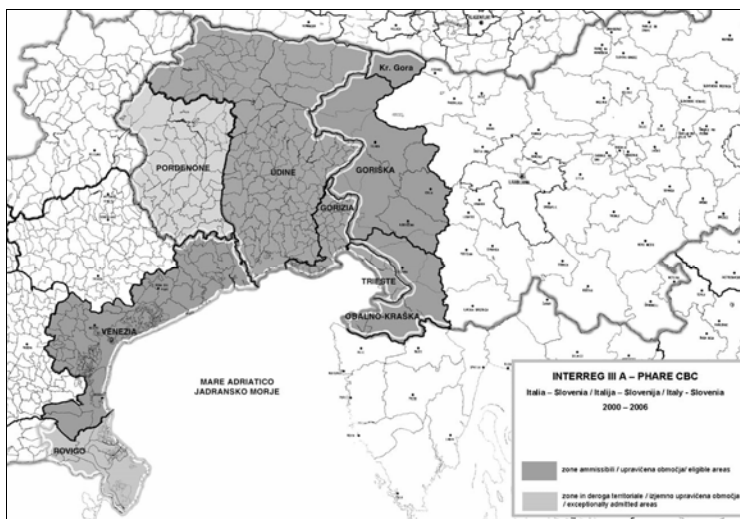


## EUROREG

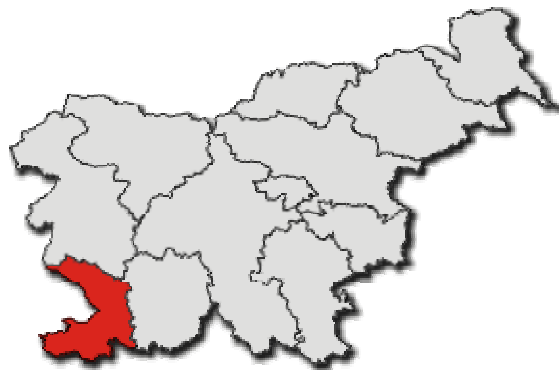
### Regions, Ethnic Minorities and European Integration: A Case Study of Italians in Slovenian Istria

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*The eligible area of Interreg III A Italy – Slovenia*



*Slovene Istria, where the Italian minority in Slovenia is settled, is part of the Littoral-karstic (Obalno-kraška) statistical region and part of the Primorska historical and geographical region.*



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## 1. Introduction

The first State of the Art Report (Šabec, 2005) dealt with issues such as the historical background of the Italian community in the Republic of Slovenia, the minority-majority relationship, regional development and the processes of European integration of Slovenia as a new EU member state. Findings from the first report significantly contribute to the following case study.

In accordance with the project objectives, the current case study strives to respond to the following four research questions:

- What have been the effects of EU integration and cross-border cooperation initiatives on the Italian national community and on minority communities in terms of rights and protections, political participation, socio-economic activity, cultural vitality and mobilisation? This question should be explored on a comparative basis i.e. looking at changes in the situation after the dissolution of communist regime and the creation of new independent Slovene (and Croatian) states in comparison to conditions in the former Yugoslavia.
- How and to what degree has the Italian national community in Slovenia been involved in cross border cooperation up until now? Does cross-border cooperation promote integration between minority and majority populations (Italians in Slovenia and Italians in Italy) or between two minority populations (Italians in Slovenia and Slovenes in Italy)?
- According to respondents, what are the main threats to minority identity, culture and interests in the multi-cultural European sphere?
- How do minority and majority representatives perceive their regional or national-ethnic identity in relation to the EU and European values?

The case study report focuses on the condition of the Italian national community in Slovenia and in the statistical border region of Littoral-Karst (Obalno-kraška). Although the eligible area of cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia (Phare in the past and Interreg III A Italy – Slovenia for the present) also includes the Goriška statistical region on the Slovenian side or the border, there is not a substantial Italian community in this area. The report also discusses the Italian national community in Croatia since it represents a significant number of the Italians in the former Yugoslavia (2,258 members of Italian national community lived in Slovenia in 2002 and 19,636 in Croatia). The relationship of these two Italian minority populations on the territory of new independent states created in the 1990s is a particularly interesting question as regards European integration processes. Slovene EU membership on the one hand and Croat accession status has had a notable affect, particularly on Slovenia's small Italian minority. However, the real impact of the EU on the once unified Italian community (in former Yugoslavia in the past and in the EU in the future) can be fully understood only after Croatia becomes a full member state in the EU.

The structure of the report follows the research questions enumerated, although there were some important findings that feel outside the defined questions that were included. A background section summarizes the historical situation of Italians in this region, particularly after World War Two. A comparison of the community's rights and protections in the former Yugoslavia and in the current Republic of Slovenia is presented followed by the political and economic consequences of the dissolution of Yugoslavia for the entire minority community in Istria region.

