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Grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit in Europa

Theorie – Empirie – Praxis

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Cross-Border Cooperation from the perspective of the ARGE Alpe-Adria. Empirical Findings

1. *The Alpe-Adria region: an historical-geographical note*

Alpe-Adria is a relatively new geographical concept. It refers to the area where the Eastern section of the Alps bifurcate, one part sloping north-east toward Vienna, and the other bending south-east toward Bosnia (Dinaric Alps). Here the Alps and the Danube basin come closest to the Adriatic sea, the branch of the Mediterranean deeply thrust into Central Europe. This is also the one point in Europe where the three major European culture areas – the Latin, the German and the Slavic – come together. Historically, these spatial relations have always generated important economic and political developments. In antiquity, the coastal city of Aquileia acted as bridgehead and powerhouse of the Roman expansion into "Noricum", i.e. modern Austria, Hungary, and Slovenia. With the decline of the Roman empire, the mountain passes of the Julian Alps became the port of entry of countless armies marching from the East into Italy: about 17 major invasions, from the Quads and Marcomanns in the III. century, to the Goths in the V., the Lombards in the VI., the Magyars in the X., the Turks in the XVI., and the Cossacks in the middle XX. century, can be counted. From the X. century on, the area was polarized and paraged by two main powers, the Empire (later the Hapsburgs, based in Vienna) in the Danube basin, and the Republic of Venice in the south-eastern Alps and the Adriatic. Since the XVIII. century the Hapsburgs developed Trieste as the main seaport of the Empire and as a rival and successor to the moribund Venice. For almost one thousand years, the area between the upper Adriatic and the Alpine continental divide has been a bitterly contested frontier region. In the last two centuries, the old geopolitical and geoeconomic reasons for contention were supplemented by nationalistic motifs. The culmination of it all was the carnage of World War I, when several hundred thousand Italian, Austrian, Hungarian, Slovene and Croat soldiers slaughtered each other on the Isonzo river and on the Karst hills; and the ethnic cleansing in the aftermath of World War II. With the communist takeover of Yugoslavia, the frontier became not only, as it has been for more than a thousand years, a border between the Mediterranean and Central Europe, between the Latins, the Germans and the Slavs; but also the frontier between West and East, democracy and totalitarianism, capitalism and communism.

World War II sealed this frontier, as part of the iron curtain. Only after Tito's break from Moscow (1948), the settlement of the conflict over Trieste (1954, formalized in 1975), and the liberation of Austria from Soviet occupation (1955), could peaceful

contacts across the borders slowly be resumed. There was the pressure to solve very practical problems, like water supplies of border towns, or the access of farmers to properties left on the other side of the border; or more social ones, like the resumption of family contacts in split communities. One important force in this process was the presence, along the borders, of national minorities; mostly Slovenes in Italy and in Austria.

2. *The dawning of cross-border cooperation*

In the sixties, the slow healing of the war scars, the improving inter-governmental relations, and the wave of sustained economic growth, with the entailed private motorization, mobility, spare time, tourism, unleashing of market forces, and so on, converged into the rapid increase of border traffic. Private citizens would cross borders in search of new places to visit and economic bargains, profiting from the steep price and quality differentials. Border commerce began to flourish. Enlargement of border-crossing structures, speeding up of control procedures, building of access roads, cooperation between border authorities was necessary. Local administrations joined ever more enthusiastically the Council of Europe's campaign for "jumelages", mutual visits and friendship-and-peace events. Minorities were less and less seen with suspicion, as potentially unloyal citizens, and more and more as "bridges" and "mediators" with the nation across the border; a resource, instead of a liability. Professionals, intellectuals, artists, academics, sportsmen started to stage cross-border meetings. Businessmen explored the opportunities for exchanges and cooperation across the borders; and their organizations, beginning with the Chambers of Commerce, pressured in this direction. Institutions specializing in the study and promotion of cross-border, or even international, relations, were launched. In Friuli-V.G., one can mention the Institute for Central European ("Mitteleuropa") Cultural Meetings (1966), the Institute for East-West studies, and the Institute of International sociology (both in 1968). Through these and other instruments, the Region involved itself in the "European movement of Frontier Regions", and in the corresponding institutions within the European bodies (Council of Europe and EEC); more broadly, in the general drive for a "Europe of the regions". The situation and aspirations of regions in this corner of Europe were compared with those in other areas, experiences exchanged, lessons learned.

