Turkey’s EU Cross Border Cooperation Experiences: From Western Borders to Eastern Borders

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ABSTRACT
Turkey’s pre-EU membership process has presented a number of regional development opportunities through Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) Programmes, which have involved a great variety of actors from local government to civil society organisations in border regions. Although there is a high level of scepticism about the future of Turkey’s EU membership aspirations in certain political circles both in Turkey and EU, in the event of such a membership the EU’s borders will be expanded to the Caucasus and Middle East regions. In other words, with its long land borders to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Iraq and Syria; Turkey would also likely to become the key EU country for the bloc’s European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) programmes. Therefore the paper undertakes a comparative analysis of Turkey’s relations with the Balkans, Caucasus and the Middle East and what these relations mean from the perspective of CBC programmes.

KEY WORDS
European Union, Turkey, Cross border cooperation, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey’s east and south borders

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INTRODUCTION

Cross border cooperation (CBC) is a form of international cooperation exercised bilaterally or trilaterally among nations who share common borders and distributive policy that provides funds to the Union’s border regions (Heidbreder, 2011: 103). Due to the geographical proximity, CBC is a more direct form of international cooperation and as such provides more opportunities for extensive and substantive applications of friendship and cooperation. Cross border cooperation is a promising strategy to exploit opportunities in border territories relatively untouched in recent years by capitalism (Perkmann and Sum, 2002: 1). In most cases, the initiative was taken by local and regional authorities in the attempt either to create links with global arenas or to mobilise additional resources offered by supranational and international bodies in exchange for cooperating with their counterparts located in contiguous areas (Jessop, 1995).

A considerable canon of work has developed which offers varying explanations for why and how states cooperate over time (Milner, 1992). As Helen Milner indicates in a comprehensive review of this thinking, scholars have managed to develop a consensus definition of “cooperation” as well as a general framework to understand the causal factors that may lead to it (1992). That definition, Milner suggests, is dominated by the thinking of Robert Keohane extracted from Lindblom “when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination” (1984). The process of cooperation, Milner notes, generally involves rational decision making by actors that seek cooperation fundamentally to serve their own interests. Accounts of the normative structure of international politics offer alternative explanations, for instance, as to why states cooperate in areas (Reus-Smit, 2003).

Greece became a full member of the EU in 1981 and 10 Central and Eastern European States, as well as Malta and Cyprus, joined the EU in 2004. Finally the last round of enlargement was in 2007 with Romania and Bulgaria. Consequently, today Turkey has common borders with two EU members. When the Schengen Agreement was signed on 14 June 1985 its main objective was a borderless Europe. Greece became a member of Schengen only on 26 March 2000. Furthermore, EU Home Affairs Ministers were set to postpone enlarging the Schengen border-free area for an indefinite period on 9 June 2011, despite calls to the contrary from the European Parliament, which voted overwhelmingly in favour of Bulgaria and Romania’s accession
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to the EU’s passport-free zone (www.europarl.europa.eu). According to the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry, Bulgaria expects to get a date for accession to the Schengen Area at the upcoming External Affairs EU Council 22 September 2011 (www.novinite.com). If the European Interior Ministers fail to reach an agreement on Bulgaria’s Schengen entry on September 22, the Government projects that the decision will be delayed until the end of the 2011 at the latest (www.sofiaecho.com). However, the Greek authorities believe that with the entry of Bulgaria into the Schengen Zone, there will be an increase of pressure on the Greek-Turkish border as more immigrants would like to use the border as a potential crossing point to the EU (www.novinite.com). Nevertheless, with Wider Europe and its long-term commitment to support local and regional initiatives of CBC, the question as to whether border regions can function as laboratories of cooperation. CBC is a very selective project of networking and region-building (Scott, 2006: 4). Local and regional CBC and other forms of societal interaction between states are seen as important aspects of EU integration and have acquired considerable political significance as a mechanism for deepening relations with non-EU neighbours (Anderson, O’Down, Wilson 2003; Scott, 1999).

Turkey’s Relations with the European Union

Turkey’s relationship with the European Union (EU) dates back to 1959, when the first application was made to European Economic Community (EEC), and following this the Agreement Establishing an Association Between the European Economic Community and Turkey (signed at Ankara, 12 September 1963), known as Ankara Agreement, which came into force on 1 December 1964, which aimed at the full membership of Turkey. This treaty was foreseeing Turkey to go through a five year preparation stage, which was going to be followed by a transition stage for becoming a member.

The relationship of EU and Turkey has started with the promise of full integration if only a certain perspective is fulfilled and supported appropriately with the statement of the then Commission President, Walter Hallstein, as “Turkey is a part of Europe” (extracted from Olli Rehn, 2008). However, such a positive inception of the process could not save its progress due to

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2 Bulgaria who joined 2007, was expected to enter Schengen in the spring of 2011, but their accession was blocked by a number of older member states, such as France and Germany.
the political events of 1960’s and 1970’s in Turkey. A review of all these stages shows that they took much longer than expected, and it was only in 1996 that Turkey was able to qualify for the Customs’ Union framework.

In the 1970’s, although the road to fulfill the membership criterion was clearer together with the complicated political environment of Turkey, the deadlock in the decision making bodies of the two parties, and the international economic crisis followed by the OPEC’s oil embargo slowed down the development of relations between Turkey and EU. Following the military coup in Turkey in 1980, the relations were frozen until the political environment started to turn to normality, with the multiparty elections in 1983.

