

Interaction, Perceptions and Policies in the Boundaries of European Union: The Case of the Northern Greek Cross Border Zone

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Summary: The accession of ten new States in the EU following 1st May 2004 and the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 have brought to the fore a new economic geography in Europe shifting the EU's external borders eastward. In the broader Balkan area in particular a "new geography" starts to shape, which sets new factors, balances, threats and challenges. Within this context, the borders and border regions are found to be in the center of academic research and policy making as well. This article attempts to study the type and level of interaction, the perceptions and policies occurring across the Northern Greek cross border zone. The border zone between Greece on the one hand and Albania, FYROM and Bulgaria on the other, is one of the most fragmented economic, social and political spaces in Europe. Consequently, the actual region was considered to be a low

opportunity area. It hosts small states having a low level of trade interaction and until recently a mosaic of trade policies and restrictions to interaction towards each other. In addition, all countries have ethnic minorities usually living in border regions that have triggered friction or conflict in the past and continue in some cases to be a source of suspicion and tension. The empirical analysis is based on a survey in the Northern Greek border zone that was conducted within the framework of the European research project EXLINEA¹.

Key words: boundaries, interaction, perceptions, policies, cross border cooperation.

Introduction

In terms of bibliography in recent years, in both the theoretical and empirical level of research, new and interesting studies have appeared dealing with borders. Borders have often played the role of a boundary line among different ideologies, cultures, religions and

¹ EXLINEA (Lines of Exclusion as Arenas of Cooperation: Reconfiguring the External Boundaries of Europe — Policies, Practices, Perceptions) is funded by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme. This survey is part of a wider effort to study the evolution, problems, policies, practices and perceptions prevailing in the old and new external borders of the European Union.

nationalities (Anderson and O'Dowl, 1999). It was often the case when the borderline acted as a field for extremely intense conflicts and discords some of which are still evident today (Kratke, 1999; Paasi, 1999). The transition procedure into Central and Eastern Europe in particular, had triggered the discussion for cross border cooperation policies as the border regions had been transformed from "dead ends" in areas of communication and exchange, into contact zones with neighboring regions (Dimitrov et al., 2002; Resmini, 2002).

The accession of ten new states in the EU following 1st May 2004 and the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, has brought in the foreground a new economic geography in Europe shifting the EU's external borders. Within this framework, positive outlooks and perceptions had been developed for the formation of a new "European identity". In the meantime, the new European structure is associated with new conflicts and new border lines that re-define the perceptions of "us" and the "others".

In the broader Balkan area a "new geography" is shaping, which sets new factors, balances, threats and challenges. The collapse of the communist regimes has brought forward significant changes at a social, political and economic level for which most Balkan countries had not been prepared for. The dramatic changes occurring in the transition countries was not a smooth course but a rather a distressing experience at times.

This article attempts to study the type and level of interaction, the perceptions and policies occurring across the Northern Greek cross border zone. The border zone between Greece on the one hand and Albania, FYROM and Bulgaria on the other (in short: AFBG border region) is one of the most fragmented economic, social and political spaces in Europe, where it was considered to be a low opportunity area (Dimitrov et al 2003). It hosts small states having a low level

of trade interaction (Petraikos 2001) and until recently a mosaic of trade policies and restrictions to interaction towards each other. In addition, all countries have ethnic minorities usually living in border regions that have triggered friction or conflict in the past and continue in some cases to be a source of suspicion and tension. Even their relations with the EU are different. Greece is an EU-15 member since 1981, joined the EU in 2007, while the other two countries do not have yet a clear road map or a date determining when they become members of the EU.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the next section a theoretical discussion concerning the borders and border phenomenon is provided. In section three, empirical evidence based on a survey conducted across the Northern Greek Borders is presented. The paper's conclusions are presented in the last section.

Theoretical aspects concerning borders and border regions

The research drift on border issues has been triggered over the last fifteen years. The recent eastward European enlargement in particular, has drawn on a new ground for the discussion dealing with the role of boundaries. "Borderless", "re-bordering", "de-bordering", are only some of the terms and notions concerning borders and border regions, indicating that this discussion has only just begun. Moreover, territorial lines that show dominance over the "other" dividing line between ideologies, cultures and nationalities, tension and conflict, "wall", "bridge", "tunnel", "opportunity", "threat" are only few of the different interpretations that have been accredited for the role of borders. In the meantime, border issues have accented not only the aspect of safety which was dominant up to then but also stressed the role of geography, history, religion, language and the "initial conditions" (Topaloglou et al, 2005; Petraikos and Topalo-

glou, 2007; Houtum and Struver, 2002; Paasi, 1999; Agnew, 2003).

It is broadly evident in the existing literature that borders discourage spatial interaction hindering factor mobility. However, some studies emerging during the two World Wars suggested that border obstacles are "good". Seen from a military point of view the "best" borders would be mountains, lakes or deserts (Holdich, 1916; Fawcett, 1918). Regardless of the two different approaches, undoubtedly, the intensity of interaction drops where a border crosses a place. Barriers of movement may concern people, goods, capitals but also ideas, cultural standards, regulations or intangible items. Barriers detected across a frontier line often emerge due to differences in culture, language, religion, geographical characteristics or institutional difficulties inter alia.

The impact of borders in the process of integration in particular, has become an issue of concern in the bibliography in recent years. Theoretically, the economic integration between two countries implies the abolition of barriers and obstacles at the borders. In other words, border line ceases to affect the cost of factors on the one hand and products and services mobility on the other. However, barriers may continue to exist even long after the removal of borders. As indicated by Hostfede (1980), often there are such substantial cultural differences between countries that make cross border cooperation difficult. Almost all studies with regard the impact of borders in integrated regions come to the conclusion that the economic interaction between two countries would have been much more intense if there were no borders (McCallum, 1995; Helliwell, 1998; Bröcker, 1998). The above arguments suggest that placing a border and removing a border is not a symmetric action due to the significant role of initial conditions (Petraikos and Topaloglou, 2007). But at the same time, there is no doubt that integra-

tion procedures induce impacts upon space and economy. The process of integration of course, although it possesses a non-spatial dimension, seems to bring forward both losers and winners with relative terms, though in absolute terms the positive result is inarguable (Petraikos, 2002).

