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## **BORDERS IN PERSPECTIVE**

UniGR-CBS Thematic Issue 1/2018

# Cross-Border Territorial Development – Challenges and Opportunities

TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT KAISERSLAUTERN  
Beate Caesar, Karina Pallagst (Eds.)

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# CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIAL COOPERATION IN NON-EU MEMBER COUNTRIES - Evidence from Albania and Switzerland

Alys Solly, Erblin Berisha, Giancarlo Cotella

In an age of political uncertainty, where the EU must come to terms with internal fragmentation pressures and external humanitarian emergencies, it is interesting to reflect upon the role that the European Territorial Cooperation objective can potentially play in softening such tensions. This paper explores the importance of territorial cooperation initiatives between the EU and non-member countries, with a special focus on cross-border cooperation. It does so by focusing on case studies of two countries, Albania and Switzerland, that occupy a rather different position in relation to the EU. The contribution argues that, since the 1990s, the EU has been active in promoting cooperation initiatives along its external borders by progressively involving candidate countries, whose candidature had still to be formulated, as well as countries whose application is not on the agenda. It shows how European Territorial Cooperation, especially through cross-border cooperation initiatives, strengthens the territorial dimension of the border relations among neighboring countries, thereby improving the chances for actual integration.

**European Territorial Cooperation, cross-border cooperation, spatial planning, territorial governance, non-EU member states**

## GRENZÜBERSCHREITENDE ZUSAMMENARBEIT MIT NICHT-EU-MITGLIEDSSTAATEN – Erkenntnisse aus Albanien und der Schweiz

DE In Zeiten der politischen Unsicherheit, in der sich die EU mit einem internen Fragmentierungsdruck und externen humanitären Notlagen auseinandersetzen muss, ist es interessant sich mit der Rolle der Europäischen Territorialen Zusammenarbeit bei der Abschwächung solcher Spannungen zu beschäftigen. Vor diesem Hintergrund untersucht der Beitrag die Bedeutung territorialer Kooperationsinitiativen zwischen der EU und Nicht-EU-Mitgliedsstaaten, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf der grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit liegt. Dies geschieht durch die Fokussierung auf zwei Fallstudien, Albanien und die Schweiz, die in Bezug auf die EU eine unterschiedliche Position einnehmen. Der Beitrag vertritt die Ansicht, dass die EU seit den 1990er Jahren grenzüberschreitende Initiativen entlang ihrer Außengrenzen aktiv fördert, indem sie Beitrittskandidaten (z. B. die Visegrad-Länder), potenzielle Beitrittskandidaten (z. B. Albanien) und Länder, die sich aktuell nicht um eine Mitgliedschaft bewerben (z.B. Schweiz) schrittweise einbezieht. Es wird aufgezeigt, wie die Europäische Territoriale Zusammenarbeit und insbesondere grenzüberschreitende Initiativen den Grenzbeziehungen zwischen Nachbarländern eine stärkere territoriale Dimension zuweisen und so die Chancen einer tatsächlichen Integration verbessern.

**Europäische Territoriale Zusammenarbeit, grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit, Raumplanung, territoriale Governance, Nicht-EU-Mitgliedsstaaten**

## COOPÉRATION TERRITORIALE TRANSFRONTALIÈRE DANS LES ÉTATS NON-MEMBRES DE L'UE – Le cas de l'Albanie et de la Suisse

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FR À une époque d'incertitude politique où l'UE doit faire face à des pressions internes en faveur de la fragmentation et des urgences humanitaires externes. Il est intéressant de réfléchir sur le rôle joué par la coopération territoriale européenne dans l'atténuation de ces tensions. C'est dans ce contexte particulier que cet article explore l'importance de la coopération territoriale entre l'UE et les pays non-membres, en mettant l'accent sur la coopération transfrontalière. L'article se concentre sur deux études de cas. Le cas de l'Albanie et le cas Suisse occupent une position assez différente par rapport à l'UE. L'article à la position que l'UE s'est efforcée de promouvoir les initiatives transfrontalières le long de ses frontières extérieures depuis les années 90 en impliquant progressivement les pays candidats (par exemple les pays du groupe de Visegrád) ceux dont les demandes devaient encore être formulées (par exemple l'Albanie) ainsi que les pays qui ne semblent pas particulièrement intéressés par une demande d'adhésion (par exemple la Suisse). Le texte montre comment la coopération territoriale européenne, en particulier les initiatives transfrontalières améliorent les relations frontalières entre les pays. Cela crée une dimension territoriale plus forte et par conséquent les chances d'une réelle intégration.

**Coopération territoriale Européenne, coopération transfrontalière, aménagement du territoire, gouvernance territorial, états non-membres**

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## Introduction

Territorial cooperation has always been at the center of European Union (EU) policy (EPRS, 2016). First examples of transboundary cooperations in Europe date back to 1962 with the Conference of Regions of North West Europe (CRONWE). Similar initiatives were organized by the Benelux and Baltic Sea countries (Dühr, Stead and Zonneveld, 2007). However, it was only at the beginning of the 1990s that the EU started to dedicate greater attention to territorial cooperation initiatives beyond its external borders. Since then, European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) has evolved from a Community initiative to become one of the European Union's principal instruments for territorial development and a cornerstone of EU cohesion policy (EPRS, 2016).

Bearing this in mind, this paper investigates the role of ETC, in particular of cross-border cooperation (CBC), in two non-EU member countries: Albania and Switzerland. After looking at the relations between the EU and these two countries, it explores the main CBC programs that each of them deals with. In particular, it pays attention to those objectives with evident spatial implications. Secondly, it identifies some of the potential impacts of CBC on the territorial governance and spatial planning of these countries, showing how CBC programs can influence not only border regions, but also central administrations. Finally, a set of recommendations for future research are sketched out. These could pave the way towards a better understanding of the impact of ETC on the territorial governance and spatial planning of the non-EU member states. The paper thus aims to extend and share knowledge in a research area largely overlooked in the existing literature on ETC.

## The role of the European Territorial Cooperation for non-EU member states

European Territorial Cooperation as an EU initiative dates back to the launch of the INTERREG Community Initiative in 1990. Since then, ETC has become the primary instrument for enhancing territorial cooperation among: (i) EU member states; (ii) EU member states and non-member states and; (iii) non-member states. Originally focused on existing gaps in transport infrastructure, the main investments of ETC currently deal with the environment, climate change, tourism, and cultural heritage. Even if ETC initially focused on

strengthening cooperation within the EU's internal borders, hence on the EU member states (1990-1993), it later developed an external dimension by promoting cooperation initiatives among member states and the countries of Central Eastern Europe – not belonging to the EU at that time. Over time, three strands of ETC have been institutionalized:

Cross-border cooperation (INTERREG A) encourages integrated regional development between neighboring land and maritime border regions.