Turkey applied for full membership in 1987, for which the Union completed its opinion in 1989, and stated, as “it would be inappropriate for the Community - which is itself undergoing major changes while the whole of Europe is in a state of flux – to become involved in new accession negotiations at this stage” (Commission opinion on Turkey’s request for accession to the Community). It continued that “furthermore, the political and economic situation in Turkey leads the Commission to believe that it would not be useful to open accession negotiations with Turkey straight away” (Commission opinion on Turkey’s request for accession to the Community). This statement, expressing that neither Turkey nor European Community was ready for Turkey’s membership, indicated the possibility of Customs’ Union as foreseen in Ankara Agreement. The decision with the Customs’ Union that was taken on 1995, March 6, once again raised the hope on the Turkish side for a further integration.

However in 1997, in Agenda 2000, Turkey’s name was not pronounced as to be transferred to the state of being a candidate country among the applicant countries in the enlargement process. On the other hand, also in Luxembourg Summit in December 1997, Turkey was excluded from the enlargement process. Nevertheless, the importance of the relationship in this time period should not be under evaluated and clearly the EU economic sphere together with the interest of Turkish economic and political elites’ interest in the Union had an important effect in the normalisation of Turkish democracy and in other good governance issues.

In 1999, with the Helsinki Summit in December, Turkey’s position was finally promoted from being an applicant country to a candidate country,
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being officially included in the enlargement process. In November 2000, the European Union adopted the Accession Partnership Document for Turkey’s membership and Turkey submitted its first National Programme to the EU in March 2001.

It is argued that post-Helsinki process has changed Turkey’s efforts in the sense of making serious reforms in order to adapt to Acquis. It was clear that certain reforms should be done in order to catch the train of Europe, as heard in many public discussions. The reforms were needed to restructure several social, economical and political areas (Dağı, 1996). Since 1999, several packages for harmonisation process were passed as a result of these restructuring efforts including some major ones such as the abolition of death penalty in 2002.

In November 2002, Justice and Development Party (AKP-Adalet ve Kalkınma) which is considered as an “Islamist” party came to power with a majority in Parliament. The significance of this for Turkey – EU relations, could not actually be guessed at the time, but the AKP stated EU membership as one of their priorities. As quoted from Tanıyıcı (2003), Tayyip Erdoğan as the leader of AKP and the Prime Minister of Turkey, has affirmed that meeting Copenhagen Political criteria is not only an obligation for Turkey in the EU membership process, but an objective to reach for Turkey’s modernisation in any case.

In 2002, during the Copenhagen Summit, the Union decided to review Turkey’s candidacy. In Summit of December 2004 the decision was taken to open accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005 and consequently, the accession negotiations officially started on 3 October 2005. Following, the examination of the Acquis Communautaire began in June 2006; with the unresolved issues of Cyprus in relation to the use of Turkish ports and airports.

Due to these unresolved issues, in specific lack of progress on the Cyprus issue, the partial suspension of membership negotiations was stated as of 29 November 2006. On 11 December 2006, eight out of 35 negotiation headlines have been suspended (www.euractiv.com).

Since the end of 2001, the assistance to Turkey, as the case with all candidate countries, is gathered under one budget item and called “Pre-Accession Financial Assistance”. Financial assistance that is oriented for the support
of the Accession strategy, and is prepared and planned according to the Accession Partnership Document and National Programme, respectively, is administrated by the Decentralized Implementation System. According to this System, under the control of the European Commission the management of projects is assigned to the authorized persons in the countries concerned. In 2001, Turkey formed the National Aid Coordinator, Central Finance and Contracts Unit and National Fund, which are necessary for this System, and the authority of contract making is transferred to Turkey by the Commission in 2003 (www.cfcu.gov.tr). The Pre-Accession Financial Assistance to Turkey is implemented in the area of institutional building that supports the activities towards the implementation of Acquis and the harmonisation with the EU policies such as the areas of economic and social cohesion and within the framework of the investments which are undertaken to structure and strengthen regulatory infrastructure and for the economic and social cohesion (Özerdem, 2007: v). In the framework of the Programme, it is necessary to develop projects in order to benefit from the Grants and Community Programmes, which are open to the country.

Turkey’s current cross border cooperation mechanisms and experiences with Greece and Bulgaria

For the reflection of Turkey, the EU assistance had two-fold focus with respect to EU supported CBC/Interreg programmes: capacity building activities supported under the technical assistance components integrated into the relevant programmes and cooperation with EU member and accession countries in the fields of infrastructure, economic development, environmental protection and local cooperation.

In this framework, The European Union was financing/co-financing two CBC/Interreg programmes whose coordinator is General Directorate of Regional Development and Structural Adjustment (DGRDSA) in State Planning Organization (DPT):
- Cross Border Cooperation Programme between Turkey and Bulgaria
- Interreg III/A Greece-Turkey Programme

As an accession country Turkey needs to establish and develop cooperative networks with the neighbouring regions of EU and create linkages of these networks with the ones in wider EU area. Bulgaria also needs to establish and develop cooperative networks with its relatively isolated regions to the
neighbouring regions of Turkey. Border regions usually suffer from low levels of infrastructure; strong dependence on interstate relations; ageing population and out-migration; and low level of attraction to businesses due to fear from border conflicts (Bacsi and Kovács, 2006: 487). Therefore, the Bulgaria-Turkey CBC Programme is designed to support the existing cooperation of Turkey with Bulgaria’s border regions via EU funds and co-financed by Turkish and Bulgarian budget. The CBC Programme would be implemented within the framework of a “Joint Programming Document” (JPD), which includes strategies, priorities and measures for the period 2004-2006. The CBC Programme aimed at strengthening relations between the border regions of Bulgaria and Turkey by promoting joint activities for achieving economic and social development and for overcoming problems deriving from the specific conditions of these regions, in a manner compatible with the protection of the environment (Joint Programming Document, 2004: 3).