What is the role of geography in the type and level of cross border interaction? Are distance and transport cost associated with the level of border transaction? It is generally accepted in the literature, that distance is associated in a negative way with trade intensity (Rauch, 1991; Kinoshita and Campos, 2003) and with the level of regional labour wage (Hanson, 1998). Under this scope, the borders and the obstacles involved, can be considered as factors that increase distance. Reversely, the reduction of trade barriers at the borders will bring an increase of trade transactions because of the reduction of the relative distance. According to the new economic geography approach, the reduction of transport cost under a crucial point could lead to a very serious discontinuity in the spatial distribution of economic activity (Krugman, 1991).

In the European space more specifically, following the recent E.U. enlargement, the proximity of border regions of the transition countries with Western Europe seems to play an important role in the type and level of cross border interaction. Petraikos (1996), states that areas with common borders with western European countries and border regions near to the European economic centre are expected to attract activities of a higher functional order. The fact for example that the distance of the Greek border areas is beyond 1000 kilometres from the main European economic centres prejudices also a problematic incorporation in the single European space (Petraikos 2000). Niebuhr and Stiller (2002), add from their part the importance of spatial proximity of border regions to foreign markets as the basic geographical advantage that gives an explicit precedence to the central border regions.

Proximity also favours the diffusion and the flow of “non-material goods” such as information, social and organisational models, cultural osmosis, etc. On the other hand perimetric regions with weak economic structures, poor infrastructure and inadequate local resources are expected to deteriorate.

An interesting question in this discussion is whether or not the map of geographic borders is associated with the map of perceptions. It is generally acceptable that a border line dividing two countries in their geographical space affects significantly the extent and type of interaction that exists between them. However, the border line in terms of its intellectual and geographic dimension contributes significantly in the formation of the “us” vis-à-vis “others” identity. In fact, one could claim that the definition of “us” in relation to the boundaries presupposes the existence of the “others” in the opposite side of the borders. The manner that the people of these two countries perceive the concept of borders is not simply a matter of lines drawn on a map or on the ground but something rather more complex and dynamic. The issue lends itself to further complexity when borders divide large geographic territories such as the EU-25 with neighbouring countries. In such cases, the grouping of characteristics that form integrated

perceptions like religion, language, historical and cultural affairs all lead to an intellectual hierarchy in space (Freundschuh, 1991). It is obvious that this “intellectual” special hierarchy is not always associated with the “geographic” spatial hierarchy.

Empirical Evidence

Methodology

What is attempted within the empirical section is to study the evolution, problems, policies and perceptions prevailing in the Northern Greek cross border zone. The empirical analysis is based on a research carried out in nine cross border areas at the EU’s external borders within the framework of the EXLINEA² European Research Programme. Three of these nine cross border areas are found in the Northern Greek borders. The survey was conducted (among others) with the use of a standardized questionnaire which included a total of 220 closed questions providing answers to sets of questions in a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7. A total of 937 questionnaires have been gathered within the EXLINEA from which 400 questionnaires refer to the Greek case study. More specifically, ninety eight (98) questionnaires were collected from the

Table 1. The profile of respondents of the survey

(a) Public	186	(b) Private	214
Local Authorities	86	Local Chambers	27
Public Agencies	27	Selected large firms	140
Development agencies	47	Consultants	23
Agencies promoting cbc	11	Journalists	6
Universities and Institutions	15	NGOs	18

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

² EXLINEA (Lines of Exclusion as Arenas of Cooperation: Reconfiguring the External Boundaries of Europe — Policies, Practices, Perceptions) is funded by the European Commission under the 5th Framework Programme. This survey is a part of a wider effort to study the evolution, problems, policies, practices and perceptions prevailing in the old and new external borders of the European Union.

Table 2. Cross border Trade

1 = no exports/imports at all 7 = very satisfactory level of exports/imports	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Cross-border exports to the <u>nearest city</u> on the other side	2.94	1.80	2.84	2.71	2.58	2.59
Cross-border exports to the <u>nearest larger city</u> on the other side	3.18	4.33	3.22	2.83	2.80	2.76
Cross-border exports to other <u>nearby regional markets</u>	2.92	2.31	3.18	2.71	2.95	2.99
Cross-border exports to more <u>distant markets</u> of the country	2.51	3.63	2.45	2.56	2.52	2.64
Cross-border exports to the <u>capital</u> of the country	2.76	3.49	3.21	2.76	2.93	2.84
Exports to <u>other countries</u>	3.51	1.63	3.70	3.20	3.60	4.00
Cross-border imports from the <u>nearest city</u> on the other side	1.78	2.18	2.09	3.49	2.78	2.48
Cross-border imports from the <u>nearest larger city</u> on the other side	1.94	5.18	2.12	3.46	2.60	2.81
Cross-border imports from other <u>nearby regional markets</u>	1.92	5.04	2.15	3.80	2.68	2.86
Cross-border imports from more <u>distant markets</u> of the country	1.57	4.08	2.06	3.34	2.55	2.59
Cross-border imports from the <u>capital</u> of the country	1.63	5.22	2.55	3.22	2.83	2.80
Imports from <u>other countries</u>	3.57	2.29	3.87	4.12	3.98	4.23

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 3. Cross border Investment

1 = no Investment at all 7 = very satisfactory level of Investment	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Cross-border exports to the <u>nearest city</u> on the other side	2.37	1.45	2.77	2.71	3.35	1.93
Cross-border exports to the <u>nearest larger city</u> on the other side	2.76	1.53	3.07	2.46	3.37	2.04
Cross-border exports to other <u>nearby regional markets</u>	2.82	1.47	3.06	2.76	3.50	2.15
Cross-border exports to more <u>distant markets</u> of the country	2.06	1.37	2.74	2.63	2.50	2.00
Cross-border exports to the <u>capital</u> of the country	2.55	1.45	3.01	2.90	2.90	2.14
Exports to <u>other countries</u>	2.98	1.35	3.15	2.85	2.75	2.66
Cross-border imports from the <u>nearest city</u> on the other side	1.59	1.96	1.82	2.85	1.60	2.61
Cross-border imports from the <u>nearest larger city</u> on the other side	1.61	4.43	2.00	2.68	1.80	2.92
Cross-border imports from other <u>nearby regional markets</u>	1.71	2.29	2.12	2.71	1.90	2.92
Cross-border imports from more <u>distant markets</u> of the country	1.47	2.86	2.07	2.37	2.05	2.66
Cross-border imports from the <u>capital</u> of the country	1.67	4.47	2.33	2.63	2.02	2.77
Imports from <u>other countries</u>	2.65	2.04	2.84	2.95	2.45	3.75

