

# **Toolkit for Inter-Cultural/ Cross-border Project Management**

## **AT-IT-SI Border Area**

### **ANNEX**

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# I. PRESENTATION OF THE AT-IT-SI BORDER AREA

## 1. GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

Parts of Austria, Italy and Slovenia form a tri-lateral cross-border region, departing from the so-called mountain “Dreiländereck / Peč / Monte Forno” and being embedded in the greater “Alpe-Adria Region”. Administratively, the regions of Carinthia (Austria), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy) and the state of Slovenia represent this border triangle. Along the border runs the mountain range “Karawanken” (Carinthia-Slovenia) and the Carnic Alps (Carinthia-Italy). The border region is beside the mountain range mainly characterized by the karst and the coastal areas of Slovenia and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. From a geographical point of view this tri-state area has vast pine forests, mountain lakes and is well known for its tourist destinations, e.g. the skiing areas like the Nassfeld or Tarvisio. Moreover, each individual region has its own characteristics. Whereas Carinthia and Friuli-Venezia Giulia are a region of a federal state and respectively an Autonomous Region, Slovenia is a state itself. Carinthia is the southernmost and fifth largest “Bundesland” of the Republic of Austria. Overall, about 556.845 people live here. Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of Italy’s five autonomous regions with special statute. It is located in the extreme north-east of the country and has about 1.2 million inhabitants. The Republic of Slovenia is situated in South-Central Europe. The state is politically subdivided into 210 municipalities and has about 2 million inhabitants.

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BORDER-REGION

The border region of Austria, Italy and Slovenia is characterized by three different languages, administrative systems and cultural backgrounds. These special characteristics cause benefits as well as disadvantages in cross-border cooperation. Mainly three languages (German, Italian and Slovene) from three different language families (Germanic, Romance and Slavic) are spoken, causing problems in communication. Beside the official languages in each country, the border-regions are furthermore characterized by different dialects. Although in cooperation matters the official working language is mostly English, a lot of people living in the border area are able to speak/understand at least one language of a respective neighbour.

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Even if the three countries of this border triangle have a common history that interconnects them in some parts, cultural differences in cooperation matters are obvious. In meetings, for instance, it differs whether the Austrian, Italian or Slovene partner is responsible for the organisation. While meetings in Austria and Slovenia start early in the morning, in Italy meetings just begin at midmorning. This demonstrates only one example of existing intercultural differences in this cooperation-area. It is of utmost importance to be familiar with the respective national conventions and habits and to avoid thinking in stereotype-patterns. Each border region has its own behavioural specifics, so it is difficult to describe special characteristics for the Alpe-Adria Region as a whole apart from its obvious heterogeneity.

Also three administrative systems emboss this tri-border region, which highly influence business-cooperation and cross-border projects. As the country-specific institutional and legal frameworks are highly complex and differ in a lot of ways from each other, the regions have implemented various institutions with the purpose to facilitate cross-border cooperation. The systemic differences and barriers as such influence cross-border projects in general. They also have a huge impact on the behaviour of the actors involved. This becomes especially obvious when comparing the confidence in national politics and the administration in the border regions. While Austrian administration is fully based on law and legal compliance, in Slovenia the citizen orientation aspect has most priority, and in Italy the distrust in legal authorities is increasing. These different approaches also influence the perception of foreign partners within the trilateral area.

Summarizing, the border triangle Austria – Italy – Slovenia can be seen as one geographical area, which is highly reliant on cooperation in an economic, educational and also cultural perspective for its future development. However, this cross-border region is not characterized by specific political, linguistic or social similarities. All three nationalities have developed in a different way, despite some common historical and cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, the area represents a collaborative and future-oriented environment that opens further space for cross-border cooperation and networks.



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## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE “BORDER AREAS”

### PREMISES

*Why to dedicate a complete chapter of a training manual on project management to describe the characteristic of the border areas?*

Peter Drucker<sup>1</sup> suggested the answer: “WHAT Managers do is the same the world over... HOW they do it is embedded in their tradition and culture”.

Before starting any cross-border project which means build a partnership, for any project manager it is fundamental to learn as much as possible about the partners. Not only regarding their economic situation (which is of course important) or position in the society or relationship they have, but on their culture.

In a broader anthropological (mental) way the meaning of “culture” is: “Collective programming of the human mind”.

To better deal with partners is therefore important to get as much information as possible on their history, habits, environments, rules, etc. which are the ingredients of the “culture”. Moreover, when acting on cross-border areas where different cultures meet and clash day-by-day it is important to know how have been developed these interactions and how they affected each culture.

This is why in the management of cross-border project and relations not only a knowledge of the “other” border area is important, but a comparable analysis.

This is even more important for a trainer who has to organise a cross-border course.

The following chapter describes in deep the main characteristic of the border area concerned of this Manual by a comparative description of the 3 bilateral borders area:

- Austria – Italy
- Austria – Slovenia
- Italy – Slovenia

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Drucker, (November 19 1909 – November 11 2005) one of the greatest management thinkers from the last

Before *entering* in the specificity of each borders it is necessary to make another reflexion on which it is based the approached followed in the manual.

Dynamics change a lot according to the culture you meet. An Austrian person involved in a meeting with a colleague from Slovenia has not the same reactions and behaviours in a meeting with a similar colleague from Italy. The same for the Slovenian and Italian. Moreover, dynamics and reactions will be completely different if in the same meeting the three persons are involved altogether.

The development of all the chapters is based on the above reflexions which revealed that from the cultural point of view it necessary to consider not only three but *four* border areas: 3 bilateral and 1 trilateral. Case studies are therefore developed both considering bilateral situation and trilateral.

### III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BORDER AREAS

## 1. AUSTRIAN-ITALIAN BORDER

### 1.1 BILATERAL BORDER

#### 1.1.1 *POLITICAL SITUATION*

Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) is an autonomous region of the regionalising Italian state, which along with other Italian regions is constantly tied up in efforts to find a balance with the national state level. The capital city of FVG is Trieste. Since 2008 Renzo Tondo (popolo della libertà) is the president of the region, however, there were local elections in April 2013. Besides Italian as the main language, there are “minority languages” (Friulian, Slovenian, German).

Carinthia, on the contrary, is a federal state within the Republic of Austria. Klagenfurt is the capital city of Carinthia. After elections in March 2013 there has been a political change and the social democrats, conservative and green party form a coalition government. German is the main language, however, Slovenian constitutes - according to a federal law (Volksgruppengesetz, 22.04.2013 § 13ff in conjunction with appendix 1 II and appendix 2 II ) – in the enumerated municipalities an official language together with German.

#### 1.1.2 *GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS*

The total surface of Carinthia (9.538 km<sup>2</sup>) and FVG (7.858km<sup>2</sup>) is roughly comparable. The population density in Carinthia is 59,8 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, which is much lower than in FVG where it is 162,3 per km<sup>2</sup>. Concerning geographical aspects the border line between Italy and Austria runs for 430 km along the Alpine barrier. Austria borders on three Italian regions which are Trentino, Veneto and FVG with Udine province. The mountainous area is characterised by vast pine forests and pastures, mountain lakes (e.g. Sauris and Barcis) as well as numerous streams and small rivers descending from the mountains. The area is also known for its tourist destinations, especially during the winter season (Monte Zoncolan, Tarvisio, Nassfeld).

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### **1.1.3 MAIN HISTORICAL ASPECTS**

Around 450 BC, Carinthia was inhabited by the Carno-Celts hence the name of the region. Carnia, Carso, Kärnten (Carinthia) and Carniola (Slovenia), probably derive from the same root Karn-(rock) of the language of Carno-Celts.

The Duchy of Carinthia was part of the Holy Roman Empire until its dissolution in 1806 as well as a territory of the Crown under the Habsburg rule. With the dissolution of the Empire after World War I Italia annexed the Kanaltal/ Val Canale and the newly founded Yugoslavian State attempted to occupy parts of Carinthia by force in 1919. In a plebiscite in 1920, under the supervision of the League of Nations, the majority of the population declared its will to belong to Austria. Nowadays history is not considered problematic within the Carinthian-FVG border region- in contrast to the until recently stressed relations between Carinthia and Slovenia.

### **1.1.4 SITUATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

The traffic infrastructure is strongly influenced by the mountainous morphology which equally characterises the whole region. There is only one railroad crossing point between FVG and Carinthia at Tarvisio/ Tarvis with predominantly commercial traffic. However the motorway network connects the region quite well to the rest of Austria, Italy and Europe. The regional airport in FVG is Ronchi dei Legionari, which is situated 30 km from Trieste and 40 km from Udine. In Carinthia exists the Klagenfurt airport, but flight connections are limited. Moreover, there is the Villach Air Terminal which offers shuttle services from Villach to Venice, Treviso; Trieste Airport as well as Ljubljana.

The social infrastructures framework of the cross-border area, besides its good supply of schools, universities and research centres, finds an important sector in the health care and social affairs/services context. There are many voluntary organisations present in the area that are working in different sectors (culture and education, social assistance, civil protection, environment, etc.). The structure of the health system between FVG and Carinthia differs. Thus, FVG hospitals (5 beds per 1.000 inhabitants) have smaller capacities than Carinthian ones (about 8 beds per 1.000 inhabitants). However, doctors are more numerous in FVG (about 500 per 100.000 inhabitants) than in Carinthia (about 300 per 100.000 inhabitants). In both regions, there is a general lack of care taking facilities for early childhood, in particular nurseries (about 1.4 per

1,000 children aged 0 to 3 years). Especially in peripheral areas there can be difficulties in accessing services (e.g. Emergency Aid and administrative services).

### **1.1.5 EXISTING AGREEMENTS AT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL**

The most important agreement in the Carinthian and Italian cross border context is constituted by the recently founded Euroregion "Senza Confini" (Carinthia, FVG, Veneto). Moreover there exists the Working Community Alpe Adria as well as associations at European level such as AEBR (EU Association of border regions) and CALRE (Conference of EU regional legislative assemblies).

Cross border cooperation is also fostered by a great variety of projects (e.g. BENCH-PA (Interreg Project- 2010-13); CBC Study (2010-11); European Cross-border Symposium (2011); NEXT4PA (2012-14); TEIN (2010); PAT-TEIN (2012-14-follow-up project of TEIN).

### **1.1.6 EXISTING AGREEMENTS/STRUCTURED DIALOG FOR THE CBC WITH THE NEIGHBOUR AREAS**

Apart from political visits etc., no structured CBC-dialogue exists yet between Carinthia and FVG.

### **1.1.7 STRUCTURE OF ECONOMY (FIRST, SECOND, THIRD SECTOR)**

The primary sector plays a minimal economic role in both areas and the number of persons employed is relatively low (FVG: 3,3%; Carinthia: 6,1% in 2008). The secondary sector represents 26,9% of regional GDP (European average of 25%) in FVG; in Carinthia it is 32,1%. On the contrary, the tertiary sector represents 68,7% of regional GDP in FVG. The European average is 72%; in Carinthia it is 64,4%. The unemployment rate (2010) was significantly higher in FVG (5,7%) than in Carinthia (3,9%)

The sectorial distribution of companies (number per 1.000 inhabitants) in the cross border area is as follows: 24% are operating in the industrial sector, 23% in trade and retailing, 52% in the tertiary sector. The Italian province of Udine has its highest concentration of companies in the industrial sector as well as in the tertiary sector. The IT sector employs more people in FVG, whereas the social services and health care sector is of higher importance in Carinthia. The average size of enterprises situated in the cross-border area is mostly small or even micro: in

FVG 94% of firms count less than ten employees and only 0,7% more than 50; the situation Carinthia is comparable (87% and 1,6%).

The cross-border area has a strong vocation in tourism with more than 113 million tourists per year. Therefore, the area is relatively well equipped with tourism-related infrastructures. The growing importance of the agro-tourism plays an important role, especially in Carinthia.

### **1.1.8 MAIN BARRIERS**

Apart from the mountainous structure there are still existing barriers between Carinthia and FVG such as the language, cultural differences (Germanic vs. Romanic traditions) or differences in the politico-administrative system (Federal state Carinthia vs. autonomous region FVG). The mountain area (Carnic Alps) constitutes a barrier in economic terms: sparsely populated, transport difficulties, lack of strong connections in the past, low commuter rate. Historical aspects (World War I and II), however, are not considered problematic for cross-border cooperation. Common challenges of CBC projects are the funding, lack of motivation and political will, the lack of expertise among actors, bureaucracy, fragmentation of structures, etc.

### **1.1.9 DEMOGRAPHY, POPULATION, IMMIGRATION / EMIGRATION**

Most densely populated areas are Klagenfurt and Villach as well as the province of Udine, whereas great parts of the direct border area are sparsely populated. The area is characterised by an aging population, which is particularly evident for Carinthia (the average age of population will increase from 42,2 to 49,5 years in the near future). The amount of foreign population living in the cross border area is about 7% of total resident population and shows a strongly increasing trend in the provinces of FVG, more stable, instead, in Carinthia.

The area is well equipped in terms of education infrastructures and has a large number of universities teaching more than 60.000 students. The propensity to invest in R&D, however, is still low. In Carinthia the investment in R&D and people employed in this sector mostly derive from the private sector. In FVG, on the contrary, it is mainly channeled through universities and public administration.

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## 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF BASIC LOCAL CULTURAL HABITS & PATTERNS

### 1.2.1 CULTURE

#### 1.2.1.1 LEVEL OF EDUCATION

In Carinthia as well as in FVG education is state-controlled and all schools, both public and private, are subject to comply with the curricula and teaching methods laid down by the respective national Ministry of Public Education. Education is compulsory and free for all children between the ages of 6 and 16. In Carinthia it is segmented into four classes at elementary level (FVG: five classes), four classes at lower secondary level (FVG: three classes middle school) and high school (four or five years in Carinthia). After compulsory education people can decide whether to start an apprenticeship or to attend the high school to receive the A-levels as precondition for university access. In FVG students must pass an exam in order to receive their Diploma after completing the higher secondary school. Afterwards they either begin their careers in their professions or move on to the University.

#### 1.2.1.2 SOCIAL CLASSES

In 2011 about 10,8% (60.500 persons) of people living in Carinthia were immigrants. The majority of immigrants are living in the big districts (Villach City, Klagenfurt City). Some 9% of Carinthian pupils were speaking a language other than German. There are large differences in birth rates between foreign and naturalized women (the latter bear less children). The amount of unemployment related to foreign nationals in Carinthia receives the highest amount compared to all the other federal states in Austria. The median income of Carinthian employees (2009: 21.600 Euro) is much higher than net annual income of foreigners (2009:17.800 Euro).

In FVG there is a strongly increasing trend of the presence of foreigners (49 inhabitants per 1.000 residents). In the border area of Carinthia and FVG there is a demographic change caused by a migration of the active population, low demographic density due to both morphology reasons and outward migration phenomena linked to lack of work possibilities; reduction of social and economic services. This finally leads to a loss of attractiveness as well as to an increasing percentage of elderly people.

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### **1.2.1.3**      **VALUES AND ASSUMPTION**

Carinthians as well as Italians (FVG) are considered as a masculine society which means that people are driven by competition, achievement and success. Italians show their success by acquiring status symbols. In both societies there is a stringent value system that already starts at school and continues throughout organizational behavior. People “live in order to work”. The emphasis is on equity, competition, performance and target-orientation.

### **1.2.1.4**      **TRADITIONS, RELIGIONS, CUSTOM**

The majority of the Carinthian and FVG population is catholic. The Catholic church enjoys considerable influence in both countries, however, there exist good relations with other religious groups. Carinthians have a strong sense of tradition and preservation of customs such as the spectacle of incubus (“Krapus”) and Saint Nicholas. People do also prefer wearing traditional clothes such as the “Kärntner Tracht”.

### **1.2.1.5**      **GENERATIONAL HIERARCHIES**

In Carinthia generational hierarchies do exist in the context of treating people depending on their age. Elder persons are normally addressed as “Sie”, which is much more formal than the simple “Du”. Age in general is associated with experience, knowledge, expertise, rationality and wisdom. In working life several positions can just be filled after having reached a certain age. Also in Italy age is an important factor for a person’s career. That is why many powerful Italians, especially at political level, are quite old. This justifies the different distribution of power. Moreover, in both societies generational hierarchies do appear also in family life (patriarchal society).

## **1.2.2**      **COMMUNICATION**

In Carinthia German is the main language, however, Slovenian constitutes - according to federal law (Volksgruppengesetz, 22.04.2013 § 13ff in conjunction with appendix 1 II and appendix 2 II ) – in the enumerated municipalities an official language together with German. In FVG the Friulian language is spoken in most parts of the region. There are a few exceptions, most notably in Trieste and the area around Monfalcone and Grado, where a version of the Venetian language and Triestine dialect is spoken instead. Slovene dialects are spoken in the largely rural border mountain region known as Venetian Slovenia. German (Bavarian dialect), instead, is spoken in

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Val Canale, mostly in Tarvisio and Pontebba as well as in several ancient enclaves like Timau, Zahre (Sauris) and Plodn (Sappada).

Concerning the way of communication Carinthians are defined as a neutral culture of high-context, which means that communication is rather implicit. People try to control their emotions and do not express them to others. Behavior is controlled and people avoid having body contact with others- not so in FVG. Discussions are generally held on a factual level, however, Carinthians tend to dislike small talk and conversation before or after a meeting. Although Italians in general are extremely expressive communicators and tend to be wordy, eloquent, emotional, and demonstrative, often using facial and hand gestures to prove their point, this does not count for FVG. Friulian people are generally closed (at the beginning) and it is difficult to become a "friend" with them. They are more closed, like the Carinthian society.