Transnational cooperation (INTERREG B) strengthens cooperation over larger transnational territories according to priorities established by EU cohesion policy.

Interregional cooperation (INTERREG C) promotes exchanges of experience focusing on the design and implementation of operational programs, encouraging good practice in the area of sustainable (urban) development. (EPRS, 2016; Dühr, Stead and Zonneveld, 2007).

The first non-EU member states to benefit from ETC were the Central Eastern European countries in 1992, when ETC acquired a new external dimension with the PHARE (Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies) CBC Programme. However, only the establishment of the Instrument for Pre-Accession 2007-2013 (IPA), and in particular IPA II (2014-2020), led to a full extension of the logic of ETC to external countries. The aim was to allow those countries to improve their mutual relations, by reducing historical border divergences and thus reducing the territorial imbalance of borders.

## State of the art: Albania and Switzerland along the process of integration

For the majority of European countries, the EU has always been seen as a window of opportunity, central to the political agenda. Historically, Switzerland's path towards integration was interrupted by the referendum held in 1992, while Albania started its first integration steps (1991). Since then, these countries have followed divergent paths. On the one hand, Switzerland, even if outside the EU, participates (with its own funds) in the majority of EU programs. On the other hand, since 2000 Albania has benefited from some EU programs, mainly those that seek to integrate extra-EU countries. In this regard, the section below explores in more detail the EU integration paths followed by each country.

## Three decades of Albania's EU integration path

Despite the process of EU integration that started in 1999 with the Stabilization and Association Process Agreement, Albania is not yet a member of the EU. Political instability paralyzed the country between 1990 and 2000 and the major political, economic and social transformations have negatively affected the relationship with the EU for the past three decades. In any case, after the collapse of the totalitarian regime, several institutional agreements were signed between Albania and the EU<sup>i</sup> (table 1).

Steps	Agreements	Albania
Pre-Adhesion Agreement	Stabilization and Association Process	1999
	Potential Candidate	2000
	Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)	2006-2009
	Program Signed (PHARE, OBONOVA, CARDS, IPRA, SAPARD, and IPA I-II)	1996-present
	Candidate Status	2014
Screening	Started Screening Step	2018
Negotiation	Chapters' discussion period	...
Adhesion	Treaty adhesion signed	...

**Albanian main integration steps Tab.1**

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

An example is the Trade Agreement (signed in 1992) which allowed Albania to participate and to benefit from the PHARE Programme funds for the period 1992-2000, endorsing the EU to be one of the most important actors in the country. The new course of events inspired by the Albanian ambition to be part of the EU was interrupted later by the economic and political crises that caused the civil war of 1997 (Berisha, 2018). One of the consequences of the civil disorder was the new negative perception of the EU towards Albania, considered less stable than before. Only a few years later, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) gave Albania the opportunity to near the EU again. By launching the SAP, the EU demonstrated its intention to establish a stronger relationship with all the Western Balkan Countries, almost foreshadowing that all of them would soon be "potential candidates" (Berisha et al., 2018). Being a "potential candidate" country meant that Albania was eligible for economic and financial support. At the time, the main economic assistance was the CARDS Programme that replaced the former PHARE and OBNOVA programs. Together, these programs contributed, through the allocation of funds, to the enhancement of Alba-

nia's ability to prepare for the EU prospect with numerous reforms. The introduction of the programming approach was certainly one of the main novelties introduced in the country, contributing to the alignment of the domestic policy documents to the EU programming period<sup>ii</sup>. In this context, it seems relevant to note the proliferation of the National Strategy, Action Plans (especially the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020) and cooperation programs (above all related to IPA programs).

In June 2006, Albania signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU. This agreement was ratified and became effective in 2009. After years of important socio-economic progresses, Albania was granted "candidate status" in June 2014 in recognition of its reform efforts and the progress made in meeting the required conditions (Cotella and Berisha, 2016). According to the European Commission the country still needs to increase and consolidate the reform momentum and to focus its efforts on tackling the EU integration challenges in a sustainable and inclusive way despite the achievement of the "candidate status" (European Commission, 2014). For this reason, Albania should continue participating actively in high-level dialog meetings, as well as in joint working groups on the five key priorities. These are democracy, public administration reform, rule of law, human rights, the protection of minorities and regional issues as well as international obligations (European Commission, 2015). These criteria need to be fulfilled continuously if Albania wants to approach the accession negotiations shortly (Berisha, 2018). Only recently, to recognize the efforts along the integration process (working on the identified five key priorities<sup>iii</sup>), the Commission has recommended to open the accession negotiation phase. Together with the new enlargement spirit, emerging from the EU strategy for the enlargement of the Western Balkan Region, called "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans", Albania has never been so close to the EU before.

## Switzerland and the EU

Switzerland is a European country, geopolitically situated in the heart of Europe. It is a federal country with highly independent cantons and significant cultural and linguistic diversity. In fact, three of the main European languages (French, German and Italian) are officially spoken in the country. However, although Switzerland is an important economic and political partner and is surrounded by EU member states for historical and cultural reasons it does not belong to the European Union

(EU) - and does not seem to aspire to membership. In fact, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1992, the Swiss referendum to join the European Economic Area (EEA) was rejected by 50.3% of votes and the government had to suspend further negotiations to become part of the EU. In 2016, Switzerland formally withdrew its application for an EU membership. Thus, an accession strategy has never been carried out.

Nevertheless, Switzerland is involved in shared initiatives, such as the bilateral agreements and the EU programs in order to take part in the EU single market without becoming a “member state”. These shared initiatives and agreements enhance reciprocal cooperation and access to markets such as transport, energy and security. For example, the bilateral agreement on overland transport of 1999 opened up the market for the transport of persons and goods by road and rail between Switzerland and the EU. Consequently, in order to face the increasing traffic volumes, including those across borders, the Swiss national policy took the key European transport corridors (e.g. Trans-European Transport Networks) into consideration. In December 2016 the 57 km long Gotthard Tunnel was opened to provide a high-speed rail link under the Swiss Alps between northern and southern Europe. Many bilateral agreements have been signed since the 1970s, and new agreements are being created in order to take into account the country’s needs and interests. For example, Switzerland negotiated with the EU on a bilateral agreement in the electricity sector to ensure cross-border electricity trade, a reliable supply of electricity and to open up new opportunities in the renewable energy market.

