European Integration and ethnic minority mobilization: A theoretical introduction and literature review

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This report introduces the main theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the EUROREG project. EUROREG's focus is on the impact of EU induced regionalisation on minority and majority nationalism. EUROREG is centrally concerned with regions inhabited by large historical minority populations. The term 'historical minority' is used here to distinguish between the minority populations that were part of a national or multinational state since its creation, from the minority groups that are the outcome of international migration flows. EUROREG is interested only in the former type of minorities.

More specifically, EUROREG studies the links between European economic integration and ethnic minority mobilisation. It explores the effects of European integration on territorially concentrated ethnic minorities and their politics, as well as on their relations with national majorities and the state. We have selected nine cases of minority inhabited regions, seven in EU member states: five in 'old' member states (Austria, Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK), two in 2004 member states (Slovakia and Slovenia), and two in accession countries of Central-East and Southeast Europe (CESE) (Bulgaria and Romania).

EUROREG examines how changing opportunities and constraints induced by EU regional economic and human rights policies, alter patterns of local political participation and economic activity of local ethnic minorities and national majorities, their relations with national and ethnic political parties and state administration, as well as minority political and cultural demands vis-à-vis the central state. We will also examine their influence on how local minorities and majorities view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualise 'Europe.'

Our case studies focus on ethnic minorities inhabiting regions near or across border areas in EU member states and accession countries, looking at EU cohesion policy (structural funds and cross border co-operation initiatives), pre-accession programs that include funds to prepare CESE states to implement structural funds and the broader regime of human rights and minority protection, which has developed over the past fifteen years in conjunction with the Council of Europe (CoE).

In the sections that follow we shall outline the general process of nation state building and minority formation in Europe, the politicisation of regional minorities in post war Europe, the role played in this context by EU cohesion policy with particular reference to structural funds and cross border cooperation programmes. We shall furthermore identify ways in which territorial restructuring and the minority question have been intertwined, and probe the changing socio-economic and institutional context in minority inhabited regions, as well as the changing configuration of minority and majority relations and interests (both political and economic). In section 9, we shall further discuss the regional implications of the EU enlargement in Central Eastern and South East European (CESE) countries with special reference to the human rights and minority protection regime, and the preparation of new member states and accession countries for joining the EU. In all these sections we review the relevant bibliography and propose specific research questions on which to focus our case studies in EUROREG.

Last but not least, Section 10 defines a frame for analysing and comparing the (re)configuration of minority-majority interests and identities in sub-national regions in the cases under study. It depicts four ideal forms distinguished by their relationship to the central state and the way they view the connection between the cultural, political and territorial unit and variable conceptions of the EU.

This report should be read as a first exploration of our research questions in the light of existing literature but also as the departure point of further empirical, analytical and comparative work on these questions.

1.1 Nation-state building, border regions and minorities in Europe

The rise of modern national states in Europe was a century long historical process that involved the creation of bounded geopolitical, cultural and economic entities out of myriad of fragmented, overlapping and quasi-autonomous territories and communities that comprised the pre-existing feudal and imperial systems. It advanced through two parallel, highly contested and inter-related processes of consolidating an external and clearly demarcated territorial border and simultaneously internally creating an integrated national society. The consolidation of territorial borders advanced through wars and military campaigns and required enhanced capacity on the part of state rulers to extract resources from the populations inhabiting the

areas under their command. In the course of it, state formation evolved with the emergence of an administrative apparatus and the concentration of political power in a national centre that tremendously expanded their ability to administer distant territories (Tilly 1975). Such capacity grew in tandem with the expansion of markets and improvements in communications and transport infrastructure (Calhoun 1997: 68). With the consolidation of state borders in the 19th and 20th century, the emerging international system institutionalised mutual recognition of demarcated sovereignty of states and their exclusive jurisdiction over a particular territory.

As state borders became increasingly secure and relatively fixed, national leaders re-oriented and channelled the state's capacity and power internally in the service of creating a unified and homogeneous national society out of dispersed and culturally diverse local communities. Besides political-administrative centralisation, this simultaneously involved processes of economic integration, cultural standardisation and political incorporation. The growth of national economies organised along functionally differentiated lines and the expansion of socio-economic development and transport infrastructure expanded social communication and diffused common cultural norms and a sense of national membership among diverse groups (Deutsch 1966). Cultural and linguistic standardisation was advanced with the construction and expansion of national educational systems (Gellner 1983). The gradual extension of political-civil rights and the broadening of political participation contributed to fostering a common sense of national membership powerfully conjoined to citizenship (Calhoun 1997: 69). Social-economic integration, extension of political rights and cultural homogenisation, however, did not uniformly efface regional-territorial divisions and ethnic-cultural minorities that remained strong, particularly in areas lying across state borders.

In the 20th century, Western European states dealt with ongoing regional protest through attempts to incorporate minorities in systems of representation defined by national political institutions (Urwin and Rokkan 1982). The extension of political rights and the rise of parties with the gradual entry of masses into politics enhanced opportunities for regional minorities and territorial interests to participate in national systems of representation. In the 1920s, these factors contributed to the diffusion and containment of regional autonomy movements and politics (Rokkan and Urwin 1982: 429; Flora 1999: 23). The expansion of democratisation went hand in hand with ongoing standardisation, administrative centralisation and the creation of cross-local organisations and labour markets. Processes of national unification continued to nurture regional-territorial tensions, which, however, remained relatively quiescent through the 1950s in West Europe (Rokkan and Urwin 1982: 429). Throughout this period, national parties penetrated into the various regions and successfully solicited the support of the local population weakening the territorial basis of politics and replacing them with class distinctions (Keating 1998: 43-46).

Drawing upon the work of Stein Rokkan (1970), Albert Hirschman (1970) and Rokkan and Urwin (1982), Bartolini analyses the historical formation of nation-states as a gradual process of incorporation of ever larger sectors of the population through political participation and social citizenship rights in national institutions (Bartolini 1998; 2000). The expansion of democratisation and internal opportunities for political representation (*voice*) with the center's yielding to popular pressure went hand in hand with the consolidation of the state's external boundary and consequently with strong limitations to the possibility to secede (*exit*). Nation building bolstered the state's ability to control its border, less through force and increasingly through the endowing of citizenship rights and the elaboration of a discourse highlighting the 'will of the nation'. This strengthened cultural loyalties towards the centre and provided it with a new account of political legitimacy of the state as the embodiment of the nation (Bartolini 2000: 12-18; Calhoun 1997: 71). In the internal system of political representation and differentiation that emerged, functional interests and individual rights were privileged over the claims of peripheral regions and ethnic-cultural minorities, which withstood assimilation and were regarded as threatening. Governments sought to diffuse or solve conflict with peripheral regions and minorities by channelling it through the centralised administrative structures and national political parties.

Throughout this tenuous and ongoing juxtaposition between the centrifugal forces of administrative and political power and the centripetal claims of regional minorities, states employed a variety of centralising and federalising accommodation strategies. Combined with variable cultural configurations at the bottom, they produced different territorial structures, degrees of centralisation and centre-periphery relations among states, which are systematically categorised by Rokkan and Urwin in the following way. In the first place, the *unitary state* is characterised by overwhelming and unambiguous dominance of the political and economic centre, from which administrative structures and standardised institutions spawn to extend and diffuse central control over the entire territory. France, Denmark, Italy could be included in this category. Secondly, the *union state* approximates the centralisation and administrative standardisation of the unitary state but diverges from it in tolerating a degree of ethnic-cultural membership and in preserving some degree of pre-existing regional autonomy. Examples of this kind are the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Spain. Thirdly, *mechanical federalism* indicates a model of accommodation comprising diversified territorial structures across the state introduced by the centre, which, however, retains its predominance and control over all other areas, with Germany as an example. Finally, *organic federalism* denotes the voluntary association of several territorial-cultural units into a state entity while they retain their specific institutional structures and Switzerland is the example here.