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 4. De-localization of Activities

1 = no de-localization at all 7 = very satisfactory level of de-localization	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Firms in this side of the borders have <u>totally</u> transferred their activities to <u>nearby regions</u> in the other side of the border	1.90	1.53	2.96	2.07	3.32	1.64
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>partially</u> transferred their activities to <u>nearby regions</u> in the other side of the border	2.35	1.45	3.24	2.44	3.58	1.74
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>totally</u> transferred their activities to the <u>capital</u> of country in the other side of the border	1.71	1.51	2.73	2.29	2.73	1.66
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>partially</u> transferred their activities to the <u>capital</u> of country in the other side of the border	1.90	1.49	2.70	2.41	2.87	1.73
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>totally</u> transferred their activities to other regions in the other side of the border	1.69	1.45	2.74	2.02	3.13	1.73
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>partially</u> transferred their activities to other regions in the other side of the border	2.12	1.55	2.94	2.17	3.05	1.92
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>totally</u> transferred their activities to other countries	2.06	1.49	3.02	2.15	3.10	1.86
Local firms in this side of the borders have <u>partially</u> transferred their activities to other countries	2.49	1.84	3.54	2.33	3.03	2.12

Source: Exlinea project. own elaboration

border zones of Greece-Albania, a hundred and twenty four (124) from the zones of Greece-FYROM and a hundred and seventy eight (178) from the zones of Greece-Bulgaria. Table 1 illustrates the basic profile of the sample which includes representatives of the public and of the private sector, comprising a balanced sample. The following part of the paper deals with the analysis of questionnaire results per thematic field.

The regional context

The region under study is a region where border conflicts and a decades-long legacy of rigid border regimes have made cross-border interaction difficult. Another important

characteristic of the region is that of asymmetry. Not only do state borders define a physical/legal separation of communities, they also reinforce the economic and political-administrative differences between EU member states and their neighbors. The pattern is one of West-East and North-South disparities, where standards of living, wages and general indicators of welfare appreciably decrease as one moves eastward. Political asymmetries manifest themselves in differing degrees of political decentralization, empowerment of local and regional governments and the resources available to local and regional governments. Under the influence of the EU and EU policies and as a result of the political modernization process in the EU member states, multilevel governance has begun to emerge as an important political fact of life.

As is typical of many international border regions, the EU's external borders are also areas where cultural overlap and minority issues loom large. Greek communities can be found straddling both sides of state borders, providing, on the one hand, a vehicle for improved communications across state borders but, on the other, in some cases conjuring up fears of challenged national identities and revisionism. Perhaps one last major common characteristic of the case study regions is their lack of connectivity. Poor roads (except for major trans-European corridors), a limited number of border crossing points, an underdeveloped cross-border network of railway connections as well as other hindrances, new visa regulations in particular, make direct face-to-face contacts cumbersome.

Economic interaction

Trade and investment flows as well as dynamics of firm's relocation concern the sets of questions examined in this thematic field. Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide aggregate figures in mean values, referring to each border area and each cross border zone at the Northern Greek border region. The responses range from 1 to 7, with extreme values representing no trade/investment/relocation at all (1) and very satisfactory level of trade/investment/relocation (7) respectively.

The information provided in the above figures allow us to make a number of interesting observations: a) The level of cross-border interaction in trade and more specifically, in exports, is of a very low level, reflecting the weak border productive system and the regional character of specific border areas (i.e. small market areas). Also, exports in other countries are rather extensive, something that shows that the export orientation of border regions has not changed substantially since 1989 (see Table 2). b) the region does not appear to constitute

neither an important place of origin nor an important location for investments despite the fact that Greece constitutes a vital foreign investor to the neighbouring countries. However, in the Bulgarian border zone the Greek border enterprises invest in nearby regions because of fabric manufacturing, which mainly requires low labour costs (see Table 3). c) Examining the degree that the size and the distance of cities from the borders determine the form and the intensity of cross-border interaction, we identified a systematic correlation despite the fact that variations were not particularly intense. In particular, it was noted, that, under certain conditions the larger city close to the borders could absorb a lot of agglomeration dynamics released with the opening up of borders, attracting economic activities. d) No evidence of significant relocation tendencies were found in the three cross-border areas as a whole. However, the existing relocation of Greek firms mainly concerned the big cities near the Bulgarian borders and with hardly any effect on those near the borders of FYROM (see Table 4).

Migration and social aspects of cooperation

What are examined in this section are immigration, cross-border mobility and social interaction across the borders. Tables 5, 6 and 7 provide us with relative summary information.

With regard to migration and social aspects of co-operation we can conclude that migration flows of Albanians in the Greek border zone are of great importance, while there are also meaningful flows from Bulgaria. However, a specific concentration of Albanian immigrants is not observed to the border area in relation to the rest of Greece. It must also be noted that the migration flows from FYROM to Greece are very low. Immigrants work mainly in the sector of agriculture as unskilled workers and

Table 5. Immigration/Emigration

1 = no immigrants/emigrants at all 7 = veri satisfactory level of immigrants/emigrants	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Locally settled cross-border immigration from <u>nearby regions</u>	4,73	3,35	3,96	2,40	3,85	2,58
Locally settled cross-border immigration from <u>other regions</u>	4,29	2,88	3,84	2,30	3,53	2,55
Locally settled immigration from <u>other countries</u>	3,63	1,84	4,34	2,55	3,93	2,42
Locally settled cross-border immigration working in the <u>agriculture</u>	4,80	1,84	4,05	2,18	4,05	2,25
Locally settled cross-border immigration working in <u>industry</u>	3,33	1,53	3,13	2,30	3,07	2,33
Locally settled cross-border immigration working in <u>services</u>	2,59	1,88	2,24	2,33	2,25	2,58
Locally originated cross-border emigration to <u>nearby regions</u>	2,20	5,69	1,80	3,00	2,02	4,52
Locally originated cross-border emigration to <u>other regions</u>	2,06	5,51	1,91	3,30	2,30	4,51
Locally originated emigration to <u>other countries</u>	3,22	5,10	2,84	3,55	3,25	4,86

