated framework which responds to progress made by the partner countries in political and economic reform”*.

With the conclusion of the accession processes of the Central and Eastern European states, the Euro-Mediterranean relations were reinserted, therefore, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy that, as mentioned, was meant to encourage the creation of a security, stability and prosperity zone in the border area of the Union, by signing new Euro-Mediterranean agreements as well as free trade agreements among the EU partners, and also fixed the standards on which collaboration should be based: shared responsibility, differentiation, conditionality. It defines, finally, the areas of collaboration: political reforms, respect for human rights, security, structural economic reforms. The main objective pursued by the ENP was to enable those countries, excluded from accession, to receive the same benefits received from Eastern European countries that joined the Union, thus starting a more intense political, economic and cultural cooperation (Manfra, 2010).

It is the concept of proximity that settles the interest for borders and differentials in the relations with each country, also depending on its physical and socio-economic position, confirming in this pragmatic cooperation the non-existence of a Mediterranean Region because of the divergent interests of the Arab countries. Multilateralism, bilateralism, regionalism and integration on different scales describe then tricky processes to structure the context of relations outside the Union, with the strategic aim of building a Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (PEMFTA) (Tino, 2012), to be created through cross-border cooperation, implemented by operative structures in which national, regional and local authorities are involved and through multi-annual programming.

In 2007, moreover, forty-three countries signed the founding document of the “Union for the Mediterranean” (UfM)<sup>5</sup>, focused on the development of regional projects and returned to intergovernmental formulae concerning six priorities: de-pollution of the Mediterranean; building of maritime and land highways between the two sides of the Mediterranean; strengthening of civil protection; creation of a Mediterranean solar plan; development of an Euro-Mediterranean University; promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the operation of UfM has so far been quite limited because of politic-institutional difficulties that have not yet been overcome.

The popular uprisings of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa in 2010 eventually led to the adoption of a new European Neighbourhood Policy, which emphasizes the promotion of democracy and rights, extolling the principle of differentiation and conditionality in the relations between EU and Mediterranean countries and establishing specific support to civil society organizations. The instruments promoting economic and social cohesion are, therefore, a precondition to the development of territorial cohesion, needed to develop long chains of proximity. The reflection on the “variable geometry”, ensued from the possible regionalization, eventually allows the institutional nature of the particular region considered in this paper to be specified and thus of the authority that it can exert to promote cohesion as a tool for sustainable development. This peculiarity has been taken into account in the evaluation of cross-border cooperation experiences between Turkey and the EU.

## **5. A SUSPENSION BRIDGE: TURKEY IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN SPACE**

The long story of relations between the EU and Turkey can be summarized starting from Turkey’s first application for associate membership of the European Economic Community (EEC), in 1959<sup>6</sup>. That was the beginning of a long process that would bring Turkey to be recognized as an EU candidate country in 1999. This occurrence was made possible by a particular geographical feature: the fact that part of Turkey’s territory is inside the European continent<sup>7</sup>. The first association agreement (known as the Ankara Agreement) dates back to 1963. The course was resumed after the first major enlargement of the Union and the emanation of the Single Act: in 1987, indeed, Turkey made an application for full EEC membership. However, it was only in 1999 that the EU Helsinki Council recognized it as an EU candidate country on an equal footing with other candidate countries. The access to negotiation was opened in 2005, but in 2008 the Council adopted a revised Accession Partnership for Turkey. Regular Reports of the Commission registered the progress of the country in fulfilling the criteria defined at Copenhagen in 1993<sup>8</sup>, concerning economic aspects and the acceptance of the Community *acquis*.

The aforementioned facts intertwined with partnership and neighbourhood policies, thus confirming the strategic role of Turkey in connecting three continents and opening the way to particular cooperation scenarios with the Arab world. The long path undertaken and the stalemate in the relations with Turkey can be basically attributed both to the adverse position of France and to the internal problems of “secularization” of the country: party opponents,

Kurdish issue, relations with Cyprus, all led to a slowing down of the reforms. However, the interest to encourage and reanimate the integration process is reciprocal, since Europe is particularly attracted by Turkey's strategic position, which opens the way to many possible areas of influence – Balkans, Central Asia, Middle East, Africa – thus strengthening proximity strategies. In the case of Turkey, on the other hand, it is the cumbersome weight of countries such as Russia, Iran and the Arab countries to push it westwards.