In Central-East and Southeast Europe (CESE), state unification was specifically shaped by the belated process of nation-state building that spanned over a century of empire dissolution and did not produce secure

borders until well in the 20th century. The complex multiethnic mosaic in the Habsburg and Ottoman territories, with language and religious differences irregularly spread and thoroughly intermeshed, made national unification and territorial consolidation particularly antagonistic and bound to remain incomplete. The presence of large and regionally concentrated ethnic minorities in border areas that are often territorially contiguous to an external national homeland continues to this day to bear testimony to this legacy (Brubaker 1996). In the inter-war period, the project of economic modernisation and state centralisation, with which state elites embarked towards unification, came up against ethnic fragmentation, institutionalised through international treaties aiming to protect minority cultures. The resulting tensions and growing revisionist sentiment contributed to the collapse of liberal institutions and the democratisation processes in the region in the inter-war period, which precluded forms of political incorporation of territorial minorities available in Western Europe (Mazower 2000: 109-110). The project of state-led modernisation, nationalisation and political-administrative centralisation did not resume until the 1940s with the advent of communist regimes in CESE.

During the communist period, state socialism in CESE countries consolidated ethnic-national identities and their regional concentration not only in the federal socialist states that explicitly institutionalised such identities, but also in unitary states. States in CESE are home to sizeable ethnic minorities concentrated near or along border regions. While a series of policies unintentionally contributed to strengthening their identities, the Communist regimes politically suppressed both minority and majority nationalist movements and ideologies (Anagnostou 2003). The Communist ideology left little room for the expression of culturally distinct identities, and even less for ethnic mobilisation. In this way, ethnic conflict was prevented and neutralised. Nonetheless, the post-1989 experience has shown that ethnic and national identities retained part of their strength or appeal. They were relatively easily revived in the 1990s during the process of democratic transition and economic transformation in CESE.

1.2 Regional minority politicisation in post-war Europe

In post-war West Europe, national governments implemented regional economic policies and territorial reforms that set the context for two waves of regional minority politicisation. The first one made its appearance in the 1960s and 1970s. Undertaken with the overriding objective to further national integration, regional policy in the latter period reflected the state's increasing responsibilities in economic management and welfare and targeted through resource transfers and increased investments the peripheral and industrially lagging regions. Conceived as an integral part of national economic management, regional policy was administered in a centralised fashion aiming at enhancing modernisation, efficiency and the performance of the national economy as a whole (Keating 1998: 47-49; Esman 1977: 373). In implementing it, states such as France, the UK and Italy undertook a series of

administrative and territorial reforms to improve transport infrastructure, communications, and local provision of services, as well as to redress problems of urbanisation and industrial development (Anderson 1996: 114). In areas where ethnic-cultural distinctions remained significant, regional policies also had an implicit political rationale in providing additional resources as a mechanism for accommodating territorial and potentially disloyal minorities within the prevailing state structures (Urwin 1982: 58).

A growing literature in the late 1970s and 1980s sought to explain the rise of ethnic-regional parties in Scotland, Wales, Brittany and elsewhere, as well as the failure of state modernisation policies to effectively accommodate territorial minorities (Levi and Hechter 1984; Esman 1977; Lijphart 1977). The forms and content of such politicisation varied from case to case depending on electoral arrangements and constitutional structures among other things (Rogers 1990), but on the whole they represented a reaction against what was regarded as excessive state centralisation and intervention in local affairs. An important factor highlighted in this body of literature was the declining appeal of traditional national parties and their weakening as mechanisms of political integration of regional minorities. Significantly influenced and inspired by the rise of social movements in the 1960s and their anti-centralist message (Berger 1977), regional nationalisms of the 1970s raised issues of cultural identity and sought greater autonomy from the central state in determining their distinctive path of economic development (Watson 1990). For most part, scholars entirely left out considerations of the EU factor, exceptions notwithstanding (see Scheinman 1977).

In contrast, the second wave of minority nationalisms in the 1980s and 1990s, in Catalunya, the Basque Country, Scotland and Wales, has been inseparably linked to the processes of EU integration (Lynch 1996; Mitchel and Cavanagh 2001). Studies attribute this wave of politicisation no longer to the centralisation of political and economic power in the hands of the state but instead to its dispersion above and below the latter, induced by European integration. Most importantly, a central factor driving it is the processes of regionalisation, the growing significance of sub-state regions characterising the EU, which gives a fundamentally novel dimension in this most recent wave of minority revival. In the first place, the basic, albeit implicit contract underlying earlier state management policies, under which minority regions would give loyalty or support to the state in exchange for regional resources, is increasingly undermined in the European context. So is the national state as the exclusive focus of identity and the sole centre to which minorities and regions can direct their claims (Keating 2001b: 22). By expanding political, economic and administrative boundaries from the state to the supranational level, the EU transforms the nature and content of 'new' minority nationalisms. Some scholars argue that the latter shifts away from a concern with ethnic community preservation and state-seeking aspirations, and turns towards civic themes emphasising economic development, territorial self-government and market integration (Keating 2001a).

In this project, drawing upon the insights of the aforementioned studies, we set out to systematically explore the links between EU-induced regionalisation and the changing nature of minority and majority nationalism. We specifically examine how regional resource distribution and territorial and/or institutional changes induced by EU cohesion policy, as well as political opportunities created by the minority protection regime, affect majority-minority relations, ethnic-national politics and identities in the selected regions. In pursuing these research objectives, we also take into account the wider context of European integration and accession to the EU within which each of our case studies is duly contextualised as well as the historical particularities of each case including internal political, economic and symbolic factors that are strongly implicated in the the process of regional development in regions with large historical minority populations.

Cohesion policy has been a major driving force behind the regionalisation of state structures and politics in the EU and more recently in CESE accession states. Comprising structural funds and a variety of cross-border co-operation initiatives and pre-accession programs, it is largely pervaded by functional economic priorities and stresses administrative efficiency, regional competencies and local mobilisation with the goal of enhancing production, development and market competitiveness. In its implementation phase within EU member states, its partnership arrangements adopted after 1988 have been seen as factors promoting a complex reconfiguration of economic, territorial and/or government structures between European, national and subnational levels.

The implementation of pre-accession programmes in the Associate Candidate Countries (ACC) and the partial diversion of cohesion policy in the new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe is at an embryonic stage, yet, it has set the frame for widespread, ongoing and contested processes of regional reform. Undertaken in the context of pre-accession strategies and in anticipation of structural funds, regional reforms in CESE states seem to follow a markedly distinct trend from earlier practice within the EU, increasingly premised on nationalisation and centralisation of changing regional economic and territorial structures. Nonetheless, they pave the way for ongoing struggle over the drawing of regional units and the creation of subnational structures and competencies, with potentially significant implications for areas inhabited by territorially concentrated ethnic minorities.

Their assertion and politicisation in the 1990s was not only made possible by democratisation and liberalisation, but it has also been encouraged by the emerging European minority protection regime. European human rights norms and minority protection conditions promoted in CESE states by the EU in conjunction with the CoE have encouraged these states to adopt political representation and cultural rights that institutionalise ethnic-national identities (Deets 2002). They have contributed to the adoption of electoral rules and the emergence of institutional arrangements for ethnic-based representation of minorities at the national and subnational levels (Aniol et al 1997). The

second part of this project seeks to examine the effects of the European minority protection regime on minority opportunities for political representation at the national, supranational and subnational levels, as well as their implications for regional economic and institutional restructuring in border regions in CESE accession states.

In addressing the abovementioned research questions, we shall seek to cast light to the overall symbolic and political context within which they are embedded. We shall thus place EU policies of regional development and socio-economic cohesion as well as the European human rights regime into their wider context of changing ideas of democracy, values of social and institutional organisation, approaches to the economy (with the emphasis on the liberal functioning of a single European market). We shall pay attention to the influence of European institutions such as the Council of Europe whose powers may be more moral than material but whose work is closely related to parts of the EU legal system.