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 6. Labor Commuting

1 = no commuting at all 7 = veri satisfactory level of commuting	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Labor commuting (people living in the other side of the borders and working <u>regularly</u> in this side)	3,59	2,31	3,05	2,83	2,80	2,45
Labor commuting (people living in the other side of the borders and working <u>sporadically</u> in this side)	4,10	2,92	3,18	2,68	3,38	2,71
Reverse labor commuting (people living in this side of the borders and working <u>regularly</u> in the other side)	2,04	3,73	2,58	2,98	2,07	3,70
Reverse labor commuting (people living in this side of the borders and working <u>sporadically</u> in the other side)	2,24	4,12	2,61	2,90	2,55	4,01
One-day <u>trade activities</u> (local merchants selling products in the other side in short trips)	3,08	2,80	3,37	3,08	2,75	3,63
One-day <u>reciprocal trade activities</u> (merchants from the other side selling products in the local market in short trips)	2,57	2,37	3,18	3,35	3,45	3,08

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 7. Social Interaction

1 = no interaction at all 7 = very satisfactory level of interaction	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Cross-border visits of local residents to the <u>largest city</u> of the other side near the border for personal reasons	3.71	4.86	4.14	3.88	4.65	4.36
Cross-border visits of local residents to the <u>nearby regions</u> of the other side for personal reasons	3.76	4.84	3.87	4.10	4.45	4.38
Cross-border visits of local residents to other more <u>distant regions</u> of the other side for personal reasons	3.33	4.76	3.58	4.20	3.73	4.01
Cross-border visits of local residents to the <u>capital</u> of the other side for personal reasons	3.31	4.78	3.77	3.78	4.45	3.93
Cross-border visits of residents of the nearby regions of the other side to <u>local destinations</u> in this side for personal reasons	3.98	4.43	3.57	3.75	3.65	4.06

Source: *Exlinea project. own elaboration*

a very small number of them work in industrial or service sectors. This finding also reflects the production base pattern in the cross-border zone area (see Table 5). There is no significant level of labour mobility found on any side of the borders. The daily trade activities are recorded in all cases, to below average, underlining the separating role of border in daily transactions (see Table 6). With regards to the visits of the local residents to the other side of the borders, the nearby destination trips explicitly surpass the long distance ones, stressing the important role that distance plays in social interaction. In the Greece-Albania border zone in particular, the Albanian zone appears to be more active especially for visits paid to relative immigrants (see Table 7).

Identifying barriers to interaction and cross-border co-operation

The third thematic section examines the degree to which conditions of infrastructure, crossing the borders, trade, level of assistance,

and also economic geography operate as obstacles of interaction at the borders (see Tables 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 respectively).

The data indicated in the above Tables allow us to make the following observations:

a) Despite the general belief that the infrastructure constitutes a decisive obstacle in interaction, the research results do not confirm this statement. However, the standard of railways appears to be an obstacle between the borders of Greece with Albania and FYROM (see Table 8).

b) The closeness and the inadequate number of check points do not constitute a serious problem for crossing the borders. The Visa's procedures constitute the basic obstacle of crossing the borders for FYROM and Albania as well as at a lesser degree the passport and custom officers' treatment and attitude. (see Table 9).

c) The obstacles that concern conditions of trade are not important in the cross-border Greece-Bulgaria area due to Bulgaria's accession in EU. However meaningful obstacles in trade transactions to exist as a result of duties,

Table 8. Infrastructure Conditions As A Barrier

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Railways	2.86	3.37	4.29	2.83	3.83	3.44
Roads	3.88	5.51	4.84	4.65	3.85	3.90
Telecommunications	4.00	5.67	4.76	4.95	4.75	5.08
Public transport	3.84	5.06	3.96	3.58	3.52	4.15

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 9. Barrier in Crossing the Bordes

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Closeness of check points	4.59	4.59	4.87	4.03	4.13	4.08
Inadequate number of check points	4.35	3.94	4.54	4.25	4.22	3.78
Visa procedures (is any)	3.63	3.24	4.19	2.60	4.37	4.56
Passport officers treatment and attitude	3.92	3.47	4.47	3.60	4.57	3.93
Customs officers treatment and attitude	4.12	3.69	4.08	3.41	4.60	4.04

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 10. Trade Conditions as a Barrier

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Tariffs or duties imposed by the other side on exports	3.69	3.90	3.58	3.03	4.35	3.99
Quotas (limited quantities) imposed on exports	3.92	3.90	3.63	2.79	4.45	3.94
Bureaucratic procedures in exports	3.35	3.67	3.54	2.97	4.10	3.67
Bureaucratic procedures in imports	3.27	3.84	3.54	2.85	4.18	3.69
Technical requirements concerning exports	3.90	3.86	3.90	2.87	4.48	3.75
Technical requirements concerning imports	3.80	4.10	3.93	3.38	4.17	3.97

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 11. Level of Assistance as a Barrier

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Insufficient <u>local</u> government assistance	3.47	4.18	3.93	2.95	4.03	4.36
Insufficient <u>regional</u> government assistance	3.43	4.29	3.75	3.18	3.97	4.23
Insufficient <u>national</u> government assistance	3.12	3.61	3.71	3.18	3.70	3.87
Insufficient <u>local</u> business associations assistance	3.69	4.45	4.04	3.03	4.20	4.42
Insufficient <u>regional</u> business associations assistance	3.73	4.33	3.82	3.10	4.08	4.26
Insufficient <u>national</u> business associations assistance	3.47	3.90	4.00	3.13	3.85	4.19
Insufficient <u>local</u> agencies assistance	3.88	4.65	4.10	3.08	3.73	4.44
Insufficient <u>regional</u> agencies assistance	3.76	4.22	3.80	3.18	3.98	4.30
Insufficient <u>national</u> agencies assistance	3.43	3.92	3.80	3.23	4.17	4.20
Insufficient <u>European</u> (international) organizations assistance	3.18	3.35	3.76	3.36	3.92	4.23

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 12. General Conditions as a Barrier