### **1.2.3 RELATIONSHIPS**

The nuclear family is very important in Carinthia as well as in FVG. Maintaining good relationships and long friendships is appreciated highly. Relationship building in the context of work and business is valued. Building networks is seen as the basis for long and successful lasting business relations and business achievements. As both cultures tend to be rather individualistic and masculine, work and success is very important. This may indicate a preference towards achieving better results than colleagues, as they indicate individual success. Basically, good relationships between colleagues are desirable, however, there is a lot of competition especially at work. Group orientation and openness to "outsiders" is less marked.

### **1.2.4 SOCIAL LIVING AND CONTROL**

In Carinthia and FVG society is rather individualistic and "me" centered. People show a strong preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. However, taking part in public life, which means joining family and friends as well as building social networks, is also very important. People can be seen as highly socialized.

In FVG hierarchies are respected greatly and inequalities amongst people are acceptable. The different distribution of power justifies the fact that power holders have more benefits than the

less powerful in society. There are big differences between genders. Men, instead of women, dominate the country and society; in Carinthia this phenomenon is less marked.

Carinthians are strongly rule-orientated. Laws and standards are applied to everybody, no matter what status or relationship. People do rely on contracts; the written language counts more than the spoken word. In Italy people are traditionally expected to behave with a sense of decorum and formality. People do stick to rules, however, it is also important what other people think about you. Actions must at least seem to be done in the "right" way.

### **1.2.5 ATTITUDES**

As a long term-orientated society Carinthians exhibit great respect for traditions, they show impatience for achieving quick results and have strong concern with establishing the Truth. People do tend to avoid uncertainty; they have rigid codes of belief and do not tolerate unorthodox behavior. Society is characterized by being busy and working hard, by precision and punctuality. Security is important for individual motivation (see civil servants), decisions are taken carefully and information is analyzed precisely.

Italians, on the contrary, show some flexibility in the adherence to schedules and deadlines. Bureaucracy, regulations and procedures imply a high level of useless formality to them. People are used to changes, modifications to plans and new directions to follow at last minute. The fear of exposure and of potential embarrassment that may accompany failures, brings about aversion to risk and the need to thoroughly examine the potential negative implications. Failures in Italy cause a long-term loss of confidence by others as well as a big lack of self-confidence. This is also true for Carinthian society.

### **1.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL**

Carinthians claim a high level of security, especially in the public sphere. The executive authority is much in evidence and the level of crime is rather low. This also counts for FVG. The public sector is considerably enlarged in Austria. The offer of public services is quite extended. The welfare system is particularly developed. Everybody has the right to receive equal services.

Concerning infrastructure, roads are generally well maintained in both countries. The lighting and road signs are adequate and there are frequent controls because of the increase of strict regulations. In Carinthia there is a special focus on the expansion of public transport also in rural

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areas to relieve the car traffic in agglomerations. To foster transportation by bus and train a number of park and ride options is offered all over Carinthia.

### **1.2.7 WORK AND LEISURE**

In Carinthia everyday life is structured to explicit or implicit time planning. On the contrary to Italians, priority setting and adhering to plans is of high importance. In both societies, however, people work hard and efficiently. Enterprises are generally small or medium sized and many businesses are family-owned. In FVG companies often have a rigid hierarchy with little visible association between the ranks. Managers may take a somewhat paternalistic attitude to their employees and they preserve a very distinct role within the organization. There is only a small number of women at the highest levels of business and government.

In Carinthia, however, employees in the private sector prefer to work independently, control is disliked, hierarchy is only used in problematic cases and superiors are accessible for employees (rather informal attitude towards managers at the first name basis). Communication is direct and participative. The public sector (civil servants), however, is based on fixed rules, clear hierarchical orders and subdivisions are bound by instructions. There is a defined way of communication and control mechanisms exist and, if necessary, are executed.

### **1.2.8 MONOCHRONIE / POLYCHRONIE**

Carinthia as a monochronic society is characterized by doing actions consecutively and in a segmented manner. Scheduling, timetables and fixing appointments/deadlines are of high importance. Activities are coordinated precisely.

Italians, on the contrary, are polychronic with a strong tendency to build lifetime relationships on the one hand, but with a tendency on the other hand for short term oriented actions, non-verbal communication and informal dialogues. People do have a fluid approach in scheduling time.

### **1.2.9 GOVERNMENTS AND OFFICIAL BODIES**

As defined by the Austrian Constitutional Law (Art. 18 B-VG<sup>2</sup>) the entire public administration has to be based on laws and rules. It is not allowed to act without a legal basis; the federal and the

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<sup>2</sup> B-VG refers to the Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz, which is the Austrian Constitutional Law.

administrative system have a high level of credibility and reliability. The Austrian welfare state offers a wide range of public services to the population. Although people's requirements are constantly rising, the public sector still provides services of high quality. Due to the fact of the increasing complexity of services, however, it has become more difficult to accomplish this wide range. A discrepancy between expectations and possibilities/means is slowly arising, which constitutes a problem as well as a challenge.

In Italy people are increasingly disillusioned by (public) institutions. The confidence in government, parliament and political parties is decreasing fast and significantly. Distrust is generally high, but still some public bodies like police and army have a good reputation.

### **1.2.10 MEETINGS**

The Carinthian monochromic society prefers to do tasks in sequence, to stick to dates, appointments and timetables, to set priorities and reach an effective progress and results in meetings etc. Punctuality is of high importance, breaks are foreseen but limited. Communication during meetings is formal and rational focused on the target and output. It is required to create added value. A moderator/chair often guides meetings by keeping harmony and generating agreement; everybody gets the opportunity to take the floor and give an opinion. Opposing opinion is allowed but consensus-orientation is strived.

Italian meetings, on the contrary, are often lengthy and the communication style can be rather loud and animated. Agendas are flexible and frequent interruptions and side-conversations are allowed. Punctuality and deadlines are desirable but not always respected. Italians prefer to have moments of rest during a meeting (e.g. coffee breaks, lunch), which for them are also occasions for doing business and get to know partners.

## **1.3 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1.3.1 STATE**

Austria is a democratic republic, whose law emanates from the people (Art. 1 B-VG). Austria is organised as a Federal State. The Bundespräsident or Federal President is the head of state, but not the head of the executive. He is elected directly by the people in accordance with the Austrian

election principles (Art. 60 (1) B-VG). The candidate obtaining more than half of all valid votes is elected. To become candidate for the Federal Presidency, it is necessary to have Nationalrat suffrage and to have a minimum age of 35 (Art. 60 (3) B-VG). The period of office lasts six years (Art. 60 (5) B-VG) and the Federal President can only be re-elected for one consecutive period (Art. 60 (5) B-VG).

The national government consists of the Federal Chancellor and the Federal Ministers who are appointed by the Federal President (Art. 70 (1) B-VG).

The National Council (Nationalrat) - House 1 parliament- is elected by the citizens in accordance with the principles of proportional representation (Art. 26 (1) B-VG). The election is based on the Austrian election principles of universal, equal, direct, secret and personal suffrage. All citizens having reached the age of 16 on or before election day may cast their votes (Art. 26 (1) B-VG). The mandate lasts five years, from the day of its first meeting until the day on which the new Nationalrat meets (Art. 27 (1) B-VG). Seats are allocated to the parties running for election on the basis of their percentage share of the votes cast. In Austria, each party needs a minimum of 4% of votes to be represented in the parliament, or to have a direct or basic mandate in one constituency.

The members of the Federal Council (Bundesrat) - House 2 parliament- are elected by the Länder Parliaments (Landtage) based on the principal of proportional representation. The duration of the mandate depends on the duration of the Länder Government's legislative period (Art. 35 (1) B-VG): members are elected after every state general election. The Federal Council as such is never dissolved, but partially renewed. The number of members which the Bundesländer can delegate to the Bundesrat depends on the number of inhabitants of the respective Bundesland (proportionality). The number is fixed by the Federal President in an ordinance and is based on the results of the last census (Art. 34 (1) B-VG).

The fundamental law in Austria is the Constitutional Law, which was enacted on 1 October 1920. Major amendments were made in 1925 and 1929. In 1925 the articles regulating the allocation of competences (Kompetenzverteilung) were enacted and the indirect federal administration (mittelbare Bundesverwaltung) was established. With the second amendment in 1929 the position and competences of the Federal President were consolidated.

All courts in Austria are federal institutions (Art. 82 (1) B-VG) and judges, in exercising judicial authority, are independent (Art. 87 (1) B-VG). Organization and jurisdiction of courts is established by federal law (Art. 83 (1) B-VG). A special Bundesländer judiciary is debarred by the Constitutional Law. Judges are appointed by the Federal President or the Federal President may

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delegate this task to the responsible Federal Minister of Justice, following the proposal of the Federal Government - which may also delegate this task to the Minister of Justice - (Art. 86 (1) B-VG). The highest level of jurisdiction in civil and criminal law is the Oberster Gerichtshof (OGH) or Supreme Court (Art. 92 (1) B-VG). The Constitution states that judicial and administrative powers shall be separated (Const. Art. 94). The highest instance in civil and penal-law cases in Austria is the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court along with the Constitutional Court Verfassungsgerichtshof (VfGH) and the Administrative Court Verwaltungsgerichtshof (VwGH) are the highest courts.

The Italian Republic is a “regional State” and the fundamental law is the Constitution. The head of the State is the President of the Republic being elected by Parliament in joint session and maximum consensus (the majority requirement is stated in the Constitution); he is elected for seven years. The Judiciary body constitutes an autonomous and independent branch of the State. Regional courts do not exist. The Judiciary body is divided into Ordinary (civil and criminal), Administrative and Accounts courts.

### **1.3.2 AUTONOMOUS MEMBER STATES**

Austria consists of nine autonomous member states: Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tirol, Vorarlberg and Vienna. In each federal state there is one government administration that constitutes the subsidiary body of the land government (Landesregierung). Its duty is the execution of the autonomous sphere of competence of the land. Furthermore, the government administration is responsible for providing tasks of the land in its role as a bearer of private law. Besides the autonomous sphere of competence the government administration also fulfills tasks within the sphere of indirect federal administration.

The land governor officially acts as the director (Vorstand) of the government administration. In fact, the vice-governor fulfills his duties, as it is determined by law. In its function as director he or she is responsible for personnel and functional issues as well as for the supervision of the head of the inner service, the director of the state government administration (Landesamtsdirektor). The judicial framework for the Carinthian government administration is regulated in the Carinthian Rules of Procedure of the state government administration (K-GOA).

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As a result of a comprehensive organizational reform in the Carinthian government administration ten competence-centres were created out of former 20 departments. These ten competence-centres cover the following topics:

1. Directorate of the Land government administration
2. Finance, Economy and housing
3. Land-development and municipalities
4. Social matters
5. Health
6. Education, generations and culture
7. Commercial-law and infrastructure
8. Environment, water and nature-protection
9. Streets and bridges

Italy is divided into 20 regions, 15 of them with ordinary statute and 5 with special statute (FVG, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-South Tyrol and Aosta Valley).

### **1.3.3 DISTRICTS**

Each of the nine Austrian federal states is composed of districts. The district administration is carried out either by a district commission or through the city administration of a statutory city.

A district commission (Bezirkshauptmannschaft) is the general administration office of a district within a federal state. It acts as a federal state authority. Each district in Austria has a district commission, except statutory cities, as in this special case the municipal administration / magistrate (Magistrat) assumes the duties of this authority. Furthermore, except statutory cities, all municipalities in Austria belong to a district. The employees of the district commissions are employees of the federal state (Landesbedienstete). The head of the district commission, the district commissioner, is also a state-employee appointed by the Land government.

The district commission is subject to the governor of a federal state. As far as tasks of the indirect federal administrations are concerned, the governor is subject to the responsible federal minister.

By January 2012 Austria has 83 district commissions and 15 statutory cities. Within Carinthia there are two statutory cities and eight district commissions.

### **1.3.4 LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

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In 2013 Austria consists of 2.354 municipalities. Municipalities are legal persons and have a limited sphere of autonomous self-government, which is protected in the Austrian Constitutional Law in article 116 to 118. Municipalities are territorial corporate bodies, being an administrative local district, which are entitled to self-administration.

The bodies of the municipality consist of the mayor, the Local Administrative Board (Gemeindevorstand) and the Municipal Council (Gemeinderat). The number of representatives in the Municipal Council depends on the number of inhabitants.

Municipalities as such do not have any legislative power, which means a lack of competence in establishing laws. However, administrative functions are divided in an own sphere of competence and an assigned sphere devolved by the Federal State or the states. The own sphere of competence just relates to the execution of Federal and State laws, but not to issue laws. Responsibilities within the own sphere of competence are matters of local interest like construction, fire fighting, policing or ambulance services. Examples for duties of the assigned sphere of competence are any matters relating to the system of registration, electoral registers, carrying out elections, schools or protection of water.

In Italy regions with Special Status and Autonomous Provinces have “full” legislative responsibility in terms of local autonomy. Ordinary Regions have the power to regulate local authority’s functions by taking into account those that have been allocated, because considered “fundamental functions”, to local authorities (municipalities and provinces) by the State.

### **1.3.5 CBC ORGANISATIONS**

In the Carinthian Government Administration (Amt der Kärnter Landesregierung) -Competence Center 1 Administration for Regional Authorities (Landesamtsdirektion)- there exist several departments which are also dealing with CBC related issues:

- Office for Ethnic Groups (Volksgruppenbüro)
- Commissioner for Integration (RR Gernot Steiner)
- European and International Affairs (Alpen-Adria-Geschäftsstelle Kärnten)



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## 1.4 OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS OF THE TERRITORY

In both countries exists a wide range of actors with influence on cross border cooperation (the following enumeration is not exhaustive).

### 1.4.1 CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

- In FVG there are four chambers of commerce, one for each Province (Trieste, Udine, Gorizia, Pordenone). The Chamber of Commerce of Trieste also acts as a special agency for promoting in particular the foreign trade and internationalisation of the enterprises (Aries = Special Agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Trieste).
- The Carinthian Chamber of Commerce is part of the Chamber of Commerce of Austria and also has a strong international branch.

### 1.4.2 INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION

- Confindustria is the main organisation representing Italian manufacturing and services companies. In FVG there are Confindustria Trieste, Confindustria Udine, Confindustria Gorizia and Unione Industriali Pordenone.
- In Carinthia exists a regional branch of the Federation of Austrian Industries (Industriellenvereinigung).

### 1.4.3 AGENCIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- FVG: Informest (agency for development and international economic cooperation- one of the four national agencies for cooperation in the area of Southeast Europe); FINEST; AICREE fvg (FVG branch of the Association of the European Municipalities and Regions)
- Carinthia: Carinthian Economic Promotion Fund (Kärntner Wirtschaftsförderungsfond - KWF); Business Agency for Carinthia (Entwicklungsagentur Kärnten- EAK).

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## 2. ITALIAN – SLOVENIAN BORDER

### 2.1 BILATERAL BORDER

#### 2.1.1 *POLITICAL SITUATION*

Text Friuli-Venezia Giulia is an autonomous region from a regionalizing state, which along with other Italian regions is constantly tied up in efforts to find a balance with the national state level. Slovenia, as a new democratizing European state, has no regional level.

In 2001, the Italian Parliament approved the legislation resolving the last open issues regarding the Slovenian minority in Italy. Following the 2004 accession of Slovenia to the EU, the border region changed from becoming a new border region wholly located within the EU. Italy was a firm supporter of Slovene EU and NATO membership, helping Slovenia technically and legislatively master its bid for membership in European and transatlantic institutions.

#### 2.1.2 *GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS*

The border between Italy and Slovenia runs on a north-south axis for about 232 km. Starting at the Dreilander Mountains where the borders of Austria - Italy and Slovenia meet and then, leaving eastwards the Italian city of Tarvisio, the Italian-Slovenian border climbs up to the Mangart Mountain to follow gradually the Isonzo/Soča river valley up to the twin town of Gorizia/Nova Gorica. The border then runs along the Carso hills to end in the Adriatic sea, south of Trieste in the city of Muggia. From the geological point of view this cross-border region can be subdivided into three areas: the mountain area, the Karst area and the coastal area:

- The maritime border lies in the Upper Adriatic in the gulf which includes Trieste and Capodistria.
- The hilly area, situated to the south of the mountains and along the central section of the border with Slovenia. The easternmost part of the hilly area is also known as Slavia Friulana, as it is mostly inhabited by ethnic Slovenes. The river Timavo flows underground for 38 km from Slovenia and resurfaces near its mouth in Duino.
- The mountain part of the border area is characterized in particular of small and isolated centers.

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### **2.1.3 MAIN HISTORICAL ASPECTS**

The main historical events are:

- The Roman origin: is visible over all the territory, and the unifying element of the two parts is the X Regio Venetia et Histria, with its capital at Aquileia in the Augustan period.
- The First World War: Friuli region was a theatre of the Battle of Caporetto that took place in 1917, near the town of Kobarid (now in Slovenia), on the Austro-Italian front of World War I. In exchange for joining the Allied Powers in the First World War, the Kingdom of Italy, under the secret Treaty of London (1915) and later Treaty of Rapallo (1920), was granted rule over much of the Slovene territories. The present-day Slovene municipalities of Idrija, Ajdovščina, Vipava, Kanal, Postojna, Pivka, and Ilirska Bistrica, were subjected to forced Italianization. The Slovene minority in Italy (1920-1947) lacked any minority protection under international or domestic law. Clashes between the Italian authorities and Fascist squads on one side, and the local Slovene population on the other, started as early as 1920, culminating with the burning of the Narodni dom, the Slovenian National Hall of Trieste. Especially after Benito Mussolini came to power in 1922, the violent Fascist Italianization of Slovene minority in Italy (1920-1947) and Littoral Slovenes in the areas that were given to Italy in exchange for joining Great Britain in the World War I were under no international restraint. In order to fight violent process of Italianization in the area, the militant anti-fascist organization TIGR was formed in 1927.
- The Second World War: led to the Anglo-American Administration of Trieste until the border was fixed with the Memorandum of London in 1954. When Trieste was reunited with Italy, the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia could finally be established. The Italian Constitution assigns it the status of Region with a Special Statute, together with four other Italian regions. However, Friuli – Venezia Giulia obtained administrative autonomy and the special statute only in 1963. In 1975 the Treaty of Osimo definitively dividing the former Free Territory of Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia. In 1945, at the end of the second World War, for the second time the Yugoslavs attempted annexation of the southern part of the region, but again they had to give up.