This tricky and still uncertain path suggests some reflections on the role that territorial cooperation can play within the integration process: constitution of a unity. Within the wider European strategy, indeed, the inclusive role of the border for stability, security and sustainable development is clearly recognized, with the instrument for achieving these objectives being territorial cooperation, that requires a high level of harmonization and the participation of national and sub-national institutions as well as civil society.

In this framework, the last accession principle was added at the European Council summit held in June 2006, called “absorption capacity”. It was created as “a safety valve for the member states as they can always delay enlargement on the grounds that the EU is not ready to absorb new members” (Christensen, 2009, p. 4). According to the same author, “the principle of absorption capacity has been very prevalent in the discussion over Turkish enlargement which has been considered as a concern for the institutional and socio-economic balance in the EU with its relatively large population, economic impact, and socio-cultural differences” (*ibid.*). This principle preserves the internal efficiency of the system and then its cohesion, by activating precautionary processes and fostering those modifications that are essential for real integration.

The 2007-2013 programming period has been directing this process of diffusion of democratic practices, completely renewing the neighbourhood policy with the introduction of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), governed by the Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006.

## **6. GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL COOPERATION IN TURKEY**

The debate on the prospect of Turkey's accession has been described in the previous section, highlighting how the EU is looking for a balance between different positions through the principles of differentiation and absorption capacity. Such considerations serve to remind how economic and geographic spaces are intertwined, thus generating repercussions on regional organization. Retracing Turkish history and the evolution of Turkey's relations with neighbouring countries – which, in turn, have their own political, economic, historical and cultural evolutions – is not the objective of this work<sup>9</sup>. Its aim is rather to understand how territorial cooperation involves the regional level by observing some particularly interesting cases, which show different typologies of cross-border relations involving candidate countries and member states, focussed on themes that highlight the link between the aims of territorial cooperation, cohesion and spatial planning.

It is evident that the inputs of the present objective of territorial cooperation have affected the Turkish centralized system and promoted changes and openings in situations of past tensions. All the basic information, also in this case, has been taken both from European documents and studies of experts in the issue. In particular, the reading of some cases of territorial cooperation such as the one concerning the management of the Meric River Basin (CBC Turkey-Bulgaria on Meric River Floods) has suggested the reflection on those topics that promote the shift from cooperation (external moment) to cohesion (internal moment). In summary, the strong organizational relation between territory and system, that becomes “region” in social and cultural terms, passes through density, efficiency and effective management of infrastructures as well as fixed social capital, which are in their turn affected by geographic determinants (Lo Monaco, 1982).

Considering the vastness of the topic, the attention has been focussed on the IPA instruments that, as aforementioned, include a set of programmes and financial tools, introducing some innovations related to: multi-annual programming; greater involvement of local and regional authorities and local actors; funding of projects instead of territories. The aim is to create a platform to support processes of shared development. The peculiar feature of territorial cooperation, to be highlighted and enhanced, is its nature of *alter ego* of cohesion, conveying the theme of infrastructural development, peculiar to cohesion funds, toward the possibility of instituting public services, thus creating a link between different systems. In its evolution, the implementation of European strategies with neighbouring countries determined a gradual dilution of the concept of border. In the case of Turkey, this is recognizable in the ongoing territorial cooperation programmes: Bulgaria-Turkey IPA Cross-border Programme and the Greece-Turkey programmes. These programmes show the capacity of regional institutions to set up tables of governance, activating forms of cooperation that are suitable for the objective of diffusion of the EU's identity.

The border between Bulgaria and Turkey extends for 288 km and includes five administrative units: three Bulgarian districts and two Turkish provinces, corresponding to NUTS III level (Eurostat). The capacity to stimulate inter- and intra-institutional dialogues on different scales is proven by the public actors involved: the program was under the responsibility of a Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), acting as financial guarantor; of a Joint Select Committee (JSC) as responsible for the selection of projects; of an institution composed by national, regional and local representatives of the two countries as well as by representatives of the European Commission (Fusun Özerdem, 2011). The Bulgaria-Turkey Cross-border Programme was implemented through the Joint Programming Document (JPD), including strategies, priorities and measures for the period 2004-2006.