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Political industry	3.22	3.65	3.25	3.36	4.05	4.42
Historical events	3.61	4.71	3.28	3.23	4.38	4.48
Corruption	3.04	3.22	3.08	3.00	3.70	3.54
Security problems	2.98	3.59	2.88	3.33	3.55	4.05
Frequent changing of the rules in business	3.27	4.22	3.25	3.10	3.92	3.92
Exchange rate instability	3.61	4.53	3.58	3.79	4.02	4.91
Quality of banking system	3.47	4.47	3.46	3.77	3.80	4.88
Inflation	3.82	4.84	3.83	4.41	3.86	4.74
Different culture	4.22	5.82	4.64	4.46	4.76	5.32
Different religion	4.33	5.51	4.67	4.64	4.97	5.11
Different language	4.31	5.22	4.11	3.92	4.59	4.44

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 13. *Economic Geography as a Barrier*

1 = barrier that cannot be overcome 7 = no barrier at all	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Insufficient in size nearby markets in the other side	3.35	4.98	3.64	4.49	3.80	4.55
Low purchasing power of the nearby markets in the other side	3.16	5.31	3.47	4.21	3.66	4.51
Difficult geographical conditions in border regions	3.90	5.31	4.31	4.90	4.31	4.41
Large cities on the other side too far away	4.12	4.84	4.05	4.46	4.19	4.38
Low quality and productivity of local firms	3.49	3.49	3.81	4.10	4.03	3.99
Limited product differentiation of local economy	3.43	3.96	3.95	4.18	4.25	4.02

Source: *Exlinea project, own elaboration*

quotas, bureaucratic procedures and technical requirements concerning the exports and imports at the border zones of Greece with Albania and FYROM (see Table 10).

d) The level of assistance of cross border cooperation in general is not perceived as an insuperable obstacle. However, the national level of support in all cases is recorded to contribute the least in the cross-border collaboration in relation to local and regional levels. Also, the Bulgarian and Albanian side believe that they have a higher level of assistance in relation to the Greek side, while opposite perceptions are held from the side of FYROM (see Table 11).

e) Obstacles concerning general conditions, corruption is flagged up as a serious obstacle that penetrates all regions. On the contrary, differences in terms of religion, culture, and language, does not represent obstacles. All three border zone regions consider that obstacles are represented by the general economic conditions that have to do with the banking system, exchange rate, inflation, and the stability of business rules. The concerning issues of political instability, security, and, historical events, are presented as obstacles at the border zones of Greece with Albania and FYROM (see Table 12).

f) With regards to economic geography conditions, the purchasing power and the insufficient size

of the nearby markets in the other side of the borders is seen as a problem by the total Greek border zone. On the contrary, the distance of the large cities as well as the difficult geographic morphology, are not perceived as obstacles. The low quality and productivity as well as the limited product differentiation of local economy seem to constitute a problem which is mainly presented in the border zone of Greece-Albania (see Table 13).

Perceptions and attitudes towards the border and the neighbours

The "initial conditions", the images of the "others" and the perceptions concerning the impacts of greater cross border interaction are the issues examined in this thematic section. Tables 14, 15 and 16 report the relative empirical results.

On the basis of the above empirical results the following comments are derived:

a) All sides face "initial conditions" in general as an advantage, with Albania presenting the highest scores. When comparing perceptions among border zones, they are systematically

Table 14. Initial Condition

1 = serious problem 7 = important asset	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Historical events among the two countries	3.55	5.76	3.78	3.61	4.07	4.75
Cultural differences	3.65	5.86	3.82	4.32	4.53	4.93
Religious differences	3.82	5.63	4.00	4.68	4.42	5.00
The existence of an ethnic minority in the other side	4.00	5.53	4.19	3.55	4.47	4.67
The existence of an ethnic minority in this side	4.02	5.45	4.01	4.53	4.36	4.71
Linguistic differences	4.00	5.61	3.78	3.74	4.20	4.33
Current relations among governments	4.41	5.84	4.14	3.89	4.49	5.20
Current relations among local / regional authorities	4.53	5.76	4.30	4.39	4.51	5.22
Political differences among regional and local administrative frameworks in both	3.96	5.65	3.92	4.16	3.71	4.92

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 15. Images of the Other

1 = not at all 7 = yes to the maximum degree	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Hard working (people on the average)	4.22	5.59	3.73	4.37	3.88	4.35
Productive	3.82	5.37	3.80	4.63	3.92	4.42
Honest	3.55	4.84	3.90	3.92	3.95	4.39
Friendly	3.65	5.27	3.77	4.16	4.15	4.81
Peaceful	3.65	5.49	3.69	4.39	4.20	5.07
Wealthy	2.88	5.45	3.07	4.87	3.12	4.74
Open minded	3.57	5.35	3.46	4.16	3.90	4.63
Disciplined	3.57	5.39	3.87	4.11	4.03	4.51
Similar to us	3.24	4.57	3.76	4.08	3.92	4.64
They have good feelings towards us	3.51	3.96	3.91	4.11	4.14	4.61
They have a "European" culture	3.06	4.73	3.84	4.37	3.78	4.61

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 16. Perceptions About the Impact of Greater Interaction

1 = totally negative impact 7 = highly positive impact	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
	49	49	83	41	60	118
Number of Observations						
Totally open borders within a wider Europe	4.57	5.98	4.72	4.63	4.97	5.82
Investment by local firms in the other side of the borders	4.92	5.69	4.83	4.61	4.88	5.69
Investment by firms originating in the other side of the border in the local economy	4.24	6.02	4.53	4.11	5.07	5.53
Immigrants from the other side working in the local economy	4.39	5.92	4.46	3.92	4.86	4.64
Emigrants from this side working in the other side of the borders	4.45	6.20	4.51	4.03	4.83	5.36
Local exports to the other side of the borders	5.10	6.22	4.74	4.32	5.14	5.62
Local import from the other side of the borders	4.55	5.88	4.25	4.00	4.59	5.08
Mixed marriages with immigrants	4.08	5.80	4.49	4.24	4.76	5.08
Cultural interactions	4.59	6.04	4.90	4.26	4.97	5.87
Collaboration among universities, research institutes, etc.	4.94	5.54	4.67	4.08	5.19	5.80