Apart from the CBC Bulgaria-Turkey Programme, Turkey and Greece initiated a special bilateral cooperation in the context of Community Initiative Programme (CIP) INTERREG III/A. In the context of this special Programme four priorities had been chosen as infrastructure; economic development and employment; quality of life/environment/culture; and technical assistance for the purpose of supporting bilateral cooperation and promoting economic development of the neighbouring regions. The purpose of the Programme is to strengthen of economic activity and encouraging initiatives for addressing unemployment; to upgrade quality of life of citizens, to improve environmental management and management of cultural resources and to improve accessibility and communication (Project Fiche CBC with Greece: 1). The strategy of the Programme must contribute to the balanced and sustainable development of the neighbouring areas, improving the economic potentials and reinforcing their socio economic issue for the benefit of all citizens in the neighbouring area. Therefore, Turkey needed to strengthen integrated mechanisms for the development and implementation of regional policy and the institutional capacity for the management and coordination of regional development policies and the implementation of projects supported with EU Funds.

The 8th Five Year Development Plan, covering the period of 2001-2005 and the Preliminary Development Plan (pNDP), covering the period of 2004-2006, emphasized the positive contribution of CBC to the regional development (The Eight Five-Year Development Plan, 2001: 64). The pNDP
articulated about the contributions of CBC and Interreg programmes to regional development and their special importance for the EU aims by referring to reinforcement of economic, social and cultural links between neighbouring countries and contribution to the improvement of economic potential of the relevant programme regions (Preliminary National Development Programme, 2003: 137). According to Decentralised Implementation System (DIS), following structures were responsible for the programme management and implementation:

The Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) represented by the Program Authorizing Officer (PAO), was the Contracting Authority and was the Implementing Agency responsible for all contractual and financial issues - tendering, contracting (contracts with applicants/beneficiaries), financial administration, payments, (including payments to beneficiaries).

State Planning Organization (DPT) was responsible for the management, technical implementation of the grant schemes, coordination and programming of CBC and Interreg programmes and the projects under these programmes. In this regard, the General Director of Regional Development and Structural Adjustment (DGRDSA) in DPT had taken the position of Senior Programme Officer (SPO) for EU supported regional development, CBC and Interreg programmes to ensure that programme inputs were efficiently and effectively used to produce the expected results and achieve the expected objectives. In order to fulfil these responsibilities effectively, the SPO had delegated part of his/her responsibilities to the two department heads within the same General Directorate. As far as EU supported regional development, CBC and Interreg programmes were concerned; the head of Department of EU Regional Programmes (DEURP) was responsible for technical management of the programmes until signing of the grant contracts and the head of Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DME) was responsible for monitoring and evaluation after signing of grant contracts. The DEURP was established in 2003 for coordination activities in that field within the DGRDSA of DPT. Considering the importance, DME was constituted in 2004 so as to establish an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism for regional programmes.

Before the approval of 2004-2006 Turkey-Bulgaria JPD, a pilot project was determined to be launched to improve cooperation between border regions of both countries and gain experience in CBC. The concerned pilot project, Joint Small Projects Fund (JSPF), thought as a separate initiative from the
2004-2006 CBC Programme. JSPF played a useful role in the process of preparation of Turkey and Bulgaria for accession, in particular through the improvement of the administrative capacity of local and regional actors to implement grant schemes (Standard Summary Project Fiche: 1). The project supported the social and economic integration between the border regions of candidate countries. The JSPF also responded to the priority areas of the regional development medium-term strategy of National Development Plan. It was in line with the objectives of Development Axis 4 of pNDP.

At the end of the first Call for Proposals (CfP) of Joint Small Projects Fund, 11 projects from Bulgaria, 9 projects from Turkey were selected for the grant. For the 2nd and 3rd CfPs total 25 projects were granted respectively. For the last CfP just Turkey projects were granted with the number of 17.

The common Bulgarian – Turkish border stretches along 288 km and includes 5 administrative units: 3 districts in Bulgaria and 2 provinces in Turkey, which correspond to NUTS level III (EUROSTAT) in accordance with the requirements of the related EC Regulations.

The CBC BG-TR regional coverage is illustrated on the map below:

Map 1

Map 2

The CBC programme with Bulgaria-Turkey (2004-2006) was under the responsibility of a Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC), which would ensure a policy and financial overview of the operation of the programme, and

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3 The Call for Proposals was done between 26 October 2004-3 January 2005 but this was 2003 budget year.
4 http://geology.com/world/bulgaria-satellite-image.shtml
5 http://www.trakyabook.tr.gg/
of a Joint Steering Committee (JSC), which would be responsible for the selection of the projects. A JCC - as described in Article 7 of Regulation 2760/98 for the CBC Programme - has been set up consisting of national, regional and local representatives of both countries concerned and of representatives of the European Commission.

As mentioned in the previous section, DPT was responsible for the management and coordination of CBC and Interreg programmes. DPT was assisted in the management of these programmes by Local Technical Secretariats (LTS) established in the governorships of the provinces included in the programme regions of the concerned Programmes. For the Interreg Programme, there had also been established a Regional Technical Secretariat (RTS) responsible for the coordination of LTSs of the Programme. Concerning the Bulgaria-Turkey CBC Programme, The LTSs established in the Governorships of Edirne and Kırklareli consist of one responsible Deputy Governor and relevant experts.