1.3 Cohesion policy, structural funds and cross-border co-operation in EU member states

Cohesion policy administered by the European Commission was designed as a policy to deal with and reduce the large regional disparities in the EU. Successive waves of enlargement since the 1970s heightened the diversity of member states with regard to levels of development and increased economic and social disparities among regions in the EU (Tsoukalis 1991: 206). Cohesion policy reflected the dominant thinking about integration of the 1970s and 1980s, which was influenced by earlier modernisation theories and premised upon economic development as a means of incorporating peripheral areas and mitigating regional tensions. Through assistance to disadvantaged regions to help them develop economically and converge with the European economy, cohesion policy was also intended to contribute to the stabilisation and political normalisation in the newly democratised states of south Europe. Upholding the post-war model of social democracy, redistribution and regional development, structural policy was intended as a compensation for those regions and populations likely to loose or be placed at a disadvantage in the competitive European common market (Hooghe 1996: 5).

Regional redistribution measures existed in the EU prior to 1970s but it was the first wave of enlargement in 1974 that raised greater concern with regional disparities and made salient a more decisive approach. This was signalled with the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975 to add to the pre-existing European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). Relatively small in size, the EC's embryonic regional policy involved the disbursement of funds to member states on the basis of quotas, which were intended to

supplement national resources going into regional and infrastructure investments.

In order to deal with the evident reluctance of national authorities to make available their share of resources (principle of additionality), as well as to tackle the special development problems of the Mediterranean, the Commission began to change its approach in the 1980s. With the Iberian enlargement serving as a catalyst, it introduced its new approach with the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMPs) in 1985, which targeted the regions of France, Italy and the whole of Greece (Tsoukalis 1991: chapter 8). The shift from the financing of separate individual projects to medium-term development programs inaugurated with the IMPs signalled a more systematic approach that embedded single projects within more integrated frames of regional development. In this sense, it was a precursor to the major reform of structural policy in 1988.

The formal grounds for the 1988 overhaul of structural policy had been laid by the Single European Act (SEA) that decided to create the internal market. With Title V inserted in the Treaty of Rome, the SEA assigned greater importance to social and economic cohesion (Tsoukalis 1991: 216). Besides the doubling of the size of structural funds, largely a side-payment for the political acceptance of the internal market, the reform adopted five priority Objectives to which the bulk of funds would be channelled. These targeted (Objective 1) the less developed regions where GDP per capita falls below 75% of the EU average, (Objective 2) areas of industrial decline, (Objective 3) the long-term unemployed, (Objective 4) employment among young people, (Objective 5a) adjustment of agricultural structures and (Objective 5b) development of rural areas.

The emphasis was placed on Objective 1-less developed regions that includes the whole of Greece, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal, the greater part of Spain, the *Mezzogiorno* and the overseas departments of France and Corsica, with the intent of improving their capacity in market competition. The amount of structural funds targeting these areas continued to significantly increase throughout the 1990s. The 1988 reform reinforced and extended the integrated approach of the IMPs. Structural funds began to be distributed for projects incorporated in multi-annual Community Support Frameworks (CSFs), that is regional development programs submitted by regional authorities in co-operation with national governments to the Commission.

Structural policy cannot merely be seen as the social counterpart to the European liberal project of economic deregulation and market integration. Its underlying philosophy transcended territorial borders and challenged national socio-political and cultural boundaries. Structural policy sought to address economic development and economic integration into the EC/EU beyond national borders, challenging thus indirectly and to a certain extent unintentionally the loci of national and ethnic antagonisms.

This is exemplified and explicitly captured by a particular kind of regional programs that have a transnational and inter-regional dimension and involve cross-border co-operation (CBC) schemes, which flourish across the EU. Such programs are the focus of the INTERREG Community Initiative established in 1990, which is financed by the ERDF, and other similar programs targeting specific countries like PEACE in Northern Ireland. Designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion, they particularly target remote regions and regions sharing external borders with candidate countries. They place emphasis on fostering co-operation between local minorities and majorities, as well as between national authorities in economic activity and development strategies across state borders. Designating them as responsible for project implementation, these funds promote involvement of local and regional authorities that directly apply to the Commission for these funds (Murphy 1999: 64; Christiansen & Jorgensen 2000). As an idea, cross-border programs originated in the trans-frontier co-operation between local governments across the Franco-German border in the 1950s, instituted with the aim of fostering reconciliation between the two countries by overcoming their wartime national divisions (Anderson 1996: 121).

Although, as we shall se below, INTERREG programmes are rather limited in terms of economic impact, they have gained an important political and symbolic significance in some cases (albeit not all) despite persistent problems in their implementation related to historical relations and actual disparities between communities at each side of the border.

1.4 Partnership, territorial restructuring, and ethnic minorities

Regional processes induced by EU cohesion policy can be seen to represent a continuation of the historical processes of political-economic integration, which this time is initiated above the state level and targeting entities below it, while reproducing the current functional regime centred on the national state. In contrast to regional policies undertaken by national states in the 1950s and 1960s, however, EU cohesion policy necessitates regional devolution of competencies, the creation of regional units where they do not exist, and improved administrative and planning capacity of substate structures. The most important component of the 1988 reform of cohesion policy was the decision-making and procedural innovations it introduced, which reinforced a series of domestic territorial reforms among the member states that are the policy's beneficiaries. In particular, the 1988 reform enshrined the principle of *partnership*, whereby the planning and implementation of EU-funded regional programs requires close co-operation between subnational, national and European Commission authorities (Hooghe 1996: 2; Marks 1993: 396). The involvement of subnational actors was a departure from the earlier arrangement in which the Commission was exclusively dealing with national authorities. Reflecting an implicit intent to enhance efficiency and promote effective policy implementation, the principle of partnership was also in tune with the principle of subsidiarity and

emphasised the involvement of local actors as a precondition for successful economic development and democratic participation (Hooghe 1996: 21).

Requiring the involvement of local authorities together with national governments and the Commission, the partnership arrangements of EU cohesion policy reinforce significant reforms and changes in the territorial structures of member states. The direction and impact of domestic reforms at least partly induced by EU structural policy greatly vary across states. Differences stem from prior experience with regional policy, as well as from the nature of pre-existing territorial structures and power relations between central and local government levels, as a series of case studies have demonstrated (Hooghe 1996; Marks 1996). Belgium had already engaged in extensive territorial devolution of power and Germany had a highly developed system of regional federalisation and arrangements familiar to partnership rules. Despite a strong tradition of regional policy, Britain had retained its unitary structures and centralised practices in dealing with regions and minority nations (Bache et al. 1996). Notwithstanding its strong regional differences and earlier decentralisation attempts to accommodate its historical nations, Spain had little experience with regional policy before its entry in the EU. France had already experimented with some form of partnership, but it otherwise shared with Ireland and Greece a strong unitary tradition and a high degree of administrative centralisation (Hooghe 1996: 13-14).

In states with unitary territorial structures, such as in Greece, Ireland and France, domestic reforms induced by EU structural funds and CBC devolved more competencies to regional structures and enabled local actors to assert their interests vis-à-vis central authorities more openly than before (Hooghe 1996: 13; Thielemann 2000). In some cases, it even promoted a degree of decentralisation and strengthened subnational government institutions (Ioakimidis 1996; Laffan 1996). In contrast, in states with already strong regionalised structures and competencies, such as Spain, Germany and Belgium, the implementation of EU policies potentially placed regions at a disadvantage in a European political arena where national states continue to be the pre-eminent decision-making actors (Borzel 2001). In regions dominated by historical minority nations, the unsettling of existing territorial structures set anew a struggle between the central and local levels and sparked a new wave of minority politicisation seeking to preserve or extend their autonomy vis-à-vis central states (Morata and Munoz 1996; Laible 2001).