### **2.1.4 SITUATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Road system appears, on an aggregate level, sufficiently developed by national standards. The Italian and Slovene systems need to be logistically connected for a new corridor towards

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eastern European. Another important implementation is the development of Transeuropean Corridor 5 Lion-Turin-Trieste-Ljubljana-Kiev, exploiting the infrastructures.

The situation of the railway system is that the cross border public transport is under-developed, there are no frequent connections by train between Italy and Slovenia. The railway system fails to be competitive if compared to the road system in terms of speed, reliability and costs. In the past decade, several initiatives in terms of development were launched, such as the 1999 the study of improvement of the railway Trieste-Venezia-Ljubljana by opening a ronchi Sud-Trieste railway line.

The main airports are located in Ronchi dei Legionari in Friuli and in Ljubljana in Slovenia. The airports offer regular national and international flights including destinations in Eastern Europe and in recent years it has been developed in terms of traffic of passengers and goods, moreover in terms of new destinations is an important achievement for the regional infrastructural system.

Maritime connections are the ports of Trieste and Capodistria represent an important asset of cross-border economic infrastructures system, along with the ports of Monfalcone and Nogaro.

The telecommunications network is reliable and technologically sophisticated. The internet and mobile telephony are readily available. Access to internet is much better in Slovenia than in Italy, for private users as well as companies.

### **2.1.5 EXISTING AGREEMENTS AT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL**

The most important existing agreements between Italy and Slovenia, at political, at social and at economy are:

- Working Community Alpe Adria, AEBR (EU Association of border regions),
- AREV (Assembly of EU Viticol regions),
- ARE (Assembly of EU Regions, Decree ratifying the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Italy;
- Decree ratifying the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Italian Republic.

### **2.1.6 EXISTING AGREEMENTS/STRUCTURED DIALOG FOR THE CBC WITH THE NEIGHBOUR AREAS**

At level of cross border dialogue, FVG Region and Slovenia cooperate in different programs:

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- POR FESR 2007/2013
  - Interreg Italy-Slovenia Program 2007/2013
  - EU Alpine Space Programme 2007/2013
  - IPA Adriatic Cross-border Cooperation Programme
  - Memorandum of Understanding about the foundation of a Cross-Border Network for Applied Research and Training

### **2.1.7 STRUCTURE OF ECONOMY (FIRST, SECOND, THIRD SECTOR)**

The primary sector plays an important role: in Friuli more than 50% of the territory is occupied by agricultural sector. This is characterized by, on the one hand the wine production with innovative production process and high qualitative standards, on the other hand, more traditional agricultural farming that has been slowly deteriorating mainly due to the lack of managerial skills and generation turnover. Slovenia is characterized by a large number of SMEs, the primary sector plays a relatively minimal economic role on the territory.

The secondary sector is mostly developed in Udine and Pordenone but also in Slovenia in Obalno-Kraska and Goriska. Gorizia and Trieste are characterized by a well developed service and trade sector. Foreign trade between Italy and Slovenia has always been very consistent. The sectors in which the exchange is higher are oils and fuels, metals and metal products, machinery and equipment, automobiles, chemicals. In Slovenia the secondary sector plays a higher role than the European average. Most of developed sectors are: electrical machinery, car equipment and production, iron and steel industry, chemicals and pharmaceuticals and the agribusiness are leading sectors.

Services and tourism are well developed and efficiently managed, especially in the coastal area both in Friuli and in Slovenia. In particular thermal-tourism represents an important share of the cross-border tourism sector. The regions have also experienced strong growth in high technology sectors such as information technologies, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Slovenia in advanced telecommunications and integrated logistics.

The situation of import/export from Italy to Slovenia appears to be remarkable, primarily made up of machinery, electric equipment and telecommunication technology, textiles and clothing. The imports from Slovenia to Italy are mostly transportation vehicles, metal products, electric equipment, textiles and clothing. The cross-border areas of Trieste, Gorizia and Udine show a significant intensity of interchange. At the cross-border level, the energy, gas and water sectors

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represent an important flow from Slovenia for the Gorizia and Trieste provinces (329 million euros).

The leading industrial sectors for Italian provinces are in Udine chair-furniture, industrial plant engineering and automation, food industry, chemical industry, steel and iron industry, paper industry, building materials, IT and TC industries, plastics industry, transportation and logistics; for Gorizia shipbuilding industry, transportation and logistics, food and wine, engineering industry, electric and electronic equipment; for Trieste shipbuilding industry, transportation and logistics, food and coffee industry, iron and steel industry, paper industry, IT and TC industries, pharmaceutical industry, diagnostic and biomedical industry. The fishing industry is relatively well developed but limited to the coastal area. The fleet is mostly composed by small and medium fishing boats. Slovenia continues to come between Eastern European countries such as the one characterized by the lower volume of foreign investment. This is due to the small size of the market of a country that has just over 2 million inhabitants, but also very specific policies that have affected the ability of foreign investors to acquire companies and directly administer commercial settlements and productive. In strategic sectors such as banking and insurance, privatization have yet to be completed.

### **2.1.8 MAIN BARRIERS**

The main obstacle between Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia is the different language, consequently the two lands present also differences at cultural level, having a diverse historical background and habits.

As regards the political and administrative systems, they differ a lot between the two lands and particular in Italy the bureaucracy complicates and slows a lot the procedures.

It is proved that also at economic level there are several difference in the development, in structures and infrastructures such as transports.

### **2.1.9 DEMOGRAPHY, POPULATION, IMMIGRATION / EMIGRATION**

In Friuli the population is composed by 1.236.103,00. 51,6% female - 48,4% male and the population density: 157.3 per square kilometer, less than the national average of 201,2 inhabitants. The plain area is the most populated, then the hilly area and in the end the mountains. The population is characterized by a considerable number of older people, over 65

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years and the average of the age is 46, one of the highest in Italy. The birth rate is decreasing, and on the contrary, the mortality rate is increasing because of the higher number of elderly people. In recent years due to economic crisis and lack of employment, many Italians emigrated abroad, especially people under 40 years old. In despite of, in Slovenia, there is a presence of young people and a positive demographic structure due to immigration of young people.

In the cross-border area of Friuli there is a strong increasing trend of the presence of foreign (49 inhabitants each 1000 residents). In the Italian provinces there is a triple population density compared to the Slovenian provinces, but in Slovenia the age of the population is less than in Friuli.

The border area, in particular the northern part (mountains) is characterized by the depauperation in particular of the small and more isolated centers thus there is a demographic change caused by a migration of the active population, low demographic density due to both morphology reasons and outward migration phenomena linked to lack of work possibilities; reduction of social and economic services thus loss of attractiveness, % of elderly people increasing.

## **2.2 DESCRIPTION OF BASIC LOCAL CULTURAL HABITS & PATTERNS**

### **2.2.1 CULTURE**

For Slovenes, education is very important. Having a good education is an important requisite for finding a job. Among people aged 30 to 34 years, those who have a degree or diploma, is nearly a third. In the share of young people in tertiary education, Slovenia is on the top between the EU-27. In the Slovenian part, about the 70% of the population has a medium-high education qualification, compared to the 33,4% of the Italian provinces. In Slovenia there are a lot of graduate students (14,9%), more than in Friuli (6,9%). The percentage of Slovenian citizen with an high-school diploma or degree is much higher than in Italy. In Italy education is compulsory and free for all children between the ages of 6 and 16 and in general cultural, historical, and traditional aspects are generally very important. The main Slovenian value at the end of the 90's were egalitarianism, work and family. Now hedonistic values are gaining more importance, as customs, traditions, popular beliefs. Most of the Slovene population is Roman Catholic. Social classes in Slovenia wealthier and more educated people have more cultural capital than less wealthy and less educated, the gap between the poor and the rich is widening, older generations give more attention to habits, customs and tradition than the younger generations. In FVG most

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of the population is Catholic but there are also significant minorities also for the presence of many immigrants.

### **2.2.2 COMMUNICATION**

Friulian dialect is spoken in most of the region FVG, with a few exceptions, in Trieste and Grado, where a version of the Venetian language and Triestine dialect is spoken instead. Slovene dialects are spoken in the largely rural border mountain region known as Venetian Slovenia, it is also spoken in the Collio. In the Resia valley, most of the inhabitants still speak an archaic dialect of Slovene, known as Resian. According to the official estimates of the Italian government, between 45,000 and 51,000 Slovene speakers live in Friuli. In Slovenia the official language is Slovenian, but Slovenes speak over 32 dialects, which are grouped into 7 larger dialect segments.

Friulan people are generally closed, at the beginning and it is very difficult to become "friend". Nonverbal communication is considered very important, as gestures are used frequently during conversations, people, sometimes, do not observe personal space and it is viewed as a sign of affection or friendship to be in close proximity of one another. A kiss is given on each cheek to friends or family members upon greeting. Dissent is usually not explained with many words; sometimes only the silence, but body language is very expressive. Slovenes are naturally indirect communicators but can moderate their behavior to others' communication style. They are soft-spoken and do not raise voice when conversing; are polite, courteous, respectful to the others and have a good sense of humor. The most common greeting when meet people for the first time is handshake. It is very important to make eye contact when talking to others, whether for personal or business purposes. Family members and close friends may hug each other when they get together. They may tap each other on the back there might be a lot of gesturing, smiling and loud, lively conversation.

### **2.2.3 RELATIONSHIPS**

In FVG family is the centre of the social structure and provides a stabilizing influence for its members and generally only the nuclear family lives together. Personal contact is a non formal system for getting information, help in finding a job, build new relationships.

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Slovenes look to be reserved, but this reserve disappears rapidly once they build a relationship. A relationship between people they trust is more informal and between people they don't trust it is more formal. Generally, Slovenes stand closer to their family members and friends than to people colleagues, clients and strangers. Slovenes like to establish a personal relationship with colleagues; while this can help establish a better professional relationship as well. Slovenes are also a very accommodating people.

## **2.2.4 SOCIAL LIVING AND CONTROL**

In FVG society is highly individualistic, and the culture is "me" centered, on the contrary in Slovenia, there is a strong sense of community and a moderate level of civic participation. Slovenes are social, like to volunteer. Family is the centre of social structure, indeed sense of "home" is very strong. Italy is famous to be a masculine society, highly success oriented. Children are taught from an early age that competition is good and to be a winner is important in life. Usually hierarchy should be respected and inequalities amongst people are acceptable. The different distribution of power justifies the fact that power holders have more benefits than the less powerful in society. In Italian companies it is normal for a high level manager to have special benefits that his subordinates have not. Men, instead of women, dominate the country and society. Although women have entered the workforce in Italy, still the most significant part of managers and politicians is male. In Slovenia, holding hands among couples is common and considered acceptable. It is common to see young couples displaying affection in public places and it is considered somewhat acceptable within the limits of good taste. Public displays of anger and other negative emotions do happen, but are not considered acceptable. In general, Slovenes respect the rules.

## **2.2.5 ATTITUDES**

Typically, in Italy may be some flexibility to strict adherence to schedules and deadlines. A lot of bureaucracy in rules and procedures implies an high level of useless formality and big and continuous uncertainty. Because of this Italian are quite used to changes, modifications to the plans and new directions to follow at last minute. Italians have medium tolerance for risks. Usually they prefer friends over strangers and familiar over new or strange situations. The fear of exposure and of the potential embarrassment that may accompany failures, brings about aversion to risk and the need to thoroughly examine the potential negative implications. Failures

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in Italy causes in a person a long-term loss of confidence by others but also a big lack of self-confidence.

Slovenes are punctual. Punctuality is especially vital for lunch / diner meetings or business meetings. It is a sign of respect to be on time. Meeting deadlines is also important. Slovenes tend to be risk-averse and make decisions methodically and with tremendous precision.

## **2.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL**

Compared to other Italian regions, Friuli is an area where crime level is low and the perceived sense of security is high. In general roads are well maintained, lighting and road signs are adequate, frequent controls also because of the increase of strict regulations.

To Slovenes it is important to have an access to green spaces; access to clean water - satisfied with water quality. Outdoor air pollution is one important environmental issue. Slovenia's overall crime rate is low and violent crimes are relatively uncommon.

## **2.2.7 WORK AND LEISURE**

In FVG region people are direct, see time as money, and have hard work attitude and efficiency. Enterprises are generally small-medium size and many businesses are family-owned. Companies often have a rigid hierarchy, with little visible association between the ranks. Managers may take a somewhat paternalistic attitude to their employees and they preserves a very distinct role within the organization. There are not large numbers of women at the highest levels of business and government. In Slovenia, business decision making processes are often based on hierarchy and many decisions are still reached at the highest echelons of the company. This is changing though as companies are adapting to global competition. The hierarchy is relatively flat. Although the team leader is considered to be the expert, all members are deemed to have something to contribute. In the workplace, women still face many challenges. There are less women in top leadership positions in public and private sector, compared to men. Women may be paid less for the same work as their male counterparts. Education, skills and experiences are very highly regarded. If a person has a good mix of education, experience and is open minded and personable, will be regarded more highly.

In FVG people spend most of their daily life in the workplace, but they need also to have good and relaxing moments in everyday life, enjoying meal or coffee breaks and spend time for

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socializing. Hospitality plays a key role in Italian business culture. Invitations to lunch and dinner are occasions for doing business and know better the attendees. When Slovenes work it is important to work hard and perform well, but when it is time off, they enjoy it as well. The distribution of tasks and activities within the family is still influenced by gender roles.

### **2.2.8 MONOCHRONIE / POLYCHRONIE**

Italy is a polychronic culture with a strong tendency to build lifetime relationship, a short term orientation, non verbal communication, informal dialogue, a more fluid approach in scheduling time. However in last period such crime as theft are common and little increased. Usually houses are equipped with alarm protection systems or railings and fences. In despite of Slovenes usually use monochronic time concept.

### **2.2.9 GOVERNMENTS AND OFFICIAL BODIES**

Italians are increasingly disillusioned by institutions. The confidence for the President of the Republic has been significantly decreasing. Distrust is high also on government and parliament, instead police and army have a good consensus.

For Slovenes employees of public administration represent the most significant factor in perceiving the quality of administrative services - attributes such as willingness to assist customers, professional attitude at work, individualized treatment of customers, a proper regard toward customers. The second most important factor in administrative service quality estimation is procedure or the manner and time of executing administrative procedures. In Slovenia, there is a low public trust in political institutions, especially in political parties (5%) , parliament (9%) and government (11%) (September 2012; see [http://www.cjm.si/sites/cjm.si/files/file/raziskava\\_pb/PB9-12.pdf](http://www.cjm.si/sites/cjm.si/files/file/raziskava_pb/PB9-12.pdf) ).

### **2.2.10 MEETINGS**

In FVG meetings are often lengthy, and communication styles loud and animated, agendas are flexible with all members of the meeting taking an active role and with frequent interruptions and side conversations. Punctuality is desirable, but sometimes is not respected, as well as the deadlines. Working lunch and dinners are very common. In Slovenia, the preferred times for

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meetings are between 10-13 and 15-17. Punctuality is vital, as meetings adhere to agendas, including starting and ending times. Communication is formal and follows rules of protocol. The greeting is handshake. Eye contact is very important. The meeting usually starts immediately after some minutes with small-talk, they are guided by a moderator. The interventions are usually made at the end of each section of agenda, invited by the moderator. A meeting is often followed by a lunch which is a great opportunity to learn more about new business friends. It is recommended to prepare the minutes which is usually in written communication with an outlining about what was agreed at the meeting and who are responsible for the next steps.

## 2.3 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.3.1 STATE

The Italian Republic is a “regional State” and the fundamental law is the Constitution.

- The head of the State is the President of the Republic is elected by Parliament in joint session and maximum consensus (majority required is stated in the Constitution);
- the President is elected for seven years, the office is formally renewable, but the renew is practically unlikely, the office is incompatible with any other office. His legislative functions are promulgating the laws approved in Parliament or /and in some cases review to the Houses and dissolution of the Houses. In relation to the Government functions: appointing the President of the Council (Prime minister) after elections, and on proposal of the latter, the ministers; emanating laws by decree.
- The Judiciary body constitutes an autonomous and independent branch of the State. Regional courts do not exist. The Judiciary body is divided into Ordinary (civil and criminal), Administrative and Accounts. (see attached document)

Slovenia has:

- Unitary state
- Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia
- Municipality (slov. občina; 1st level – 212) and Region (slov. pokrajina; 2nd Level – 0)

## 2.3.2 REGIONS

Italy is divided into 20 regions, 15 of them with ordinary statute and 5 with special statute (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-South Tyrol and Aosta Valley).

### REGIONS WITH ORDINARY STATUTE:

- Regions with ordinary statute have exclusive legislative power with respect to any matters not expressly reserved to State law, European law and international treaties. Matters expressly reserved to State law and those in respect of which regions have exclusive legislative power are laid down in article 117 of Constitution. Regions, however, have legislative powers in all subject matters that are not expressly covered by State legislation. Regions and autonomous provinces of Trent and Bolzano take part in preparatory decision-making process of EU legislative acts within the areas falling within their responsibilities. They are also responsible for the implementation of international agreements and EU measures, according to the procedures set out in State law.