The programme INTERREG III/A Greece-Turkey intended to support the social and economic integration between the neighbouring regions of Greece as a EU member and Turkey being a candidate country. The programme also represented an important element in Turkey’s preparation for the adoption of the Structural Funds Acquis, considering that economic cooperation activities would be implemented in line with Structural Funds instruments and methodologies. The total resources of Programme amount in € 66,018,843, from which € 46,664,004 concern the Greek side (€ 34,998,000 the participation of ERDF) and € 19,354,839 Turkish side (€ 15,000,000 the participation of financial pre-accession instrument for 2004.

The INTERREG III/A Greece-Turkey Programme intended to contribute to all of the priorities in the pNDP, medium-term Regional Development Strategy at national level in the context of the programme region and to the extent that the budget of programme allows.

The eligible region covers the entire land and maritime neighbouring areas of Greece and Turkey, an area of 81.215 km². The Programme covers Aydın, Balıkesir, Çanakkale, Edirne, İzmir and Muğla from Turkey and Eastern Macedonia-Tracia Region (Evros Province), North Aegean (Samos, Lesbos, Chios Islands) and South Aegean (The Dodacanese Islands) from Greece.

6 The author of the paper was a Founder Coordinator of European Union Coordination Centre in Governorship of Edirne.
The countries participating in the Programme had agreed on the following structures for the management and monitoring of the INTERREG III/A Greece - Turkey Programme:

- Joint Monitoring & Steering Committee (JMSC),
- Managing Authority,
- Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS).

JMSC met at least twice a year. Whenever necessary, the countries that participated in the Programme were obliged to call an extra-ordinary meeting of the Monitoring Committee. JMSC co-chaired from the Greek side by the Secretary General for Investment and Development of the Ministry of Economy and Finance; from the Turkish side by the Deputy Undersecretary of State Planning Organization. The Committee consisted of national, regional and local representatives of both countries concerned and of representatives of the EC and ECD. For the selection of the projects jointly, the JTS had been established. The JTS consisted of three parts; the Greek, the Turkish and the joint part. The Turkish part of the JTS was composed of six Local Technical Secretariats in each NUTS III region covered by the Programme and one Regional Technical Secretariat.

http://www.hko.gov.hk/wxinfo/climat/world/eng/europe/gr_tu/tu_gr_e.jpg
Also on the Turkish side, the Inter Ministerial Coordination Committee had been established in order to provide better coordination among the relevant Turkish public institutions for the implementation and selection of the pre-identified projects for 2006 programming year.

The Managing Authority had been established in Greece in the Ministry of Economy and Finance that is entitled as "Managing Authority of the Community Initiative Programme Interreg" and anticipated the responsibility of the INTERREG III/A Greece-Turkey Programme. On the Turkish side, the State Planning Organization (DPT) had the responsibility of management and acting as the Managing Authority. The CFCU was the paying authority for the Turkish side. Concerning the INTERREG III/A GR-TR Programme, one Regional and six Local Technical Secretariats established in the Governorships of Edirne, Çanakkale, Balıkesir, İzmir, Aydın and Muğla consist of one responsible Deputy Governor and expert/experts.

On the other hand, several problems were faced in the programme and therefore it could not be implemented. For example the Greek side had launched eight Call for Proposals (CfP). Among them three CfP had been notified to Turkey shortly before the launch dates. The others were notified to Turkish side only after their launch date. The Greek side did not share the guidelines and provisions for the CfP. This lack of coordination had seriously affected the successful implementation of the CfP, which envisaged partnerships at the project level. In the CfP whose rules were not laid down and shared with the Turkish side, Greek project beneficiaries were forced to receive partnership statements from Turkish counterparts either for operational partnership, financial commitment or for the justification of mutual impact. Differences in the programming periods (as 2003-2006 in Greece and, 2004-2006 in Turkey) and imbalance of the budget allocations as (in Greece € 45 million and in Turkey € 15 million) led to serious difficulties in the synchronization of activities. There was a considerable lack of capacity to operate EU programmes particularly in the Programme region on the Turkish side. The eligible institutions for the CfP were also different between the two sides. While the governmental institutions were regarded as eligible on the Greek side, they were not eligible on the Turkish side.8

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8 In the Calls for Proposals covered by the South Eastern Anatolia Development Programme, the governmental institutions had been regarded as eligible, only if it was declared in the project as the monthly costs, personnel costs and other current expenditures of the institutions were not covered by the grant. However, the ECD had negatively assessed the eligibility of governmental institutions for the Calls for Proposals covered by the other regional development, cross border and Interreg programmes.
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For 2007-2013 Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) operates on both sides of the border on the basis of "one set" of rules which means that both member states and potential candidate countries will have equal opportunity for programming and decision-making. On 20 December 2007 the European Commission approved a CBC Programme between Bulgaria and Turkey for the period 2007-2013, which is adopted under and co-financed by the cross border cooperation component of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). The programme involves Community support for five Bulgarian and Turkish regions that lie along their common border: the Bulgarian regions of Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo and Turkish regions Edirne and Kırklareli. Community funding for the programme over the period 2007-2009 is worth around € 10 million, supplemented in turn by about € 1.8 million of national funding from the two participating countries. The programme's total value therefore is approximately € 11.8 million. This programme builds on previous experiences and interventions allocated to the Bulgarian-Turkish border region in the framework of the EU financial support because the border area development is affected by the long-term confrontation and nowadays by constituting as external EU border after becoming Bulgaria EU member in 2007 (Stoyanov, 2010: 198).