3. *The founding of Alpe Adria*

Occasional contacts between the top politicians and the concerned regions across the borders took place, even though at least in the Italian constitutional system they had no powers whatsoever (and still formally do not) in the field of external, "international" relations. In the seventies, these contacts grew to the point that it was felt opportune to institutionalize them, according to the model of other European trans-frontier regional

organizations, such as the ANOC, ALP, and others, in Venice, on November 20th, 1978, the heads of the Italian Regions of Friuli-V.G. and Veneto, the Yugoslav Republics of Slovenia and Croatia, the Austrian Länder of Carinthia, Styria, and Upper Austria, plus the German Land of Bavaria and the Austrian Land of Salzburg as "active observers", signed an agreement establishing the "Working Community Alpe Adria".

Its very name, echoing the distinctively German expression *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, stresses the important role played by the German partners as midwives in this event. Bavaria was one of the most significant partners of Alpe Adria, mainly because of her immediate interest in the improvement of land links with the Adriatic harbours.

The organizational model was very lightweight. It consisted of the Plenary Assembly of the heads of the member regions (Länder, republics), that sets the goals and takes all political decisions, and the Committee of Higher Officials, responsible for their implementation. The chairmanship of the Assembly, as well as of all Committees, would rotate every two years, according to the alphabetical order. For a long time there was no standing Secretariat; it moved with the presidency. Also, there was no common budget; organizational costs were sustained by each region, with a complex balancing system. Each region would be asked to play the leading role in each project, for a certain time; during this capacity, it would act both as chair and as "local organizing committee" for meetings, set agendas, play host, etc. Meetings took on all the formal features of diplomatic events, with strict observance of rules regarding the use of languages, precedences, etc.

The working committees closely reflected the Community's stated goals and thus concerned respectively 1) regional planning and environmental management, 2) transport, 3) culture, science and sports, 4) economy and tourism, 5) agriculture, forestry, animal production and mountain economy, 6) health, 7) social affairs. Number, denomination and tasks of the Committees showed a certain variation in time. Each Committee was to establish specific objectives, methods and schedules and to present results, in the form of common reports. These have usually an analytical-descriptive part, presenting the state of the question in each member region, and a policy-oriented part, commenting on the differences between the regions, recommending strategies for the harmonization of policies in the sector concerned, and setting common goals. Some of these reports were given wide circulation in form of handsomely illustrated documents and books. Other activities of the Alpe Adria took the form of promotional events, exhibitions, wider-scale public events.

4. *The enlargement of Alpe Adria*

In a short time, successively outer layers of regions applied for admittance to the original group. To the west, Alpe Adria was enlarged to Trentino-South Tirol, Lombardy, and even the Swiss canton of Tessin. To the East, the Austrian Burgenland, and the

Hungarian counties of Győr-Ménfőcsanak, Vas, Zala, Somogy and Baranya. The Italian region of Emilia-Romagna was also admitted, although its status is a bit uncertain, because of distinctive lack of concrete activities. Interest was expressed by some areas of Czechoslovakia in the North and of Bosnia-Erzegovina in the South, but at this point it was decided that further enlargements would make the Community unmanageable. Thus the number of members was stopped at 19. In this format, the Alpe Adria comprises 305,000 square km and 43.5 million inhabitants – the equivalent of a middle-size state, and a major portion of the old Hapsburg empire. In the mid-eighties, they belonged to 6 states (Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary), spoke 5 languages (Italian, German, Slovene, Croat, Hungarian) and belonged to 4 political systems (neutral/capitalist Switzerland and Austria, Nato- and EEC members Germany and Italy, neutral/socialist Yugoslavia, Warsaw-pact socialist Hungary), and the member units had 5 different names (canton, region, land, republic, county). Understandably, managing in a strictly democratic and egalitarian mode a system of such internal diversity made the proceedings of Alpe Adria quite cumbersome. One needs only think to the ponderousness of the letterheads and frontispices of publications.

