

THE SCHENGEN REGIME AND THE NEW EU'S INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE

Milan BUFON*

Abstract: This article seeks to explore the effects of the introduction of the Schengen regime on the Central-Eastern European border areas, and offers relevant data on cross-border mobility, referring to Slovenian border areas as well. It deals with integration perspectives on two levels: “regional globalization”, namely the integration of an increasing number of Central European countries in a wider trans-continental dimension and local aspects of cross-border co-operation.

Keywords: borders, Schengen border regime, cross-border traffic, migration, border crossings, Central-Eastern European EU members, Slovenia, Poland

INTRODUCTION

Management of the EU's external borders, which is an integral part of Europe's so called “Global Approach to Migration”, is certainly one of the major policy challenges to be faced in the years ahead. Increased movements of migrants have gradually eroded member states' ability to control their national borders and this “diminishing power” has become a permanent feature of today's Europe. Migratory pressure, however, is not the only policy issue commanding Europe's attention. There are also pressing external security threats, such as terrorism and drug and weapons smuggling. In the face of these cross-border challenges, there are demands for more action and more security both nationally and Europe-wide. But it is also important that Europe should continue to deliver and develop the area of justice, freedom and, more generally, social integration, both within its internal boundaries and in relation to its neighborhood. Borders thus embody a clear geopolitical concept, as they incorporate both geographical and political aspects. In the last half of the 20th century, however, these two dimensions were joined by a third dimension, namely a human dimension based on a cross-border integration process, which has gradually become more politically relevant than the other two border components. Thus the functional social and economic dimensions of borders must also be given equal weight in the EU's concepts and policies. Obtaining a visa and crossing the external border must be simple and quick for bona fide travelers. People-to-people contacts in border regions and between family members must be facilitated. Border management must support, not stifle, economic growth in border regions of neighboring countries (Leresche and Saez 2002). The ultimate challenge is to maintain the credibility of the abolition of internal borders and to extend the Schengen area still further.

This article seeks to identify the key stages in development of the Schengen acquis and the recent Schengen enlargement, and to explore the

* University “Primorska” of Koper, Department of Geography, Faculty of Humanities, Garibaldijeva 1, SI – 6000 Koper, Slovenia, e-mail: milan.bufon@upr.si

effects of the introduction of the Schengen regime on the Central-Eastern European border areas, now transformed into the new EU's internal and external boundaries. Given the challenges posed by globalization, the previous territorial border management is neither adequate nor effective. The question is not whether Europe should place a greater number of controls at its external borders with a view to turning it into an impenetrable fortress. The fundamental question is how to make Europe's controls more effective, more technologically advanced and more responsive to the new challenges posed by globalization with a certain degree of success, without impinging on the principle of free movement of people and the results produced by past cross-border cooperation and integration processes.

THE IMPACT OF THE SCHENGEN REGIME ON EU'S NEW INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES

The rise of freedom of movement rights in Europe – now codified with the legal category of European Union citizenship – represents a startling reversal of the historical tradition of state sovereignty. States have historically been defined in terms of insiders (citizens) and outsiders (foreigners). The new supranational rights supersede this traditional distinction by reducing or even removing the ability of European states to discriminate between their own citizens and those of other EU member states. Borders within the EU still matter, but the remaining barriers to freedom of movement within “fortress Europe” are practical rather than legal, and even they are rapidly disappearing.

Exceptions to Schengen also continue to exist, such as the phase-in period for workers from most of the new member states, or security controls at special events such as the European soccer cup, for which Belgium and the Netherlands in 2000, Portugal in 2004 and Austria in 2008 were granted a temporary drop-out on the Schengen regulations. On the whole, however, the picture that emerges for freedom of movement within Europe is one of a continent in which Europeans can move about freely, and in which state borders (though clearly not the borders between “fortress Europe” and the rest of the world) have lost most of the significance they once possessed.