Apart from the existence of these shared initiatives, Switzerland seems to be indirectly influenced by the developments and decisions of the EU (Solly, 2018; Berisha et al., 2018). In fact, even though there is no legal conditionality pushing for the transposition of EU sectoral legislation in the Swiss legal system, a certain number of Swiss laws must be in line with EU policies, directives and agreements, in order to provide conformity and compatibility. Moreover, Switzerland contributes with its own funds to EU enlargement and EU Cohesion Policy.

The country’s choice to remain outside the EU and its declared intention to contribute actively to European policies seems to be a paradox. Nevertheless, as the Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE) points out, it is essential for a small country such as Switzerland, whose needs are closely bound up with those of its European neighbors, to maintain a close dialog with partners outside its borders. Indeed, as Scholl (2008, p.32) states, Switzerland cannot ignore initiatives of the EU member states and will “increasingly

have to play a part in influencing the spatial development of transfrontier regions”.

## European Territorial Cooperation in Albania and Switzerland: an opportunity for further integration?

Both countries participate, in some way, in the EU’s CBC framework. Albania principally benefits from the implementation of the second generation of INTERREG and IPA (2014-2020). The latter regulates territorial cooperation initiatives among EU and non-EU-member states. Meanwhile, Switzerland has a long tradition of participating in INTERREG programs (strands A, B, C), as illustrated in table 2. Indeed, in contrast to Albania, Switzerland has been actively involved since 2000 in several interregional cooperation programs, such as ESPON, URBACT, INTERACT, INTERREG EUROPE.

### The role of European Territorial Cooperation for Albania

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As we have seen, ETC plays an important role in the Western Balkan Region, and for Albania in particular, even though the countries are far from joining the EU. According to the new enlargement strategy launched by the EU, cooperation is certainly one of the main challenges for the region. Regional cooperation and good neighborly relations are at the top of the EU agenda for the Western Balkans. As such, Albania currently benefits from two strands of INTERREG, namely A and B. Concerning INTERREG A, both cycles of IPA CBC programs (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) focus on border areas that have been generally considered peripheral – physically, economically and politically – and often marginalized by the central government.

In this respect, the country is currently involved in five programs: (i) the INTERREG IPA – CBC launched among Italy, Albania and Montenegro; (ii) the IPA CBC that involves Montenegro and Albania; (iii) the INTERREG IPA - CBC between Greece and Albania; (iv) the IPA that includes Albania and Kosovo and; (v) the IPA between FYROM<sup>iv</sup> and Albania. Each program deals with specific priorities. The INTERREG IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro focuses on small and medium enterprise competitiveness, tourism and cultural heritage, environment and climate change, and sustainable transport infrastructure.

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)	Albania	Switzerland
Cross-Border Cooperation INTERREG (A)	INTERREG IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro (2007-2020)	INTERREG Italy - Switzerland (2014-2020)
	IPA CBC Montenegro – Albania (2007-2020)	
	INTERREG IPA CBC Greece – Albania (2007-2020)	INTERREG France – Switzerland (2014-2020)
	IPA CBC Albania – Kosovo (2007-2020)	INTERREG Germany-Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein “Alpine Rhine-Lake Constance-Upper Rhine” (2014-2020)
Transnational Cooperation INTERREG (B)	IPA CBC FYROM – Albania (2007-2020)	INTERREG France-Germany-Switzerland “Upper Rhine” (2014-2020)
	ADRION	Alpine Space (2000-2020)
	SEE - South East Europe Transnational (2007-2020)	
	EU Macro Region – EUSAIR (2014)	EU Macro Region – EUSALP (2015)
MED (2007-2020)	North-western Europe (2000-2020)	
Balkan-Mediterranean (2014-2020)		
Interregional Cooperation INTERREG (C)	n.a.	ESPON (2000-2020)
	n.a.	URBACT (2000-2020)
	n.a.	INTERACT (2000-2020)
	n.a.	INTERREG EUROPE (2000-2020)

European Territorial Cooperation programs involving Albania and Switzerland Tab.2

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

Other CBC programs, such as the IPA between FYROM and Albania and IPA Albania–Kosovo, emphasize the need to improve the technical assistance in program management and project implementation.

In analyzing these programs, it is interesting to note their tendency to focus on territorial aspects (e.g. the question of environment, climate change and infrastructure) and societal challenges (e.g. economic development and reduction of social exclusion). By doing so, even if through different means, these programs position the role of border regions at the center of the public debate, highlighting the importance of reducing territorial disparities between border regions and the more central ones. Moreover, it is important that the Albanian National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020 (NSDI) recognizes the priority to minimize the debilitating influence of borders on economic opportunities and to explore the potential for joint development initiatives on both sides of the borders (Council of Ministers, 2013). In this way, the NSDI affirms its reliance on the implementation of EU-funded cross border and territorial cooperation initiatives with neighboring countries. This is particularly important in light of the process of EU integration.

However, it is important to note that the country faces several implementation problems in relation to the ETC. Certainly one of the main challenges is to improve the coordination between the central and local administrative levels. As stated by Allkja (2017), the programming process is exclusively in the hands of the central government, while local authorities are eligible to be part of the

implementation phase. Other inhibiting factors limit the implementation capacity of CBC. These are: (i) the lack of co-financing funds (Allkja, 2017); (ii) the readiness of administrative staff to deal with such complex programs (Seferaj, 2014); (iii) the lack of coordinated participation of local stakeholders (Seferaj, 2014). However, according to Seferaj (2014), during the first cycle of IPA, despite several shortfalls, the CBC projects should be seen as a success story, since several local organizations had the opportunity to come into contact with EU programs, thus benefiting from economic and knowledge-related sources.