### *Autonomous regions with special statute:*

- have special forms and conditions of autonomy pursuant to the special statutes adopted by constitutional law. Each of them has exclusive legislative powers in the subject matters covered by their own statutes, within the limits established by them: constitutional laws, fundamental principles laid down in State legislation, international obligations and national interests, fundamental rules set down by the economic and social reforms adopted by the Italian Republic. Other matters covered by special statutes are subject to concurrent legislation of both the State and regions. In this case, legislative powers are vested in the regions except for the determination of the fundamental principles which are laid down in ordinary State legislation. The Republic is composed of the Municipalities, the Provinces, the Metropolitan Cities, the Regions and the State.

Friuli Venezia Giulia has a Special Statute of Autonomy which confers legislative powers to important government's areas so that the Region can promulgate its own laws in sectors such as the environment, health, industry, scientific research, culture and housing. The Regional Council is the supreme representative body, being elected by universal suffrage every five years and it is responsible for the formulation of laws and for providing political orientation on the works of the Regional Government.

Slovenia has:

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- 
- Autonomy, Cooperation and State Supervision of Legality of Acts of Regions
  - Region as local self-government community (2nd level)
  - Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia – Articles 138, 140 and 143 (Regions Act hasn't been adopted yet)
  - Matters of broader local importance and regional matters (not defined by legislation yet – see previous comment)

### **2.3.3 LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

In Italy regions with Special Status and Autonomous Provinces have “full” legislative responsibility in terms of local autonomy. Ordinary Regions have the power to regulate local authority’s functions by taking into account those that have been allocated, because considered “fundamental functions”, to local authorities (municipalities and provinces) by the State.

It is not easy to understand the difference between what the municipality’s OWN functions are and what those assigned by State or Regional legislation are, given that according to Art. 97 Cost., all administrative functions are carried out and organized only according to the pre existing provisions of law.

#### 1. Subject matter :

- Municipal Statute: Fundamental rules regarding organization; allocation of bodies’ duties and competences; guarantee and participation of minorities; collaboration between local authorities; decentralization; legal representation of the municipality; active citizenship .
- Regulations: Matters and functions assigned to municipality.
- Organization Regulations: organization of offices / departments; executive Committee (based on strategic framework of Municipal Council).

#### 2. Administrative functions of the municipality:

- Municipalities “own” functions: administrative functions belong to the municipalities, regardless of size and density of population.
- “assigned” functions (by the State or Region): Those functions assigned to them by the law of the State or the Region according to their respective domains.
- “delegated” functions (by the State or Region) Functions delegated to them by the law of the State or the Region.
- State functions Functions carried out by the municipality, which represents a State body.

In Slovenia:

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- 
- Autonomy and State Supervision of Legality of Acts of Local Authorities
  - Municipality (slov. občina; 1st level) and Region (slov. pokrajina; 2nd Level )
  - Local Self-Government Act
  - Mayor, Council and Supervisory Committee
  - Matters of local importance (1 - public services – environment, health, education, water supply; 2 – spatial planning; 3 – regulation of traffic)
  - Mayor is executive body of municipality; directly elected official, represents and acts on behalf of the municipality, presides over council.

### **2.3.4 CBC ORGANISATIONS**

The Region FVG has full responsibility in the CBC legislation. There are in fact regional law that regulate the CBC according to the EU rules and the National legislation. Each year the Regional government develop a strategic document explaining the main objectives the Region wants to reach. This document is presented and approved by the Regional Assembly of counselors.

In the Regional administration there is a specific department the "European Territorial Cooperation" among the International department. Only one councilor member of the Regional govern is in charge for this area.

A particular responsibility and role the Regional law (LR.1/2006) gives to the local municipalities asking them to promote and develop the cross-border and transnational cooperation.

In Slovenia:

- Ministry of Justice and Public
- Administration (previous: Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy – Bureau for European Territorial Cooperation).



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## 2.4 OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS OF THE TERRITORY

### 2.4.1 CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

The Italian Chambers of Commerce, representing all the Italian companies, are extremely important pillars for the various production sectors, both nationally and internationally. Chambers, classified as local autonomous public bodies by Law n. 580/93, are the mainstays of a wide network of agencies working with institutions, organisations and associations, providing services, development strategies and projects aiming at promoting a balanced growth of the economy. In Italy, the system is represented by Unioncamere, the Union of the Italian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Handicraft, a public law organisation, “promoting, carrying out and managing, activities and services of interest” for the whole Chamber Network. Moreover, there are additional national components of the System, providing technical and professional services to businesses and Chambers in several areas. In Friuli there are four Chamber of Commerce: one for each Province (Trieste, Udine, Gorizia, Pordenone).

In Friuli Venezia Giulia the Chamber of Commerce of Trieste create a special Agency for promoting in particular the foreign trade and internationalization of the enterprises : Aries (Special Agency of the Chamber of Commerce of Trieste).

In Slovenia there are: SPRINT: one stop shot for the FVG enterprises aiming at promoting their internationalization. Other organization similar to Fvg are: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (<http://eng.gzs.si/slo/>), the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia(<http://www.ozs.si/ozseng/Aboutus.aspx> ), the Bank Association of Slovenia (<http://www.zbs-giz.si/en/>).

### 2.4.2 INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION

Confindustria is another organization presents in FVG, it is the main organisation representing Italian manufacturing and services companies. The fundamental value underlying Confindustria’s activities is the belief that free enterprise and free economic activity, within the framework of a market economy, are key factors for the growth and development of society as a whole. In Friuli there are: Confindustria Trieste, Confindustria Udine, Confindustria Gorizia e Unione Industriali Pordenone.

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Likewise in Slovenia URES represents Slovenian Economic Regional Union - Intercategorical association of the Slovenian entrepreneurs in FVG.

### **2.4.3 AGENCIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Other agencies working on CBC are in FVG: Informest: agency for development and international economic cooperation- one of the four national agencies for cooperation in the area of Southeast Europe (L. 84/01); FINEST; AICREE FVG (Association of the European Municipalities and Regions) and in Slovenia: the Regional Development Agencies (e.g. <http://web.rra-mura.com/default.aspx> ; <http://www.rra-sp.si/intro>).

Relevant association in CBC context are also in FVG: ISIG: Institut of International Sociology of Gorizia; Sanicademia (FVG): International Academy for the training of health profession. In Slovenia: the Association of Municipalities of Slovenia (ZOS) (<http://www.zdruzenjeobcin.si/index.php?lang=en>) and the Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia (SOS) ([http://www.skupnostobcin.si/zgmenu/english/general\\_about\\_sos/index.html](http://www.skupnostobcin.si/zgmenu/english/general_about_sos/index.html)).

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## 3. AUSTRIAN – SLOVENIAN BORDER

### 3.1 BILATERAL BORDER

#### 3.1.1 *POLITICAL SITUATION*

From the political side, the Slovenian – Austrian border was denoted with Austrian State Treaty of 1955: Article 7 “Rights of minorities”, regarding education, topographic signs, etc. in Slovenian side of the border. In 1989, the fall of the Iron Curtain followed and next was the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. In 1991, the Declaration of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted. In 1995 Austria acceded to EU and in 2004 Slovenia also acceded to EU. Until 2005 the border represented external EU border. Following the accession of Slovenia to the EU, the border region changed from becoming a new border region wholly located within the EU. Austria was the most firm supporter of Slovenia's independence. It firmly endorsed Slovenia's path into the European Union. Over the years, political tensions, fuelled in particular by unsolved minority issues, remained troublesome. Politico-administrative system of the border consists of a federal state in Carinthia and a new democratising European state Slovenia that has no regional level.

#### 3.1.2 *GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECT*

Considering the EU membership on both sides of the Slovenian – Austrian border, there is no border between Slovenia and Austria and therefore the accessibility between SI and AT is easy, except in the winter time the natural barriers on the western part area (the Alps and the Karavanke mountains) can represent difficulties in the accessibility across the border. The Western part of the border forms part of an alpine region with some high mountain ranges (Julian Alps, Kamniško-Savinjske Alps and Karavanke). Total surface area of Slovenian part of the border (Slovenia) measures 20,273km<sup>2</sup>, which is more than twice as big as Austrian part of the border (Carinthia).

### **3.1.3 MAIN HISTORICAL EVENTS**

After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in late 1918, an armed dispute started between the Slovenes and German Austria for the regions of Lower Styria and southern Carinthia. In November 1918, Rudolf Maister seized the city of Maribor and surrounding areas of Lower Styria in the name of the newly formed Yugoslav state. Around the same time a group of volunteers led by Franjo Malgaj attempted to take control of southern Carinthia. Fighting in Carinthia lasted between December 1918 and June 1919, when the Slovene volunteers and the regular Serbian Army managed to occupy the city of Klagenfurt.

In compliance with the Treaty of Saint-Germain, the Yugoslav forces had to withdraw from Klagenfurt, while a referendum was to be held in other areas of southern Carinthia. In October 1920, the majority of the population of southern Carinthia voted to remain in Austria, and only a small portion of the province (around Dravograd and Guštanj) was awarded to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. With the Treaty of Trianon, on the other hand, Kingdom of Yugoslavia was awarded the Slovene-inhabited Prekmurje region, which had belonged to Hungary since the 10th century. Slovenes whose territory fell under the rule of neighbouring states Italy, Austria and Hungary, were subjected to policies of forced assimilation and in case of Fascist Italy forced Fascist Italianization.

In 1955, the Austrian State Treaty was adopted, regarding the Article 7 "Rights of minorities" that includes education, topographic signs, etc. in Slovenian side of the border. In 1972, the Topographic Signs Law ("Ortstafelgesetz") was adopted which represents political and legal solving of the topographic sign conflict. In 1984, the referendum against the multilingual education system (Slovene) was instigated by the Austrian Freedom Party (Jörg Haider).

In 1995 Austria became a member state of the EU and later in 2004 Slovenia also joined the EU.

### **3.1.4 SITUATION OF INFRASTRUCTURES**

On the Slovenian – Austrian border, there is a good international linkage and accessibility - good transport infrastructure between Ljubljana-Villach, as well as between Ljubljana –Klagenfurt. There is motorway Villach-Ljubljana via Karawankentunnel and Klagenfurt-Ljubljana via Loiblpass; train and bus, which are inexpensive and with regular connections. There is also accessibility to the regions by air - Villach Air Terminal (Shuttle from Villach to Ljubljana Airport), but there is no flight connection from Klagenfurt Airport to Ljubljana Airport. Cross-border links

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between the regions on the western part area are poor due to natural barriers (the Alps and the Karavanke mountains). The general infrastructure is quite favourable, though some gaps can be identified. Public transport is well organised and the telecommunications network is reliable and technologically sophisticated. The internet and mobile telephony are readily available. The healthcare system is well developed.

### **3.1.5 EXISTING AGREEMENTS AT POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL**

On the Slovenia – Austrian border there are some agreements identified, for example: Austrian State Treaty of 1955: Article 7 “Rights of minorities”; Memorandum of bilingual signboards; Agreements at the EU-level (since 2005: internal EU border region); Decree ratifying the Joint Communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Austria; Law on Ratification of the Agreement between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Austria on the bilateral foreign trade cooperation; Agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour of Austria on the labour market; Euregio-Agreement „Senza Confini“.

### **3.1.6 EXISTING AGREEMENTS / STRUCTURED DIALOG FOR THE CBC WITH THE NEIGHBOUR AREAS**

There are existing agreements / structured dialog for the CBC with the neighbour areas on the Slovenian – Austrian border: Euregio-Agreement „Senza Confini“, Euroregion Adria-Alpe-Pannonia, CONSPACE, Several Projects, such as KOOPFLEX - Interreg Project 2010-12, CBC Study (2010-11), European Cross-border Symposium (2011), Memorandum of Understanding about the foundation of a Cross-Border Network for Applied Research and Training (2011), Cross-border cooperation Austria - Slovenia 2007-2013 (Operational programme Slovenia-Austria 2007-2013), focus on interregional cooperation between Carinthia and Slovenia (Conference of the Carinthian Chamber of Commerce 2012), NEXT4PA (2012-14), TEIN (2010) and PAT-TEIN (2012-14): follow-up project of TEIN.

### **3.1.7 STRUCTURE OF ECONOMY (FIRST, SECOND, THIRD SECTOR)**

In the structure of the economy in the Slovenian – Austrian border, the primary sector plays a relatively minimal economic role on the territory (in 2008: in Slovenia 8.7% persons employed and in Carinthia 6.1%). The secondary sector plays a higher role than the European average (in 2008: European average of 25% of regional GDP, Slovenia 34.6% of regional GDP and Carinthia 31.1% of regional GDP). The tertiary sector's role in Slovenian – Austrian border is lower than the European average (in 2008: European average of 72% of regional GDP, Slovenia 56.6% of regional GDP and Carinthia 64.4% of regional GDP).

In Carinthia the leading sectors and enterprises are found in wood processing, raw materials, machinery and equipment sectors; in Slovenia electrical machinery, car equipment and production, iron and steel industry, chemicals and pharmaceuticals and the agribusiness are leading sectors. The region has also experienced strong growth in high technology sectors such as information technologies.

The Important economic cities/ connections in the region are Klagenfurt – Villach and Ljubljana, Maribor. Mountain area (Karavanke mountains) constitutes a barrier in terms of economic development.

There are strong regional disparities of gross domestic product within Slovenia (Eastern Slovenia vs. Western Slovenia. Compared to Carinthia (3,9%) the unemployment rate (2010) in Slovenia was significantly higher (Western Slovenia: 6.5%, Eastern Slovenia: 7.9%).

### **3.1.8 MAIN BARRIERS**

The Slovenian – Austrian border faces barriers, such as: different language, cultural differences (Germanic vs. Slavic traditions); different politico-administrative systems (Federal state Carinthia vs. young European state Slovenia with no regional level); historical events (World War I and I; Iron Curtain); ongoing discussions - unsolved minority issues (Slovene Carinthians; topographic signs; not recognized german-speaking minorities in Slovenia); mountain area (Karavanke mountains) constitutes a barrier in economy (sparsely populated, difficult transport, lack of strong connections in the past, low commuter rate).

### **3.1.9 DEMOGRAPHY, POPULATION, IMMIGRATION / EMIGRATION**

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On the Slovenian – Austrian border, Slovene and Carinthian minority and its rights represent a controversial issue. Total 3.400 persons are living as autochthones minority group in Carinthia. The decline of population, particularly in the rural regions or regions with industrial decline (regions Pomursko, Podravsko, Koroško) is evident. There is migration of young people from rural to urban centres due to the lack of employment possibilities; growth of population in attractive, dynamic urban areas.

## **3.2 DESCRIPTION OF BASIC LOCAL CULTURAL HABITS & PATTERNS**

### **3.2.1 CULTURE**

#### **3.2.1.1 LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

There are some differences between the level of education in the Slovenian – Austrian border region. The proportion of young people with at least upper secondary education in Slovenia is one of the highest in the European Union, while in Austria the secondary education represents 14%. In Austria there is 36.28% of apprenticeship (differences between sexes: 50% males, 34% females). The university degree goes to 9.6% (3.5% related institution of higher education or college) in Austria and in Slovenia among people aged 30 to 34 years, those who have a degree or diploma, is nearly a third. In the share of young people in tertiary education, Slovenia is on the top between the EU-27. In Slovenia, cca 16% of adults are included in Lifelong Learning.

#### **3.2.1.2 SOCIAL CLASSES**

Wealthier and more educated people have more cultural capital than less wealthy and less educated. The gap between the poor and the rich is widening.

There are a lot of immigrants from former Yugoslavia in the area of Slovenian – Austrian border. In Slovenia there are almost two-thirds of immigrants from the countries on the area of former Yugoslavia. In Carinthia there are 10.8% immigrants from Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo. In Slovenia half of immigrants have upper secondary education,

nearly one in three have basic education or less and 17.3% have tertiary education. In total 109% of Carinthian pupils speak a language other than German.

### **3.2.1.3** *VALUES AND ASSUMPTION*

The main value at the end of the 90's were egalitarianism, work and family. Now hedonistic values (like: sensual enjoyment, pleasure, material prosperity and health) are gaining more importance. Competition is evident, achievements and success are important, stringent value system, "living to work", managers expected to be decisive, task- and target-orientated.

### **3.2.1.4** *TRADITIONS, RELIGIONS, CUSTOM*

Most of the population is Roman Catholic. There is strong sense of tradition and preservation of customs (Austria: e.g. spectacle of incubus ("Krampus") and Saint Nicholas); traditional clothes (e.g. "Carinthian custom" ("Kärntner Tracht"); Slovenia: Carnival time - when a parade of carnival and dance try banish winter and awake nature (typical for Slovenia is "kurentovanje"). Holidays: Easter time - easter is an important family holiday; the 1st May is Workers' Day; "Martinovanje" (September 11th) - new wine (must) is changed into wine; all Saints Day (November 1st); Sant Nicolas; Christmas - Christmas dinner, Midnight Mass. Traditional wedding - "šranga", civil wedding, church wedding).

### **3.2.1.5** *GENERATIONAL HIERARCHIES*

Generational hierarchies do exist (age related), as sign of respect; social intercourse towards elders is very polite (e.g. offering a seat); positions in working life often depend on age (experience, knowledge, expertise, rationality, wisdom); apparent titles; patriarchal societies: generational hierarchies in family (father, grandfather).

#### Communication

The culture in the Slovenian – Austrian border region is a "neutral" culture. People are indirect communicators, are polite, courteous, respectful to the others. The behaviour is rather distant. People are controlling not to express emotions. They are reserved and formal outside the family and close friends circle. There is no body contact outside the family and close friends circle.

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### **3.2.2 RELATIONSHIPS**

On both sides of the Slovenian – Austrian border people stand closer to their family members and friends than to people colleagues, clients and strangers. There is less openness to “outsiders”, shyness towards unknown persons. They are a very family oriented, nuclear family is important, they dedicate time to family after work, to family celebrations and meeting relatives. People within a family are generally quite close to one another. Relationship building in the context of work and business is important, long and successful business relations are valued.