Initially, studies saw in the EU's reformed cohesion policy a political thrust and attributed to it an implicit and substantive aim to transfer political power to regional and subnational government units (Nanetti 1996). Extrapolating from the decision-making and partnership arrangements of cohesion policy, scholars increasingly identified the contours of a system based on multi-level governance. In its vein and in contrast to the historical processes of nation-state building, that involved a progressive concentration of power to a national centre, EU integration was depicted as signalling a perverse process

of asymmetrical dispersing of power above and below the national centre (Marks 1993; 1997). It appeared to reconfigure the historical national state as a political organisation with fixed and impermeable territorial boundaries and a unified structure of political power within its territory. The model of multi-level governance has established an analytical frame alternative to the two dominant conceptions of neo-functionalist and intergovernmental models, which challenges the supranational focus of the former and the state-centric view of the latter. It depicts an emerging European polity in which some of the previously centralised functions of the national state have moved up to supranational level and some down to the local-regional level in a highly asymmetrical fashion and without eroding the state.

More recently, scholars have retracted earlier depictions of EU cohesion policy as a force reconfiguring political power relations between central state and subnational levels, as it became increasingly evident that national states retained significant central control over its implementation (Keating 2003a: 21). After all, decentralisation of political power is rarely voluntarily conceded by central states in the absence of local mobilisation to contest and demand it. Nonetheless, in the context of implementing cohesion policy, regional reforms on the whole opened up greater space for and revitalised mobilisation among local and regional actors in several member states even though the effects of cohesion policy implementation on regionalisation are mixed.

Structural policy has far from created a 'Europe of Regions', yet, the regional tier of government is becoming more important and more active in Europe (Anderson 1996: 125). In the past fifteen years, several regions have mobilised in the EU setting up regional offices in Brussels and inter-regional organisations and participating in networks with EU organisations. The strongest and most active regional governments have sought to gain a formal role in the EU and have succeeded in instituting a consultative Committee of the Regions composed of representatives across the EU and a wealth of transnational regional networks (Marks and McAdam 1996).

Leaving aside the debate about its political decentralisation effects, the implementation of cohesion, perhaps more than any other policy, has enabled European institutions to penetrate the politics and societies of member states (Hooghe 1996: 5) in the following way that is of central interest to this project. While exhibiting an increasing tendency for centralised administration of structural funds and even CBC, cohesion policy continues to place strong emphasis on regional administration, efficiency and programming. It is pervaded by a functional economic logic that highlights the need to mobilise local production capacities for development in order to improve the competitiveness of regional economy in the European market. Such a logic entails policy priorities and norms that potentially contradict traditional regional policies driven by the priority to secure national control over local territory, and potentially reconfigures forms of interest aggregation and articulation historically linked to the national state. In this respect, it potentially undermines political interests based on cross local representation

embodied in nation-wide and centralised organisations such as political parties, trade unions and other corporate entities, and potentially paves the way for the rise of regional-economic or ethnic-cultural forms of representation (Marks and McAdam 1996; Bartolini 2000).

1.5 Europeanisation, regional restructuring and minority-majority relations.

Studies on structural funds and CBC have primarily focused on their effects for domestic territorial structures, the resulting changes in the balance of power between central state and the regions, as well as their consequences for opportunities and constraints of minorities inhabiting them (Mitchel and Cavanagh 2001; Laible 2001). Few, however, have paid attention to minority-majority relations within border regions (McCall 1998). While the presence of regional minorities exposes the artificial and incomplete nature of nationalisation within a state, the frequent conflation of a region with a minority nation no less reifies the same national logic it originally sought to challenge. If border regions often lack the national unity professed by central states, they rarely become the citadels of ethnic minority solidarity.

Whether interface or enclave peripheries, minority inhabited and border regions are divided societies. They are spaces of antagonism and conflict between national majorities and ethnic minorities contesting control over local institutions and regional territory. In the course of history, regional and local institutions in border areas have variably been dominated either by national and centrally ruling majorities or by strong regional minorities that acquired extensive degrees of autonomy through successive waves of democratisation. In both cases, the common feature is the attempt to gain national-ethnic control over territory underlined by the aspiration to establish congruence between the cultural community and the political unit, which in Gellner's infamous definition is the epitome of nationalism.

EUROREG examines how the reorganisation of regional resources, administrative structures and subnational institutions around economic development goals, induced by EU cohesion policy, impact upon minority-majority relations not only between central and local levels but primarily *within* border regions. In the first part of the project, we address the following question:

- Does the increased salience that structural funds implementation and CBC assign to regional development, economic competitiveness and administrative efficiency revive majority-minority contestation for asserting exclusive national-ethnic control over local territory, institutions and economic resources? Or conversely does it impute to regional-local mobilisation and subnational government a civic and integrative character that mitigates ethnic-national divisions over territory?

In addressing the aforementioned question, this project employs a research design that focuses on the level of the region. The emphasis on the local context of interaction shaped by changes in sub-national institutions, allows us to focus on actors as much as on structures, and to examine the variety of stances within minorities and majorities, rather than reify them as homogeneous collectivities.

Studies show that even though structural funds and CBC may enhance opportunities for regional interests and politics, the extent to which such opportunities are utilised is largely shaped by the unit-level characteristics of sub-national actors (Smyrl 1997). The constellation of local forces, cultural resources as well as endogenous processes of mobilisation and political interaction are decisive for the reconfiguration of regional, national and ethnic interests and identities.

The first part of EUROREG examines a number of cases of ethnically inhabited and border regions in the EU, which have received structural funds (Objective 1) and INTERREG funds for cross-border co-operation.

EU regional funds affect regions in two direct, as well as indirect ways:

First, structural funds and CBC promote regional policy priorities that may enhance resources and competencies of subnational institutions in economic development. They thus may expand opportunities of local minorities and majorities to mobilise and pursue their interests through them. We will examine how economic development and integration priorities promoted within the frame of EU cohesion policy impact upon regional-subnational authorities and their relations with state administration, as well as on the politics of local-prefecture-regional government. We shall examine how resulting changes in opportunities and constraints of local, regional and national actors, affect patterns of local political participation and economic activity of minorities and majorities, as well as minority political and cultural demands vis-à-vis the central state.

Secondly, structural funds and CBC have an indirect impact on regions. They are part of a wider discourse and set of European policies around the content and meaning of national-ethnic identity, cultural and linguistic diversity, national/European citizenship and 'Europe'. EU regional economic policies are carriers of ideational and imagined constructs of Europe, intertwined with variable and contested ideas of ethnic/national identity, democracy, cultural pluralism, administrative efficiency and economic competitiveness. EUROREG will seek to assess how structural funds and CBC implementation relate to the wider 'Europeanisation' discourse. We will examine how structural funds and CBC implementation on one hand, and the overall discourse on Europe, democracy, diversity, efficiency and citizenship, on the other, influence and/or are reflected in how local minorities and majorities view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualise 'Europe.'

For this part of the project pertaining to EU member states, we have selected three cases of regions that receive structural funds as Objective 1 regions: Northern Ireland in the UK, Thrace in Greece, Burgenland in Austria. We have also selected three cases that receive CBC funds: the Italo-Slovene border communities in northeast Italy and northwest Slovenia, and the Spanish Basque country (in relation to the French Basque country).

The region of Thrace in the northeast of Greece is territorially contiguous to Turkey and is inhabited by a small Turkish Muslim minority and a Greek Christian majority. Since 1989, it has received the third largest in size CSF in Greece, which falls under the Objective 1 areas.

In the case of Northern Ireland, we will focus on economic co-operation projects funded by PEACE I and II programs operating since 1995, which seek the involvement of both Catholic and the Protestant communities. The Austrian region of Burgenland is inhabited by a Hungarian minority and has been receiving Objective 1 funds since Austria joined the EU in 1995.