Turkish Cross Border Relations with Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan

European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) Black Sea Basin Cross Border Cooperation Programme (2007-2013) is one of the two cross border cooperation programmes in the course of financial cooperation between Turkey-European Union. This multilateral cooperation

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10 The Bulgaria-Turkey IPA Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 subdivides into the following priorities: Priority 1: Sustainable social and economic development [approximately 40% of total funding], Priority 2: Improvement of the quality of life [approximately 50% of total funding], Priority 3: Technical assistance [approximately 10% of total funding]
The programme involves eight countries, namely Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine, and it is jointly financed from ENPI (for participant countries excluding Turkey) and IPA (for Turkey) funds.

The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) has been established in Romania by the Ministry for Development, Public Works and Housing. The Operating Structure in Turkey is designated with Prime Ministry’s the then Secretariat General for EU Affairs (Ministry of EU Affairs currently) as the National Authority and Finance and Contracts Unit as the Implementing Agency.

The programme, which aims to provide a stronger and sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin, is a framework to finance the projects that meets the following criteria: to be implemented in cooperation with partners from other countries and to have a cross border impact. In Turkey, Programme’s eligible area covers 25 provinces: İstanbul, Tekirdağ, Edirne, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Düzce, Bolu, Yalova, Zonguldak, Karabük, Bartın, Kastamonu, Çankırı, Sinop, Samsun, Tokat, Çorum, Amasya, Trabzon, Ordu, Giresun, Rize, Artvin, Gümüşhane.
The objectives of the grants to be awarded under this programme are promoting economic and social development in the border areas; working together to address common challenges; and promoting local, people-to-people type actions (www.abgs.gov.tr).

Within the scope of the programme, the first call for proposals was launched on 30 July 2009, and project applications were submitted by the announced deadline. Following the expiration of the application period, the projects to be financed were selected by independent assessors. However, the information on selected projects and their owners, can not be declared, due to delay in the conclusion of the contracts between the selected project owners and Joint Managing Authority of the Programme (www.abgs.gov.tr).

Apart from ENPI Black Sea Basin Cross Border Cooperation Programme, there are some cross border cooperation initiatives between Turkey and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Relations between Armenia and Turkey are constrained by the two countries’ histories and more contemporary conflicts. Armenian-Turkish relations worsened in 1988, at the start of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. As a result of the fighting, while Turkey was imposing a blockade on all overland trade and transportation with Armenia, it meant the country’s main trade routes with Europe were cut off. In accordance with the political will for solving

\[\text{http://www.c-r.org/our-work/caucasus/images/caucasus-map500-2.gif}\]
bilateral issues and establishing normal and good-neighbourly relations with Armenia, the process has entered a new phase with the signing the Protocols on “Establishment of Diplomatic Relations” and “Development of Bilateral Relations” in Switzerland on 10 October 2009.

On the other hand, some civil society groups, business people, local government and journalists in Armenia and Turkey have already established cross border contacts and in some cases have jointly implemented programmes.

The Armenia-Turkey Cross-Border Dialogue and Cooperation Programme, launched in 2006 by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF)\textsuperscript{13}, could in fact, contribute to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey by strengthening the capacities of non-government, local government and business sectors to develop and maintain cross border partnerships. The programme would also inform the general public of the potential impact of a border opening and support initiatives for the establishment of cross border links. Together with the International Center for Human Development, EPF organized a series of town hall meetings in Armenia in 2009. Attended by more than 1,300 people in seven cities, the meetings gave citizens an opportunity to ask questions and voice their opinions and concerns (Eurasian Foundation, 2010).

EPF provided support to seven civil society organizations and media associations to establish partnership with Turkish counterparts and to jointly implement cross border activities. These partnership projects support cultural and youth exchange programmes as well as cross border media projects (www.epfound.am). Here are some project examples: The “Photo Bridge Across the Border” project was developed with the collaboration of Patker Limited Liability Company and Nar Photo Agency in 2007. The project consisted of a cycle of cross-border exchange trips by Turkish and Armenian photographers and published and distributed the photographic material produced in both print and electronic modes. In 2007-2008 with the collaboration of Urban Sustainable Development Foundation and Istanbul Policy Center at the Sabancı University, the project “Armenia-Turkey Cross Border Dialogue in Light of European Integration” was implemented. The partners provided a short-term intellectually rigorous cross border platform for youth activists and expert communities from Armenia.

\textsuperscript{13} Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) is comprised of three locally registered offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.
and Turkey to discuss issues of mutual concern. In particular, the project partners conducted Vox Populi, interviewing random people on the streets both in Armenia and Turkey to reflect on the wider public opinion in the two countries with respect to the European integration processes and the prospects for improving the Armenia-Turkey dialogue and cooperation (www.epfound.am). Between 2001-2010 period, 41 projects were implemented by the organizations but not just within the CBC\(^\text{14}\). Moreover these projects were not funded by the EU because between Armenia and Turkey, there is not any agreement for EU funded programmes.

The three-year restoration of the tenth-century Armenian church on the island of Akdamar (in Armenian, Aghtamar) in Lake Van that ended in 2007 was another good example of such an initiative, though Armenian officials say it did not go far enough\(^\text{15}\).

If and when the border opens, local administrations on both sides of the border should proactively encourage cross border activities to build on what civil society has already achieved, including links between schools, businesses and tourism agencies. Indeed, the above steps could be taken even if the border is not officially opened (Crisis Group Europe Report, 2009: 30). On the other hand, the meaning of border opening will be good for both sides. It will be good for Turkey for increasing penetration to the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS\(^\text{16}\)) Market and regional development problems will be tackled. As a short term impact, more trade from border provinces will be occurred and as a result of this development, new jobs will be created. It will be good for Armenia because increasing the feasible set of economic operations is good and competition brings welfare enhancement.