### **3.2.3 SOCIAL LIVING**

There are some differences apparent in the area of Slovenian – Austrian border in terms of social living. Austrians are more individualistically oriented and have strong preference for a loosely-knit social framework, taking care of oneself and immediate families only but highly socialize (joining family and friends, building social networks). In Slovenia, there is a strong sense of community and a moderate level of civic participation. Slovenes are social, like to volunteer. Family is the centre of social structure.

### **3.2.4 SOCIAL CONTROL**

On the both sides of the Slovenian – Austrian border people respect the rules. Especially Austrians are strongly rule (not relation)-orientated, laws and standards are applied to everybody, relying on contracts, written language instead of spoken word, rules are essential for public and private life, learn from the very beginning what is permitted and prohibited. In Slovenia on other hand, rules are more essential for public life.

### **3.2.5 ATTITUDES**

Punctuality is vital. It is a sign of respect to be on time. Meeting deadlines is also important. There is strong preference for avoiding uncertainty. People tend to be risk-averse and make decisions methodically, careful and with tremendous precision and analysis of information.



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### **3.2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL**

In terms of security and control, there are laws and regulations, high level of security (especially in the public) is evident, public sector is considerably enlarged in general, extended public services (welfare system, everybody receives equal services).

Residential organization is focus on district capital cities, minor distribution in rural areas.

Infrastructure is quiet favourable. There are good highway connections to the neighbouring areas, as well as good train and bus connections, and there is also an air connection between the neighbouring areas.

### **3.2.7 WORK**

There are some differences between the areas of the Slovenian – Austrian border. In Austrian side of the border there is not much hierarchy in the private sector, independence, equal rights are preferred, while in public sector clear hierarchical order is evident. In Slovenian side of the border business decision making processes are often based on hierarchy and many decisions are still reached at the highest echelons of the company. Exception is when meeting with peers or in teams. Then Slovene's egalitarianism is apparent. The hierarchy is relatively flat. Although the team leader is considered to be the expert, all members are deemed to have something to contribute. In Austrian private sector superiors are accessible for employees, (coaching leaders), management means facilitation and empowerment, decentralized power, experience of team members, being consulted, control is disliked, rather informal attitude towards managers (first name basis), direct and participative communication. In public sector Austria is based on fixed rules, subdivisions are bound by instructions; defined ways of communication, control is necessary and executed. In Slovenia public sector is becoming more flexible, less bureaucratic, introducing marketing mechanisms.

### **3.2.8 MONOCHRONIE / POLYCHRONIE**

In the Slovenian – Austrian border region there is monochromic time concept. People are doing actions consecutively and in a segmented manner; scheduling, timetables and fixing appointments/deadlines, coordination of activities, short-term relationships are present.

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### **3.2.9 WORK AND LEISURE**

Time is instrument used to structure everyday life, for priority setting, for adhering to plans, taking time commitments seriously (deadlines, schedules), not disturbing others, follow rules of privacy and consideration. It is important to work hard and perform well, but when it is time off, they enjoy it as well.

### **3.2.10 GOVERNMENTS AND OFFICIAL BODIES**

Public administration has to be based on laws and rules. There is a wide range of public services offered. Employees of public administration represent the most significant factor in perceiving the quality of administrative services - attributes such as willingness to assist customers, professional attitude at work, individualized treatment of customers, a proper regard toward customers. Increasing complexity of services is a (future) challenge.

### **3.2.11 MEETINGS**

Monochronic time concept is used (tasks in sequence. dates, appointments, timetables, scheduling, setting priorities, structured meeting, agenda). Punctuality is vital, as meetings adhere to agendas, including starting and ending times. Communication is formal and follows rules of protocol, it is rationally focused on target and output, creating added value, not loosing in detail, little small talk. Effective progress and fruitful results are important. Breaks are foreseen but limited. The meeting is guided by a moderator, following up the agenda.

Moderator guides the meeting by keeping harmony and generating agreement, everybody gets opportunity to take the floor and give an opinion. It is recommended to prepare the minutes of the meeting which is usually in written communication with an outlining about what was agreed at the meeting and who are responsible for the next steps.

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## 3.3 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.3.1 *INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN SLOVENIA*

Slovenia is a democratic republic, whose law emanates from the people (Art. 1 and 3 of URS). Slovenia is organised as an unitary state.

The fundamental law in Slovenia is Ustava Republike Slovenije (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia), which was enacted on 23rd of December 1991. Major amendments were made in 2000 (principle of proportionality in elections), 2003 (accession to EU) and 2006 (regional self-government).

Local self-government is one of the basic constitutional principles – according to Art. 9 of URS »Local self-government in Slovenia is guaranteed«. Chapter V. a) of the URS (Art. 138 to 144) lays down the basis for the functions, organization, revenues and supervision of local self-government. Residents of Slovenia exercise local self-government in municipalities (občina – Art. 139) and other local communities (region – pokrajina (Art. 143)).

An intermediate level between the State and municipalities (level 2 government (NUTS 2)) is Region (pokrajina). According to Art. 143 of the URS region is a self-governing local community that manages local affairs of wider importance, and certain affairs of regional importance provided by law. The state transfers by law the performance of specific duties within the state competence to the regions and must provide to them the necessary financial resources to enable such. No regions have been established so far.

Municipalities (občina) are the “closest” institutions to the citizen. At the moment 212 municipalities are established. The municipality is a legal person of public law (Art. 7 of Local Self-Government Act – LSGA).

Municipalities consist of the občinski svet (Municipal Council), which as the decision-making organ is a representative body elected by qualified voters; the župan (mayor) and nadzorni odbor (supervisory board). Municipalities shall have at least one vice-mayor, appointed by the municipal

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council at the proposal of the mayor (Art. 28 and 33a of LSGA). Župan is head of the municipal administration, and the operation of the municipal administration is led directly by the secretary of the municipality (tajnik občine), who is appointed by the mayor.

Municipalities have regulatory powers, performed by issuing decrees (odlok) that must be in conformity with laws and URS. A municipality has its own sphere of competence (local affairs which may be regulated by the municipality autonomously and which affect only the residents of the municipality – Art. 140 (1) of the URS) and one assigned to it by the State (Art. 140 (2) of the URS). Municipalities are autonomous in their own sphere of competence, which means that the municipality is independent from orders of the Government. The State has the right to ensure that a municipality does not overstep its sphere of competence (Art. 140 (3) of the URS). Powers within the sphere of competence of the municipality include matters of local interest such as spatial planning, traffic regulation and providing public services (waste management, water supply, primary education, health services etc.). Municipalities have the right to contest illegal interference with their powers from the State in the Constitutional Court and in the Administrative Court (Chapter XI of LSGA - protection of local self-government).

The principles governing local elections are laid down in Local Elections Act (LEA). Members of municipal councils and mayors are elected on the basis of universal and equal voting rights in free and direct elections by a secret ballot (Art. 2 of LEA). Members of občinski svet are elected directly by the citizens – the same stands for elections of župan. Members of nadzorni odbor are appointed by občinski svet.

Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) is managed by Ministry of Interior and Public Administration (previous: Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy – Bureau for European Territorial Cooperation).

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### **3.3.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN AUSTRIA**

Austria is a democratic republic, whose law emanates from the people (Art. 1 B-VG\*). Austria is organised as a Federal State.

The fundamental law in Austria is the Constitutional Law or Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz, which was enacted on 1 October 1920. Major amendments were made in 1925 and 1929.

Municipalities (Gemeinden) are the “closest” institutions to the citizen.

An intermediate level between the Federal State and municipalities (level 2 government (NUTS 2)) is State (Land). Art. 10 to 15 of the B-VG contain provisions regarding the competence of legislation and execution. The B-VG only allocates legislative and executive power between the Federal State and the Länder. However, “Jurisdiction” in a formal sense is assigned to the Federation (Stelzer 2009, p. 43). In comparison to other countries the legal position and competences of the Länder are rather modest. In contrast, the local level (municipalities) has a comparably strong position (Öhlinger 2009, pp. 239-240).

Municipalities have a somewhat limited sphere of autonomous self-government, which is protected by the Constitution. Articles 116 to 118 of the B-VG lay down the basis for the organization of local self-government. Art. 116 (1) B-VG states that every Land is divided into municipalities and municipalities are territorial corporate bodies which are entitled to self-administration while also being an administrative local district. The municipality is a legal person (Art. 116 (2) B-VG).

Municipalities consist of the Gemeinderat (Municipal Council), which as the decision-making organ is a representative body elected by qualified voters; the Gemeindevorstand (Local Administrative Board) – in towns with their own charter, the Stadtrat (Town Senate); and the mayor.

Municipalities do not have legislative powers, but administrative functions. A municipality has its own sphere of competence and one assigned to it by the Federal State or the Länder (Art. 118 (1) B-VG). Municipalities are autonomous in their own sphere of competence, which means that the municipality is independent from orders of the Land or the Federal Government. The Federal State and the Land have the right to ensure that a municipality does not overstep its sphere of

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competence (Art. 119a (1) B-VG). Powers within the sphere of competence of the municipality include matters of local interest such as construction, fire, market inspection, policing, ambulance services etc. (Hausmaninger 2003, p. 75). Municipalities have the right to contest illegal interference with their powers from the Federal State or Land in the Constitutional Court (Art. 119a (9) B-VG). The Land is entitled to examine the financial administration of a municipality with respect to its thrift, efficiency and expediency (Art. 119a (2) B-VG). The Federal State and Länder have the right of supervision in matters which derive from their sphere of competence.

The principles governing local elections are laid down in Art. 117 (2) B-VG. Elections take place on the basis of proportional representation by equal, direct, secret and personal suffrage of all citizens who have their principal domicile in the municipality. The seats in the Gemeinderat and its committees are allocated to parties according to the d'Hondt system. The mayor is elected by the members of the Gemeinderat (in some Länder the mayor is elected directly by the citizens who have their principal domicile in the municipality). The Gemeindevorstand is elected by the members of the Municipal Council.

Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) is managed by Carinthian Government Administration (Amt der Kärnter Landesregierung).

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## 3.4 OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS OF THE TERRITORY

### 3.4.1 SLOVENIA

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (<http://eng.gzs.si/slo/>), Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia (<http://www.ozs.si/ozseng/Aboutus.aspx>), Bank Association of Slovenia (<http://www.zbs-giz.si/en/>), Regional Development Agencies (e.g. <http://web.rra-mura.com/default.aspx>; <http://www.rra-sp.si/intro>), Association of Municipalities of Slovenia (ZOS) (<http://www.zdruzenjeobcin.si/index.php?lang=en>), Association of Municipalities and towns of Slovenia (SOS) ([http://www.skupnostobcin.si/zgmenu/english/general\\_about\\_sos/index.html](http://www.skupnostobcin.si/zgmenu/english/general_about_sos/index.html))

### 3.4.2 AUSTRIA

Chamber of Commerce (WKO-Wirtschaftskammer Österreich/ Kärnten), Federation of Austrian Industries (Industriellenvereinigung- IV), Business Agency for Carinthia, Carinthian Economic Promotion Fund (Kärntner Wirtschaftsförderungs Fond- KWF), Slovenian Trade Association in Carinthia (Slovenischer Wirtschaftsverband in Kärnten)

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## IV. CASE STUDIES

### 1. BILATERAL

#### 3.5 AT-IT CASE STUDY

##### *“Intercultural Differences between Austria and Italy”*

###### **3.5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Intercultural differences in communication, language, appreciation and approach may negatively affect the efficiency of projects in a cross-border context. These differences can have various causes – and serious consequences. Therefore, this paper will provide a closer look at some of the intercultural problems and barriers that occurred during a cross-border project between an Austrian and three Italian institutions. Moreover, it will provide an insight into possible underlying causes to these problems. The discovery of the perspective of the project partners involved, the teaching notes and recommendations demonstrate possible solutions how to overcome these difficulties in similar contexts as well as further/ general specificities that have to be taken into account when operating in cross-border projects.

###### **3.5.1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The regions Veneto, Friuli Venetia Giulia and Carinthia agreed on establishing a so called “Euroregion” requiring a more intensive cooperation on a strategic level. Against this background a cross-border project, funded within an European program line, was concerned with the development of cross-border institutional cooperation and an intra- and interregional as well as software-based comparison of municipal services in the three regions. The lead partner of the project was an Italian training organization. Further core partners were two Italian and one Austrian Universities.

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### **3.5.1.2      *STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY***

This case study describes sources of conflicts that occurred during the early phases of the project and led finally to a “critical incident” putting into danger not only the future project steps but also the whole existence of the project and the partnership itself.

The case study is deliberately resting upon the information and views of one project partner involved (Austria). Based on that, questions are raised to encourage the reader to think about the partners reaction, the sources of conflicts (what went wrong; what could have been done to prevent it; etc.) and approaches for possible solutions. Furthermore, recommendations on the basis of relevant literature and theoretical background are developed in order to take into account intercultural aspects and problems in future projects.

### **3.5.2      *PROBLEM AREAS***

#### **3.5.2.1      *SOURCES OF CONFLICT***

The challenge of such a big, complex and demanding project lasting for more than three years and with project partners located at different places and countries was especially the coordination of working together effectively as well as the creation of a common understanding concerning aims, needs, processes and results to be obtained. However, different working cultures, communication styles and conflict behavior strongly influenced the relations between the project partners.

Subsequently the main sources of conflicts that caused the critical incident are mentioned.

- ***Application process***

The initial project proposal was developed by the Italian lead partner (IP1) by fusing two originally different project ideas, which led to imprecise formulations and thematic inconsistencies. The Austrian partner (AP) concentrated on refusing only the most unrealistic aim – the development of shared municipal “cross border-services” – but did not engage in any further content-related discussions after this aim had been abandoned. On the contrary, the Italian partner was deeply

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convinced of the project and highly engaged in getting it submitted and approved. During the application process, Austrian remarks about translation errors or too restricted time frames especially for the crucial work package 2 (WP2) at the beginning of the project were hardly taken into account by the lead partner. This was, of course, noticed by the Austrian partner, but not taken seriously enough as they finally did not believe in the success of the application. However, they did not communicate this, believing that – as a last resort in the unlikely course of a project approval – there would be enough room for re-negotiating and re-adapting the single tasks for reaching the declared aims of the project.

Unexpectedly, the slightly modified application raised a sudden political interest in the region. As a result the Austrian partners on the one hand got under high pressure to take part in the project and on the other hand, due to the political expectations, to ensure the overall success (or to find a “waterproof” exit option).

- ***Misunderstandings concerning “real” contact person and responsibilities***

A second problem arose due to the fact that during the meetings leading to the project submission both partners were represented by the same persons. The misunderstanding developed because in the case of Austria the meetings were headed by the highest representative of the organization (ultimately responsible for personnel and finances), who does never work operatively in projects. This crucial fact was not known or simply misunderstood by the Italian partner, without the Austrian side noticing it. As a result, the Italians believed in “wrong” responsibilities for a very long time. This became extremely problematic, when the Austrians appointed a project leader who was – due to his own hierarchical status – wholly responsible for all further operative decisions. This led to unclear positions and role perceptions from the beginning of the project.

- ***Different project understanding***

After the final project application it seemed that all partners had a common understanding about the content of the project. However, one member of the Austrian team recognized several substantial translation mistakes after the project application process had already been finished. As there never was a detailed discussion between all partners concerning possible mistakes, first concerns arose at the side of the Austrian partners.

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Moreover the Austrian partner's recognition of completely different and contrary project approaches made it more and more difficult to trust in the project and its success. The existing differences in terminology and the disparate understanding of the way to reach the common project aims in general reinforced the already existing doubts of the Austrian team. Finally differences and discrepancies also in methodology as well as in the experience and know-how of the partners increased the already existing tensions.

### **3.5.2.2 CRITICAL INCIDENT**

The Austrian partners tried several ways to make the Italian side understand their situation. These ranged from a personal "non-official" visit before the project start, to several meetings with the Lead partner as well as to the open explanation of the Austrian situation, aims and doubts. However, they had not the impression that the Italian partners took their concerns seriously and subsequently started to "fight" for their positions as from the Austrian side this was a clear sign of a lack of respect and appreciation. The more tense the discussions became, the more the Austrian team accorded their points of view and finally only the Austrian project leader intervened in the discussions. For the Austrians this was another clear signal, as for them referring to hierarchy in a partnership is a sign of stress, of "defending" the own collaborators and of stating their "official" or "institutional" point of view. This behavior and its underlying reasons were obviously not understood by the Italians. When especially one Italian expert, who had been hired by the Lead partner, again and again challenged the Austrian positions and suggestions and finally – from the Austrian point of view – directly and personally attacked the Austrian partners, they came to the conclusion that either there had to be a significant change in the running of the project or they would get out of it altogether. In a meeting, in which the Italian expert again acted in a way that was not acceptable for the Austrians, the Austrian project leader asked for a break and informed the Italian Lead partner that he – with the backing of his institution – would pull out of the project (with the consequence of huge financial losses especially for the Italian side, which had already spent a considerable amount of money). The Lead partner was surprised and shocked and finally consented to the Austrian requirements: a new project design, a more team-oriented approach, and the removal of the Italian expert with whom the Austrians did not want to work any longer. To their big surprise, the Austrians were supported in this conflictive situation by one of the other Italian partner institutions, something they had not expected before as they had

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seen the Italians as united against them. For all partners the situation was extremely stressful and they had huge problems to adapt to it, but they finally found a way to deal with it and to bring the project together to a successful end.