It is quite evident that the visa-free European space strengthens the control and security demands at the external borders of the EU (Sherr 2000; Tassinari 2005). The question of expansion of visa-free European space on the region of the Central-Eastern Europe has a special, particular character and could be perceived either as a visible effect of the European re-integration or as an inevitable negative compound factor of the new geopolitical division between “proper Europe” and the “outer Europe”. To avoid closures in the economic, social and ethno-political spheres at EU's external boundaries, interstate relations of the CEE countries with their eastern neighbors should be developed by taking into the consideration:

- (a) specific features of the historical development of CEE,
- (b) peoples socio-cultural ties and socio-economic needs,
- (c) existing legislative alternatives between the EU member-states,
- (d) strengthening instruments such as the EU programme INTERREG-III.

The implementation of the Schengen acquis undoubtedly will have strong influence upon the CEE's minority agenda and generally on the socio-cultural and socio-economic cross-border interdependence, so common for this part of Europe. Both the procedure of the visa registration, as well as slowed procedure

of crossing a border, create an extremely negative image and disable the formation of positive image of the EU in future. With implementing the Schengen visa all small crossing points will be automatically liquidated and only those which meet the criteria of international standards will function. It in turn will put significant impact on the cross-border economic co-operation and trade, and in particular, the shuttle business, to which both minorities and local communities living in the border areas are related.

In practice there are sensitive cases arising almost the whole way along the EU's eastern borders (Apap and Tchorbadjiyska 2004). At the border between Moldova and Romania, many Moldavians are acquiring dual Moldovan and Romanian citizenship because of the Romanian accession to the EU combined with the prospected Schengen border regime. At the Narva-Ivangorod border between Estonia and Russia, Russian communities are living directly alongside each other, but they are not treated as full citizens in the EU's side of the border. At the borders of Russian Kaliningrad with Lithuania and Poland, the issue is represented by the fact that Kaliningrad has become a sort of Russian enclave within the territory of the EU, whilst at the borders between Ukraine and the new EU member states (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania) as well as between Belarus and Poland, there are quite large illegal cross-border movements for purposes of trade and personal connections. Then there is the case of the borders in South Eastern Europe, where an outer ring of visa-free states (Slovenia, Hungary, Greece, and now also Romania and Bulgaria) are surrounding an inner core subject to visa requirements (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo). Problematic is also the situation of the Aegean islands of Greece which are very close to the Turkish coast, and where tourist movements are now being very unfortunately hampered at a time of improving Greek-Turkish relations, not to mention the divided situation on the island of Cyprus.

The Schengen requirement on external border controls has obliged many of the Central-Eastern European EU members to re-examine their border management policies (Sherr 2000). These countries now need strong controls at their eastern borders once they eliminated such checks at their western borders, which, in the recent past, represented the Iron-Curtain border type. Possible solutions might include:

1. Provision of adequate consular services for people living in frontier regions and co-operative arrangements between neighboring states which could provide the facility of issuing a standard 3-month Schengen visa;
2. Upgrading of border facilities to provide for rapid passage of large numbers without the multi-hour queues as often experienced today, which are indicative of existing problems irrespective of Schengen rules;
3. Special bilateral agreements for border regions, such as long-term multi-entry national visas at low or zero charge, very short-term visas for one or two days to facilitate local family contacts, tourism and small scale commerce, and (outside Schengen jurisdiction) long-term or permanent resident permits;
4. Customer-friendly consular and border services, with training of personnel to eliminate the undignified interrogation styles, cut visa queues and delays, and make available application forms by post or from Internet sites;
5. Development of new Euro-region programmes to boost cross-border regional cooperation;
6. Reciprocal efforts by the neighboring states, with efforts on their part to

ease or abolish visa requirements and improve consular and border services.

In fact, Schengen States which share an external land border with a non-Schengen country are authorized by virtue of an EU regulation to conclude or maintain bilateral Agreements with neighboring third countries for the purpose of implementing a local border traffic regime. The regulation stipulates the conditions which have to be met by such agreements. The agreements have to provide for the introduction of a *local or bilateral border traffic permit* under the relevant scheme. Such permits must contain the name and a picture of the holder, as well as a statement that its holder is not authorized to move outside the border area and that any abuse shall be subject to penalties. The border area may be comprised of any administrative district within 30 kilometers from the external border (and, if any district extends beyond that limit, the whole district up to 50 kilometers from the border).