The Basque country in Spain and France have received since 1991, INTERREG I, II and III funds for CBC programmes. The areas around the Italo-Slovene border where the Italian minority of Slovenia and the Slovenian minority of Italy live have participated in the INTERREG II and III programmes. The EU's Phare external assistance programme began operating in Slovenia in 1992, and a cross-border cooperation (CBC) component within it was formalised in 1994, though its interventions took place entirely upon Slovene territory. INTERREG II as regards Italy-Slovenia was finally approved in 1997 while both regions participate in INTERREG III (2000-2006).

1.6 Socioeconomic and institutional change, historical trajectories and culture

Historical processes of nation-state building did not only bequeath distinct territorial and administrative structures among states in Europe but they also bear a strong imprint on the workings and culture of local and regional government particularly in border regions. Seeking to fortify national and state boundaries, traditional state policies towards border regions sought to nationalise culturally diverse groups and/or to accommodate sizeable and territorially based minority nations. Economic development strategies in border and minority regions have been pervaded by the logic of national unification positing the overarching imperative to defend state integrity.

National political parties, nation-wide functional organisations and local state administration have played a central role in perpetuating such a nationalising politics on behalf of the central state in border regions. They have done so through their control over and interference with the workings of subnational self-government institutions and the cultivation of clientelistic relations with the local population. Centralised control of resource distribution and interest

representation often privileged the local national majority and/or sought to co-opt the most loyal and moderate segments of an ethnically distinct but often regionally dominant minority in order to accommodate it and neutralise its nationalist tendencies. At the same time, a parallel politics and local structures of ethnic solidarity among minority nations has contested and sought to assert control over local territory and political autonomy vis-à-vis the central state. In sum, the nationalising and centralising functions of regional political economy of border areas produced and sustained strong ethnic and inter-communal divisions at the local level. It has been particularly pronounced in areas bordering a state, which the internal minority considers its "national homeland", such as found in several parts of CESE.

Structural funds implementation and cross-border co-operation place a fundamentally different set of priorities, as well as constraints and opportunities, than those dictated by national integration. The CSFs bound with their priorities and imperatives the decisions and workings of regional authorities and representatives. CSF objectives place emphasis on enhancing competitiveness of the region's economy in the European common market rather than integrating it better with the needs of the national economy. Imbued with the ideas of new regionalism, they also highlight the mobilisation of local resources and actors, as well as on values of administrative efficiency, economic performance and infrastructure modernisation.

In this changing regional context, subnational institutions can become loci for the growth of 'development coalitions,' comprising local government associations, trade unions, private investors and local representatives-members of regional or prefecture councils. A 'development coalition' as expounded by Keating is a cross-class, place-based, and inter-communal, we may add, alliance of social and political actors of variable composition, dedicated to economic growth in a specific location (Keating 1998: 144). Economic development objectives and the performance criteria defining structural and INTERREG funds may result in a degree of inter-communal co-operation and come in conflict with national unity priorities.

Structural funds implementation and CBC may also encourage the local minority and majority population to reorient its political participation and economic activity centred on national or ethnic community associations, and pursue its interests through regional-local channels of influence. Where pre-existing structures and practices favour it, minorities and majorities can also try to 'exit' the national and mobilise at the European arena, however, *as regions*, that is by utilising regional (rather than national or ethnic-communal) channels of access. Expanded opportunities for the local minority and majority nations to 'voice' their interests through subnational and supranational institutions potentially reinforce a re-orientation of their politics away from supporting ethnic-based and/or nationalist parties and towards supporting more moderate leaders working within regional government structures (McCall 1998).

Whether and the extent to which local minorities and majorities actually mobilise around economic development projects and engage in subnational government and supranational institutions may be constrained by historical, national, political and cultural factors. The view of institutions as decisive factors in shaping political outcomes and behaviour has formed the kernel of the school of new institutionalism that has dominated the study of politics and policy processes in the past few decades (March and Olsen 1989). One strand of this school has offered rational choice accounts that see institutions as arenas shaping political outcomes by providing different sets of opportunities and constraints for actors to pursue their interests, which are taken to be a priori defined and outside the scope of analysis (North et al. 1990). A major challenge to rationalist accounts has come from historical and sociological perspectives that attribute to institutions a more formative role that influences not only the strategies of political actors but also the very goals they pursue (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Historical perspectives view institutions as path-dependent bearing the imprint of specific historical trajectories, while sociological approaches place emphasis on the cultural frames that influence how individuals conceive of and formulate their interests (Di Maggio and Powell 1991). These approaches focus the analysis on the process of politics and policy-making, on how institutions structure relations of power between contending actors and the overall context of interaction between actors whose conflicting interests may transform in the process.

While historical and sociological approaches to institutions highlight continuity by attributing to their influence an enduring quality, they identify various sources of change. Broader political and socio-economic restructuring can revive the salience of old institutions, it can infuse them with new ideas and/or produce shifts in the functioning of, as well as the goals pursued by existing institutions. Political actors may adjust their strategies to changes and new actors may come into play setting in motion new kinds of struggles (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Historical and sociological approaches take institutions both as independent and as dependent variables, both shaping and in turn being shaped by political actors' behaviour, respectively.

In areas near or along state borders, minority-majority interaction and regional economic mobilisation may be constrained by existing administrative-political structures and ethnic/national traditions (including distinct cultural-social norms, linguistic differences and religious beliefs). In ethnically divided regions, minorities have historically established their own structures of economic activity, political organisation and cultural-associational life, which can constrain local actors' choices. Cultural-historical factors and communal solidarity underpinning the latter may actually conflict with forms of regional economic co-operation and institutional participation made imperative by the functional logic of structural fund implementation and CBC.

The cohesion and intensity of ethnic community solidarity varies from case to case. It is most binding when cultural differences are enmeshed with interests, as well as when both are institutionalised through state policies,

international treaties or cultural-religious organisations (Cornell 1996). Historical ties and close contacts with an external national homeland can also reinforce such collective cohesion, together with the extent of politicisation characterising an ethnic community. During periods when state nationalising functions and minority marginalisation or repression were strong, such parallel ethnic community structures offered what Bartolini has called 'partial exits' (Bartolini 1998: 14). These were alternative spaces physically within but at the same outside the public sphere of the national state, where minorities could retreat and pursue their economic and political interests. Minority-majority divisions, parallel and comparable in essence to transnational relations across state borders, have imbued local life and politics with profound inter-communal mistrust. In a slightly different context, scholars have identified the latter as a major constrain in building social capital, in encouraging civic participation and in promoting the autonomisation of regional institutions and politics from national structures (Putnam 1993; Paraskevopoulos 1998).

EUROREG's first research question aims at presenting the background to each of our case studies:

a) Have EU structural funds and cross-border co-operation schemes affected the territorial and administrative structures of states and if yes, how?
b) Have these same funds and schemes influenced regional economic development strategies of minority-inhabited regions and if yes, how?

The second set of questions that will guide our research is the following: Has the implementation of structural funds and CBC schemes and the related changes in regional competencies and/or subnational institutions affected the patterns of political participation and economic activity of minority and majority actors? And if yes, how?

In particular:

a) Do they expand minority and majority opportunities and initiatives for political 'voice' and economic participation in regional-subnational and/or supranational institutions? Or do they eventually nurture the power of central state institutions?
b) Do they promote the formation of inter-ethnic, cross-border and inter-party coalitions and co-operation around regional economic and cross-border development schemes? Or do they reinforce pre-existing patterns of division along ethnic (or other) lines?
c) What is the impact, if any, on relations between locally elected minority and majority representatives on the one hand, and national and ethnic political parties and leaders on the other?

We identify here two competing sets of factors that affect the development of regional patterns of economic development and political participation in minority inhabited regions. On one hand, we hypothesise that SF and CBC

implementation mobilise and strengthen regional and generally subnational resources and institutions with a view to fostering the development of the region, transcending traditional ethnic lines of division and promoting integration of minority and majority political and economic activities in regional frames. We also hypothesise that this trend, which potentially leads to the decline of minority and majority support for nationalism and the politics of national unity/ethnic solidarity, is further reinforced by wider discourses on democracy, cultural and ethnic diversity, human rights, non discrimination as well as economic efficiency and competitiveness in a market economy that take place within the wider framework of European integration processes.