### **3.5.3 PARTNERS PERSPECTIVE**

#### **3.5.3.1 AUSTRIAN'S PERSPECTIVE**

In the Austrian's perspective the main problems arose in the field of "language and communication":

- verbal and non-verbal communication (kisses, hugs, addressing a person, names, titles),
- "translation gaps" (partners often have different associations of the same context),
- humor might be helpful to distress situations (but not every partner has the same understanding of "humor"),

as well as in the field of intercultural "project management" with special focus on hierarchy and different "escalation strategies":

- cultural habits and patterns (meetings, agenda, breaks, dress code, mail/telephone contacts etc.)
- rules and framework: making clear the "rules" already at the beginning of the project (Who speaks?. When, etc.),
- inclusion of the target group: formal (e.g. politicians) vs. informal
- negotiations outside the meeting (dinner conversation etc.)
- addressing the partner correctly and knowing his/her hierarchical status.

For the Austrians it was of high importance to focus on the process and results from the beginning, however the Italians had a sharper focus on building relations but without understanding or openly addressing the Austrian way to deal with relations, conflicts and hierarchies. To overcome the difficulties that arose because of different cultural approaches, sharing a unique / common understanding of the project (aims) would have been an essential premise for the further process. This would have required the awareness of intercultural

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differences as well as a deeper knowledge of the “other” culture. Moreover, continuous critical self-reflections of the partners and a common reflection of the results of the project would have been required (e.g. analyzing the partner’s view, reactions and approaches, identifying the problems and possible solution, creating awareness of future problems to prevent them next time).

### **3.5.3.2 ITALIAN´S PERSPECTIVE**

There are 3 main tricky elements which affected the management of the project and which can be considered the base on which all the following problems arose:

1. the unbalanced partnership (4 Italian partners and only one Austrian)
2. the change of the Austrian reference persons
3. the presence of 3 Universities as partners and a training centre as a lead partner

1. When the project idea was discussed with both the National Coordination offices it was considered important for the policy of the Eu program; because of this there were some elements that had to be included in the project:

- only one Austrian full partner even if the Italians asked to have at least another one
- one more Italian partner from the other region included in the Program area

The presence of only one Austrian partner made the partnership weaker since the exit of this partner can lead to the failure of the project (in cross-border project the presence of at least one partner from each border/Country is compulsory).

2. The development of the project idea was made with different persons of the Austrian partners. The previous representative (which Italian knew as the highest representative and the only one with they had discussed and agreed on the most important issues about the project) did not officially informed about the change. When the new reference person asked to have a meeting for introducing himself it was not clear to the Italian partner his position and responsibility. Moreover, the fact that he did not take part neither to the development of the idea nor to the design of the project, made it very hard to explain the project as a “project of governance”. Italian partners felt scepticism and very low

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appreciation on the aim and content of the project. Besides this, Italians tried to re-build trust with the Austrian side. It was very hard since the Italian perceived signals coming from the “body language” of the partners that meant for them disprecciation and distrust.

3. There are different approaches between academic institutions and practitioner organisations (such as a training centre). People working in these environments have different backgrounds, tend to focus on different priorities and have a different mind-setting while facing problem analysis. Therefore, it happens to have misunderstandings and to lose time on discussing on elements which seem worthless to one part and of crucial importance to the other.

*Concerning the critical incident:*

There was an important delay in the implementation of the activities planned. To the Italians it appeared impossible that Austrians stopped any proposals as “not possible”. In order to proceed with the activities, at least for only a little step, Italians agreed with lot of compromises, but they were worried to be obliged to completely change the project! The Italian’s perception about the Austrians attitudes was that they were acting for making the project a failure. Moreover, there was a perception that Austrians tried to influence the other Italian University partners in order to realise their objective: the project failure. Based on their experience, to Italians the Austrian’s worries and concerns seemed being not so “impossible” to overcome. In such a situation stress was very high and reactions of partners were not completely controlled. Body language, not correctly interpreted, added to the words increased a lot of tension among the partners.

Moreover, the Italians were aware that the Austrians, being the only partner from the other border Country, could make the project fail by their exit. For the Italians any Austrian’s request for modification of the project was therefore perceived as a blackmail.

Beside the previous described situation when the critical incident happened and the Austrians declared their will to exit from the project, the Italian’s reaction was “relationship oriented”.

The Italians asked immediately to have an informal meeting with Austrians and the main reason was first of all to try to clarify the person’s situation with the Austrians independently from the project. The priority, at that point and in such inunpleasant situation, was to rebuild trust between people, „forgetting“ about and independently from the project objectives.

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### 3.5.3.3 *FURTHER QUESTIONS...?*

- What could have been done in general?
- How could the escalation have been prevented?
- What could have done other partners?
- What would you have been done in this situation?
- How would you have prevented it?
- What suggestions, recommendations would you give to the partners?
- What can be done to prevent for the future time?

### 3.5.4 *SOLUTION APPROACHES*

There are various approaches proposed in literature how to overcome difficulties in communication that occur in intercultural project teams. This part will therefore have a closer look on different solutions and will discuss which of the proposed solutions could fit to the concrete requirements of the concrete project.

#### 3.5.4.1 *DEALING WITH DIFFERENT CULTURAL VALUES*

One of the main sources of differences in communication between Austria and Italy are different underlying cultural values. In the following, three possible solutions for dealing with such differences are presented.

- ***Develop intercultural awareness***

The project partners were only generally aware of the fact that cultural differences exist between Austria and Italy. Misunderstandings were caused because of different interpretations of words, but especially also because of difficulties in interpreting the others' behaviour. According to literature, the more people know about each other's cultural background, the more cross-cultural misunderstandings can be avoided. Besides acknowledging that there are cultural differences, one has to understand one's own culture and how it affects the way things are done. After that,

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one can start learning about the other's values, beliefs, and attitudes. In order to become more culturally aware, one can organise a meeting or a workshop together with a mediator who helps the project partners to overcome cultural barriers and create awareness on how the partners perceive each other.

- **Overcome monochronic and polychronic culture shocks**

When monochronic people do business with people from more polychronic cultures, they are likely to get a culture shock, and vice versa. This has also happened during the project. The Austrian project partners complained, for example, about the "chaotic" organisation of meetings, thinking about agendas being sent out very late and a lack of punctuality being problematic. This behaviour is considered to be rude and frustrates people with a monochronic time orientation as they do not understand the reason for this impoliteness. The same is true for the Italians who perceive the Austrian partners to be over-prepared (which is not considered necessary for every setting) and too demanding on deadlines.

There are three basic practical suggestions especially, but of course not only, for rigid-time people to deal with polychronic oriented partners:

- Study the culture of the country you are about to visit and find out whether it is a rather monochronic or polychronic one.
- Avoid judging individuals by your own cultural standards. Rather try to understand them and improve intercultural relationships.
- Be flexible and patient! If you as a monochronic person go to a polychronic country for a business trip, take books with you or work (e.g. paperwork) which you otherwise do not have time to accomplish. Time goes faster then (but this might be interpreted as a lack of interest/respect by the polychronic partner).

- **Create a project culture**

As in a project it is not always possible that one part adapts to the other and because one spends a lot of time together, another possibility to deal with different cultural values is to create a third culture. A project culture is created by all team members who agree on which behaviour is valued during the project and which not. Such a third project culture guides the team members' perceptions and directs their behaviour. It is not a compromise that both parties are agreeing on, but it combines the strengths of the individuals' cultural backgrounds for the purpose of the

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project. This prevents people from thinking that one's own culture is "normal" or even "superior" compared to the other, and fosters shared understanding and leads to fewer misunderstandings.

### 3.5.4.2 **OVERCOME LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

A second predominant issue constitute language barriers due to the communication in a foreign language. Of course, also here cultural values play a role, but this is an issue which can be dealt with in a more precise way.

- ***Employ an interpreter***

The main solution for avoiding misunderstandings related to language is employing an interpreter. Engaging an interpreter at least for big project meetings would foster mutual understanding and comprehension. An interpreter would have to be fluent in both, Italian and German, but it would also be necessary to understand nonverbal messages as well. Moreover, every party usually should have their own interpreter whom they trust. In the project once an interpreter was employed for a meeting and this was the first time that the Austrian partner realised that the Italians were competent in their field of work which some of them did not convey while speaking English. This shows that understanding the others properly contributes to building trust between the parties.

- ***Make use of active listening and observation***

In cross-cultural work situations misunderstandings often occur due to different interpretations based on different cultural values and experiences or a lack of technical vocabulary in the foreign language used. This was also identified to be one of the causes leading to the problems in the project. To overcome such communication barriers, literature suggests active listening as one of the most effective solutions. Active listening means to frequently ask questions to the person speaking and also to paraphrase and summarise what was said to check whether one accurately understood the message and to clarify understanding if necessary. When being aware of the other's cultural values, one can also try to put oneself in the other's shoes and imagine what could be meant in the specific context. For that purpose it might also make sense to consider "active observation" by paying attention to the other party's nonverbal messages. If the listener does not clarify the meaning of the message by themselves, also the sender of the message can

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facilitate a common understanding by providing room for questions and by asking individuals whether the message is clear. Additionally, the speaker can ask questions to check whether the listeners' interpretation matches with one's own thoughts. Active listening cannot only be applied in face-to-face meetings, but also when communicating virtually. In the latter case it is even more important for people conveying a message to keep it simple and clear.

### **3.5.4.3 OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN VIRTUAL TEAMS**

In the project a lot of communication was not done face-to-face but with the help of technology. The project partners reported that email messages made up around 70% of the whole communication. This led to a lack of interpersonal contacts and therefore the relationship suffered.

For project partners that are located geographically at some distance apart it is a) rather difficult to establish relationships and trust, which also was an issue in the project, and b) important to see the advantages and limitations of the different communication means available. Literature reports that face-to-face meetings in the beginning of a project are essential to build relationships and trust, which is a prerequisite for effective team work among the project partners. What might have been more important for the project could have been a better balance of the different communication means. Although it is difficult to meet face-to-face more often, it is possible to enhance the human touch in their virtual communication. It is obvious that for reasons of documentation a lot of the communication has to be done in written form. Additionally, exchanging information via email gives the sender more time to find the right words for what they want to say and the receiver for interpreting the message, especially when not communicating in the mother language (but you have to identify the intercultural differences also in this matter before!). While communication via phone is considered to be harder, not only by the literature but also by the project partners, it keeps the human touch and allows building relationships through more informal chats. The same can be considered to be true for videoconferences (e.g. via skype), which is even closer to face-to-face meetings.

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### 3.5.5 *TEACHING NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

Within such complex and demanding projects lasting over several years and with project partners of different nationalities and with different cultural, historical, legal and administrative backgrounds a variety of **challenges** can arise, such as:

- the coordination and management of working together effectively as a team
- the creation of a common understanding concerning aims
- the individual and overall needs of the partners and the project in general
- the processes and results that have to be obtained, etc.

To manage the challenges and obstacles sustainably and to overcome existing barriers it might be helpful to determine **differences and similarities** in:

- culture,
- history,
- the communication style,
- the working attitude of each partner,
- the conflict behavior,
- the handling of meetings,
- the frame concerning the political, legal and administrative system, etc.

#### **Immediate actions:**

- Do active listening and observation.
- Avoid judging by own cultural standards.
- Use email and phone (videoconferences).

#### **Future actions:**

- Organize a kick-off meeting.
- Do intercultural training.
- Establish a project culture.

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## 3.6 IT-SI CASE STUDY

### ***“Is it only a question of differences in legislation and administrative rules?”***

#### **3.6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following case describes how a bilateral Interreg project between Slovenia and Italy produced some critical situations due to differences in the application of administrative and legislative rules in the two Countries. Moreover it sheds light on a different “meaning/interpretation” given to the strategic objective of the project by the two National partnerships.

The project aimed to improve the “use” and “exploitation” of a river which crosses the two Countries by defining a “river management and maintenance plan” which can be applied in both of the sides.

The Partnership is composed as follows:

1. for Italy the Italian River Basin Authority (Ministry level) a Regional Administration, a Province Administration and a Municipality;
2. for Slovenia the National Institute for the waters (Ministry level) a Development Agency (Lead Partner), the National Institute for health, environment and foods, and 4 Municipalities.

#### **3.6.2 OPENING PARAGRAPH**

The project was designed by the Lead Partner involving all the other partners previously identified. The common idea was to work together in order to improve the use and the exploitation of a river which represents an important natural source for the cross border area. On these premises, each partner was convinced the designing of the project was easy and so the implementation. Both the Slovenians and the Italians agreed to develop a common river management plan based on some analysis concerning the geomorphological aspects, the management of the basin river flows, and other kind of analysis needed to improve the river maintenance thus its exploitation advantaging in particular the Communities living in this area.

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### 3.6.3 **BODY OF THE CASE**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> situation: *the Design of the Project***

During the designing phase a quite important difference arose between the Italian and the Slovenian final aim of the project. While Italians' interests focused the technical aspects of the maintenance of the river as project priority (developing a plan in order to improve the policy, the rules, the activities of preservation of the river and its sides at cross-border level) the Slovenians were primarily focused on the touristic/economic exploitation of it. They were primarily interested in producing as soon as possible and by the project some concrete infrastructure and economic benefit: the implementation of the plan.

All the partners agreed on the importance of the technical analysis but for different final aims.

(see question n.1 and 2)

#### **2nd situation: *the kick of meeting***

The project was submitted and got the funds. The kick of meeting was therefore organised by the lead partner.

During the kick off meeting the lead partner presented the project summarising the main objective, the specific objectives and the work-packages as follow:

WP1 Project management

WP2 Studies and Analysis

WP3 Plans of Actions

WP4 Sustainable development of the river and his surroundings

WP5 Communication and Promotion

During the detail discussion on WP2 and WP3 a critical point arose. The discussion was about the analysis of the water of the river that Italian requested while Slovenians did not want realise. The Italians did not understand the Slovenian position: those analysis respond to the EU rules on the matter which are taken in the Italian law. On the other hand Slovenians consider the Italian's request and insistence as worthless for the project. Plus it could produce a delay in the timetable.

(see questions 3, 4)

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### 3.6.4 QUESTIONS

1. *Is the composition of the partnership balanced in your opinion?*
2. *How do you think the partners solved this situation?*
3. *Why the above mentioned situation arose?*
4. *How do you think the partners solve this situation?*

### 3.6.5 PARTNERS' POINTS-OF-VIEW

#### Italian's Perspective

Italians consider Slovenians rigid in the management of the project activities but a bit "lighting" in following the rules concerning the water analysis.

If the aim of the project is to develop a plan for the maintenance of the river in order to improve the sustainable exploitation and its environment, why refuse to make some analysis of the water?

The Italians suspected the Slovenians refused in order to avoid some adding work, because they are not priority for them but also because those analysis investigate the quality of the bathing water which seems they do not want to consider. These analysis are nevertheless compulsory for the Italian law in particular for any touristic activities.

#### Slovenian's Perspective

Slovenians did not understand the Italian's insistence on that point as the analysis was neither imposed by the Slovenian law nor considered as a priority for the National Authority. The Slovenians where also a bit annoyed by the Italians who did not take care enough about the risk of delay in the timetable.

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### 3.6.6 **HOW IT WAS SOLVED BY THE PARTNERS**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> situation**

Getting aware about that different approach the partner decided to make the activities of the project in a separated way: each of the Country realised the activities planned in its own territory following a common framework. The results would be then joint for developing a common knowledge and guidelines.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> situation**

The partners solved the situation by agreeing that the analysis would be made in a separated way – the Italians would make them along the Italian part of the river, the Slovenians in their part – then the data will be collected by one partner in charge for the development of the Plan. The project avoided therefore to work and face the question of the “bathing river” in a common way.

### 3.6.7 **TEACHING NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Between the partners of the two Countries there are difference in the administrative level and competences. In Slovenia there are neither Regions nor Provinces. These levels are therefore replaced by the Development Agency. The role of this kind of institution is however completely different and more link to the implementation then governance/policy of the activities needed for the river management in charge to the Italian Province and Region.

The problematic situation arose for in particular 2 main elements:

- the different approach to the project by the two National partnership (technical interest versus touristic interest)
- differences in the National laws even within a common EU legislative framework. In fact in Italy qualitative analysis of the waters are necessary for getting permission to have any kind of activities (in particular touristic one)and limits of bathing are higher than in Slovenia. This means along the same river in Italy it is forbidden to swim while just crossing the border it is possible to have a bath.

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## 3.7 SI-AT CASE STUDY

### ***“Do intercultural differences impact our point of view and our decisions?”***

#### **3.7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Cross-border cooperation or international cooperation demands a lot of adaptation to different cultures where the participating partners come from. Cross-cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts or even to a collapse of the project if the partners can not manage to overcome these differences. Therefore, at least basic knowledge about the involved partners' culture is a good beginning to avoid problems connected with cultural differences.

Bellow, the bilateral cross-border project REGIOLAB between Slovenia and Austria is presented with two situations, where cultural differences (different perception, different point of view) can lead to prolonged discussions about certain topics or tasks.

#### **3.7.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION<sup>3</sup>**

The project Regiolab was developed under the Operational Programme Slovenia-Austria 2007-2013. There were 13 partners from Slovenia and Austria involved in the project.

The cross-border region (Styria, Carinthia and Burgenland on the Austrian side as well as Gorenjska, Koroška, Podravje and Pomurje on the Slovenian side) has a lot of development potentials, institutions, knowledge and ideas which are used, nevertheless, independently and without (steady) cross-border connections. The cross-border cooperation must be supported. For interested companies, institutions and organisations the way must be paved for cross-border activities and supporting services should be offered. These supporting services could be: absorption of initial expenses for preparations and the development of cooperations e.g. in connection with market or partner searching, getting to know the business sphere and its

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<sup>3</sup> RegioLab. Project description: <http://www.regiolab.info/index.php?id=1427&L=3>



institutions on the other side of the border, with the acquisition of missing knowledge and with securing of a location for the cross-border business activities.

The basic objective of the project was the establishment of a functional platform for a quicker and more uniform development of the whole cross-border region Austria (in particular Styria and Carinthia) – Slovenia.