Under the umbrella of transnational cooperation (INTERREG B) Albania participates in other initiatives. In particular, the INTERREG V-B Adriatic-Ionian Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 (ADRION) includes thirty-one regions from four different member states and four IPA Partner States. The overall objective of the ADRION Programme is to act as a policy driver and governance innovator to foster European integration among the Partner States<sup>v</sup>. Thus, to benefit from the high quality natural, cultural and human resources and to enhance the economic, social and territorial cohesion in the area. Albania is also part of the South-East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE, 2020), launched by the Western Balkan Countries in 2011. SEE 2020 is a strategy that acknowledges the importance of the need for close cooperation in accelerating the accomplishment of the EU Agenda 2020 goals. Inspired by the EU 2020 Strategy, the SEE 2020<sup>vi</sup> provides guidance for the Western Balkan Countries to achieve a higher degree of convergence with the goals of

the EU Agenda 2020. Together with seven other Adriatic-Ionian countries, Albania participates in the EU Macro-Regional Strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), one of the four EU macro-regional strategies already adopted. The proposed strategy focuses on areas of (macro) regional mutual interest<sup>vii</sup> with high relevance for the Adriatic and Ionian countries<sup>viii</sup>. Additionally, Albania participates in the MED Programme, which is a transnational ETC program that improves the area's competitiveness and promotes territorial cohesion and environmental protection. Finally, Albania is also part of the Balkan-Mediterranean 2014-2020 ETC program, bringing together Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the FYROM and Greece. Diversity and geography signify a strong cooperation potential that can focus on important concerns shared by all five participating countries (Berisha, 2018).

At the same time, Albania is still excluded from benefiting from interregional cooperation initiatives such as ESPON, URBACT, INTERACT and INTERREG EUROPE, since the country does not yet have the status of an EU member state.

Over the years, Albania has benefited from a large amount of EU funds. Whereas in the past, the co-participation through domestic funds was rather low, with the introduction of IPA, higher co-financing rates are required (according to the IPA II regulation, the current rate of co-financing is 15%) (see table 3).

Co-financing can be covered by public funds (based on the central or local financial budget) and/or private investments. Even the management procedure has changed. During the implementation of the first generation of IPA (2007-2013), the EU adopted a direct management approach (formally called decentralized implementation system), with funds that were directly managed by EU institutions (usually establishing offices in each country). With IPA II, some funds are directly managed by the countries themselves (for Albania the body in charge is the National Fund Direction, which acts as the treasury for IPA funds). This is the case for the majority of IPA programs implemented in Albania, except for the common IPA-CBC established with Kosovo and FYROM. The latter is still managed by the EU offices located in Albania. Moreover, IPA funds are also used even if Albania (or another non-member state) participates in transnational cooperation initiatives like ADRION, EUSAIR etc. In fact, IPA is the only instrument that allows non-EU countries to be part of, and hence to benefit from, the EU ETC initiatives.

What differentiates the programs is the way in which Albania participates in each of them. When the eligible area is the entire country (INTERREG IT-AL-ME, ADRION, EUSAIR etc.), the programs

are managed by central institutions; the local authorities are excluded from decision-making and participate only in the implementation). In all other cases (the majority of IPA CBC), Albania participates with local units (regions and municipalities), assisted by central government institutions.

In all cases, the common need is to involve not only institutional actors, but primarily civil society (NGOs, cultural institutions, SME networks), although this can prove challenging in practice (Allkja, 2017).

## European Territorial Cooperation in Switzerland

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In Switzerland, great attention is given to coordination across administrative borders and cross-border issues. This can be seen in the country's adoption and implementation of the new cycles of European programs, such as INTERREG and URBACT, which has led to an increase in transnational cooperation and in the exchange of knowledge and experience, especially in the Swiss cross-border regions and municipalities.

In the 1990s, the participation of the Confederation and the cantons in European cross-border cooperation mainly pursued integration goals; later on, the interest shifted towards other objectives, such as the promotion of tourism, jobs and exchange programs (RegioSuisse, 2015).

Between 2014 and 2020 Switzerland participates in INTERREG V (A-B-C). Participation in the cross-border and interregional cooperation programs (strands A and C) is in the responsibility of the cantons, whereas the ARE coordinates the participation of Switzerland in the transnational cooperation programs (strand B). Previously, the country participated in the 2007-2013 programming cycle, taking part in over 450 ETC projects, strengthening cross-border cooperation in order to face common challenges, such as natural risk management and sustainable development. As regards trans-European risk management, there are many interregional, cross-border disaster risk management projects involving cooperation between Italy and Switzerland (see e.g. Gillet et al., 2007). As explained on the ARE website<sup>x</sup>, the Confederation is interested in a continuous trans-European collaboration, as the country's participation in the INTERREG programs seems to strengthen its competitiveness. However, because Switzerland is not a member of the EU and thus acts as an external partner, the country does not benefit from the EU structural funds. Instead, it finances its participation in the INTERREG initiatives itself.

ETC	Albania	Albania's participation	Funding support
INTERREG (A)	INTERREG IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro (2014-2020)	Albania is participating as a whole. Local authorities can only implement projects without being involved in the political decision making process. A key role is played by the Ministry of Integration, the Ministry of Finance and in particular by the National Fund Director.	The program is co-financed by each country and requires a minimum share of 15% (funds may be both public or private). For this period a total of 93 million EUR has been established. IPA II are managed according to the indirect mechanism that allows each country to manage funds.
	IPA CBC Montenegro – Albania (2014-2020)	Albania participates with local units (Region of Shkodra, Region of Lezhe and District of Tropoje) and the Ministry of Integration. In addition, in Shkoder the Antenna Office has been established, as the technical unit required for IPA-CBC.	The program is co-financed by each country and requires a minimum share of 15%. For this program an investment of around 14 million (12 by IPA funds and 2 based on co-financing rate) is foreseen. Indirect mechanism.
	INTERREG IPA CBC Greece – Albania (2014-2020)	Albania is participating with the Region of Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Korçë and Berat coordinated by the central level.	The general amount of the investments under this program is 36 million plus the co-financing rate at 15%. Indirect mechanism.
	IPA CBC Albania – Kosovo (2014-2020)	The participation in this program is restricted to Lezha and Kukës Region. As usual, the main authorities in the participating IPA II beneficiaries are the Ministry of European Integration assisted by the Joint Technical Secretariat established in Kukës.	Contrary to the other programs, the allocated funds (8.4 million) are managed directly by the EU through the Delegation of the European Union in Albania. The co-financing remains the same, 15%.
	IPA CBC FYROM – Albania (2014-2020)	The Albanian Regions involved in the program area are: Korce, Elbasan and Diber that cover twelve municipalities. Despite the institutional actors, great impulse has been given to the participation of the civil society.	Similar to Kosovo, funds (14 million including co-financing) are directly managed by the EU.
INTERREG (B)	ADRION	Albania participates as a whole. The Unit for Cross-Border and Transnational Cooperation is the national contact point.	According to the logic of the program, the total amount of the budget derives from ERDF and IPA II (for a total of 99.2 million) and co-financing 18.8 (15%).
	SEE - South East Europe Transnational (2007-2020)	The program covers the entire country.	As an IPA country, Albania participates through co-financing 15% of the budget with national funds. All transnational EU initiatives require a national budget contribution besides the majority of funds derived from ERDF and IPA II.
	EU Macro Region – EU-SAIR (2014)	Albania participates as one of the non-EU countries and is responsible for the Sustainable Tourism Pillar together with Croatia.	
	MED (2007-2020)	The contact point is the Ministry of Integration.	
Balkan-Mediterranean (2014-2020)			
INTER-REG (C)		n.a.	