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

presented by the highest scores for the Albanian and Bulgarian zones in respect to the Greek zone. Moreover, perceptions held by the Greek zone as against to the Bulgarian one are systematically more positive than for the other two border zones of Greece-Albania and Greece-FYROM. It is also important that the relationships among local, regional authorities and the governments are considered as an advantage, underlining the vital role of policy making in the cross-border collaboration. Religious differences and the existence of national minorities at the borders are also considered as an asset, although there are diffused opinions for the opposite (see Table 14).

b) The "map of images" for the "other" as it came out of from the findings of the research is as follows: Albanians for Greeks: very hard working, productive, honest, friendly, peaceful, open-minded, moderate similar to us. Greeks for Albanians: Enough hard-working, moderate productive, honest, friendly, peaceful, open-minded, similar to us. FYROM for Greeks:

Enough hard-working, productive, friendly, peaceful, open-minded, disciplined, similar to us, moderate honest. Greeks for FYROM: moderate hard working, productive, friendly, peaceful, open-minded, disciplined, similar to us, honest. Bulgarians for Greeks: very peaceful, enough hard-working, productive, friendly, open-minded, disciplined, similar to us, honest. Greeks for Bulgarians: enough peaceful, friendly, disciplined, moderate hard-working, productive, open-minded, similar to us (see Table 15).

c) The expectations from the potential greater interaction are very positive in general. However, in relative terms Greeks are more retained towards Albania and Bulgaria, whereas less favourable are the people from FYROM towards Greece. Nevertheless, the cross-border collaboration in trade, investment, social interaction, and institutional co-operation is perceived as a process that will prove advantageous to all parties (see Table 16).

Institutional initiatives of cross-border co-operation

In this fifth thematic section what was investigated was the frequency and effectiveness of policies of cross-border collaboration and the degree of activation of local actors (Tables 17, 18 and 19 respectively).

The figures presented in the above Tables allow us to make the following comments:

a) The frequency of implementation of cross-border policies is of moderate level, while, systematically, the frequency of implementation of European policies are higher relative to the corresponding national, regional and local policies. In terms of subject-matters, policies

seem to focus across all border zones in the collaboration of local authorities and cultural exchanges. In the Albanian and Bulgarian border zones more frequently implemented policies seem to exist in relation to the Greek regions located across. From the Greek side, the frequency of policies concerning the environment and natural disasters exhibit below average in all cases. On the other hand, there is low frequency of policies from the Greek side that deal with organised crime, immigration, education/research and trust building policies (see Table 17).

b) The effectiveness of the cross border co-operation policies could be characterised as moderate appearing values at a lower level in relation to the frequency of policies. The European level also, in this unit, obtains in all cases the highest values when compared to the

Table 17. Implementation of Policies of Cross-Border Cooperation

1 = no policies at all 7 = very frequently polities	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
<u>Local</u> policies of c-b cooperation	3.61	4.46	4.01	4.37	4.29	4.92
<u>Regional</u> policies of c-b cooperation	3.71	4.35	4.26	4.11	4.17	5.06
<u>National</u> policies of c-b cooperation	3.73	4.06	4.25	4.13	4.21	4.83
<u>European Union</u> policies of c-b cooperation (funding)	4.14	4.21	4.44	4.16	4.41	5.00
<u>Infrastructure</u> (roads, crossings, railways, etc.)	3.80	4.46	4.28	3.95	3.98	4.43
Cooperation among local <u>authorities</u>	3.98	4.96	4.31	4.16	4.43	4.61
Cooperation among local <u>firms</u>	3.80	4.58	4.12	3.97	3.97	4.16
Policies of cooperation in <u>environmental</u> problems	3.16	4.38	3.69	3.68	3.78	4.55
Policies of cooperation in the case of <u>natural disasters</u>	3.51	4.35	3.74	3.87	3.95	4.75
Policies of cooperation towards <u>organized crime</u>	3.65	4.79	3.73	4.16	3.98	4.81
Policies of cooperation in <u>migration issues</u>	3.57	4.96	3.81	4.11	4.07	4.59
Policies of <u>cultural</u> cooperation	3.82	5.29	4.17	4.29	4.28	4.92
Policies of cooperation in <u>education / research</u>	3.51	5.25	3.62	4.29	4.31	4.53
Trust building policies	3.80	4.91	3.90	4.21	4.05	4.56

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 18. Effectiveness of Policies of Cross-Border Cooperation

1 = no effective at all 7 = maximum effectiveness	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Local policies of c-b cooperation	3.67	4.79	3.65	3.68	4.09	4.64
Regional policies of c-b cooperation	3.88	4.62	4.11	3.79	4.05	4.63
National policies of c-b cooperation	3.86	4.23	4.11	3.63	4.31	4.39
European Union policies of c-b cooperation (funding)	3.94	4.60	4.17	4.00	4.47	4.53
Infrastructure (roads, crossings, railways, etc.)	3.67	4.62	4.20	3.76	4.17	4.14
Cooperation among local authorities	3.92	4.72	4.11	3.89	4.22	4.53
Cooperation among local firms	3.92	4.43	3.96	3.50	4.12	4.17
Policies of cooperation in environmental problems	3.31	4.40	3.54	3.26	3.84	4.53
Policies of cooperation in the case of natural disasters	3.42	4.47	3.75	3.63	4.03	4.63
Policies of cooperation towards organized crime	3.56	4.57	3.62	3.71	3.88	4.64
Policies of cooperation in migration issues	3.46	4.68	3.95	3.45	4.19	4.68
Policies of cultural cooperation	3.85	4.83	4.09	3.63	4.36	4.91
Policies of cooperation in education / research	3.56	4.79	3.91	3.66	4.24	4.62
Trust building policies	3.60	4.64	3.86	3.76	4.33	4.71

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 19. Local Actors Active in Cross-Border Interaction or Cooperation

1 = no active at all 7 = very active	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
Number of Observations	49	49	83	41	60	118
Local administration	3.79	4.74	4.01	3.26	4.34	4.76
Regional administration	3.94	4.98	4.10	3.87	4.16	4.71
NGOs	3.69	5.57	3.93	3.82	4.16	4.49
Local or regional Chambers	4.10	5.19	3.80	4.03	4.22	4.50
Labor Union	3.71	4.60	3.78	3.37	3.95	3.54
Universities and Research Centers	3.77	5.23	4.34	3.82	4.16	4.23
Development Agencies	4.15	5.43	4.19	4.32	4.16	4.15
Private firms	4.04	5.09	4.39	4.03	3.98	4.39
Political parties	3.64	4.87	3.76	3.53	4.02	3.85
Private citizen	4.09	5.11	4.20	4.24	4.19	4.30
Networks of citizen	3.62	5.02	3.81	3.97	3.98	4.30
Cultural Associations	4.11	5.28	3.95	4.00	4.47	4.42
Minorities	3.70	5.66	4.21	4.26	4.10	4.03
Other	4.30	6.04	4.54	4.61	4.40	4.79