On the other hand, we also expect a competing set of factors related to local/national traditions of ethnic/cultural solidarity, traditions, policies and institutions of state nationalism and centralism and also the strength of national and ethnic political parties among local populations to affect minority and majority cooperation in the opposite direction. In other words, we expect that such ethnic/national factors will resist regional integration for development and will promote political and economic patterns of activity along ethnic lines and traditional divisions between majority and minority actors and populations.

In our case studies, we shall look at the varying combinations and strength of these different factors and the ways in which they can explain the differences in the degree to which local minorities-majorities and cross border communities mobilise and seek 'voice' through sub-national, regional or supranational channels and engage in economic activities that promote a common pattern of development or a pattern that favours the interests of one group, at the expense of the other.

1.7   The reconfiguration of political and economic interests

Territorial-regional institutions and representation may not only expand political and economic participation of minorities and majorities, but they may also become a source of institutional learning ensuing in the process of inter-communal association and interaction. Such process can arguably engender mechanisms of political collusion, suspend the traditional majority principle and challenge the unquestionable authority of the national centre and its nationalising activities and priorities (Bartolini 2000: 41-42). Growing interest aggregation around subnational institutions, local mobilisation and inter-communal co-operation around regional development projects, engendered in the course of structural funds implementation, can initiate a process of learning and re-evaluation through re-negotiation of means and ends. It may promote trust among minorities and majorities in ethnically mixed and border regions and attenuate their historical divisions (Kirchner 1998).

Studies show that in the process of mobilising local actors and regional representatives around development projects, structural funds implementation and cross border activities strengthen their commitment to self-government and regional decentralisation and redefine their interests (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992; Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). As early as 1990, an empirical study on prefecture councils in Greece examining their role in the implementation of the IMPs, identified growing awareness and mobilisation around local problems (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992). The implementation of the IMPs was seriously hampered and undermined by a highly centralised administrative structure and entrenched networks of clientelism flourishing by political parties. Yet, in the course of local mobilisation they engendered, local support for increased decentralisation seemed to grow and the first signs of building a regional image began to emerge in a context where regional-subnational institutions have historically been extremely weak (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992; Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). A few years later, following a major reform that established regional institutions and prefecture self-government, another study found growing political interaction and local support for decentralisation in the Greek region of Thrace, across the two ethnic communities of Christian Greeks and Turkish Muslims minority inhabiting the region (Anagnostou 2001).

Nonetheless, these findings from the case of Greece mainly cannot be mechanically projected to other countries. For this reason, while we take inspiration from these early studies to propose our third set of hypothese, we remain cautious in relation to the complex ways in which experiences of Structural Funds and CBC programme implementation are mediated by the national and regional context of ethnic politics, ideas of democracy and economic efficiency, patterns of ethnic-cultural solidarity and, last but not least, perceptions of Europe and European values.

The third set of questions that will guide EUROREG is:

Does involvement in structural funds implementation and CBC affect the political views and interests of locally elected minority and majority representatives, as well as local party leaders? And if yes, how?

a) What are the views of ethnic minorities and transnational communities about decentralisation, subnational government and EU integration?
b) What do local-regional representatives and leaders of minorities and majorities view as the most effective strategy, as well as the main obstacles in pursuing national and ethnic interests and in preserving cultural identity?
c) What are the levels of minority and majority support for nationalist political parties and associations?
d) Can we identify any convergence of regional minority-majority interests, and/or increasing differentiation of views about the proper means and ends of collective solidarity and political

representation *within* each national and ethnic community (i.e. about the proper centre -- regional, national or supranational -- towards which to act)?

1.8 Local participation, national-ethnic identity and emerging concepts of 'Europe'

In the social, political, cultural and historical sciences the predominant approaches conceive of collective identities as constituted by the collective group which individuals belong to and identify with. Accordingly, national identities are analysed as derivatives or prerequisites of nation-state formation and, translated to Europe, a European identity is seen as an attachment to the evolving European transnational governance regime. Within this perspective, in parallel to the opposition between the nation-state and an evolving European super-state, two opposite theoretical approaches define the methodological options for analysing the relationship between national identities and a potentially emerging European identity. The first position, starting from the conceptualisation of the European Community/Union as a transnational layer above the constituting nation-state members, views the emerging 'Europeanness' as an additional layer to the basic national identity (Lepsius 1998). The premise here is that the emerging European identity is secondary or additional and therefore weak as compared to the primary and strong national identity. The opposite position, conceptualising the European Union as a system of governance which absorbs elements of national governance, assumes a trans- or post-national European identity is increasingly replacing the pre-existing national identities (Eder 1998). The opposite premise here is that national identities are progressively declining against a strengthening European identity.

However, these approaches tend to neglect the interaction between nations and the EU and more generally the link between collective identity development and boundary constructions (Triandafyllidou 2001). Each national identity is constructed and continually reconstructed as a collective sentiment, self-awareness, self-definition and boundary setting of a national group, but at the same time in continued interaction with the surrounding national groups in the cultural and geopolitical context of Europe. The post-World War II European integration project has been developing in interaction with the matrix of national groups and web of national identities involved in it and has been influenced by a set of interwoven national and European elements (af Malmborg and Stråth 2001). From this relational perspective, the European element in national identities is not simply an emerging property of or an identification with the formation of transnational European institutions, rather it is constituted in continual interaction between nationally formed European orientations and the developing transnational European framework. In this sense, the image of intertwining of European and national components

in collective identities is more appropriate than the alternative models of superimposition or replacement.

From this relational perspective, the reconfiguration of collective identities in their national and European components with the implosion of Soviet communism, the opening and bridging of the East-West divide and the progressing reconnection of the European civilisation is crucial. On the Western European side, the opening of the Eastern European space means a geopolitical as well as a cultural reconfiguration of collective identities and redefinition of boundary constructions as cultural bases of the Eastern enlargement of the European Union. In geopolitical terms, it presents an opportunity to export and enlarge the Western European model of liberal-democratic welfare capitalism and create a military, political and social welfare zone. In cultural terms, a reconstruction of a Western 'mission' towards the East from defensive anti-communism to a cautious expansion of Western values is under way. This includes the geopolitical relocation and cultural reconstruction of national identities, particularly of those countries at the border of the former East-West divide and now again in-between East and West.

In the past decade, a lively debate has been taking place on whether a common identity is a precondition for greater political integration among the peoples of Europe. On the one hand, scholars argue that political union can only be founded upon a common European identity that can endow legitimacy to EU-induced institutions and decisions. In so far as it is absent, and in light of enduring national allegiances, the latter are hampered by and further reinforce the union's infamous democratic deficit (Grimm 1997; Smith 1997). Others, however, argue that the emergence of a shared social identity, whether it originates from a national or supranational centre, is not premised upon common culture but grows out of a shared experience of political citizenship. It is a product of civic participation in institutions that help forge a common sense of belonging to a broader European demos (Habermas 1997; Weiler 1997). From this perspective, the extension and deepening of EU competencies and institutions at the subnational level as expounded by multi-level governance, arguably contributes to growing citizens' attachment to the European sphere without, necessarily, any corresponding decline of national or regional identity (Marks 1997: 85). From this view, identities are arguably no longer exclusively defined in reference to the nation but exhibit a variety of coexisting attachments to local-regional, ethnic-cultural and supranational communities alongside the national one (Marks 1997; 1999).

The methodological task we are confronted with here is thus to analyse how direct experiences of European integration through involvement in the implementation of SF and CBC programmes, on one hand, and more general discourses on Europe, European values, democracy, equality and cultural diversity contribute to new understandings and configuration of regional ethnic or national identities and notions of citizenship.