Albania's participation in the main European Territorial Cooperation programs and related funding mechanisms Tab.3  
Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

Since 2008, the cantons have been increasingly participating in the INTERREG programs, supporting cross-border initiatives and projects as part of the New Regional Policy (NRP). The NRP promotes ETC and supports the Swiss participation in the INTERREG, ESPON and URBACT programs. It provides financial assistance for programs, pro-

jects and initiatives, which contribute to the promotion of innovation, value creation and competitiveness in the various different regions. In 2004, the Swiss Secretary of State observed at a meeting on INTERREG that many of the innovative projects which have been initiated in cross-border

and interregional cooperation had a positive impact on the economic structure of the regions concerned (Gerber, 2004). For example, innovation promotion has become an important component of regional policy, strengthening its cross-border dimension. This could also lead to better technology transfer practices and to an increase in know-how exchange (see the CABEE and the NEUREX+ projects).

For the country's participation in the new programming period (2014-2020), the Confederation dedicated CHF 50-60 million of its Regional Development Fund. The cantons and the federal government pay for the financial assistance provided within the NRP framework in equal parts (table 4). The percentage of public funds in the total project volume has no limit. For projects to be eligible for funding, they must have an impact on border, rural or mountain regions. Those projects which are in line with ETC, are not subject to this rule and may be launched throughout Switzerland. Compared to the previous programming period, Swiss public contributions have increased considerably. Moreover, thanks to private, cantonal and national funding, projects relating to other sectoral areas and which do not necessarily pursue the objectives of the NRP can nowadays receive financial support as well (RegioSuisse, 2015: 9).

Since January 2008, the Confederation and the cantons have supported the Swiss participation in regional cross-border cooperation (INTERREG A) as part of the NRP and have participated in transnational (INTERREG B) and interregional programs (INTERREG Europe, URBACT, ESPON). In the implementation of the INTERREG projects, the cantons have room for maneuver, provided that federal funds and equivalent cantonal contributions are used for projects that are compatible with the regional policy objectives defined in the NRP. The cantons are free to participate in INTERREG V both inside and outside the NRP. As a result, they can also participate with their own resources in projects that do not obtain federal support. Swiss stakeholders can thus participate on their own initiative in projects that obtain only cantonal funding or that do not even obtain public funding. The thematic priorities, the application procedure, the evaluation and the selection criteria of projects vary depending on the type of program.

According to RegioSuisse, the platform for regional development in Switzerland<sup>x</sup>, Swiss project partners taking part in an INTERREG, ESPON or URBACT project are generally not eligible for funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). However, the Swiss partners can request co-financing from the NRP. To be eligible for these federal funds, the projects have to be in line with the objectives of the NRP. There-

fore, they need to contribute to competitiveness and value creation in the respective region. Transnational projects can also be supported if they are of national strategic importance.

As regards CBC (strand A), Switzerland participates in four programs of the 2014-2020 programming period: Italy-Switzerland, France-Switzerland, Alpine Rhine-Lake Constance-Upper Rhine, and the Upper Rhine. The Italy-Switzerland cooperation program contributes to the common needs and objectives of the two countries. It is in line with both EU regulations and the NRP and aims to achieve the objectives of the EU2020 strategy. The France-Switzerland program is a joint cross-border strategy, which faces the current and future challenges of the economic development and the employment situation of the area. The Alpine Rhine-Lake Constance-Upper Rhine is an important European economic node, and the program aims to strengthen its competitiveness and innovation. The Upper Rhine Programme encourages collaboration in the field of training and research, promoting knowledge transferability and the mobility of workers. Moreover, Switzerland also participates in the Italy-France Alcotra Programme as an external partner.

Concerning transnational cooperation (strand B), Switzerland currently participates in the 2014-2020 Alpine Space Programme together with Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein and Slovenia. The Alpine Space Programme promotes cooperation between the European involved regions and aims at enhancing a sustainable development in the Alpine region, thus contributing to the EU2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The country also participates in the 2014-2020 North-West Europe Programme, which endorses a sustainable and integrated development, in order to strengthen the whole region.

Since 2013, Switzerland has also been involved in the EU macro-region Strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP), a new transnational instrument for the Alpine space. The macro-region aims to strengthen the cooperation between the Alpine regions and to address common challenges more effectively.

When it comes to interregional cooperation (strand C), Switzerland participates in INTERREG Europe, URBACT, ESPON and INTERACT programs. The cities of Basel, Lugano and Zurich have been participating in URBACT projects, improving and strengthening their partnership and cooperation with neighboring municipalities. Moreover, there has been an increase in strategic and supra-municipal CBC (see Solly, 2018). For example, as part of the *Projet de territoire Grand Genève 2016-2030*, the French, Geneva and Vaud

partners decided on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to increase their cooperation and dialog. Another example is the plan for the Swiss-French metropolitan area of Geneva (Charte de l'agglomération Franco-Valdo-Genevoise), which promotes the implementation of urban planning policies and

the coordination of governance on a cross-border scale. Since 2002, Swiss research institutes have also been participating in various ESPON programs, improving scientific knowledge on territorial development across Europe and establishing networks with long-term international partners, showing a certain openness to the EU discourse