Afterwards, as established by Objective 3 of Regulation 1083/2006, the programmes of territorial cooperation have been further elaborated, leading to the approval of projects concerning the promotion of joint actions in the basin of the Meric River (Sezen, Gündüz and Malkarali, 2007). Such projects bring attention to the importance of the environment as an element of global and "absolute" value, that is a value which is not limited to its location, but also having a local value related to the "milieu" created by local culture and economy. Therefore, it presents a "territorial production" for a collective use (extra-territorial) (Conti Puorger, 2005).

Cooperation with Greece, on the other hand, had already begun with the Greece-Turkey INTERREG III/A Community Initiative Programme (2006). It is evident from the programming periods as the former involved countries in the pre-accession phase, while in the latter Greece was already an EU state member. In the case of cooperation between Greece and Turkey, some differences can be highlighted between the two programmes INTERREG III/A (2004-2006) and IPA (2007-2013). The first phase was an important test to prepare Turkey for the adoption of the Community *acquis* concerning the use of structural funds.

The complex evolution of the relations between Greece and Turkey consolidates the idea of the cohesive role played by territorial cooperation. In Rumelili's work (2005) it is stressed that the involvement of civil society and authorities of both countries on the occasion of the earthquakes of 1999 represented a crucial turning point in the relations between these two countries. In all the examined cases, it is also evident the need of the European mediation scale, responsible for two fundamental aspects: financial and legitimation of new political proposals contained in the topics of integration (Rumelili, 2005).

In conclusion, the interest in these forms of cooperation, beyond their economic commitment, lies in their observed capacity for strengthening the mechanisms of integration by stimulating the implementation of regional policies and the consequent institutional capacity of administrating and coordinating them through national planning "conditioned" by the European strategy for the use of funds. With respect to the issues of territorial cooperation

and their connection with spatial planning and then with the management and development of public goods, the MIPD 2007-2009 (Multi-annual Indicative Planning Document) pointed out the main priorities of the IPA II for Turkey were as follows: reinforcing cross-border social and cultural links; technical assistance for joint spatial, economic or environmental planning; small infrastructure for the improvement of the economic potential of the border regions.

To be thorough and to stress once again the importance of territorial links, it must be reminded that Turkey is also an actor in transnational cooperation, governed by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross Border Cooperation (ENPI-CBC) in the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins. The participation to these two programmes shows Turkey's peculiarity of being a bridge between East and West.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The report of the first round table of the Council of Europe on the European Regional Planning Concept (1979) contains the statement, "The problem of trunk communications as part of a regional planning concept", which reminds that regional planning in the past used to be based on considerations of national defence. Consequently, border regions were areas characterized by weak infrastructural and economic structures, in order to impede rapid communications. The European integration process has reversed this situation.

The matter of balanced development and the role of spatial planning, implicating the importance of local actors and participation, are all issues that were addressed in the long course of European integration and structured within the Cohesion Policy. The theme was symmetrically addressed in relation to the neighbouring states of Europe, so that the instruments of pre-accession and neighbourhood were prepared, thus identifying in terms of territorial cooperation, the cohesive capacity to extend beyond European borders a space of peace and stability. This course mainly involved those countries that were interested and compatible with the integration process. The peculiarity of the Turkish territory was the impossibility of southern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries to share the same integration aims. A solution to overcome these obstacles in perpetuating and extending territorial cooperation policies is to reduce the difference between inclusion and integration. The course is conveyed, indeed, from the principle of conditionality that is transformed into differentiation (incentive-based approach - Join (2012) 14 final).

The work is obviously not exhaustive given the vastness of the issues addressed and it is primarily meant to contribute to reordering the complex relations between cohesion – region – differences (distances) – proximity. The possible development of further research concerns the double objective that Europe wants to achieve through these programmes: creating integration and building cooperation networks that open new scenarios for Europe as an international actor through a strong link with Turkey. Another important point concerning planning and development of networks and Turkey would be cooperation on energy, a topic that has deliberately not been addressed here, because it adds further complexity to the search for the driving forces of territorial cooperation.

The work, that has emphasized the link between cohesion and territorial cooperation, can be placed into the strand of research identified in the typology of the Mystical Knights (Doucet, 2006); it aims at stressing some points of interest for the development of European policies in this field, essentially concerning the public nature of utilities and how the common use can fuz the limits of frontiers, thus creating a new law from the custom of use. Cicerone's words are particularly fitting in this case: "*populus est omnis hominum coetus, quoquo modo congregatus, sed coetus multitudinis iuris e consensus et utilitatis comunione sociatus*" (De Repubblica, I, 25).