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

national, regional, and, local level. The most effective policies for the Greece-Albania border zone seem to be the co-operation among the local authorities and cultural exchanges. The most effective policies for the border zone Greece-FYROM are infrastructure matters and the co-operation among local authorities. Regarding the Greece-Bulgaria border zone the most effective policies deal with the cultural exchanges and the trust building aspects. (see Table 18).

c) The degree of activation of local actors is presented generally moderate, with some differentiations. In the border zone of Greece-Albania development agencies are the most active. In the Greece-FYROM border zone mostly active

are the individual firms, that in relation to the most of the cross border initiatives are noted from local authorities (see Table 19). Our findings suggest that there is "room for policy making" from the local actors as long as they obtain the respective decentralized competencies.

Expected effects of greater cross border interaction and co-operation

The benefits of greater interaction between two countries and the comparative assessment of the gains are examined in the sixth thematic section (See Tables 20 and 21 respectively).

Table 20. The benefits of greater interaction between the two countries

1 = no benefits at all 7 = maximum benefits	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
	Number of Observations					
	49	49	83	41	60	118
Our country	5.04	6.40	5.05	4.68	4.81	5.61
The other country	4.87	5.81	4.84	4.54	4.82	5.39
The capital city of our country	4.78	5.98	4.83	4.38	4.54	5.35
The capital city of the other country	5.20	6.30	5.04	4.32	4.95	5.52
Our border region	5.33	6.21	5.14	4.73	4.91	5.82
The border region in the other side	5.36	6.00	5.21	4.46	4.93	5.73
The large cities near the border in our side	5.36	5.91	4.96	4.36	4.88	5.63
The large cities near the border in the other side	5.02	6.17	4.60	4.28	4.86	5.52
The rural areas near the border in our side	4.82	5.85	4.51	3.92	4.50	5.50
The rural areas near the border in the other side	4.69	5.17	4.63	3.42	4.75	5.01
The organized crime in both countries	4.78	6.15	4.92	3.86	4.93	4.97
The rich and wealthy in this country	4.69	6.20	4.90	4.19	4.65	5.24
The rich and wealthy in the other country	4.44	6.11	4.64	4.03	4.09	4.97
The poor in this country	4.71	5.76	4.35	3.47	4.06	4.57
The poor in the other country	4.55	6.02	4.53	3.97	4.23	4.87
The political parties in power	4.31	5.70	4.23	3.78	4.40	4.80
The political parties in the opposition	4.50	5.72	4.71	4.11	4.32	5.03

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 21. Comparative assessment of the gains of greater interaction between the two countries

1 = not at all true 7 = absolutely true	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
	49	49	83	41	60	118
Number of Observations						
Both countries gain from greater interaction	4.74	4.87	4.41	3.94	4.47	5.37
The other country gains more	4.21	5.35	4.61	4.17	4.47	4.15
Our country gains more	4.57	5.30	4.42	4.20	3.98	4.75
Both border zones gain from greater interaction	4.50	4.76	4.43	4.14	4.08	5.21
The other border zone gains more	4.17	4.91	4.51	4.06	4.09	4.21
Our border zone gains more	4.26	4.63	4.09	4.29	4.51	4.30
Our country gains more than one region	4.36	5.39	4.37	3.94	3.87	4.72
Our region gains more than our country	4.10	5.15	4.35	3.97	4.02	4.97
Our region and our country gain about the same	4.24	5.37	4.04	3.91	4.30	4.89
Greater interaction causes in our region both winners and losers	4.26	4.93	4.17	3.71	3.94	5.20
Gains are greater than losses in our region	3.80	4.54	4.26	3.85	3.72	4.55
Losses are greater than gains in our region	3.83	4.91	4.03	3.74	4.27	4.16
Gains and losses are about the same in our region	4.30	5.29	4.53	4.88	4.22	4.68

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

On the basis of the information provided in Tables 20 and 21 we can make the following interesting observation:

a) It is found that there are high enough expectations for benefits from all parties and in the most intense degree from the Albanian side. Among the border zones Albanians and Bulgarians expect greater benefits than Greeks do, and, on contrary to Greeks opposite to FYROM who envisage great benefits from their neighbours. It must be noted that all parties believe that their own country as a whole will benefit more, their capital, however, will gain less than the capital of the neighbouring country. Another important finding is that it is expected from the border regions to be equally benefited as a result of the cross-border interaction. Results for benefits between the rich and the poor show that all border zones expect from the rich of their own country and the poor of the

neighbouring country to gain relatively more. Finally, it is anticipated that opposition political parties are expected to benefit more than the parties in power. (see Table 20).

b) Through the comparative assessment of benefits it is found that positive expectations are focused mainly in the Albanian and Bulgarian border zones. It also follows that all border zones will come out with benefits from the cross-border interaction. Comparing the expected gains at a country level as well as at a border region level, it is found that both levels gain more or less the same. There is also the opinion that greater interaction results in winners and losers in border regions that keep some sort of balance (see Table 21).

Expected effects of EU enlargement on the region

In this seventh and final thematic section the issues examined have to do with the comparative assessment of the effects from the EU enlargement and the anticipated consequences in the cross border co-operation policies (See Tables 22 and 23).