Holders of such permit may cross the external borders, once there has not been issued an alert in the SIS for refusal of entry, and they do not form a threat to public policy, internal security, public health or the international relations of *any* of the Member States. The question whether an additional identity document is required for crossing the border (and which type may be used), and for how long the permit holder may stay in the border area, may be regulated bilaterally. The maximum permitted period of stay may not exceed three months. The features of the form of the permit have to comply with the uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals. Permits are valid from one up to five years. Permits may only be issued to persons having been lawful residents in the border area of a country neighboring a Schengen State for a period specified in the relevant bilateral agreement, which generally has to be at least one year. The applicant for the permit has to show legitimate reasons frequently to cross an external land border under the local border traffic regime, and must meet the specific entry requirements as described above. Schengen states must keep a central register of the permits issued and have to provide immediate access to the relevant data to other Schengen states. Before the conclusion of an agreement with a neighboring country, the Schengen state must receive approval from the European Commission, which has to confirm the legality of its draft. The agreement may only be concluded if the neighboring country grants at least reciprocal rights to the relevant Schengen state, and readmission of illegally staying persons from the neighboring country is ensured. For local border traffic, fast lanes or special border crossings may be introduced.

These agreements could be particularly useful in Central-Eastern Europe where the collapse of communism resulted in an enormous increase in international cross-border mobility (Apap and Tchorbadjiyska 2004). In Poland, out of a total number of about 65 million incoming foreigners, the number of arrivals from the former Soviet Union fluctuated between 11 million and 13 million, of which about 4 million were Byelorussians, about 5.5 million Ukrainians and about 2 million Russians. The introduction of visas in 2003 led to a temporary decline in arrivals through Poland's eastern border but the trend was rapidly reversed and by the end of 2005 levels had returned to those registered before the introduction of visas. As regards irregular entries, the data on foreigners captured by Poland's Border Guard while attempting to illegally cross the country's borders show quite a stable trend between 2000 and 2006, fluctuating between 3,100 and 3,600 per year. The only exception is the year 2004, when it reached a peak of almost 4,500, explained by the increase in the

mobility of Chechen immigrants who started moving west after the EU's eastern enlargement.

The unexpected migration outflow from Poland after 1 May 2004 to the countries that had opened their labour markets, primarily the UK, caused a serious labour shortage in Poland which forced it to partially open its own labour market to foreigners from neighbouring countries. On 31 August 2006 the right to employ workers from the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia without work permits for three months in any given period of six months was granted. This privilege was originally only applicable to the agricultural sector but in June 2007 the right to employ workers without work permits from Poland's neighbouring countries was extended to other sectors, including the construction sector. However, the pressure in the labour market for both skilled and unskilled workers led to further developments and in February 2008 the duration of legal work without a work permit was extended from three to six months in any given period of 12 months. Since Schengen rules conflicted with Poland's policies regarding ethnic Poles, in September 2007 an "Act of the Polish Chart" was approved in an attempt to facilitate the entry into Poland of ethnic Poles living in the East. According to this act those who meet the relevant ethnicity requirements will be able to take up employment or conduct economic activities on the same basis as Polish nationals. They will be given Polish residence visa (free of charge) and after a given period of time will be able to apply for residence permits and Polish citizenship. A similar attempt to protect co-ethnics from the results of Schengen enlargement had previously been made by Hungary through the "Status Law" and is now prospected by both Romania and Bulgaria in relation to Moldavian ethnic Romanians and to Bulgarian affiliated Macedonians, respectively.

The most recent estimate on Poland's immigrant stock was presented by the Central Statistical Office in 2008 and referred to data as of December 2006. According to this source, the number of immigrants residing in Poland is around 200,000, of which Ukrainians constitute the predominant category. Ukrainians also comprise the biggest national group working in Poland illegally. The massive shuttle migration into Poland from the Ukraine, beginning in the 1990s, was the result of the strong historical and cultural ties between the two countries, their geographical and linguistic proximity, Poland's pro-Ukrainian foreign policy after 1989 (exemplified by Polish help during the Ukrainian Orange Revolution and Poland's Eastern Neighbourhood Strategy) and its benevolent visa practices. Before joining Schengen, Poland's visa regime was highly liberal and visas were issued to Ukrainians free of charge, while Russians and Byelorussians were also allowed a number of cases for which they did not need to pay. Ukrainians were often given multiple entry visas. According to recent estimates there are 300,000 – perhaps even up to 500,000 – Ukrainians employed in Poland annually as short-time/temporary immigrants. Most of them entered Poland with a tourist visa (before 21 December 2007) but work in a shadow economy in irregular conditions. Poland's admittance to the Schengen space has had as its immediate consequence a dramatic decline in the number of border crossings by Ukrainians, a decrease that could have negative consequences for the Polish economy.