Europe – especially in these areas – has the possibility to mediate and convey the legitimization of the new law, in accordance with its modern vision. This feature belongs to

the history of Europe, where rights and ethics are filled with Jewish-Christian roots. This is a comparative advantage that the Union should protect, because it orients (in a double sense) all policies, also including in them the spatial justice issues (Young, 1990). Territorial cohesion is not only the integration of policies with territorial impacts, but also a promotion of joint planning of public services in cross-border areas, which can be achieved through territorial cooperation.

The experiences of territorial cooperation have shown the importance of the transfer of know-how and exchange of experiences implemented in decentralized cooperation and regional partnerships, in order to increase cohesion. Participation and the diffusion of democratic principles seem to be the way to bypass state powers, encouraging those bottom-up processes of secularization that can represent the common basis for the rule of law and which can support those issues already identified in the six initiatives of the Union for the Mediterranean, such as development of infrastructural networks, sustainable and local development. Territorial chains, therefore, materialize that non-continuous set of components that form an identity beyond geographical belonging. At the same time, the scale of the supranational organism is necessary, as a guarantor structure for strengthening the dialogue initiated in this area.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> For a chronological reconstruction: Interact (2010) 20 years of territorial cooperation; Policy Department-Structural and Cohesion Policies (2007) Follow-up of the territorial Agenda and Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial development and territorial cohesion; Association of European Border Region (2000) Practical Guide to Cross-Border Cooperation-Third Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1987 and 1992 a first reform of the structural funds began and five new Regulations were emanated: the framework Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88; a coordination Regulation (EEC) No 4253/88; an application Regulation for each of the three funds: Council Regulation (EEC) No 4254/88 (ERDF); Council Regulation (EEC) No 4255/88 (ESF); Council Regulation (EEC) No 4256/88 (EAGGF Guidance Section). Afterwards, the Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds; and, in addition, specific regulations for each fund. Finally, it is important to remind: Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC); Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument; Council Regulation (EC) No 1085/2006 of 17 July 2006 establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Instruments (IPA).

<sup>3</sup> For a reconstruction of this topic, see Fichera (2011).

<sup>4</sup> “The existence of collective relations between European and South/Eastern Mediterranean countries dates back to the establishment of EEC, when the overseas relations and commitments of some member states (France, Belgium, Italy and Netherlands) were put in common. [...] At first relations with North African and Middle Eastern countries develops gradually and empirically. Only in 1972 the EEC establishes a common framework for the management of its Mediterranean relations under the name of Global Mediterranean Policy” (author’s translation).

<sup>5</sup> The UfM includes the 27 EU member states plus the European Commission, 11 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, Monaco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey) and 4 the Adriatic/Western Balkan countries (Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro), for a total of 44 members. Libya has refused to join the UfM.

<sup>6</sup> Main references and chronologic reconstructions: Atila, E. 2000. *Turkey in the enlargement process: from Luxembourg to Helsinki*. Ankara: Centre for European Studies; International Crisis Group (23 February 2009) The EU-Turkey-Cyprus Triangle: Setting the Stage, by Hugh Pope (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5939&l=1>); International Crisis Group (15 December 2008) Turkey and Europe; The Decisive Year Ahead, Europe Report No. 197 (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=5949>); International Crisis Group (17 August 2007) Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead, Europe Report No. 184. (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=5947>); Müftüler-Bac, M. and McLaren, L. 2003. Enlargement Preferences and Policy-Making in the European Union: Impacts on Turkey. *Journal of European Integration*, 25(1): 17-30; Öniş, Z. 2000. Luxembourg, Helsinki and Beyond: Towards an Interpretation of Recent Turkey-EU Relations. *Government and Opposition*, 35(4): 463-483; ZEI EU-Turkey-Monitor, published by Centre for European Integration Studies (University of Bonn) ([http://www.zei.de/zei\\_english/publikation/publ\\_turkey\\_monitor.htm](http://www.zei.de/zei_english/publikation/publ_turkey_monitor.htm)).

<sup>7</sup> However this feature can also be read in a negative sense: the non-total belonging of Turkey to the European continent.

<sup>8</sup> As written in the Conclusions of the Presidency of the European Council in Copenhagen (21-22 June 1993): “Membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate’s ability to take on the obligations of membership, adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union”.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview on this topic, see Ahat (2009).