From the analysis of the results the following observation can be made:

a) Generally positive expectations prevail for the anticipated benefits that will result from the EU enlargement. It is claimed that the EU itself will come out benefited from the process of enlargement. Another observation derived is that not only neighbouring countries but all border regions will gain benefits. Moreover, it

is shown that for each side the same level of benefits are expected for the country as well as for the border regions. The EU enlargement is also claimed that will bring upon winners and losers at the border regions, which nevertheless will be of an equal size and level (see Table 22).

b) The anticipated impacts of the enlargement regarding the cross-border policies are believed to be essential. Equally positive are expected to be the consequences in the national, the regional and the local level. However, it is found that there are differences in the Albanian and Bulgarian side that expect more positive impacts from the enlargement compared to the Greek zone. On the contrary, the Greek zone opposite of FYROM is the one that holds the most positive expectations from the enlargement compared to its neighbouring border region. It is also remarkable the fact that the most optimistic expectations of the Greek zone with Albania

Table 22. Comparative assessment of the impacts of EU Enlargement

1 = not at all true 7 = absolutely true	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
	49	49	83	41	60	118
Number of Observations						
EU gains	4.70	4.78	4.60	4.53	4.10	5.42
All countries gain	4.13	5.31	4.66	4.09	4.22	4.95
The other country (countries) stand to gain more	4.78	5.33	4.57	4.06	4.42	4.30
Our country gains more	4.63	4.62	4.49	4.27	4.24	4.71
Both border zones gain	3.98	4.87	4.68	4.00	4.24	4.73
The other border zone gains more	4.50	4.60	4.18	4.13	4.43	3.78
Our border zone gains more	4.10	4.95	4.23	4.19	4.20	4.18
Our country gains more than our region	4.40	5.02	4.67	4.09	4.08	4.65
Our region gains more than our country	4.31	5.25	4.51	4.09	4.53	4.71
Our region and our country gain about the same	4.51	5.23	4.46	4.09	4.60	5.00
EU enlargement causes in our region both winners and losers	4.29	4.41	4.37	4.94	4.13	5.28
Gains are greater than losses in our region	4.29	5.07	4.48	4.44	4.63	4.71
Losses are greater than gains in our region	5.05	6.35	5.07	5.09	5.02	4.65

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

Table 23. Impact of EU Enlargement on Cross-Border Cooperation / Interaction

1 = negative 7 = positive	Greece Albania		Greece FYROM		Greece Bulgaria	
	GR	AL	GR	FY	GR	BU
	49	49	83	41	60	118
Number of Observations						
Local policies of c-b cooperation	5.47	6.43	5.41	4.81	5.27	5.75
Regional policies of c-b cooperation	5.47	6.50	5.35	4.81	5.43	5.85
National policies of c-b cooperation	5.83	6.55	5.28	4.56	5.27	5.86
Infrastructure (roads, crossings, railways, etc.)	5.51	6.63	5.32	4.56	5.07	5.89
Cooperation among local authorities	5.54	6.56	5.34	4.47	5.05	5.88
Cooperation among local firms	5.35	6.26	5.33	4.63	4.98	5.82
Policies of cooperation in environmental problems	5.65	6.28	5.28	4.54	5.18	5.84
Policies of cooperation in the case of natural disasters	5.53	6.32	5.46	4.43	5.18	5.99
Policies of cooperation towards organized crime	5.64	6.32	5.35	4.50	5.30	6.00
Policies of cooperation in migration issues	5.35	6.43	5.39	4.50	5.49	5.98
Policies of cultural cooperation	5.56	6.44	5.40	4.50	5.40	5.80
Policies of cooperation in education / research	5.61	6.26	5.37	4.67	5.24	5.96
Trust building in the cross-border region	6.50	6.50	4.75	2.83	5.20	6.02

Source: Exlinea project, own elaboration

and Bulgaria focus in the trust building policies, whereas the same issue is the one of the least optimistic expectations of the Greek zone with FYROM (see Table 23).

Conclusion

This paper has provided evidence concerning interaction, perceptions, policies and practices on the Northern Greek cross border zone. The main conclusions derived from the precedent analysis which deserve consideration are the following:

Borders constitute regions of relatively low attractiveness. The low level of economic interaction and weak competitiveness and the outward looking approach accordingly, confirm the existence of a weak productive and export base of the border zone regions, which do not appear

to constitute either the key sender or the key recipient of serious investments. The fact, however, that the problem of unemployment is sovereign in the cross-border zones is relevant to the statements mentioned above.

Investigating the extent to which size and distance of the cities from the border areas defines the type and the level of cross border interaction, we have noticed a systematic correlation. The size of a city, as in all cases, plays a significant role. In almost all cases, the largest city near the borders exhibits a significantly larger mean value compared to that of the nearest city. The significance of the results is augmented as we gradually move from smaller cities to the capital. These results lead us to the conclusion that there is a special role for the large urban centre close to the borders as this could operate under certain conditions as a hub for all sorts of economic activities.

Difficult terrain and physical geography do not constitute a major intervening factor in influencing cross border interaction patterns. However, the peripheral location in the wider European economic space influences to a large extent both the prospects for development and pattern of specializations in these border regions. It can also be noted that geographical proximity stimulates mutual contacts and social interaction and also enhances the networking between the two sides of borders.

Analysis of the impacts that are likely to arise from the greater CBC, allows us to conclude that the expectations for positive repercussions prevail. However, countries that have a low level of growth and institutional completion with the EU-15 focus their positive perceptions in attracting investments, cultural and institutional collaboration, and, social interaction. On the contrary, the most developed countries positively conceive the increase of CBC through investments, trade, and, profit from cheap labour.

In terms of regional "images", it is worth noting that there are divergent perceptions with respect to the geographical locations of Greece and its northern neighbors. More specifically, in the northern borders of Greece a sense of isolation prevails while, on the other side of the border, residents find themselves to be located in a favorable place. In other words, for the Greeks the borders separate something "different" while for their northern neighbours they separate something that is "the same". Within this context, the role of EU is decisive regarding the configuration of perceptions of "us" and "the other".

If anything has become clear in studying the area of our focus, it is that cross-border regionalization is inherently a process of socio-political construction and, in many, ways highly artificial. Cross-border regions do not create "monolithic" communities of interest, where

citizens, political actors and the private sector participate equally in promoting cooperation. Instead, regionalization in this case is a project of linking together actor groups and institutions with a stake in improved co-operation. The simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion, of "opening" and "closure" and/or "nationalizing" and "Europeanizing" discourses at the border characterizes all our case study areas. These contradictions are the point of departure for any serious contemplation of cross-border region-building. Given the simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion in borderlands contexts, the quality of cooperation will to a great extent depend on the role political elites assume in promoting a regional idea and bridging cultural difference. The quality of the political message, however, is not only a local issue; it is subject to practices and discourses that operate at several different spatial levels and societal realms.

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