What were the reasons of this success, or, at least, of this widespread interest in joining Alpe Adria? Several hypotheses can be advanced. One is the general appeal on regional authorities in engaging in a sort of international relation, with all the trappings and formalities of diplomacy: meetings in elegant settings, pagantry, ceremonies, formal dinners, prominent *podia* for high rethorics; in the cases of most member regions, with the added pleasure of transgressing their formal powers, and challenging their central governments. There was the human dimension, the interest in getting to know the world across the border, to meet peers, to exchange views and information, to learn from each other's experiences. For most of the member regions, there may have been some sense of cultural and historical commonality, the re-emergence of deep-seated memories of the good old times, when they lived peacefully together within a single political system, the Hapsburg monarchy. For the regions (counties, republics) belonging to then Socialist states, such as Hungary and Yugoslavia, Alpe Adria provided an opportunity to come to intimate distance to that object of growing desire, the West; to emphasize their being European and their determination to overcome the differences not only in living standards, but also in cultural and political conditions. The drive to join Alpe Adria was a clear clue of the failure of, and disillusion with, the socialist system. But there certainly was also the pursuit, by all parties, of more concrete, immediate interests. Alpe-Adria was seen as a way to promote the swelling wave of economic exchanges already underway by private initiatives, to ease business combinations and joint ventures. One of the main interests, as already mentioned, revolved around the development of transport and communication links. The Alps are still a barrier in the communication between Central Europe and the Mediterranean, and the location of road and rail links, requiring huge investments (tunnels, bridges), is the object of hard competition (and growing worries) between all the concerned regions and localities. Moreover, with time a second major transport concept emerged and

polarized the attention of the Alpe Adria regions: the development of an East-West major European axis south of the Alps (the Barcellona-Lyon-Turin-Milan-Venice-Trieste-Lubiana-Budapest-Kiev axis). Alpe Adria was seen as an organizational framework within which these projects could best be worked out and promoted. No concerned region would want to be left out of the discussion rooms.

5. Main activities

In almost twenty years, Alpe Adria has produced a considerable amount of activities of diverse nature. This material could be analyzed according to different criteria; for instance, the political, technical or promotional nature, the actors (not all activities involve all parties), the form it takes (resolutions, recommendations, decisions, projects, publications, exhibitions, meetings, contests, etc.), time (chronology), and others. It seems to us that a review according to content (issue area, type of substantive problem) would be the most significant one in the present context. More detailed accounts can be found by the Alpe Adria's Documentation Centre in Klagenfurt; now accessible also on Internet.

5.1 Regional and urban planning, environmental management

Cooperation in this field started with the compilation of a "First common report on regional planning" of the original 9 member regions, with rich cartographic and statistical appendixes, which was published in 1982. The following years studies of water and forest management, and of general environmental conservation policies in the Alpe Adria were completed. Another major study, complemented by an itinerant exhibition, concerned the situation and policies in the field of old urban centres of historic and cultural importance (1985). Since 1986, studies on atmospheric pollution and its effects on Alpine woods have been carried out in cooperation with Arge Alp. In 1988 a meeting of national/natural park managers was held in Heiligenblut, and other activities in this field ensued. In 1990 a "Common report on domestic and industrial waste treatment" was published. In the same year, a common statement indicating 10 criteria for environmental impact assessment procedures was approved. Again in the same year, a first report on "dirty sea" (the blooming of mucilaginous algae in the upper Adriatic) appeared. In 1991 three useful studies were presented: a) a glossary of the words used in the field of environmental management and policies, in the several languages, b) a report on energy conservation policies, and c) one on soil erosion and conservation. In 1993 a five-languages lexicon of terms used in regional planning was prepared. The following year, a study concerned the feasibility of a network of bicycle trails in the Alpe Adria, and another the automatic geographic information systems for territorial planning. In 1994 a study on the soil's carrying capacity and overload was prepared, and a second report on the conservation of historical urban and rural settlements was published. It goes without saying that every report and publication is the outcome of a complex process involving meetings, symposia and conferences at different levels.