For what the South-Eastern Europe is concerned, visa free regime negotiations between the EU and the Western Balkans were launched in the first half of 2008, and are currently underway. The Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) already enjoy a facilitated visa regime with the Schengen states (UK and Ireland excluded), including shorter waiting periods, free or low visa fees, and fewer documentation requirements when compared to other countries whose citizens require visas. The visa free negotiations are being conducted on an individual basis, and roadmaps with a list of conditions to be fulfilled have been customized for each Western Balkan state. These negotiations can be concluded as early as in the first half of 2009, and soon after those Western Balkan citizens will be able to enter the Schengen area without a visa.

There is an exception to these rules in the case of citizens of Croatia. Based on the Pre-Schengen bilateral agreements between Croatia and its neighboring EU countries (Italy, Hungary and Slovenia), Croatian citizens are allowed to cross the border with ID card only (passport not obligatory). There were many disputes about whether Croatian citizens would lose this right on 21 December 2007 when Schengen control was established on the Croatian land borders with Hungary and Slovenia, as well as on the Croatian sea border with Italy. Many people living near the border cross it several times a day (some work across the border, or have land on the other side of the border), especially on the border with Slovenia, which was unmarked for more than 40 years when Croatia and Slovenia were both part of Yugoslavia. As Croatia is about to join EU in a matter of years, an interim solution, which received permission from the European Commission, was found: every Croatian citizen is allowed to cross the Schengen border into Hungary, Italy or Slovenia with an ID card and an evidential card that is issued by Croatian police at border exit control. Police authorities of Hungary, Italy or Slovenia will then stamp the evidential card both on entry and on exit. Croatian citizens, however, are not allowed to enter any other Schengen agreement countries without a valid passport and entry stamp, though they are allowed to travel between Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. This practice will be abandoned once Croatia becomes an EU member state, which will allow its citizens to enter any member country with an ID card only.

RESTRUCTURING BORDERS AND BORDER LANDSCAPES: THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

The present status of Slovenia as an EU borderland is clear from the ratio between the surface of the state and the total length of the political borders (1160 km). On the basis of these two data we can calculate that there is 5.7 km of borders per 100 km². A higher proportion of borders to land is present only in Luxembourg (nearly 9 km per 100 km²). The “border-character” of Slovenia can also be understood by calculating the ratio between the bordering municipalities, i.e. the municipalities, which are located within a 25 km distance from the border, and other municipalities of Slovenia. According to this measurement, 61 % of the Slovenian municipalities are bordering municipalities. Even if we limit the border belt to a width of 10 km, the percentage of bordering municipalities still account for more than 50 %. The “border character” of Slovenia is furthermore made evident by the fact that the nation-state’s capital Ljubljana is by road only 54 km away from the Austrian border, 81 km from the Italian border, and 82 km from the Croatian border. The most distant border is the Hungarian, about 193 km away (Bufon 2002a).

The cross-border traffic is also coherent with the Slovenia’s borderland status. The number of people crossing the Slovenian border by car increased

between 1992 and 2002 from about 140 million to 180 million. In average half a million people are crossing borders daily. If we consider that 30 % of these are Slovenian citizens, who make about 50 million border crossings a year, we find that about 140 thousand Slovenian citizens, or 7 % of the resident population, transit the border daily. This information is also an important feature in measuring the “border character” of Slovenia. It enables us to calculate that each Slovenian citizen (including children and elderly people) visits a foreign country in average once a fortnight. According the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, of all foreigners who have crossed the Slovenian border in 2002 22 % were residents of Croatia, followed by Italy (21 %), Austria (13 %), Germany (12 %), the Czech Republic (2 %), Hungary (2 %), Switzerland (1.1 %), Slovakia (1.0 %) and The Netherlands (1.0 %). The inhabitants of other former Yugoslav republics made up in total about 2.5 million border crossings. The above disposition shows us that the structure of border crossing is a combination of dominant local or inter-state, and international transitional traffic, which is more frequent in summer. *Table 1* shows the structure of border crossing between the years 1992 and 2002.