This was done on the basis of supporting innovation and the use of the whole as well as the complementary competence and the improvement of cross-border (international) cooperation between companies, educational institutions, development organisations, supporting and regional organisations, political and administrative bodies and other actors at local, regional and national level with the intention to rise the competitiveness of the cross-border region in the international benchmark.

### **3.7.3 PROBLEM AREAS**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> situation: agreeing on work packages**

In December 2009, a kick-off meeting took place in Graz at the headquarters of the Lead Partner of the project. At the meeting the project partners discussed about the implementation of the various work packages, as well as about the partners' competences and expectations to decide on the common vision of the project.

The work packages were as follows<sup>4</sup>:

WP1: Project management and coordination

WP2: Communication, advertisement for the project and dissemination of results

WP 3: Definition of key development competences as well as thematic key areas for the cooperation in the cross border region and the improvement of competitiveness

WP 4: Development and pilot use of instruments for the support of cooperations between the key actors, preparation of pilot projects and plans for continuation activities of the cooperation

The critical incident connected with cultural differences between partners accrued at discussing the WP2.

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<sup>4</sup> RegioLab. Workpackages: <http://www.regiolab.info/index.php?id=1428&L=3>

The activities in Workpackage 2 are dedicated to the relief of the communication between the partners, the advertisement for the project activities to the broad public as well as the dissemination of the project results for the professional public and the general public. The communication between the project partners and the public will be held by the web page (in German, in Slovenian, in English) and will be held up-to-date from the partners regularly. The public will also be informed by project news (project newspaper) which appear every six months. Furthermore the project partners will write contributions about important events of the project in the medias. At the project end a final conference including a press conference will be organized in Austria.

The critical points<sup>5</sup> in WP2:

First, the Slovenian and Austrian partners had different vision of which project activities and project results should be given to the professional public and which to the general public.

Second, the partners were not consistent whether to put all the documents and information on the web page in national language and in English or just the main documents and information and other is then in the domain of each partner.

The critical points arose mainly due to the intercultural differences and connected with that it leads to different points of view for realization of a certain task. The Slovenian perception was to put all the needed information and documents available to general public and at the same time to professional public in order to raise the attention for cross-border cooperation in general. Specific documents, designed and useful only for professional public, should be available in the restricted area (to log in with a password). Documents and information designed only for national public can be available only in national language and documents which are in interest of both Slovenian and Austrian public should be available in national and English version. The Austrian perception was slightly different and they were more in favor to strictly divide the documents and information available for professional and general public. And the Austrians were defending the view point that all the information on the web page should be available in both national languages and English. Further discussion and extra time was needed to find a common solution, agreed on both sides.

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<sup>5</sup> The critical incident presented is fictional.

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> situation: agreeing on the concept of functional platform

As already mentioned, the basic objective of the project was the establishment of a functional platform for a quicker and more uniform development of the whole cross-border region Austria – Slovenia.

The Functional Platform for the promotion of the collaboration between different project users serves the project participants and other project end users as a tool for the coordination of the interests for the collaboration in the area of the cross-border region for development purposes, for the orientation and promotion of different forms of collaboration, for monitoring of the effects of the collaboration, for initiatives and recommendations, for the promotion of the model for the collaboration and development and for the search for partners outside of the cross-border region.

To reach the common goal of the project, the partners had to discuss and agree on the target groups and beneficiaries of the project, as well as on the “functional platform” itself.

Within the scope of the suggested project the project partners concentrate on three target groups:

- Educational institutions as an innovation bearer and bearer of the technological development, creation of the business and supporting sphere,
- Organisations for the realization of the supporting services,
- Regional development organisations, regional and local administrative authorities and other actors for the orientation, support and coordination of the general regional development.

Key users of the project are especially active small and medium sized companies (SME) in the cross-border region, who are the majority on both sides of the border. Within the scope of the project new tools are developed by the partners in order to support and complete already existing various forms of business cooperations for educational institutions and companies of (B2B). Other groups of users include: educational institutions which will not directly take part in the project, educational mediators, management consultants and business consultants, company support institutions, unions, chambers, political subjects, decision makers, performing

organisations in the area of regional development etc. These groups will get access to information and to knowledge which will be developed within the scope of the project.<sup>6</sup>

The critical point<sup>7</sup> arose when, after agreeing on the target groups and beneficiaries, partners discussed about the concept of the functional platform, which should cover all the target groups. The Slovenian perspective was to prepare one common functional platform which covers all three target groups. There is one main representative (administrator) responsible for the platform (either from Austria or Slovenia). The Austrian perspective was to prepare three functional platforms, for each target group separate one. And connected to that, the Austrians also defended the point of view to have three representatives, for each platform one representative. Similarly, as in the first situation, further discussion and extra time was needed to agree on a common solution.

### 3.7.4 QUESTIONS

#### Questions for 1<sup>st</sup> situation:

- 1) Is different vision, different perspective between project partners regarding publishing project documentation, results etc. something natural or it can also be connected to intercultural differences?
- 2) Is the agreement on the use of language/languages in international projects important?
- 3) Can we avoid such disagreements and spending extra time to find a common solution? How?

#### Questions for 2<sup>nd</sup> situation:

- 1) Do intercultural differences have an impact on partner's preferences how the project result will look like (in our case the functional platform)?
- 2) Do intercultural differences have an impact on the decision making regarding overtaking the responsibilities for the smooth operation of the project result (in our case – who or how many people will be the representative of the platform)?
- 3) What suggestions would you give to the project partners?

<sup>6</sup> RegioLab. Project description: <http://www.regiolab.info/index.php?id=1427&L=3>

<sup>7</sup> The critical incident presented is fictional.

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## 3.8 TRILATERAL

### *“A Matter of Communication”*

#### **3.8.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following case describes an exchange of e-mails among three Partners, involved in a trilateral cross-border project on intercultural issues and project management. They are discussing about the next meeting in Ljubljana that was planned in the previous encounter.

The three Partners are training organisations: an Austrian University, a Slovenian University and a Training&Consulting centre for Public Administration from Italy. The three Partners have been cooperating for more than 5 years in transnational projects.

The reference persons for the Universities are the Faculty Directors (as project directors) and some Researchers (as project managers). For the Italian Centre are involved the Director and a project manager.

#### **3.8.2 OPENING PARAGRAPH**

The three partner organisations had to meet for a training session on “intercultural topics” at the Slovenian partner’s Centre in Ljubljana.

The date of the meeting was agreed and planned some months before by the three partners. Despite this the meeting (and training) could take place only if a budgeted change for the Slovenian and Italian partners would be approved by the National Agency (NA). This change was also needed to involve a professional trainer on intercultural issues. The contacts with the external trainer were managed by the Italian Partner that had alerted him about the dates and contents but never confirmed in waiting for the approval confirmation.

In order to get the request approval Slovenian, but in particular the Italian partner devoted a substantial effort, sending lots of information and documents to the NA. Nevertheless the approval arrived with a large delay which caused incertitude about the possibility to held the meeting/training thus confirm the contract to the trainer.

It was used that the hosting partner sent the Agenda to the others at least two weeks before the planned date. Due to the fact that the approval arrived 4 days before this rule was missed.

Moreover no information was sent neither by the Slovenian nor the Italian partner until when the approval arrived.

At that point the communications started among the partners and with the external trainer who was still waiting for the confirmation of the training.

In particular the Italian Partner was worried about the little time the trainer had to prepare the programme. Moreover the trainer was reachable only by e-mail and with difficulties (he was involved in a training sessions till late in the evening)and he could reply only late at night.

Therefore the Italian Partner sent a proposal for postponing the date of the meeting to the other partners.

At the same time the Slovenian partner sent a proposal of Agenda.

Here follow the exchange of e-mails among the three partners which generate an important conflicting situation.

### **3.8.3 BODY OF THE CASE**

19.05.201...

**Austrian Partner**

Dear all,

I confirm the participation of Alexandra and myself; a postponing of the meeting is not feasible, because we're already running out of time.

If necessary, we might shift our trilateral workshop to Thursday and work with the trainer on Tuesday and Wednesday, but our next free dates are actually at the end of March/beginning of April - and that is way too late.

Best regards.

H.

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**19.05.201...**

**Italian Partner**

Dear All,

I thank all of you for your prompt reactions (sorry for our delays due to an important project we are working in with a very close dead line!)

I think now there is only one more element in "stand-by" concerning the dates which has to be confirmed by the trainer. In fact it seems he had pensilled down February 4th and 5th instead of 5th and 6th.

I hope he contacts us this evening and confirms his availability for the stated dates since we have no possibility to anticipate our coming and staying in Ljubljana due to the same "important project" dead line I mentioned before.

We are very sorry, but this time we are not in a position to meet the Austrian proposal. We therefore hope the trainer can arrange his agenda according to the stated dates.

We wish you a nice week end with less raining than here :-(

Kind regards

L.

**20.05.201...**

**Austria Partner**

Dear partners,

sorry to be so blunt, but as already many mails have been sent and calls been passed I just would like us all to remember some issues:

- first of all we have fixed the date of this meeting well in advance and also the general framework (Tuesday, 14h, tri-regional partner meeting, working on tri-regional case study; Wednesday and Thursday workshop with the trainer).

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- secondly we pressed our Lead partner and the NA for a budget shift and for the inclusion of the trainer - and they are already informed about the meeting and the date, as we pushed for an answer

- and this means thirdly that it would make a more than bad impression if we now told them "sorry, but there was a mistake on our side, it's not so urgent anymore", apart from the fact that we really would have problems to fix a new date and that time is already running out

So there is really no alternative to us meeting from Tuesday till Thursday in Bled - and if some partner can't attend the whole meeting, we 'll have to find a way how to deal with this situation pragmatically.

I'm very sorry, but this is not a proposal, but a very serious request to all of us in order to avoid creating a really problematic situation not only for us as a regional network but also for the whole partnership.

Kind regards

H.

**20.05.201...**

**Italian Partner**

Dear Hub,

I admit I am really very sorry and sad to read this message, but maybe I used a wrong sound and words for my communication.

We confirmed the dates of meetings till the beginning as were planned:

- 4th afternoon for working on the trilateral case study
- 5th and 6th all day training.

And we continue to confirm them.

For us it is not possible to be in Bled in the morning of Tuesday 4th; we can leave only after 12.

Therefore if the trainer could have not been present on th 6th and the training would be anticipated on 4 and 5 all day we - we could have not taken part! (Sorry but the project I am speaking is not only strategic but essential. Italian economic situation at present is not so easy!)

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In any case, I was speaking to the trainer while you sent the e-mail in order to plan and organize everything. Do not worry since he confirmed me the stated dates:

- Tuesday 4th afternoon - development of case study
- Wednesday 5th and Thursday 6th: 2 full days training.

We will work during the week-end and send the proposed program for your evaluation.

Kind regards,

L.

### **3.8.4 QUESTIONS**

The above conversation among partners created huge tensions.

1. *Do you find some elements in the text of the e-mails which could cause such reactions?*
2. *Are some words used by the partners you consider particularly hurting for the receiver?*
3. *What do you think could be the position/reaction of the Slovenian partner?*
4. *How could be acted to avoid the situation?*

### **3.8.5 PARTNERS' POINTS-OF-VIEW**

#### **The Austrian partner's reaction**

##### *Background information:*

It has to be mentioned, that the Austrian Partners have not been informed that the meeting planned might be threatened and not to be held. The first reaction and information was received just after the Austrians attempt to reach any reference from the Italian and/or Slovene Partners what was going on and what should be prepared. This happened two weeks before the original meeting date. Until the Austrian's demand, any partner made an effort to share information about the current Italian/ Slovene situation (they had big problems with the National Agency concerning financials) and the further procedure planned. This means, that the Austrian Partners had a big lack of information although they would have been willed to help their partners concerning

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communication with the German lead partner and the National Agency. This could have been advantageous to everyone and it possibly might have reduced further troubles.

#### *Reaction:*

The Austrian Partners wanted to organize and to work at the common training session most professional and efficient, not only to fulfil the overall project requirements but also to get out most of the training and for practise. For the Austrians the disasters began as it seemed to be impossible to held the meeting at the fixed date – just because of delays of the other partners. As the training session was a compulsory part it had to be held. In the view of the Austrians there was no space for postponement. This is why the target-oriented Austrians became tensed and very direct - “pragmatic” - in the e-mail conversation. They had the feeling to be at the mercy of the Italian and Slovenian partners.

As the partners run out of time and no solution seemed to be in sight, the emotional reaction of the Italian partners that seemed to be an attack against the Austrian pragmatism made them angry but also disappointed. At that moment for the Austrians it seemed that they are the “bad guys” which was absolutely not understandable for them, as they just wanted to “rescue” the training and work effectively.

Moreover, the Austrian partners were very frustrated about the Slovenian’s non-reaction. In their point of view the original problem developed because of delays of the Slovene. All the more they could not understand and accept their passive attitude. The Austrians would have expected an explanations or proposal at least.

The delay concerning the meeting and the development of the e-mail conversation made the Austrian partners feeling misunderstood and alone within this common project team.

#### **The Slovenian partner’s reaction**

The Slovenian Partners were the organizer of the meeting and the training session in Ljubljana. The problem occurred, because the Slovenian partners (and as mentioned before also the Italian partners) needed a budget change to be able to held the meeting and the training with external trainer. The budget change had to be confirmed by the German National Agency and as long as the confirmation was not received, the Slovenian partners were in an uncertain position whether it would be possible to run the meeting and the training or not. The communication only took part between the Slovenian and Italian partners, as both needed the confirmation from the NA and were trying to solve the situation as soon as possible. The Austrian partners were not involved in

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this communication process, because the Slovene did not want to burden them with this problem, as they were expecting to get the confirmation soon, however, it lasted longer than expected. This was the reason of the Slovenians first non-reaction to the Austrian partners. The Slovenians tried to receive any tangible information from the NA first and to then explain the situation to the Austrians. But the planned date of the meeting was approaching very soon and the confirmation from the NA was still not received. Therefore, the Italian partners send a proposal to postpone the meeting and the Austrians, of course, did not know the background for this reason, so that the conflict finally began.

In all the years of the Slovenian cooperation with the Austrian and Italian partners there have not been such issues (conflicts) like that. The Slovenian partners were used to a very friendly and open communication style.

The style of communication especially by the email conversation (the emails presented in the Body of the Case) seemed problematic to the Slovenian partners. Such open issues should be better solved in an open dialog approach in the Slovenian's point of view. That was also the reason why the Slovenian partners did not respond to these emails.

When the Slovenian partners finally had a chance to openly speak at the meeting with each partner about the issues happened, it seemed that the Austrian and Italian partners interpreted the Slovenian nonresponse in a "wrong" way. This issue was an experience for the Slovene partners. Therefore, they had learned that in similar future cases it would be better to use a phone conversation immediately (easier to discuss issues as via email) and not to wait until meeting the other partners directly at the meeting.

### **The Italian partner's reaction**

The Italian Partner was hurt in reading the Austrian e-mails since it seemed not to take in any consideration his own problems and propose to have the meeting in any case even without the Italian.

The Italian Partner which worked a lot to get the approval for the meeting/training which benefited all the partners, felt as the Austrian was not taking into account the Italian participation. The focus seemed to be on only the maintaining the date even if the results of the training were poor on quality.

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The Italian Partner would like to express (let the Austrian know) his “feelings” on that question, considering the Austrian Partner an “old partner” and “friend”

There are some words used by the Austrian which hurt the Italian a lot. In particular .....

The Italian Partner was also disappointed about the Slovenian Partner behaviour and silence. As hosting partner it was supposed it had a more active position in the organisation of the meeting while it completely avoided to enter in the discussion.

### **3.8.6 SOLUTION APPROACHES**

As seen in the previous chapters literature proposes different solutions to overcome difficulties. Here following we would like to add some tips which emerged from the trilateral experience above described and can be used as golden rules for managing cross-border meetings.

#### **Knowledge about partners’ cultures**

It is important to organise activities, occasions that make partners know each other and each other culture.

Take into consideration that the first important element is to create confidence/trust among the partners (remember this till the kick-off meeting!)

Organize intercultural training for partners

Organise continuously occasions of reflection of intercultural differences

#### **Combine country characteristics**

- Combination produces heavy, substantial content;
- Italian originality produces new possibilities;
- Austrians provide basic structure and organisation; others can add and change;
- Slovenians can “mellow” Austrians;
- Anyone dominating ruins the dish;
- Use diversity as “decoration”, not for the main dish;
- Outcomes are more important than rules and that works also for cultural differences;
- Leaving and valueing diversity is better than compromise;
- In structuring diversity: find your own rules;

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- 
- Offer people “buffet” solutions;
  - Use the context, but also: beware the context;
  - Do something with people’s energy;

## Communication

There are different ways and means of communication which have different level of effectiveness according to the situations (not only e-mails, not only written form,...).

Literature identifies a hierarchy which indicates at the first level the “call” as the most important and the instant message the lower. Actually this hierarchy cannot be considered as a rule since it depends on culture and age. According to Chester’s hierarchy it seems that people born before 1980 consider personal meetings and telephone calls as preferred mean of communication while social network or instant message are used only if all the other failed. The opposite situation is for people born after 1980!

Culture also must be taken into consideration in the choice of communication means.

Austrians seems having an “escalation strategy” which is not for Italians. Austrians use “neutral e-mail” when the situation is normal and for general communications. If the situation becomes problematic they uses phone calls. The following and last step for communications very critical is the “formal e-mail”.

Italians usually do not act with the same strategy. Also for this topic we can lists some reminders:

- Use *other tools* than only language
- Do not forget the *body language*:
  - Facial expression (smile means happy in Europe but argue in China)
  - Hand and arm gestures
  - Yes and no (in South India to shake the head side to side means “Yes”)
  - Personal space
  - Eyes contact
  - Touching
- In *written communication* there are different ways and means which have different level of effectiveness according to the situations (not only e-mails, not only written form,...), culture, age,... .