The relations with Georgia from the view of cross border cooperation are more various. Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV\(^\text{17}\))

\(^\text{14}\) Other CBC projects are called “Armenia-Turkish Youth Club”, “Musical Bridge across the Armenia-Turkey Border”, “My Beloved Brother”, “Armenian-Turkish Team Reporting”, “Building Linkages between Analytical Communities of Armenia and Turkey”.

\(^\text{15}\) Crisis Group interview, senior official, Armenian foreign ministry, Yerevan, February 2009. The Turkish authorities did not allow a new cross to be installed on the steeple, however, viewing the building as a museum, not a place of worship.

\(^\text{16}\) Common Wealth of Independent States the countries that includes are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.

\(^\text{17}\) Established in 2004, with the support of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) as an independent, non partisan think tank in Ankara.
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intends to develop the cooperation between Turkey and South Caucasus countries. The Foundation prepares a packet of confidence building measures which will support the resolution of political conflict while obtaining Turkey as an attraction centre. Within the scope of Programme, Turkey envisages to accomplish the cross border cooperation projects between Turkey and Azerbaijan (included Nakhchivan), Armenia and Georgia. At the first level the projects focus on transportation-border passing and tourism areas. The final aim of the Programme is contributing to increase economic activities and environment of confidence (www.tepav.org.tr).

On 12 February 2010, the panel entitled “Turkish-Armenian Relations and Cross Border Regionalism” was organized by TEPAV and AmCham in Erivan. Armenia Prime Minister Mr Tigran Sargsyan and USA Ambassador Mrs Marie L. Yovanovitch attended to this panel and the importance of trade especially between the neighbours in the financial crisis time was highlighted (www.tepav.org.tr).

Another successful project entitled “Enhancing Conservation in the West Lesser Caucasus through Trans-boundary Cooperation and Establishing a Training Program on Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Conservation” was implemented by Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife and Conservation International, Center for Applied Biodiversity Science between 1 July 2006 and 31 December 2008. The project aimed at improving human resources for the conservation of KBAs in the West Lesser Caucasus and enhancing the baseline information and scientific standards for the conservation of KBAs in the corridor having delivered strategic conservation outputs through trans-boundary cooperation between Turkey and Georgia. (Final Project Completion Report, 2009).

Another successful project entitled “Development of an Important Bird Areas (IBA) Caretaker Network in the Priority Corridors” was implemented by Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds, Azerbaijan Ornithological Society, Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife and Doğa Derneği (Turkey) between 1 June 2005 and 30 June 2008. The

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18 South Caucasus, also referred to as Transcaucasia or Transcaucasus, is the southern area of the Caucasus region between Europe and Asia, going to the Turkish and Iranian borders, between the Black and Caspian Seas. All of Armenia is in South Caucasus; the majority of Georgia and Azerbaijan, including the exclave of Nakhchivan, fall within this area. The region is one the most complicated in the post-Soviet area, and has three heavily disputed areas – Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan.
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A project aimed at creating a coordinated network of people, living at or near 31 sites (20 sites [13 IBAs] in Azerbaijan, 5 sites in Armenia [7 IBAs], 5 sites in Georgia, one site in Turkey [7 IBAs]), identified for one or more globally threatened bird species within the priority corridors. (Final Project Completion Report, 2008).

In March 2010, the Governors of Ardahan, Kars and Artvin (from Turkey) attended a cross border cooperation meeting in Bakuriani, Georgia on the subject of border trade-border management and foreign investments. At the end of this meeting, it is decided that to establish a cross border businessmen union, to prepare common projects on agriculture, stockbreeding, tourism, culture and education (www.ardahanhaberi.com).

Borderlands, where Turkish, Georgian and Armenian identities and culture intermingle can be placed at the heart of the Caucasian communication hub. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline project executed by the cooperation between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey is the largest CBC project of the region. The Shah Deniz Natural Gas reserves were discovered in 1999 and are estimated to contain more than 400 billion cubic meters of gas. Negotiations which started in October 2000 for the supply of natural gas from Shah Sea in Azerbaijan were finalized in March 2001 and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Natural Gas Pipeline was signed by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey and the Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan on 12 March 2001 (Güney-Özdemir, 2011: 139). Kars-Tbilisi Railway project is the second significant CBC that will increase the convergence between related countries.

In response to the Abkhaz and South Ossetian separatism started in the 1990s, Turkey has been pursuing a policy in support of the preservation of Georgia’s territorial integrity and finding a peaceful solution to these conflicts within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia. A project called Economic Cooperation between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey (Let’s Meet in Kura) is proposed by Governorship of Ardahan to Azerbaijan and Georgia. The aim of the project is obtaining fast and sustainable development in the region. The project’s objectives are supporting sustainable economic development; enhancing social development and providing social cohesion between people and protection of natural-cultural-historical heritage (www.ardahan.gov.tr).

The relations between Turkey and Azerbaijan are the least problematic ones in this region. Turkey is the premier foreign investor in the non-oil
sector in Azerbaijan and Turkish businesses have pioneered the services and distribution sectors. Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, constituting the sole border connection between Turkey and Azerbaijan, comprises an important aspect of bilateral relations with Azerbaijan. Turkey acts in solidarity with Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which is Azerbaijan’s most important foreign policy issue and actively participates in the work of the Minsk Group established under the auspices of OSCE for finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to this issue without further delay. Private sector development in the region should also be considered as a key component of the regional transformation process. It is not only about governments but direct communication among peoples to do business. Regional disparities among provinces could be tackled through development of cross border economic clusters.