Slovenia: Structure of Border Crossings per Sectors, 1992-2002

Table 1

	1992	1995	2002	1992	1995	2002
	(Million passengers)			(in %)		
SLO/I	51.4	74.5	64.9	36.0	41.3	36.3
SLO/A	39.4	50.7	48.6	27.6	28.1	27.1
SLO/H	1.9	4.8	4.1	1.3	2.7	2.3
SLO/CRO	50.2	50.3	61.3	35.1	27.9	34.3
Total	142.9	180.3	178.9	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.

There has been a 45 % increase in cross-border traffic on the Slovenian-Italian border between 1992 and 1995: from 51 to 74 millions. The flow has stabilized since at about 65 million border crossings. This was the consequence of the introduction of fuel cards in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which enabled Italian residents of the province to purchase fuel in Italy at to Slovenia equal price. The traffic across the Austrian-Slovenian border increased between 1992 and 1995 by one fourth, and has stabilized at about 50 million border crossings a year. The biggest increase of cross-border traffic has occurred on the Slovenian-Hungarian border. This border used to be virtually closed before the 1990's. The cross-border traffic increased 1992-1995 for 150 % and has since stabilized at about 4 million border crossings a year. Such an intense increase is the result of the democratization and liberalization of the Hungarian society and economy, and by the modification of the Hungarian borderland and its adjustment to the cross-border gateway function. The border city of Lenti (Hungary) has become an attractive shopping centre for the broader region (Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia). Changes are noticed on the Slovenian-Croatian border as well. There, the maximum was reached in 1994 with 66 millions border crossings, a 33 % increase in comparison to the year 1992. The next year, however, the number of cross-border traffic dropped, but has improved recently and is in a constant rise due to Croatia's improved position in world tourism. In 2005 about 35 % of the total passenger traffic crosses the Italo-Slovenian border, about 34 % the Croato-Slovenian border and about 27 % the Austro-Slovenian border.

The traffic on the Hungaro-Slovenian border is in a constant rise and is at present close to 4 %.

From *Table 1* it is evident that the most intense cross-border traffic was and still is on the Italo-Slovene border. The Italo-Slovene borderline is just 17 % of the entire nation-state border length, but it handles as much as 38 % of the whole cross-border traffic. The traffic across the Austro-Slovenian border is more proportional with length, whereas it is disproportional on the borders with Croatia and Hungary. The Italo-Slovene border is also the most permeable, as we find there close to 40 % of all border posts. In average, the Italo-Slovene border has 17 border-posts per 100 km, in the southern part of the border, in the section Trieste – Gorizia, the density is even bigger and comes to about 25 border-posts per 100 km, or one on every 4 km of the border length. The average for the nation-state is 8 border posts per 100 km. The Croato-Slovene border has the lowest number of border posts – just 5 border-posts per 100 km of the border.

Selected Characteristics of Borders of the Republic of Slovenia, 2002

Table 2

	1	2	3	4	5
SLO/I	17,4	35	38,5	17,3	38,0
SLO/A	27,9	24	26,3	7,4	27,6
SLO/H	7,6	6	6,6	6,8	2,2
SLO/CRO	47,1	26	28,6	4,8	32,2
Total	100,0	91	100,0	7,8	100,0

1 – The total border length (in %);

2 – Number of border posts in accordance with the relevant cross-border traffic;

3 – Border posts in relation to border length (in %);

4 – Number of border posts per 100 km;

5 – The total cross-border traffic (in %).

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.