E T C	Switzerland	Swiss participation	Funding support
INTERREG (A)	INTERREG Italy - Switzerland (2014-2020)	Cantons provide support and advice to projects implemented in the Swiss territory while projects have to be coherent with what is promoted at the cantonal level (e.g. sectoral laws of reference).	Swiss project partners can apply for financial support from the Confederation and/or the canton, since they cannot obtain EU funds; projects funded by the Confederation need to pursue regional policy objectives promoted by the Confederation; cantons can participate in INTERREG A both within and outside the NRP; cantons can participate with their own means also in projects that are not supported by the Confederation.
	INTERREG France - Switzerland (2014-2020)	Both public and private actors can receive financial support; projects need the support of a partner from both sides of the border.	
	INTERREG Germany-Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein	Funds are conceived as a single initial contribution allowing the participation of private companies, organizations and public bodies as well as other associations and private citizens. In this view, projects must be implemented by at least two partners from different countries (one of which an EU Member State).	
	INTERREG France-Germany-Switzerland	Various actors can present project proposals; the Confederation and five cantons (Aargau, Basel-City, Basel-Campaign, Jura and Solothurn) provide funds for projects.	
INTERREG (B)	Alpine Space (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- institutions of all kinds can participate in the program</li> <li>- Swiss partners can also assume administrative responsibility for projects</li> <li>- the operational management of the program is assigned to the ARE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- as for INTERREG A, Swiss project partners cannot apply for EU funds</li> <li>- under the NRP, the Confederation provides a national budget for Swiss project partners</li> <li>- the budget is administered by the ARE (Federal Office for Spatial Development)</li> </ul>
	EU Macro Region - EUSALP (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no new legislation, no new funding, no new institutions</li> <li>- Switzerland is represented by the ARE and the CGCA (Conference of Governments of the Alpine Cantons)</li> </ul>	
	North-western Europe (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- institutions of all kinds can participate in the program</li> <li>- the ARE acts as an interface for project partners and represents Switzerland within the program's steering committee</li> </ul>	
INTERREG (C)	ESPON (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Swiss research institutes can participate in ESPON projects</li> <li>- national, cantonal and private administrations can also participate in the program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- project promoters from all cantons can participate</li> <li>- ESPON and URBACT programs allow the financing of only a part of the project costs; a substantial part of financing must be supported with own or third party funds</li> </ul>
	URBACT (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Swiss cities can participate in a network as partners (also with research institutes and cantons)</li> <li>- the ARE (the Swiss contact point) is responsible for implementing the program, manages the partners' participation and supports Swiss cities that want to participate</li> <li>- Swiss participation in projects is part of the NRP framework</li> </ul>	
	INTERACT (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Switzerland participates in the program as a full member</li> <li>- the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the Swiss national contact point, is responsible for participation and makes an annual contribution under the NRP</li> </ul>	
	INTERREG EUROPE (2000-2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Swiss actors are admitted as project partners but not as lead partner; thus, they need to contact potential EU partners in advance</li> <li>- SECO (the national contact point) allocates funds to projects that implement regional policy measures</li> </ul>	

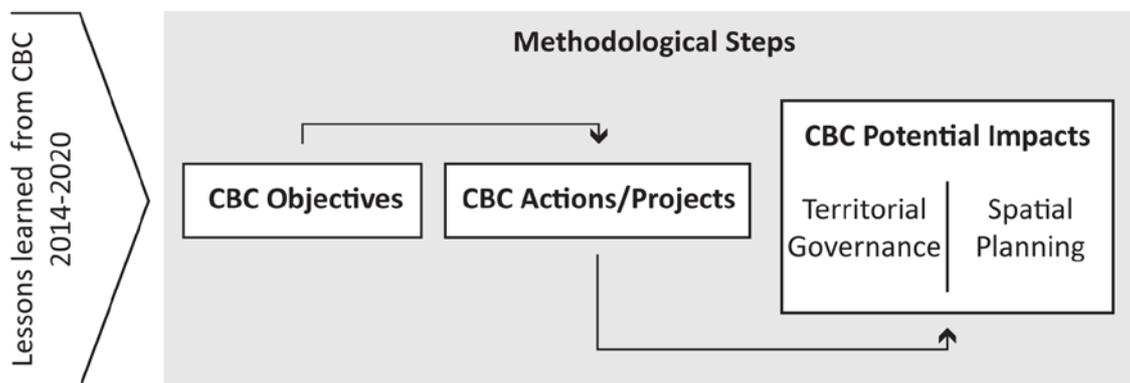
**Switzerland's participation in the main European Territorial Cooperation programs and related funding mechanisms Tab.4**

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

# Potential impacts of Cross Border Cooperation on territorial governance and spatial planning systems in Albania and Switzerland

From the information presented in the section above, it is evident how both countries actively participate in ETC initiatives and, more especially, in CBC programs. Whereas the importance of CBC has been recognized by several actors, the impact of this special type of cooperation is still generally uninvestigated, and the impacts of CBC in influencing the evolution of domestic territorial governance and spatial planning are often underestimated. Although to make a thorough evaluation of these impacts would require a comprehensiveness of analysis beyond the scope of this contribution, a list of potential impacts of CBC in-

itiatives on territorial governance and spatial planning in Albania and Switzerland is proposed in this section for future testing and verification. Methodologically, each CBC program has been analyzed according to three different steps (figure 1). Firstly, those objectives of CBC programs with clear spatial implications and repercussions were identified. Secondly, the main financed actions/projects that may produce direct or indirect territorial governance and spatial planning impacts were highlighted. Thirdly, an attempt was made to elaborate on the potential impact(s) that the implementation of these actions can produce on territorial governance and spatial planning. In this regard, the impact on territorial governance and spatial planning has been analyzed by using four different analytical categories (see Cotella and Janin Riolin, 2015). These are the following: (i) the actors involved in the process; (ii) the spatial planning tools and their introduction or modification; (iii) the practices in the implementation of these tools and, more in general, in the overall functioning of the system; and (iv) the formal and informal debate concerning territorial governance and spatial planning.



Lessons learned from CBC 2014-2020 Fig.1  
Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

By looking more carefully at each domestic context, several questions need to be addressed. As already mentioned, Albania participates in five CBC programs (table 5). Each program identifies its main objectives, priorities and actions by trying to answer the existing local needs and challenges. The majority of Albania's borders are characterized by great economic and social disparity. However, the rationalization of natural resources and cultural heritage are generally considered as key drivers for enhancing territorial development. Observing the sectoral aspects of CBC, tourism, environment and transport are certainly the main recurrent issues in the programs. Interestingly, there is a substantial convergence and synergy when it comes to the definition of the

objectives to achieve (often inspired by the EU) and the future challenges to be addressed (with place-based evidence). One of the main impacts of these kinds of programs is the changing relationship between local authorities and other stakeholders, with respect to the implementation of projects and strategies. In this regard, all the programs foresee important changes in the existing territorial governance system. They envisage the introduction of new institutional and non-institutional actors (NGOs, CSOs, etc.) and the establishment of networks and partnerships between the local government and stakeholders within and across the borders. To achieve this, new procedures are needed. Diffe-

rently from the past, it seems fundamental to improve the vertical coordination (within the country) and the horizontal coordination (between countries and sectors) of the institutional activity. This may involve not only specific sectors, but also the entirety of the institutional and social arrangements dealing with territorial management. This paradigmatic shift in territorial governance principles is progressively contributing to overcoming the tendency towards institutional fragmentation, thus leading towards a more collaborative approach. Even if it is too early to effectively evaluate the consequences of CBC, it should be noted that a multi-level and cross-border governance approach is becoming part of the admini-

strative and political discourse. Concerning the potential impacts of CBC on spatial planning, it seems that spatial planning can be indirectly influenced by the introduction of sectoral feasibility studies, strategies, plans and action plans. Indeed, all the programs in some way entail the drafting of sectoral strategies and action plans concerning the environment, tourism, other stakeholders, the preservation of cultural heritage, energy, infrastructure, transport etc. Additional potential impacts might also be due to the introduction of EU discourse and the implementation of sectoral plans.