The Middle East Cooperation

Turkey has been playing an active regional role over the last 10 years. This appears to reflect a decision by Turkish policy-makers that it is not in Turkey’s interests to have frozen conflicts on or near its own borders, and that it wants to direct its own destiny rather than be buffeted by the ongoing crises in its immediate neighbourhood (www.chathamhouse.org). Furthermore, in line with its declared “zero problems with neighbours” policy, Turkey’s “visa diplomacy” has removed travel restrictions with Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iran, among others.

The CIA World Factbook estimates Iranian Azeris as comprising 24 percent of Iran’s population (www.cia.gov). Iranian Azeris have played a key role in Iranian nationalist freedom movements throughout the twentieth century. Today, the Azeri city of Tabriz is widely acknowledged as the host of the most active and progressive student democracy movement outside of Tehran, carrying on a long tradition of Tabriz-Tehran nationalist-democratic opposition dating back to Iran’s 1905-1911 Constitutional Revolution. Shaffer challenges the widely held view in contemporary Iranian scholarship that a broad Iranian identity supersedes ethnic identities (2002: 208). Azerbaijan and Iran have a great potential for developing relations in various fields, including cultural, religious and historical spheres. Security and stability on the border between two countries depends on the will of the Azerbaijani and Iranian leaderships to strengthen bilateral relations.
Turkey had enjoyed broadly cooperative economic and political relations with Iraq both before and since the 1990-1991 Gulf War. Developments in Iraqi Kurdistan subsequent to the 1990-1991 Gulf War constitute a major consideration for Ankara's policy makers. After the 1991 uprising against Saddam failed, there was a flood of approximately half a million Iraqi Kurds to a zone near the Turkish border. Turkey's present domestic political context added an additional dimension to the country's antianwar sentiment. Up to half of all ethnic Kurds, who straddle the Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian borders, live in Turkey. Over the years, Turkish troops have launched substantial raids across the border and it has even cooperated with Iraqi Kurdish forces in tracking down the separatist Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) operatives in Iraq (Park, 2003: 12-13).

Turkey achieved a remarkable progress in pursuing the zero problem policy with neighbours such as Iran and Syria in 2009 as part of endeavors to revive its regional influence. The policy was aimed at maximum cooperation with its neighbours and minimum problems in the region. The most significant development in international relations for Turkey was the signing of two protocols with Armenia, a country that has no diplomatic or economic ties with Turkey since its independence in 1991. On the other hand, Iraq tops the agenda of the Turkish government. Turkish President Abdullah Gül became the first Turkish president to visit Baghdad in 33 years, in a sign of close relations with Iraq. Turkey initiated a new era with Syria and the two countries signed 51 agreements in 2010. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey, has said that Turkey and Syria have a new shared slogan: “Common Destiny, Common History, Common Future” (www.sundayszaman.com). Turkey and Iran also signed a number of cooperation agreements, exchanged high level visits and improve their relations. With Turkey’s various good neighbourhood initiatives oriented towards the Middle East, serious discussions arose over whether Turkey has turned its axis. However, Turkey denied the allegation, saying that Turkey should improve its relations with both West and East countries. Davutoğlu said that, “We don’t have the luxury to turn against Europe or U.S. or Middle East or Middle Asia. The stronger a country that has a geography like Turkey bows its arrow, the farthest arrow goes towards Europe. Where is the axis? Axis is in Ankara” (Svet, 2006: 71-78; www.aa.com.tr). Turkey, which was absent in the Middle East in the past decades due to its former foreign policy now is a shining star in the old and known geography. Moreover the hardest and the most complicated problems of the world are now in the Middle East region and it is reasonable
that this case is more interesting to Turkey than other European countries (Özerdem, 2011: 110).

Iran, as a neighbouring country, is one of the traditional trading partners of Turkey. Between the two countries there are some bilateral economic mechanisms such as on border trade and economic cooperation among border provinces. Turkey and Iran have opened a third border crossing at Kapıköy in eastern Turkey’s Van province, in what the foreign ministers of both countries called “a symbol of friendship amid increased regional cooperation efforts”. There is also a formal initiative to launch trilateral regional cooperation among Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The opening ceremony of the first trilateral meeting was occurred in Orumiyeh in April 2011. A new framework for trilateral cooperation will be in culture, trade, industry and investment sectors.

Iraq’s preservation of its territorial integrity and national unity is of paramount importance for peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East. There is currently only one border gate between Turkey and Iraq and there is not any cross border cooperation programmes with Iraq. Iraq–Turkey Crude Oil Pipeline (also known Kirkuk–Ceyhan Oil Pipeline) is the Iraq’s largest crude oil export pipeline. The Pipeline System which was commissioned in 1976, transports the oil produced in Kirkuk and other areas of Iraq to the Ceyhan (Yumurtalık) Marine Terminal an annual transport capacity of 35 million tons (www.mfa.gov.tr)19. Meanwhile, Turkish diplomats are reaching out to Kurdish Autonomous Region to build a secure and stable Iraq. In March 2011 Prime Minister of Turkey visited Iraq’s Kurdish region and attended the opening of Arbil’s new airport. Turkish investment in the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq is strong and the airport was built by a Turkish construction firm.