With the entrance of Slovenia into the Schengen space, border controls on the new internal EU borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary are eliminated, whilst controls on the new external EU border with Croatia are reinforced, both at border posts and along the border line. Custom and sanitary controls for imported goods into the EU are also done on external borders, thus the Slovene-Croatian border has been equipped with six specialized border check points, three at road crossings (Gruškovje, Obrežje and Jelšane), one on a railway crossing (Dobova), whilst the remaining two check points are located at the Ljubljana airport and the port of Koper. Border controls on EU external borders consist of two levels: travels of citizens of EU member states and citizens of the European Economic Space (EES), provided with a regular document, can only be restricted for reasons of public security or health; citizens of other countries, instead, must fulfill some additional requirements, as provided by the Schengen regulation and the EU immigration rules. On the other hand, border crossings on internal EU borders are free and passengers can cross the border whenever and wherever it is physically possible. Of course, people should have a valid ID and police forces can still exercise their control function at any point of the state territory.

The current Slovene and EU external border with Croatia represents the longest Slovenian border (670 km), currently equipped with 54 border posts, of which 10 are devoted to only bilateral traffic. Actually, the Croato-Slovene agreement has prospected a higher figure of local cross-border posts (22) to avoid the possible negative effects of the establishment of the Schengen border

regime, but the difficult inter-state relations caused by border disputes in the Gulf of Piran and other border sections have given severe obstacles to the full implementation of a more open bilateral border regime.

In consideration of the development potentials of border areas, we must say that they depend on a number of factors (Bufon 2002b). These include different geopolitical situations and different historical experiences of each border section; the nature of political and economic relationships between bordering states; the extent of border permeability; regional conditions, the dynamics of social-economic development in the border area, and the attitude of the population towards the maintenance and development of cross-border links. The surveys carried out in Slovenia showed that the combination of international factors – such as the increase of economic exchange, tourist fluxes and transitory traffic – and regional factors, that are prevalently linked to the movement of people and goods within the border area, stimulate a complex development, creating traffic corridors and infrastructure border centers, and are impacting broader border areas in regard to labor, produce and services. Some segments along Slovenian borders already have developed into stable border regions, despite the fact they are not institutionalized. In contrast to the "Euroregions", they are based on spontaneous cross-border links, creating small territories of development. Their common feature is the great influence of the local conditions, which derive from common territorial bonds and history, and much less from international monetary, political and economic resources.

Cross-border mobility patterns and expectations in 2007 (in %).

Table 3

a) Intensity of border crossings

	SLO/I	SLO/A	SLO/H	SLO/CRO
Every day	7,2	0,4	0,0	1,6
Min. once a week	12,0	7,8	4,4	3,6
Min. once a month	33,5	32,8	28,1	20,2
Min. once a year	40,2	39,9	51,4	56,7
Never	7,1	19,5	16,1	17,9

b) Prevailing motivations for border crossings

	SLO/I	SLO/A	SLO/H	SLO/CRO
Work	5,6	1,6	2,0	3,6
Shopping	48,2	48,4	45,4	8,7
Personal contacts	17,5	12,1	8,8	15,5
Recreation	14,3	13,7	24,9	48,4

c) Expected cross-border relations after the entrance of Slovenia in the Schengen space

	SLO/I	SLO/A	SLO/H	SLO/CRO
Better	49,0	48,4	43,0	14,3
Worse	4,4	3,9	1,6	52,4
Same	42,2	40,6	50,6	29,4
Don't know	4,4	7,0	4,8	4,0

Source: 2007 Author's Survey

A recent analysis of cross-border interdependence at Slovene borderlands, conducted in 2007, reveals small functional differences, but more pronounced psychological differences between attitudes of dwellers at "internal" and