2014-2020	Objectives	Actions	Potential impacts on TG and SP
INTERREG-IPA IT - AL - ME	Encouraging tourism; conservation of cultural and natural heritage; protecting the environment and promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation; promoting sustainable transport and improving public infrastructures.	Developing common models and plans for sustainable tourism management; promoting actions for protection and quality of the environment; developing a Web-GIS Observatory Network; cross-border exchange of regional/national good practices; development of local sustainable energy action plans.	<b>Actors:</b> increasing involvement of local authorities for implementing projects and strategies; <b>Discourse:</b> intraregional connectivity, sustainable development, bottom-up community-led approach, integrated territorial investment; integrated actions for sustainable urban development; <b>Tools:</b> improvement of sectoral plans (i.e. transport), energy action plans); improvement of vertical (within the country) and horizontal coordination (among countries); <b>Practice:</b> implementation of sectoral plans (concerning transport and infrastructure).
IPA CBC ME - AL	The protection of the environmental, climate change adaption and mitigation, risk prevention and management; encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.	Establishing cross-border synergies for the management of the protected areas located, support for reduction of pollution and management of sensitive ecosystems, integrated environmental monitoring systems.	<b>Actors:</b> rise of new institutional and non-intuitional actors, establishment of partnerships between local governments and local stakeholders; <b>Discourse:</b> local/regional governance, multi-level and cross-border governance; <b>Tools:</b> sectoral strategies and actions plans (environment, tourism, cultural heritage); <b>Practice:</b> readiness of authorities to deal with cross-cutting principles (transparency, participation etc.) and improvement of vertical and horizontal) coordination
INTERREG-IPA EL - AL	Increase the capacity of cross-border infrastructures; the effectiveness of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources; effectiveness of risk prevention and disaster management.	Planning, construction and rehabilitation of border crossings of road network; joint initiatives for environmental protection; introduction of maritime plans improving the planning, cooperation and response capacity for disaster management.	<b>Actors:</b> inclusion of new non-institutional actors (NGOs, CSOs, etc.); <b>Discourse:</b> regional integration; inter-governmental and collaborative approach; <b>Tools:</b> definition of planning priorities and principles concerning sectoral plans (exchange of data in the field of transport, infrastructure, energy and environment); <b>Practice:</b> cross-fertilization and inclusive mechanism in dealing with territorial and cross-border regional development, improvement of vertical coordination and horizontal of institutional activity.
IPA AL - XK	Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, renewable energy sources and the shift towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy; joint actions to encourage tourism and promote cultural and natural heritage.	Preparation of strategies and action plans for, prevention and mitigation of manmade hazards and natural disasters, introducing cross-border mapping and integrated environmental monitoring systems;	<b>Actors:</b> transnational collaboration between different multi-level territorial systems for improving services networking and encourage the emergence of common strategies; <b>Discourse:</b> cross-border visions and strategies; sustainable development; <b>Tools:</b> site-specific sectoral plans concerning tourism, environment etc.; <b>Practice:</b> increasing capacity of local actors to deal with EU funds, programs and strategies, improvement of vertical coordination and horizontal of institutional activity.
IPA FYROM - AL	Encouraging tourism, culture and natural heritage, protecting the environment, promoting climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management.	Development and promotion of joint tourism products and services; restoration and preservation of cultural and historical sites and associated built environment; promoting and supporting sustainable use of natural resources and environment.	<b>Actors:</b> more involvement of different groups of stakeholders; <b>Discourse:</b> multi-level and cross-border governance; <b>Tools:</b> potential influence on the new local plans priorities according to CBC objectives; <b>Practice:</b> cross-fertilisation and inclusive mechanism in dealing with territorial and cross-border regional development improvement of vertical coordination and of horizontal institutional activity.

Synoptic table: main cross-border cooperation in which Albania is involved Tab.5

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

2014-2020	Objectives	Actions	Potential impacts on TG and SP
INTERREG IT – CH	The protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage; the development and promotion of environmentally sustainable means of transportation; the promotion of social inclusion.	Promotion of the natural and cultural heritage; integrated and sustainable mobility; services for the integration of communities; strengthening cross-border governance.	<b>Actors:</b> additional public sector staff involved in initiatives which enhance the administrative capacity at a cross-border level; <b>Discourse:</b> public participation, sustainability, cross-border governance; <b>Tools:</b> harmonization of CBC projects to cantonal sectoral strategies, plans and political actions; <b>Practice:</b> more involvement of institutions in the strategic planning of transport and water management initiatives, promotion of the institutional and administrative cooperation, improving the relationship between citizens and institutions.
INTERREG FR – CH	Maintain and reinstate the weakened ecosystems and to put in place new sustainable land use bodies; increase the use of sustainable transport for cross-border travel and improve access to the regions.	Bringing organisations closer together for innovation and supporting innovative projects; protecting and making the most of cultural and natural heritage; encouraging sustainable transport.	<b>Actors:</b> emergence of sustainable land use bodies; <b>Discourse:</b> innovation promotion which derives from the EU 2020 strategy, cross-border governance; <b>Tools:</b> increased number of coordinated land-use planning initiatives; <b>Practice:</b> emergence of innovative projects and planning initiatives, improved CBC, the development of local services.
INTERREG DE-AT-CH-LI	Improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in public infrastructure and in the housing sector; increase the attractiveness of the common natural and cultural heritage; conserving and improving biodiversity, reducing air pollution.	Competitiveness, innovation, employment and education; environment, energy and transport; cooperation of administrations and civic commitment.	<b>Actors:</b> improved quality of cross-border administrations and institutions; <b>Discourse:</b> participation, innovative approach which derives from the EU2020 strategy, multi-level and cross-border governance, integrated border region; <b>Tools:</b> fostering of renewable energy and natural heritage issues in sectoral and cross-border plans; <b>Practice:</b> more bottom-up participation and civic commitment in the implementation of cross-border strategies and plans, improved cooperation between the institutions.
INTERREG FR-DE-CH	Improve the protection of plant and animal species; reduce the environmental impact of the economic development; increase the share of transport of people and goods with a lower environmental impact.	Smart growth; sustainable growth; inclusive growth; territorial cohesion.	<b>Actors:</b> more attention to sustainability issues, identification of stakeholders and citizens with the Upper Rhine Region; <b>Discourse:</b> sustainability, environmental protection, cross-border governance, territorial cohesion, EU2020 strategy; <b>Tools:</b> increase of attention on sectoral plans linked to environmental issues; <b>Practice:</b> improvement of the quality of cross-border services, of administrations and institutions; promotion of territorial cohesion and cross-border cooperation between administrations and citizens.