5.2 Transport

Transport issues form an important chapter in regional planning and environmental management. But they have also been the focus of special activities. In 1987, reports on "main communication routes" and "air communications" in the Alpe Adria were presented. A symposium on these themes was held in the same year in Zagreb, and another in 1990 in Lombardy. In 1993, an analytical statistical study was presented on border traffic and related transport problems in the border areas of Alpe Adria; two years later it was extended to the borders of Arge Alp. In 1994 a symposium on transport, development and environment was held in Győr. A handbook to improve road security was prepared in 1995.

5.3 Civil defence

A number of activities related to the physical environment regard civil defence in emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and other natural hazards. A first resolution on cooperation in this area was approved in 1988; an exhibition on equipment and practices in this field was organized in Trieste in 1990. A common documentation center was established in Palmanova (Friuli).

5.4 Tourism

Tourism is not only an important link between territorial/environmental management and economy, but also one of the main avenues to mutual knowledge and understanding, and one of the easiest ways to promote a common Alpe Adria identity, both internal and external. Thus, tourism has been a central concern in the Community activities. In 1986, a multimedia package on the touristic assets of Alpe Adria was presented in London, and a tourist map published. In 1988, a publicity campaign on Alpe Adria's natural parks was launched. In 1990, a review on cuisine specialties ("gastronomy") and in 1994 a guide to the best restaurants in Alpe Adria were published, and others on special tourist resources (for instance, castles). In the following years, a journal on "tourism, nature and health", a new tourist map and a brochure on "cultural tourism" in the Alpe Adria were presented in Zagreb.

5.5 Agriculture

A number of symposia and exhibitions on some agricultural problems have been staged; e.g. on the cultivation of apple trees, on livestock, on quality standards of agricultural produce for the European market, on alternative agricultural practices, on milk production and treatment, etc. Meetings of young farm families and of agricultural sciences teachers were organized. Practical projects included technological systems against hailstorms.

From the very beginning, the promotion of cooperation between the chambers of commerce, banks, business and trade unions, and fairs across the Alpe Adria regions was one of the main goals of the Working Community. A first meeting of the heads of the Chambers of Commerce was held in Linz in 1981, and in the same year, in Ljubljana, of the heads of fairs; in 1982, in Klagenfurt, of the trade unions. There is however scant record of further meetings of this type, because the concerned actors proceeded then on their own, outside the Alpe Adria formalities. In 1992 a series of seminars on European economic integration were held; for instance, in quality standards of industrial products for the European market, on competition, on financial matters, etc. Statistical reports on socio-economic structures and trends of the Alpe Adria regions have been published at the end of the eighties.

5.7 *Social and health affairs*

This sector received only late and desultory attention in the Alpe-Adria programs. Comparative studies on health care systems, on emergencies, cancer epidemiology, drugs, thermal treatments and resources, alcoholism, nutrition, and other issues were carried out. In 1992, in Budapest, a bulletin on health care for diabetics was published, following a symposium on the same problem. Others meeting were dedicated to European legislation on health professions, to care for paraplegics, and others. The realization of a centre for paraplegic care in Istria became one common Alpe Adria project. An experts meeting on the legal professions, and especially on judges, in the framework of the European Union was held in 1993. Another one, on equal opportunities for women, in the same year in München. A colloquium on security and organized crime was held in 1995.