“external” border areas. *Table 3* illustrates that the intensity of cross-border visits is much higher at the Italo-Slovene border where almost 20 % of border dwellers is used to cross the border either every day or at least once per week, whilst in other border areas this percentage ranges from 4.5 to 8.2 only. About 30 % of border dwellers usually cross the border at least once per month, except at the Croato-Slovene border where this percentage is lower (20.2 %). Occasional cross-border visits (some times per year) are more typical for border areas with Hungary and Croatia where count for about 51-57 %. The percentage of border dwellers who never visit the neighboring countries consists of about 16-20 %, and it is significantly lower only at the border with Italy (7 %). In consideration of motivations for cross-border traffic, “work” is more often considered in the border areas with Italy (5.6 %) and Croatia (3.6 %); “shopping” is the most often cited motivation in all border areas, ranging from 45 % to 48 %, except at the border with Croatia where this motivation is much lower (less than 9 %). “Visits to relatives and friends” are generally cited as a motivation for cross-border visits by about 15 % of respondents; only at the border with Hungary is considered less important and cited by only 9 % of respondents. Finally, “recreation” is considered as a major motivation for cross-border movements by about 14 % of respondents at the borders with Italy and Austria, by about 25 % of respondents at the border with Hungary, and by as much as 48 % of respondents at the border with Croatia. Future expectations in consideration of the enlargement of the Schengen space to Slovenia, reveal that better cross-border relations are expected by the majority of border dwellers at the border with both Italy and Austria (about 48-49 %); at the border with Hungary the majority of the respondents (about 51 %) expect that these relations will remain at the same level as before, whilst the majority of the respondents at the border with Croatia (about 52 %) expect that cross-border relations will get worse.

The support of socio-cultural cross-border links and a cultural affinity of the population on both sides of the border are crucial for a successful and prosperous arrangement of/in border regions. The Slovenian minority in Italy, for instance, was actually used to maintain a large part of the “institutional” cross-border links in regard to sport, culture, economy, information, and municipality co-operation, and represented, as border became open in the 1960’s, a kind of Yugoslavia’s “gateway into Europe”, as a substantial part of Yugoslavia’s transactions with Italy and Europe passed through the banks owned by the Slovenian minority in Trieste. Since Slovenian independence in 1991, more formal and institutionalized types of cross-border integration between border municipalities and institutions began (Bufon, 2003). Some co-operations forms are now similar to existing in several European “Euroregions” (Perkmann 2002), others are innovative and often go beyond the limited bilateral interests, in particular within the so called Alps-Adriatic context (including the border regions of Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia and Hungary), where we can find initiatives such as broadcasting cooperation or common development of Interreg projects. The bid to organize Winter Olympic Games in the Three Border Area of Slovenia, Austria and Italy in 2006 was another such step.

With the Slovenian inclusion into the EU in 2004, southwestern Slovenia, including Istria, is re-directing its interest and potential towards the Adriatic opening up the question of inter-port cooperation between Trieste and Koper, which could contribute to the development of a new cross-border urban conurbation in the Upper Adriatic. Expected consequence of the cross-border

integration will be that Trieste and its broader hinterland will again become more multicultural and play an important function in the communication between Slovenian and Italian cultural spaces. Another increasing development "line" is related to the Graz-Maribor cross-border area where the border created after World War One has divided the previous unified Austrian region of Styria. But we can say that an increase of socio-economic cross-border relations will support the "Europeanization" of all Slovenian "internal" border areas, seeking a pragmatic and peaceful relationship, and thus a "normalization" of inter-community and inter-ethnic relations as well.

The three-border region of Italy, Austria and Slovenia, in particular, already reflects advantages and disadvantages of the social and political transformation and processes of the spatial convergence and divergence. The fact that this has long been a united cultural space with a common way of life, where different ethno-linguistic communities have coexisted, has to be emphasized. The creation of nation-states divided this region into three parts and hindered normal communication and the separate social and economic developments have created three regions with different characteristics and goals. The general assumption is that, after the "Fall of the Iron Curtain", underlined more recently by the enlargement of the Schengen space into Central-Eastern Europe, the "normalization" of cross-border relationships has not reached the local level yet, nor has it found the base for a stronger cross-border integration (Bufon 2006b). This is also due to the lack of proper infrastructure and institutional decision-making, which would support cross-border communication, such as a forum for co-operation between municipalities of border area, the creation of other common social, economic, and cultural institutions, or of a common co-ordination plan, or information centers. Other reasons can be sought in the lack of improved transportation corridors, in the lack of bigger urban centers, in the low demographic and economic potential of the area, and in the lack of active national minorities and local or regional communities on different sides of the border.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Europe is in a remarkable state of change. Clearly, Central-Eastern Europe is changing rapidly and radically. There are many shocks associated with these processes and more yet to come. In addition to traumas, the region in general has experienced many positive advances since 1991. Acting out of the Slovenian experience, cooperation and integration perspectives in today's Europe may be discussed on two different but inter-related levels: (1) The first regards what could be called "regional globalization", namely the integration of an increasing number of Central European countries in a wider trans-continental dimension; (2) The second concerns local aspects of cross-border co-operation. A direct consequence of this process will be the elimination of the (negative) mental and historical legacies in the region. And good cross-border relations are crucial in this regard (Bufon and Gosar 2007).