**Synoptic table: main cross-border cooperation in which Switzerland is involved Tab.6**

Source: authors' own elaboration, 2018.

As explained previously, Switzerland participates in four CBC programs. As for Albania, it is too soon to fully evaluate the impact of the 2014-2020 CBC programs in Switzerland, but it is possible to make some preliminary observations. As can be seen in table 6, the CBC programs which have a spatial impact in Switzerland are mainly those related to the protection of the environment, the development of sustainable means of transportation and the promotion of cultural heritage. These programs seem to enhance horizontal coordination and the sectoral policy fields impacting on the country's territorial governance and spatial planning. Similarly to what is happening in Albania, CBC programs could lead to the establishment of new roles for actors and institutions, and the reinforcement of networks between

the various governmental levels and beyond administrative borders. Moreover, these programs also enhance the country's vertical and cross-border coordination and cooperation, as well as promote multi-level governance.

In general, it seems that in Switzerland administrative structures at the national, cantonal and local level adapt quite well to CBC projects and policies. It also seems that the high autonomy of the cantons enables them to develop cross-border relations with sub-state entities more effectively (Saint-Ouen, 2013, p.8). For RegioSuisse, the paradigm shift that characterizes the 2014-2020 programming period of the EU regional policy, namely EU Cohesion Policy, seems to converge and create synergies with the Swiss New Regional Policy, the NRP. Furthermore, the current ESPON project on Action Areas (ACTAREA)

has been exploring the added value and potential advantages of new forms of cooperation areas, also looking at the Swiss experience of the 'action areas'.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

As this paper has shown, ETC is one of the main objectives of the EU not only within its territory, but also among EU member states and external countries. Focusing more on the latter, the importance of ETC and in particular of CBC is evident. Indeed, thanks to the CBC, Switzerland has had the opportunity to effectively integrate its spatial development within the main EU spatial strategies. Similarly, but at a slower pace, Albania tries to position its territorial transformation within the scope of EU development by improving the collaboration among neighboring countries as recognized by the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020.

One outcome of this process of territorial integration is the potential redefinition of domestic territorial governance and spatial planning. As has been demonstrated in the past, participating in ETC (and especially in CBC initiatives) has allowed border areas to be much more integrated, increasing their competitiveness and attractiveness (Dühr, Stead and Zonneveld, 2007). From the point of view of territorial governance and spatial planning, it is interesting to note how the territorial governance changes in terms of the actors involved, as well as the procedures and principles. Whereas the spatial planning changes thanks to the cross-fertilization of spatial planning tools, practices and discourse. In this regard, the present paper stresses the idea of the mutual cross-fertilization of territorial governance and spatial planning, not only to target the border areas directly interested by CBC programs, but also the central level institutions where the decision-ma-

king usually takes place (this is particularly true for Albania, less so for Switzerland).

To further explore the impacts of ETC, and in particular of CBC programs, on territorial governance and spatial planning in Albania and Switzerland – and, more in general, in other non-member countries – on the basis of the collected evidence it is possible to make the following recommendations:

To focus further on the *role of actors*, both institutional and non-institutional, and the nature/quality of their involvement in the implementation of actions and projects and the establishment of networks and partnerships between local government and local stakeholders within and across the border;

To analyze the changes in *spatial planning tools*, in terms of the introduction of new documents and strategies, as well as the coordination between spatial planning and programming activities;

To evaluate the changing mechanisms in *relational procedures* in terms of the improvement of vertical (within the various territorial levels) and horizontal (between countries, administrative units as well as sectors of interventions) coordination, together with the *practices* that characterize the making and implementation of spatial planning and development tools;

To explore the evolution of domestic *spatial planning discourse* through the introduction and/or consolidation of new territorial governance paradigms and spatial planning concepts inspired by the EU's spatial planning discourse (e.g. polycentrism, urban-rural relations, functional regions etc.).

Overall, the evidence presented in this contribution shows how relevant ETC initiatives, especially CBC programs, can be for the future of European integration, and in particular for providing the border relations among neighboring countries with a stronger territorial dimension.

## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> In 1991 the EU and Albania started diplomatic contacts, and Albania was therefore ahead of the other countries. Until that time, no economic and political relations existed. In 1992, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, about trade exchanges, commercial and economic cooperation was signed between the EU and Albania (Goxha, 2016).

<sup>ii</sup> In this regard, the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014-2020 represents an example of how the country is being aligned to the EU.

<sup>iii</sup> In the EU Report on Albania (2015), the European Commission addresses five key priorities: 1 - establishment of a professional and depoliticized administration; 2 - enhance the impartiality of the judiciary; 3 - strengthen the fight against organized crime; 4 - strengthen the fight against corruption; 5 - reinforce protection of human rights.

<sup>iv</sup> FYROM stands for Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia. Currently, the use of the acronym is under debate by the Macedonian and Greek parliaments.

<sup>v</sup> ADRIION includes: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia.

<sup>vi</sup> *The Strategy SEE 2020 identifies five goals: (i) Integrated Growth - Trade and Investment; (ii) Smart Growth - Education and Innovation; (iii) Sustainable Growth - Infrastructure and Environment; (iv) Inclusive Growth - Job Growth; (v) Governance for Growth - Good Governance.*

<sup>vii</sup> *The EUSAIR identifies four thematic pillars: (i) Driving innovative maritime and marine growth; (ii) Connecting the regions; (iii) Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment; (iv) Increasing regional attractiveness.*

<sup>viii</sup> *The EUSAIR includes four member states – Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and four non-EU states namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia.*

<sup>ix</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/gov/it/pagina-iniziale/documentazione/comunicati-stampa.msg-id-1139.html>

<sup>x</sup> <https://regiosuisse.ch/it/politica-regionale-dellue-2014-2020>

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