- We shall examine how majorities and minorities (among local representatives and party leaders) perceive national-ethnic identity and themselves as citizens in relation to the EU? What constructions and meanings do they attribute to 'Europe': do they view the latter as a guarantee or as a threat to identity and culture?

- We shall examine whether and in what ways, in the process of their involvement in local development projects, minority and majority actors re-negotiate and potentially redefine dominant concepts of citizenship and ethnic-national identity.

- How do minority and majority political parties (and those of transnational communities) view European integration? As posing a threat or providing a guarantee to national-ethnic interests and culture?

1.9 European enlargement: pre-accession funds, human rights and minority protection, and regional economic development

Similarly to the Mediterranean enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s, eastern enlargement in the 1990s has succeeded the democratic transitions in CESE states where EU integration has been seen as a way to assist political and economic development and the consolidation of their nascent institutions. Soon following regime transition, most CESE countries applied for membership in the CoE, while since the mid-1990s, most have signed association agreements with the EU (originally the Europe agreements in 1995 and the Accession Partnerships in 1998). The foundational prerequisite for European integration remains that the country must be a democracy and have a functional and competitive market economy. At the same time, in the process of their enlargement to CESE, European organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) and the EU have given explicit attention to human rights, and specifically to the cultural and political rights of minorities as defining criteria of democracy. This was largely a response to the crucial and potentially destabilising role ethnic and national divisions played in the dissolution of communist regimes and the multi-ethnic federal states of the Soviet bloc.

The extension of human rights to an explicit provision about the protection of minorities presents a departure from earlier waves of enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s. Human rights were far from absent from the European agenda prior to the 1990s, with all EC states also being members of the CoE, and thus parties to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) that contains a list of basic human rights accorded to individuals. However, prior to the 1990s, the EC did not pay specific attention to or scrutinise the human rights record of candidate or member states neither how they treated their minorities. For example, the Council of Europe's readmission of Greece in

1975 following her transition to democracy, or her admittance to EC membership in 1981, did not pay any attention to how Greece treated her minorities. While respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights had been recognised as fundamental values since the EU's origins, insistence on the protection of minorities is a new condition explicitly highlighted only in the context of enlargement to CESE in the 1990s (De Witte 2001).

The increasing emphasis of European organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) on human rights and minority protection in the 1990s as conditions for membership have established a distinct political context for regional minority-majority relations. Central-East and Southeast Europe (CESE) is home to sizeable and territorially concentrated ethnic minorities inhabiting border, and usually peripheral and undeveloped, regions, a legacy of the multi-ethnic empires that preceded the formation of national states.

The transition from communism and the process of constructing democratic political systems in the region were what Rokkan has called a "critical juncture" during which basic decisions concerning the structures and forms of political representation in CESE were made (Flora 1999: 36). This turning point saw widespread mobilisation of historical minorities asserting their rights to political participation and representation on an ethnic basis. Indigenous minority claims and demands have been implicitly or explicitly defended by European organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) seeking to diffuse nationalist tensions and prevent conflicts. Case studies report that European support for human rights has encouraged improved state treatment of minorities in CESE states (Aniol et al. 1997; Pettai 2001: 274), which are required to demonstrate a "credible commitment" to guaranteeing cultural and political rights of ethnic minorities (Pentassuglia 2001: 28).

The EU in conjunction with the CoE has emphasised a variety of methods for protecting minority cultural and political rights in the process of integrating CESE states in the European structures. The CoE Recommendation 1201 of 1993, advocated that regionally concentrated minorities have the right to special status of local autonomy, which had become a point of friction between Hungary and Slovakia (De Witte 2000). Throughout the 1990s, EU economic assistance, co-operation and trade preferences vis-à-vis CESE has regularly been linked, directly or indirectly, to respect for human rights and minorities, with the underlying intent of conflict prevention and conflict management (Pentassuglia 2001).

With the signing of association agreements between the EU and CESE candidate states in 1997-98, the Commission has given considerable attention to minority rights in its assessment and opinions of the latter (Agenda 2000, Volume I). In the Regular Reports on Progress towards Accession, the Commission has devoted sections to issues such as minority language and education, political and social discrimination, etc., in reference to minorities in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. The EU has even tied its aid through PHARE program to CESE candidate states to the Copenhagen political conditions for

respect for human rights and the protection of minorities. Several micro-projects at the local level supported by it include analyses of minority problems and cross-border co-operation in areas where border conflicts had taken place and areas lying along the EU's external border (Pentassuglia 2001).

Nonetheless, the lack of a firm foundation in EU law and concise benchmarks for minority protection (De Witte 2000) means that what constitutes minority and minority rights remains unclear and there are different interpretations of what implementation of promotion and protection of minorities may mean (Tesser 2003).

European support for minority protection contributed in the early stages of the democratic transition to the creation of ethnic parties and their incorporation in national parliaments in countries like Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania and Poland (for the Bulgarian case, see Anagnostou 2003). Under pressure from domestic minorities and European organisations, the democratising elites and polities of CESE states adopted electoral rules and arrangements that institutionalised ethnic-based representation of minorities in spite of national opposition. The incorporation of ethnic parties in the national representation systems diffused nationalist tensions and it also gave to minorities direct access to the supranational level through their delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). They have regularly used European arenas and drawn leverage from the minority protection regime to redress their grievances and exercise pressure in pursuing their demands domestically. Furthermore and more importantly for the purposes of this project, the presence of minority parties has meant the ethnicisation of local government units and municipalities in regions where a minority is demographically concentrated. Ongoing monitoring of how CESE states treat their minorities provides further incentives for ethnic-based mobilisation and organisation.

For the second part of the project, we have selected four cases of new member states and candidate countries from CESE: the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia, the Hungarian minority concentrated in the region of Transylvania in Romania and the Turkish minority concentrated in southeast Bulgaria. These countries have been receiving pre-accession funds mainly through PHARE but also through SAPARD and ISPA programmes. Slovakia is now (2005) also preparing to receive after the 2004-2006 transition period, its first share of structural funds.

All three countries have been through a process of more or less successful decentralisation and regionalisation. This has been partly in relation to the EU's request to create a NUTS2 level of unit that would promote and assist regional development but also and perhaps most importantly as a response to the political transition elites and citizens' request for decentralisation and democratisation within these countries.

Our aim here is to study

a) Whether and how the implementation of pre-accession funds as well as the overall regime and discourse about human rights and minority protection has influenced the structure of political opportunities for minority actors and their involvement in regional/subnational institutions,

b) Whether and how the implementation of pre-accession funds has affected the patterns of economic activity of minority actors

c) What are the demands of ethnic minority parties vis-à-vis the central state regarding decentralisation, cultural rights development strategies and distribution of EU regional aid and do they come in conflict with the position of national parties and governments?

d) What are the local minority and majority conceptions of national-ethnic identity and citizenship and their perceptions of Europe? Have these been influenced by their participation in the implementation of pre-accession funds and by the related changing patterns of economic development in their regions?

e) Can we predict the implications of ethnic-based representation for processes of current and/or pending regional and territorial reforms linked to EU funds and pre-accession conditions.

The transition to a market economy in CESE states, a central precondition for membership in the EU, has led to a massive withdrawal of the central state from regional economic development, with far-reaching effects for economic conditions in the less advantaged regions such as minority inhabited areas. In general, CESE comprises states with a GDP ranging from ¼ to ¾ of the EU average. Since 1997, when the Luxembourg European Council launched the present enlargement process to CESE, the EU has expanded economic aid to candidate states to assist their development and reoriented it towards accession priorities. The main and oldest frame of economic assistance to CESE has been the PHARE program originally created in 1989 to assist Poland and Hungary, which today encompasses the ten candidate countries in the region. PHARE funds are in no way comparable to structural funds, they do not specifically focus on regions as targets, neither are they accompanied by the institutional and organisational arrangements of partnership familiar to structural funds. Since 1997-98, PHARE funds have been re-oriented in the service of accession priorities with the goals of domestic institution building, enhancing administrative competencies and programming capacity and redressing regional economic development problems. In addition, EU regional aid since 2000 has come through two new programs, the Special Accession Program for Agricultural and Rural Development (SAPARD) and the Instrument for Structural Policies for pre-Accession (ISPA).