5.8 *Education, research, science, communications*

The cooperation between universities, research centers and educational institutions was one of the top priorities in the Alpe Adria agenda. A first meeting of university presidents (Rectors) was held in Graz already in 1979, and this was followed by several others. A tradition of inviting the colleagues from Alpe Adria to university peagants (like the opening of the academic year), and a practice of signing protocols for bilateral cooperation (exchange of students and teachers, joint research programs etc.) was established. On the tenth anniversary of Alpe Adria, in 1988, a second general assembly of the Alpe Adria rectors was again convened in Graz. This seems one of the most successful, and perhaps significant in the long term, of the Community's initiatives.

Other activities in related fields concerned science and technology. A meeting on "research, development and technology transfer" in the European Union was organized in Trieste in 1990, and a bulletin titled "A2-Science and technology in the Alpine-

Adriatic region" has been published since 1991. A workshop on microelectronics for small and medium-size firms was held in Trento in 1992.

A number of initiatives concerned libraries and bibliographical systems: e.g., a colloquium in Schio in 1988 and a meeting of directors of public libraries in Zagreb, 1994. A "cultural passport" of Alpe Adria, facilitating access to libraries, research facilities, museums etc., was issued. Some other events concerned theatre and the visual arts.

A further field of high priority in the original agenda of the Alpe Adria community were the media. A first meeting of radio-journalists was organized in Graz in 1980; in the same year most television stations in the area started broadcasting programs on Alpe Adria. Production of materials is the outcome of cooperation between the several media stations. These are by now a well-established feature of the media landscape in this area, and have undoubtedly helped mightily in the popularization of the Alpe Adria concept. A Symposium on "cooperation between mass-media" was held in Portschach, Carinthia, in 1987, and in 1991, an Alpe Adria Journalism prize was instituted in Milan.

5.9 *Youth and sports*

Several initiatives, in addition to those concerning the universities, are aimed to the young. A first seminar was organised already in 1980 in Klagenfurt, on the model of similar events already in existence among Friuli-V.G., Carinthia and Slovenia; and in 1982 bi-annual Alpe Adria Youth Games, alternatingly in winter and summer, started in Auronzo (Veneto). A meeting on sports in the Alpe Adria was held in Rovigno in 1993. A chess "gala" contest for young players was launched in 1988, and a contest for young violinists in 1993. Many seminars and "camps" on cultural issues, and especially on ecology, peace, friendship, and inter-national understanding, have been staged. Hundreds, and in some cases more than a thousand, young people participate to these events. A colloquium on youth organizations in Alpe Adria was organized in Nagykanizsa in 1995.

5.10 *Minorities and peace*

A major concern of the Alpe Adria Community has been from the outset the promotion of understanding and friendship among the several national groups it comprises, and in this perspectives national minorities play a central role. A first study on the more than 30 national minorities within Alpe Adria has been published in 1990; a second one is in progress. In 1993, in Bled, a symposium on the subject was held; the proceedings have been published. A cultural festival of Alpe-Adria minorities was staged in Bala-tonfoldvar in 1996. Initiatives regarding multiculturalism, tolerance, etc. have been aimed especially to the young.

Many initiatives on international peace have been organized in relation to the breaking out of the war in former Yugoslavia. A firm resolution, expressing full solidarity of Alpe Adria to Slovenia's and Croatia's right to self-determination, and the auspices that only peaceful means be used, was approved in July 1991. One month later, the readiness of the Alpe Adria region to supply concrete economic and humanitarian aid to Croatia was stated, and Alpe Adria Red Cross convoys were subsequently organized.

5.11 Cooperation with other regional organizations

The Alpe Adria has kept close contacts, and also cooperated in particular projects, with sister regional communities; some of its member units, like Bavaria, Lombardy, Trentino-Südtirol, in fact, belong to more than one community. Cooperation has been especially strong with Arge Alp; but contacts have also taken place with the community of Western Alps (COTRAO), of Danube regions, of Central European regions, of Subcarpathian regions. Other links have been established with the community of European Frontier Region (AGEG) and with the community of European Maritime Regions.