Regarding Slovenia, the EU accession process and the EU membership, culminated with the adoption of the Euro currency in January 2007, the entrance into the Schengen space in December 2007 and the Presidency of the EU in the first semester of 2008, have also changed the function of its borders: the previous international borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary (the latter being considered a real "Iron-Curtain" type of border) are representing internal

borders within the EU space now, whilst the border with Croatia, being in former Yugoslavia just an internal, provincial border, has become the outer or “Schengen” border of the EU, facing challenges in terms of control of international migrations and security. The case of Slovenia’s borders provides an interesting illustration of an apparently paradoxical process within borderlands: the greater the conflicts created by the political partition of a previous homogeneous administrative, cultural and economic region (like on many sections on the border towards Italy, Austria and Hungary), the greater – in the longer run – are the opportunities for such a divided area to develop into an integrated cross-border region. Reflecting on the border landscape concept on the basis of Slovenia’s border areas, it becomes clear that the political or economic “macro” approach in studying cross-border regions is limited. The true nature and qualities of these regions may only be established when local cultural and social elements of cross-border relations are also taken into account. The great variety of micro-transactions at the local level, supported by the border population, is namely the result of its spatial mobility in satisfying daily needs in regard to such basic functions as work, leisure/recreation, supply, and education. These functions are also the result of the activity of the border population in maintaining the many traditional cultural links that are rooted in the relatively stable period preceding political partition (Bufon 2006a).

Yet, the instability, fragmentation, nation-state and border making within Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe has become a matter of international concern (Bufon 2004). Yugoslavia, a multi-ethnic entity since WW1 has in 1991 largely disintegrated into entities of ethnic dominance. The weakening of the idea of communism and the implementation of democracy, based on nation-state principles, combined with the altered periphery-periphery relationship were major factors for the instability. This has caused violence and wars and resulted into forced migrations, impacting Europe in a large extend. The international community was able to prevent a major, multi-national outbreak of hostilities. The final resolution of the problem, in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, elaborated by different international mediators, has yet to be proven. Many experts argue that disputes will slowly disappear, as Croatia (and other countries of the Western Balkans) will become part of the EU. Other scholars are less optimistic, as they argue that historically based stereotypes, the development gap, on the market-economy based “colonialism”, old offences and the newborn nationalism will hinder a swift settlement and a permanent solution.

Nevertheless, the study of border regions undoubtedly brings additional aspects to bear on the standard theory of the centre-periphery relations, while opening up a range of new problems, which are becoming increasingly more topical in today’s world, as we try to enhance mutual understanding in the culturally rich and diverse European space (Blatter 2003). The geography of border landscapes in its social and cultural dimensions is thus definitely assuming an important role in the “humanization” of the traditional geographical approach to borders and border conflict resolution. Three major factors which contribute towards a positive evaluation of cross-border co-operation could be detected (Bufon 2006a): (1) By orchestrating a functional, in intensity strong cross-border mobility, existing relations determine a generally positive evaluation of co-operation; (2) By stimulating cultural/ethnic affinity between the resident populations on both sides of the border, cross-border activities become natural, more intense, definitely impacting the evaluation of the

relationship in the long run; (3) By stressing how cross-border co-operation is greater in areas where differences in the socio-cultural and socio-economic structure of border landscapes on both sides of the border are small and/or compatible with a modern society. All three areas should be taken into account in the process of engineering borders and management of cross-border cooperation and integration, as they are representing the pre-conditions for a true re-integration of the European continent (Calhoun 2003), and can not be treated just as “side-effects” of the Schengen regime and the EU’s bureaucracy attempt to consolidate the “European fortress”.

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