In the frame of the accession process to the EU, however, CESE states have undertaken a series of regional reforms largely with the view to enhancing their capacity to implement structural funds once these are diverted to CESE. In contrast to earlier expectations, studies show that regional reforms

promoted in CESE states tend to reassert centralisation and the role of national states and to marginalise that of subnational authorities (Hughes et al. 2003; Keating 2003b: 63). Nonetheless, the ongoing and pending nature of regional reforms and the relative fluidity they introduce in existing territorial patterns and central-local relations set the stage for local and minority actors to contest and seek to influence outcomes (Bachtler et al. 2000).

We hypothesise that the reconfiguration of minority and majority interests, as well as contestation over ongoing or pending and EU-induced regional-territorial reforms in anticipation of structural funds, are mediated by the institutionalisation of minority rights in CESE states. More specifically, we hypothesise that ethnic-based political representation of ethnic minorities in CESE, drawing leverage from the European human rights and minority protection regime, is likely to mediate and shape very differently processes of EU-driven regional territorial restructuring, as well as minority-majority relations and politics in CESE.

The second set of questions guiding our research in the three accession countries is:

a) What has been the impact of market restructuring on regional economic conditions of the selected minority inhabited areas, and to what extent have they so far benefited from EU funds?
b) What are the patterns of conflict and co-operation between local minority and majority representatives in subnational government, and the relations of local representatives with ethnic and national parties? Does local government in minority-inhabited regions act as a representative of a national-ethnic group or is it defined by inter-party and inter-ethnic coalitions?
c) How do local government representatives and party leaders in the minority regions under study conceptualise ethnic-national identity and citizenship, and how do they view 'Europe'?

1.10 Regional minorities and ethnic politics in the EU and CESE accession countries: a comparative frame

The juncture of democratisation and the ongoing explicit European emphasis on the protection of political and cultural rights of minorities have established distinct political representation structures and normative-cultural expectations, among regional minorities and majorities in CESE accession countries, in comparison to earlier waves of democratisation cum EU integration. We suggest that the extensive and ongoing institutionalisation of minority rights in CESE paves the way for very different processes of regional institution-building and economic development in accession states than those within the EU, in which claims to ethnic solidarity and national unity are likely

to figure prominently. We can depict the (re)configuration of minority-majority interests and identities in subnational regions in four ideal forms distinguished by their relationship to the central state and the way they view the connection between the cultural, political and territorial unit and variable conceptions of the EU.

The first is the national-state form, in which the national majority politically dominates subnational institutions and its political representation is monopolised by national parties oriented towards the state centre. It may define itself along liberal or socialist lines and advocate centralisation of local government and regional economic development in the service of national unity or rapid economic reform goals of the central state, and views minority mobilisation as an obstacle to these. Majority identification with Europe may be from limited to widespread but in any case it is primarily seen as a source of political and economic modernisation of the national state. Minority and majority interests and politics in the region are predominantly defined by exclusive attachment to ethnic-national community and an underlying conflict for exclusive community control over the institutions and resources of local territory.

Secondly, we can depict a national-civic form, which has the basic characteristics of the first type, but in which we observe some, albeit limited regional co-operation, local alliances and support for decentralisation *across* political parties and *across* the two national-ethnic communities in the context of strong centralisation. Such local alliances are temporary, circumstantial and dependent upon the support and approval of strong state- and national-oriented and ethnic-based parties and associations. Issues of national or ethnic cultural identity are politicised and form the basis around which minorities and majorities advance their political demands.

Thirdly, we can depict a regional-civic form in which there is extensive regional co-operation, support for decentralisation, as well as increasingly institutionalised regional-local alliances *across* political parties and *across* the two national-ethnic communities. Local-subnational government increasingly operates as a representative of the region rather than the ethnic or national community. Minority and majority political-economic dependence on and support for state-centred and national-ethnic parties and associations are declining and minority-majority interests and politics are defined by growing convergence around economic and regional development objectives. There are active cultural and community associations of minorities and majorities, but declining politicisation of cultural identity issues and their re-orientation away and dissociation from the state. Identification with Europe is widespread and the EU is seen as an entity where various cultural identities can flourish but primarily as a source of more efficient government, economic competence and regional competitiveness.

Finally, we have the regional-ethnic form, in which a dominant minority in the region or in areas within it has established or seeks to establish control over

local government and economic resources. Local government operates as the representative of the ethnic community rather than the local population. Minority interests and identities may be aligned with a national state centre outside the state in which they live, and/or they may seek regional political autonomy and/or self-determination on the basis of ethnic community solidarity. Its politics is monopolised by ethnic parties and upon strong politicisation of cultural issues and demands for collective minority rights. Minority identification with Europe may be limited or widespread but in any case the EU is seen as an entity that can safeguard political self-determination and cultural preservation of the ethnic community.

In the overall research design and comparative focus of EUROREG, we consider the Objective I set of cases/regions (GR, NI, A), as our control group on which to test our initial set of hypotheses about the ways in which SF and CBC implementation, the wider discourse on Europe and European values, and national factors and traditions related to minority nationalism affect local patterns of political and economic participation in minority inhabited regions.

The INTERREG set of cases (IT, SLN, BC) provides for further insights on what kind of new opportunity structures and political/symbolic/identity contexts are created in cases where the local 'minority' can reach out across the border to its 'national homeland' (as in the case of Italy and Slovenia) or the local 'minority nation,' as in the case of the BC, can argue further its political and symbolic case through reaching out to its co-national brothers/sisters across the border in France. With all due recognition of the history and complexities of each of these cases, we want to see whether and how CBC funds and the overall European integration/accession process have affected the economic activity, political participation and identity patterns in these regions.

As regards the cases receiving pre-accession funds (SLVK, ROM, BU), we want to test our hypotheses regarding the new member states and their specific economic and institutional structures, their political and economic experiences from Communist times and during the transition period since 1989.

In analysing each of our nine cases we shall seek to establish with which of these four ideal types they conform most. We shall thus compare the variable configurations and effects of (a) type of EU funding received and its implementation process (Objective I, INTERREG, pre-accession funds), (b) historical legacies of state nationalism, ethnic-cultural solidarity, minority majority relations, and (c) an emerging identification with Europe and references to discourses on the values/norms that are (supposedly) distinctively European such as democracy, respect for diversity, non-discrimination, economic efficiency, and a market economy.

In comparing the three subgroups of cases, we hypothesise that regional economic restructuring in the member states (Objective I and INTERREG

cases) reinforces a reconfiguration of minority-majority interests and identities that dissociates ethnic-national community from local government institutions (EU cases will tend to fall in the middle categories of national-civic and regional-civic forms). This happens because the impact of factors (a) and (c) is stronger in these cases. Conversely, we hypothesise that ethnic-based political representation in accession states of CESE reinforces divisions between majority and minority over regional territorial reforms and control over local government institutions along national-ethnic lines (CESE cases will tend to fall in the two opposite categories of national-state form and regional-ethnic form) because factor (b) is stronger in these cases.

Moreover, EUROREG will seek to cast light to the following more general research questions with a view to casting more light to the social, political, economic and identity transformations taking place in European regions inhabited by large minority populations and/or stateless nations:

How is the nationality question reconceptualised in the European context? What collective norms are being used in the new regionalist economic modes of action? How is the theme of local cultural identity used in economic terms? What new institutional transformations are taking place locally? And what new forms of cross-frontier cooperation are occurring? Who is involved in such new cooperative patterns and why? What does it mean to be European for self-acclaimed minority representatives? What is the salience of European values (for example with the talk of human rights and regions) in local discourses about the minority community? How is the notion of Europe used in the local minority nationalist and regionalist discourses?

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