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### ***The Golden Rules of Communication***

- Short and clear writing
- Use neutral language
- Be received oriented
- Use neutral
- Verify through feed back
- Think 10 times before pressing “send”
- Know when to call
- Do not get emotional
- Separate personal from group
- Select type of communication by receiver
- e-mail “evidence” (trail)
- Sleep-on it before responding
- ignore it
- specify deadlines (not ASAP)
- and so: ensure that all stakeholders are included
- be careful about cc
- Ask questions if you feel uncertain
- Be patient
- Ask the right questions
- Answer within 24h
- Begin the messages with “Dear” if not inform the other
- Openly express feelings about others
- Do something with people’s energy;
- Use other tools than only language
- Work for finding the 3rd way (Do not find the compromise but the 3rd way.)hungry/sad
- Ask questions trying to figure out what’s happened rather than think and try to find the solution by yourself

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### **Perception of responsibility: “conflict avoidance approach”**

How we might define the so-called “typical Slovenian reaction” to conflict resolution? It has to be pointed out that at least two perspectives can be observed within Slovenian society:

- Firstly, a typical reaction would be the avoidance of conflict - for example, when somebody does not want to solve a problem, which means using a particular conflict situation in a positive manner.
- Secondly, an individual might enter into conflictive relationship with the intention to behave in a destructive manner. The consequence of such a destructive process is a situation where ongoing disagreement would exist for a long time among the two.

Anyhow, we might say that a lot of individuals are not capable to perceive conflicts in a constructive manner – with a clear vision of a possible exit strategy. The conflict avoidance approach is something really different than conflict prevention which is supposed to be an approach that would lower tensions among people, with possible agreement at the very end of a certain process. Many practical situations not only within the public sector but also within society show that employees are sometimes unresponsive towards clients and to the other stakeholders when they feel themselves not capable to carry out a specific task or feel overburdened. In this context, conflict avoidance tactics could be understood as a defense of the organisational internal image, using an approach of “silenzio stampa” (information blockade). This can also be observed in the individual behaviour of many Slovenes when they cannot accept critique and “react” with “silence”.

### **Stress management**

When people is under stress situations rationality is overcome by impulsive reaction

The more stress, the more important stereotypes will become

The more you are stressed the more you do not see the “person” but the stereotypes link to his/her Country.

In stressful situation stereotypes may impact/influence your judgment

Under stress even if you have a good partners’ relationship, you react according to your National habits

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### 3.8.7 *TEACHING NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS*

- 1) In cross-border projects, international projects we always face intercultural differences which can affect the project actions.
- 2) Language is a very important part of each international project and its communication. The partners have to agree on a use of a common language that is suitable for all partners involved.
- 3) At the beginning of the international project it is very recommendable to get to know the other partners' cultural differences, to avoid misunderstandings, conflicts etc.
- 4) It is recommendable to set concrete rules at the beginning of the project, regarding the way of communication, the way of holding a meeting, the way of solving misunderstandings etc.
- 5) Ask questions; ask for an extra explanation when something is not clear enough, to avoid misunderstanding



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## THE GOLDEN RULES

Summarizing we propose here some “GOLDEN RULES” for dealing cross-border relationships and meetings deriving from the concrete experience of the authors of this document.

- Create positive, open working atmosphere/fun/teambuilding
- Increase awareness of differences on culture
- Increase awareness of difficulty to cope with differences
- Stereotypes: introduce and discuss them
- Understand complexity of culture, Build knowledge of “other” cultures: institutional, environment, hierarchy, history.
- Explicit understanding of partners’ approach to objectives.
- Distinguish culture from individual behaviour and the project itself.
- Individuals behaviour may differ from prejudice/stereotype
- Use Hofstede as “scientific” starting point for differences
- Reflection and analysis of the past experiences/cases to benefit from
- Openly express feelings about others
- Learning by doing: cases, experiences
- Give concrete examples of difficulties (case studies) and solutions
- Discuss critical incidents: concrete!
- Do I get the right meaning? As a constant question
- Ask Questions if you feel uncertain
- Work out common rules of communication
- Work on finding the “third way”
- Be patient
- Have in mind that people can feel differently in same situation
- Work on build good result and good relationship

Finally:

***“Learn to plan international meetings - especially KICK-OFF meetings!”***

## V. EXAMPLE OF DOCUMENTS FOR A LESSON ON INTERCULTURAL TRAINING ON CROSS-BORDER MEETINGS

### 1. INVITATION AND PROGRAM

#### ***Management of cross-border projects: the organisation of the kick-off meeting of your cross-border project***

*Pasian di Prato, 02 -04-2014 – 9h30*

*Meeting Venue: ForSer Centre – Conference small room*

*This training module is part of a Training Course for project managers of cross-border projects developed by the CBN<sup>8</sup> within the Pat-Tein project<sup>9</sup>.*

*The Course aims to give the participants the possibility to enter in, analyse in depth and make practice of all the phases of the life cycle of a cross-border project: identification and definition of the idea, establishing the partnership, planning, implementation and assessment.*

*The present **Module** focuses one important moment of the “Implementation phase”:  
**the kick-off meeting.***

*One of the most important rules to learn and keep in mind for working with others in a positive and successful way is “starting in the right way”. The kick-off meeting is the most important occasion (because the first!) for establishing TRUST and CREDIBILITY among the cross-border partners.*

*This module aims to make the participants able to organise the kick-off meeting of a cross-border project with Austrian, Italian and Slovenian participants paying particular attention to the intercultural aspects.*

*Exercises, case-study analysis, active activities, discussions will be alternated with some theoretical rules. This is why participants will be asked to take active part and interact with colleagues and the trainers as to make possible practice and “live” the learnings.*

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<sup>8</sup> CBN: Cross-Border Network for Applied Research and Training founded in 2011 by the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, ForSer Formazione per la Pubblica Amministrazione, Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy and the University of Ljubljana, Faculty for Administration, Slovenia - [www.cross-border-network.net](http://www.cross-border-network.net)

<sup>9</sup> Pat-Tein is a project funded by the Leonardo da Vinci program involving 8 partners of the 5 border regions. The aim of the project is to transfer after adaptation, a “**specific toolkit for managing cross-border projects**” developed and already used by the project leader Euro-Institut.

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## PROGRAM

- 09:30**      **Welcome and presentations**  
*Introduction of the Pat-tein project and of the training for Manager of Cross-Border Projects. Presentation of the trainers. (ForSer - Udine)*  
**Introduction of participants.** (Cuas-Villach)
- 10.00**      **Presentation of the daily program and Expectation Analysis** (ForSer - Udine)
- 10:10**      **Premises**  
*Exercise 1*  
*Development of a Kick-off meeting Program and invitation for the partners coming from the border areas (Carinthia, Slovenia, Friuli Venezia Giulia) (Faculty of Administration - Ljubljana)*
- 10.30**      **coffee break**
- 10.45**      *1<sup>st</sup> session: Get knowledge of the “partners’ culture, habits, patterns, identity*  
**Culture&Stereotypes** (Cuas-Villach)
- 11:30**      *2<sup>nd</sup> session: “Project Objectives”- Reaching an agreement on the objectives, activities, interests among the partnership. (Cuas-Villach)*
- 12.30**      **Lunch break**
- 13.15**      *3<sup>rd</sup> session: **Communication in a cross-border context.** (ForSer – Italy)*
- 14.00**      *4<sup>th</sup> session: **How to cope with differences - Learning from the experiences.** (Faculty of Administration - Ljubljana)*
- 14.45**      *Final reflections on lessons learned during all the sessions<sup>10</sup> and feed backs (ForSer Udine, Cuas Villach, Faculty of Administration Ljubljana)*
- 15:30**      *Wrap-up and bye-bye*

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<sup>10</sup> After each sessions the participants are asked to pencil in the “lessons learned” which will be discussed during the Final Reflection.

### **Specific Objectives:**

- *Introduce participants in the cross-border projects specificity*
- *Improve the knowledge on the partners countries*
- *Increase the awareness of the importance of the intercultural issues in the management of cross-border projects.*
- *Improve the ability to recognize and overcome obstacles deriving from cultural differences among partners coming from the border Countries*
- *Get the main rules for the organization of a kick-off meeting of a cross-border project.*

**Didactical Methods:** *workshop based on case studies relating to the specific border area At-It-SI, role playing, exercises, discussions*

### **Language**

*The language used during the training is English.*

### **Registration**

*For a better organization please confirm your participation to:*

#### *Austria*

**Kathrin Winkler** - [k.winkler@fh-kaernten.at](mailto:k.winkler@fh-kaernten.at)  
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Europastraße,4 | 9524Villach- Tel: +43(0)5/90500-1221

#### *Italy*

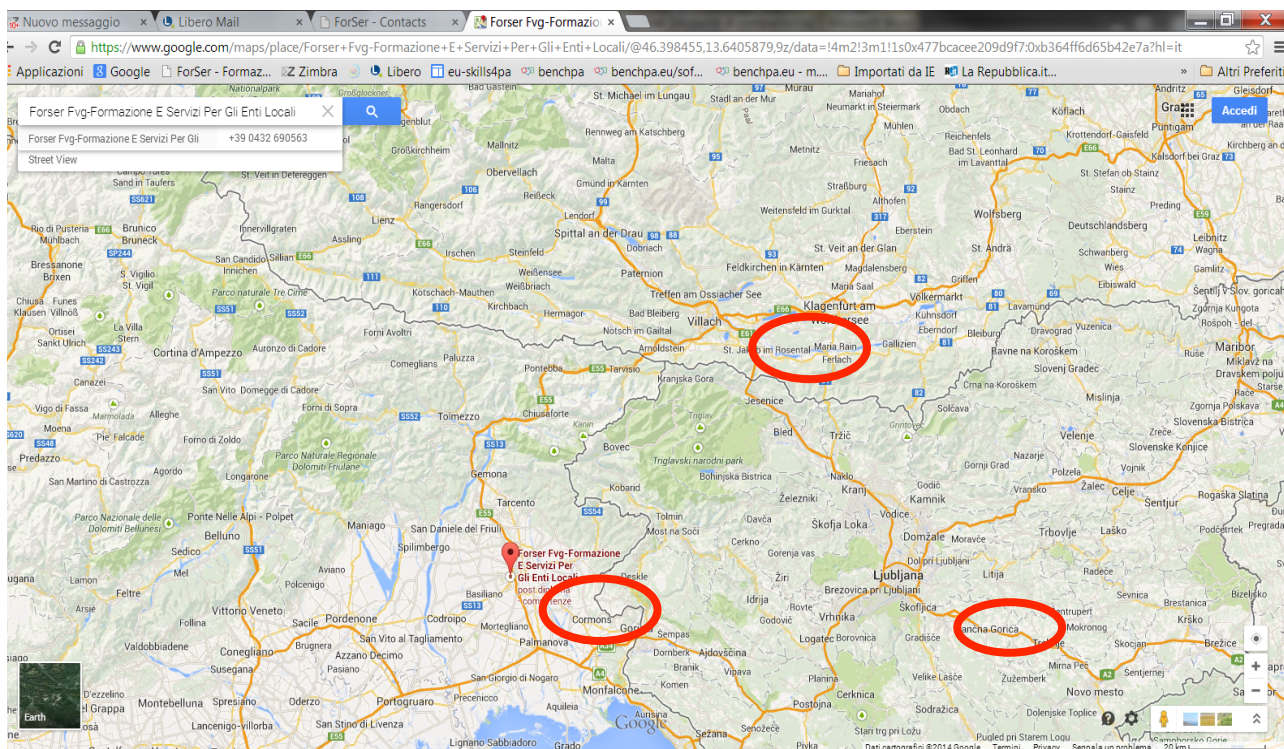
**Milena Grion** – [m.grion@forser.it](mailto:m.grion@forser.it)  
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#### *Slovenia*

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Gosarjeva ulica 5 SI-1000 Ljubljana - [t]: + 386 1 5805 542

*The participation to the Module is free of charge.*

How to reach ForSer Centre: <http://www.forser.it/forser/index.jsp?idPagina=55>



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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## 2. SLIDES

*Annex: Pilot Test\_Slides*

## 3. QUOTES

We reported some comments received from the participants of training sessions regarding their experience:

*“really very good for team building”*

*“trilateral case study was a big benefit for the trilateral CB-work between AT/IT/SL”*

*“useful methods + theoretical input for trainers to get & understand things and how to better solve problems”*

*“we learn a methodology on how to develop a program specific for this border area including the specificities of these three cultures”.*

### **What it was liked more by participants**

- *Dealing with prejudice and stereotype*
- *First meeting = good opportunity*
- *Good interaction among participants*
- *Importance of the background of the partners*
- *Good balance between theoretical input and exercises*
- *Cooperate with smile*
- *Get/ask for a feed back from the partners to be sure of what they have understood*
- *Well organised*
- *Better understanding of «task vs relationship orientation» and risk aversion*
- *Communication – never enough*
- *Listening each other means «understanding»*
- *Indirect questions to get answers of indirect communicators*
- *Culture has even more influence then I thought*
- *Enthusiasm*
- *Importance of relations and right communication*

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## VI. LESSONS LEARNED

### 1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF THE AT-IT-SI BORDER

#### Geographical Aspects

- Tri-lateral CB region
  - Carinthia (Austrian land - 556.845 inhabitants)
  - Friuli-Venezia Giulia (autonomous region - 1.2 million inhabitants)
  - The state of Slovenia (2 million inhabitants)
- Mountain “Dreiländereck / Peč / Monte Forno” - embedded in greater “Alpe-Adria Region”
- Mountain range “Karawanken” (AT-SI) and the Carnic Alps (AT-IT)
- Pine forests, mountains, lakes and well known tourist destinations (e.g. skiing)

#### Characteristics of the border-region

- 3 different languages (+ dialects) → consequence: English as official working language between partners and in training activities
- 3 different administrative systems and cultural backgrounds → important influence on business-cooperation and CB projects
- Common history but cultural differences in cooperation matters (e.g. meetings)
- Behavioural specifics → difficult to describe special characteristics for the Alpe-Adria Region as a whole

The AT-IT-SI border area is highly reliant on cooperation in an economic, educational and also cultural perspective for its future development!

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## 2. LESSONS LEARNED IN THE AT-IT-SI BORDER AREA

### Benefits of the AT-IT-SI Border Team

- Close cooperation in a trilateral network and with the other PAT-TEIN project partners
- Experiences from other border areas helped to compare and understand the own border situation
- Thorough analysis of the systemic, political, legal, administrative and intercultural differences between the three countries AT-IT-SI
- Specific training needs for civil servants in a trilateral context --> development/ professionalization of the partners own training skills/ training modules
- Toolkit from the EI as a base for further CB work and training courses but need for further specification and regional adaptation
- Enhancement of knowledge and intercultural understandings as well as networking between the individuals and civil servants from AT, IT and SI as highly relevant support for CB cooperation within the Alpe-Adria-Region
- Learning from the experiences, reflection and feedback from the trilateral border team, the PAT-TEIN network, partners and participants from training course

### Strategy and Transfer

- Transfer strategy used: **3rd Way Approach**
  - Understanding the partner's approach
  - 1 common goal and 1 common starting point but 3 different approaches (AT, IT, SI) to reach the goal
- Task- vs. Relationship-Orientation
  - AT: task-orientated; IT: relationship-orientated; SI: 50%-50% (young task-orientated vs. old relationship-oriented people)
- 3 different languages (and dialects) --> consequence: English as official working language (with all advantages/ disadvantages)



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## Sustainability

Big benefits from the involvement of the PAT-TEIN project:

- Intensive relationship between the AT, IT and SI partners as well as with the PAT-TEIN network as a whole
- Maintaining and advancing the relation and CB cooperation work between AT-IT-SI in particular
- Common cross-border project plans (e.g. Horizon 2020)
- Enhancement of knowledge and intercultural understandings as well as networking between the individuals/civil servants from AT, IT and SI
- Regional and local cooperation between AT and IT, IT and SI, AT and SI
- Synergy effects between the PAT-TEIN project and another TOI projects of the partners (NEXT4PA – Creativity and Innovation for Public Administration). The synergies and learning effects were considerable and very fruitful.

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### 3. ADDED VALUE OF THE PAT-TEIN PROJECT

- Enhancement of the CB cooperation for border regions in the EU territory
- Examination of questions and problems that exist for those border regions --> "problem solving approach"
- Elimination of the lack of knowledge, improvement of the know how as well as sensitisation of people and actors (civil servants) living within border regions regarding the necessity of CB cooperation
- Professionalization of the approaches, methodologies and instruments used and developed for transfrontier projects and CB project management
- Building of social intercultural competences to deal with the existing obstacles in border regions
- Knowledge about the neighbour states (administrative, legal and political system, culture, history, geography, etc.)
- Understanding of different points of view of the CB partner's perspective and approach
- Negotiation and creation of confidence and empathy in CB cooperation
- Use of the tool for intercultural CB project management of the EI as a base
- Adaption and modification of the toolkit to the needs of each CB region --> border specific tool
- Development of bi- and trilateral case studies
- Testing phase with pilot actions of practical training

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## VII. PARTNERS

**Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (CUAS)** offers more than 30 degree programs in the fields of technic, health, social matters and economy. In the field of economy a specialization in Public Management is provided. Public Management is characterized through engagement in cross-border projects within the European Union.

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**ForSer – Formazione e servizi per la Pubblica Amministrazione** is a school for public administration. It offers services for education of civil servants. The area of activity aims to develop and support concepts and processes concerning the development and improvement of public administrations.

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**University of Ljubljana** is the oldest and biggest university of Slovenia and involves about 26 faculties. The faculty for public administration is seen as the most important establishment within the field of education and investigation of public administrations within Slovenia.

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