6. Direct and second-order effects

Critics have an easy day, arguing that all the aforementioned activities amount to mountains of printed paper of all sorts – technical reports, statistical analyses, glossy promotional picture books, popular brochures etc. –, to the emission of endless flows of political statements and resolutions, and to countless meetings of politicians, higher officials, experts and other privileged persons in luxury hotels and attractive tourist resorts. Indeed, a cost-benefit analysis of the investments in Alpe Adria activities has not been done; in particular, the rate of translation of all those resolutions into concrete bits of legislation and administrative decisions in each region would be an interesting research object.

For many years, among the critics of Alpe Adria could be counted some of the concerned central governments, who viewed them with some disdain, if not suspicion, as usurping their sovereign monopoly of "foreign affairs". On occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Community, however, these attitudes had to be necanted. Meeting in Millstatt, in 1988, the Foreign Ministers of the concerned states approved a resolution praising the Community's activities, declaring them in full consonance with the interests of their peoples, their States and of European security and peace, and pledging every support.

It seems in fact unquestionable that Alpe Adria has firmly established itself in the consciousness of civil society. Many enterprises have borrowed the name – banks, radio stations, shopping centers, cultural associations, residential developments, motorways, etc. It has become common practice to make every cultural event in this area an "inter-

national" or "cross-frontier" one, by inviting persons of neighboring regions, and thereby bestowing upon it the Alpe Adria name. Permission to use the official logo and moral sponsorship of the Alpe Adria can be easily obtained, upon request, and many do. An Alpe Adria identity, pride, and sense of belonging has taken root.

But even if this were not the case, it can be argued that the feeling of mutual knowledge and understanding, of good will and community, among the political leaders, higher officials, and cultural elite of the area is an important effect, with very practical results.

7. The role of Alpe Adria in supporting Slovenia's and Croatia's break off

Perhaps the most macroscopic example of the concrete effects of the Alpe Adria cooperation was the prompt, deep solidarity that the neighboring regions offered to Slovenia and Croatia during the critical weeks of the break-off from Yugoslavia in 1991. For instance, in contrast to the cautious and conservative pro-Belgrade, pro-unitarian policy of the Italian central government, the regional authorities of Friuli-V.G. unhesitatingly sided with Slovenia's and Croatia's bid for independence. It was widely acknowledged that this "scandalous" difference between the central and the regional position on a burning international issue was largely due to the long experience of cooperation within the Alpe Adria community.

8. Alpe Adria after 1989

After 1989 and 1991, Alpe Adria underwent a period of uncertainty. Many statements and resolutions were dedicated to the "re-orientation" and "new tasks" of the Community, but the crisis is perhaps not yet overcome. Its future is uncertain, because the general political situation has fundamentally changed. One of the basic *raison d'être* of Alpe Adria was to devise ways of practical cooperation among regional communities belonging to three different socio-economic-political systems (Western capitalism and liberal democracy, Yugoslav one-party self-management system, Hungarian "gulasch-socialism"). Since 1989–1991, the latter two have disappeared; the former has become the system common to all regions of the area. In principle, cooperation could now proceed on the two traditional, "normal" channels: on one hand the State, the other the forces of civil society and free market. The change was tangible when, on the wake of '89, the Italian government (Foreign Minister De Michelis) launched the Central European Initiative, an attempt to build a community of interests between Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Italy and former Yugoslavia, with the not-so-obscure aim of offsetting German predominance in this area. The Central European Initiative would clearly drain Alpe Adria of most of its contents and meaning. However, it seems rather clear now that CEI, for several reasons (not last De Michelis's fall from power), has gone on the rocks, thus giving Alpe Adria a renewed lease of life.

A second interesting change is the graduation of two member regions, Slovenia and Croatia, into full statehood. This makes it awkward, for them, to keep their membership in an organization of sub-national entities. After independence day, Slovenia and Croatia avowed to keep their membership in Alpe Adria in gratitude for the solidarity received from other members; but would participate only at the level of Foreign Ministers, not of Heads of State.