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19 The capacity of the line was increased to 46.5 Million tons/year through the First Expansion Project, the construction of which was started in 1983 and completed in 1984. With the completion of the Second Pipeline, which is parallel to the first one, the annual capacity reached 70.9 Million tons as of 1987. It is served by two pipelines. Total length of the pipeline is 1.876 km. 1st Line 345 km in Iraq plus 641 km in Turkey and 2nd Line 234 km in Iraq plus 656 km in Turkey. The operation of the pipeline system was suspended on August 1990, in conjunction with the embargo imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. The suspension was ceased under the agreement of UN and Iraq on May 1996 and limited oil export was allowed. Crude oil loading activities was started on December 16, 1996 according to the UN Resolution 986. 285,715,626 barrels (38,747,770 tons) of oil was transported in 2000 by Iraq–Turkey Crude Oil Pipeline. A total of 1,008,767,195 barrels (136,077,798 ton) of Iraqi oil have been transported between December 1996 and December 2000. 230.855 Thousand barrels of oil was transported by this line in 2001.
Relations between the State Planning Commission of Syria and the State Planning Organization of Turkey started in 2004. The first meeting of the Joint Monitoring and Steering Committee was held in 2005 and an agreement was reached on the implementation of the projects on the fields of infrastructure, technical cooperation, capacity building, supporting entrepreneurship and culture-tourism under Turkey-Syria Interregional Cooperation Programme. In the development of these close cooperation activities Turkey seems to have been reflecting on the experiences gained from the Bulgaria-Turkey Cross Border Cooperation Programme. There are many similarities between the Bulgaria-Turkey programme and Turkey’s cooperation with Syria. Under the 1st CfP 26 projects, 2nd CfP 16 projects and 3rd CfP 13 projects were funded from Turkey. The 4th of CfP closed on 5th of April 2010 and 85 project proposal applications have been handed and the evaluation process is still in process. From Syria, under the 1st CfP 11 projects, 2nd CfP 18 projects and 3rd CfP 18 projects selected for granting (www.projekoordinasyon.org). The fleeing of many Syrian refugees across the border into Turkey as a result of the recent popular uprising in Syria shows perhaps why CBC is such an important political issue. There were five tent cities in Turkey in June 2011 and the number of refugees have reached nearly to 10,000 (www.dailytimes.com.pk). Turkey also helps over 10,000 Syrians who have been waiting at the Syrian side of the border.

Conclusion

Border regions are often the most excluded regions and also the regions of poverty, having very limited network relations in the market and also being far away from the intervention areas of central governments. The intensifying cross border relations established between bordering political economies constituted a special kind of regional economy through network relations, which is charged by interdependence, interaction and cooperation between two or more political regions. Therefore border areas, which accomplished to set powerful network relations with the other side of the border, have transformed from arid corridors to regions of socially and economically united twin sisters as zones of cooperation in many parts of EU. Shared social customs and history, increasing social relations had generally nourished the process, facilitating the benefiting from complementarities reciprocally and constituting comparative advantages through the opportunities gained by these networks. However, sometimes the process can be hindered by the issues like an environment of lack of
trust, insufficient infrastructures, and differences between governmental approaches. Interestingly, the world experiences have shown that both of these dynamics can be observed in each border region, at the beginning or somewhere during the process. Thus, a cross border society can be best defined through their commonalities and conflicts.

The cross border experiences of EU suggest a critical example in which all factors of cooperation is implemented through a governance approach depending on the social and economic integration. Both through the project development and implementation processes, it puts forward a compromising participation culture through symmetric relations and socio-economic cohesions; and the importance of supranational body’s facilitator role. EU has aimed to reach a competitive Europe and hinder the conflicts through establishing cross border networks. This multilevel governance network offers new opportunities for existing actors and provides the emergence of new ones; and supports these cooperations through community initiative funds.

The underdevelopment of border regions is a common problem for Turkey, which increases the significance of the probability to use cross border cooperation as a tool for providing regional and local development. The dichotomy between eastern and western border regions of Turkey clearly supports the idea that being in a network would enhance development. In other words, Turkey provides an interesting case study of border regions due to its geographical location offering a rich diversity of relations. Turkey’s relations with neighbours have diversified due to their different economic, political and social characteristics. The western border regions have always benefited from their proximity to Istanbul and from being on the major trade routes. Together with the cross border cooperation projects with Greece and Bulgaria, a new period has begun for their development trajectories since 2003.

Border relations with western neighbours depend on the EU policies, and a number of important CBC projects have been developed since 2003. However, the instable political structure and increasing terror problems in South-eastern region challenges those border policies depending on security issues. Unfortunately, the security problem impedes the increase of relations with Syria, which has shown a high level of advancement through joint projects in the last few years. The Armenian border has been closed since 1988, due to the political problems. The radical political and
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Economic changes experienced in Georgia, the north-eastern neighbour, had been the determining factors of reciprocal relation with Georgia since 1989. Especially after 2002, the Turkish government’s changing policies developed the reciprocal relations between the two countries further. The joint cross border projects in the western border regions, the opening of border trade centres, the clearance of landmines and the joint industrial projects with Syria in this area; the economic integration on the Georgian border, are all positive developments of this era. Together with these developments, the improving reciprocal relations with Syria offers new opportunities for border populations.

The lessons learned from Turkey’s western border CBC programmes have been taken into consideration during the elaboration of Turkey’s intention to use the CBC programmes with its Eastern neighbours. The priorities of common interest set in the CBC Programmes do not contradict one another and are complementary to the development priorities of the countries.

In short, the globalization effects and Turkey’s being candidate to EU are the external factors that lead border regions to establish cross border relations with their neighbours. Thus, Turkey needs new strategies for its border regions, which should provide them develop cross border relations surpassing borderlines, and act within their true economic and social hinterlands.

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