The third development is the integration of Austria into the European Union (1996) which has changed the character of the Italian-Austrian border from "external" to "internal", in respect to the EU, and in turn has transformed Austria's borders with her neighbors into external frontiers of the EU. This may be a temporary situation, since the extension of the EU to the Czech Republic, to Slovenia, to Hungary, and later to Slovakia and Croatia is on the European agenda. All these changes in status of the borders are bound to bear many and diverse practical consequences on border relations in this area. While Austrian borders with Germany and Italy would be affected under the Schengen rules, Italy's and Austria's borders with their eastern neighbors risk a scarcely acceptable hardening.

A fourth development is the revival of nationalism and right-wing attitudes in some countries of the Alpe Adria area. The roots and factors of this phenomenon need not be discussed here, and are differently mixed in each country. Suffice it to note that in the nineties they have seriously impinged on bilateral relations of Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. In 1994, the new center-right coalition in Rome resumed the controversy with the Yugoslav successor states, claiming for a revision of the Osimo Treaty, especially on the points concerning the rights of Italian refugees to win back their old properties. The equally strongly nationalist governments in Slovenia and Croatia resisted, and Italy brought the litigation at the European level, vetoing Slovenia's association to the Union. The old question of the status of Slovenian minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia and Croatia was also revived. Thus the inter-governmental relations between Rome, Lubiana and Zagreb ran back to levels of tensions almost as high as in the fifties. The regional government of Friuli-V.G. made it clear that it did not agree with Rome's hard line, but unavoidably the inter-state tensions ricocheted also on trans-frontier relations and on the working of the Alpe Adria. However, with the installation in Rome of center-left coalitions, since 1995, relationships have immediately and significantly improved.

Connected with the dissolution of Yugoslavia is also the re-emergence of the Istria question. What had been an internal, administrative, invisible line between the federal republics of Slovenia and Croatia became a fully-fledged, tightly guarded international boundary between two sovereign states. Among other consequences, the new boundary cuts the Italian minority into two halves, with different legal status. Especially the part now belonging to Croatia had many reasons to worry, in face of the nationalist, centralist and authoritarian features of the Tudjman regime. For this and other reasons, the idea sprang up among local intellectuals of claiming for Istria a special status, with

international overtones. Taking the lead from the Tirolean idea of integrating Austria's North Tirol and Italy's South Tirol in a single "Euregio Tirol", some advocated for Istria a similar status: an Euregio Istria, with complex and somewhat nebulous ties to all three concerned states (Slovenia, Croatia and Italy). All this is matter for ongoing, heated discussion (*Bogliun-Debelju*, 1994), and certainly is a motive of deep suspicions both in Lubiana and in Zagreb, ever fearful of Italian revanchism.

9. *The perspectives of Alpe Adria*

In the new European context, Alpe Adria has set herself three main goals. The first is to work for an ever more complete integration of all her member units into the European union; in particular, supporting Hungary's, Slovenia's and Croatia's bid for admission, but also pressuring the European Union for concrete financial interventions in this area. So far, however, Alpe Adria as such has not succeeded to become the recipient of European grants.

Secondly, to promote the idea of a "Europe of the Regions", to strengthen the role of regional entities in the European political system, to promote the regionalism ideology, as an expression of federalism and of the "subsidiarity principle".

Thirdly, to reduce social and economic inequalities among its member regions, by means of international collaboration and help to less developed members.

Structural and operational changes to meet these tasks are in progress. It seems unavoidable to strengthen the Klagenfurt Documentation centre, and transform it gradually into a sort of permanent secretariat. The number of commissions and working groups has been reduced, in order to allow for a concentration of efforts. The joint budget has been substantially increased, and the administrative system streamlined. In addition to organizational expenses, funds for grants to spontaneous initiatives and for concrete common projects have been established. A revision of the original protocol, to take into account the new situation and the new tasks, seems unavoidable.

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