This situation is also discussed in light of recent European integration. Political and economic factors undoubtedly affect the social manifestations of community identity as well as its cultural vitality and mobilisation (that is the organizational structure of the community) in bilingual regions. Cross-border cooperation initiatives and their implications for the integration of the Italian community in the region, and particularly in relations to the Slovene minority in Italy, are also discussed. According to many respondents, there are common threats to and demands made of the Italian community that will need to be considered. These are divided into five categories: consistent implementation of bilingualism, economic autonomy, educational problems, mass media, and socio-demographic issues. A discussion of the (re)configuration of regional (Istrian) and national-ethnic (Italian, Slovene) identity vis-à-vis identification with Europe and European values concludes the report. The report also includes an appendix presenting an organization chart of the Italian national community in the Republic of Slovenia and additional tables and diagrams.

## 2. Background of the case

### 2.1. *Italians in post-war Yugoslavia*

As a number of researchers and authors have already claimed, the Italian minority in former Yugoslavia deserves special attention because after World War II – during which virtually the entire German minority community left the former Yugoslavia – it remained the only Western European ethnic minority in the country. Because of this distinction, both the Italian and Hungarian minority populations became the subject of attention and studies after the end of the war.

In the aftermath of World War One, Italy acquired in accordance with the secret Treaty of London (1915) extensive territories of what is today western Slovenia. These territories included the Primorska region, Istria, and parts of Dalmatia in what is today Croatia. After World War Two, Italy was compelled to give up these same territories. For a variety of reasons, most of the Italians residing in Istria and Dalmatia made the decision to migrate to Italy after the borders were redrawn in accordance with the Paris Peace Conference in 1947, and a second time in 1954. For the most part, the emigrants were Italians settled on the coast and hinterland of the Istrian peninsula, in the Kvarner Islands of Cres and Lošinj, and along the Dalmatian coast between Zadar and Split. Within Istria itself, the Italians who remained modified their ethnic identification so that today one frequently hears about a unique Istrian regional identity.<sup>1</sup> Italians in this region tended to settle in cities and were historically (let's say from the Middle Ages on) employed in the non-agrarian sector. Due to the economic power of the bourgeoisie, even Slavic immigrants moving from the hinterland to coastal cities became Romanized<sup>2</sup> as early as the first generation. Most of the Italians who remained in the former Yugoslavia today live in Croatia, with approximately 90% of them on the coast and the remainder in the continental area. While the Italians in the coastal belt of Croatia are part of an old historical and autochthonous group, the

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<sup>1</sup> The affiliation of Istrian identity was cited by many respondents, e.g. R4, R10, R18, R28. See item 6.

<sup>2</sup> The Frulians assimilated into Roman culture, spoke their own language, followed Roman practices, and identified with Roman traditions.

Italians residing in the continental part of Croatia tend to be exclusively migrants either from the Istrian coast or from Italy (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004).

Italians in Slovenia and Croatia represent an old component of the ethnic structure of these regions. Some researchers define the Northern Adriatic region as a place where five “autochthonous” ethnic groups live: Slovenes, Italians, Germans, Croats, and Friulians, the latter having been considered a separate ethnic group since World War II (Klemenčič and Klemenčič, 1997: 288). The demographic development of the Italian minority in the regions where they were settled demonstrates a trend of slow decrease in population numbers following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This downward trend can be explained by outside factors (geographic features of their settlement areas, for example, natural shifts, migration) and by internal factors (statistical methods of census taking, government policies of the state, mixed marriages, changes in the identity of the population, and non-coerced assimilation). Most of the Italians in Slovenia and Croatia are partially autochthonous and partially resettled groups that repopulated the region during 1918-1943 when Primorska and Istria, Rijeka, parts of Dalmatia and the islands of Cres, Krk, Lastovo and Palagruža were part of Italy. During this period, Italian Fascists also forcefully assimilated Slovenes and Croats or forced them to leave. The Italian census of 1936 indicated some 230,000 people who listed Italian as their main language of communication in the territory of contemporary Slovenia and Croatia (then part of the Italian state). Of this figure, 194,000 reside in what is today Croatia and some 36,000 in what is today Slovenia. As previously mentioned, many of these Italians left when the territory became part of Yugoslavia in 1947. From the end of World War Two through 1953, various sources suggest that between 250,000 and 350,000 people emigrated from these regions. Approximately, two-thirds were ethnic Italians and one-third Slovenes and Croats who opposed the Communist regime in Yugoslavia. Some 15% of all emigrants left without migration permits, though most left with the approval of the authorities. These were the so-called *optanti* emigrants: those who were permanent residents of this region and on June 10, 1940, opted to emigrate to Italy where they would obtain Italian citizenship. The emigration of Italians reduced the total population of the region and altered its ethnic structure. After the “exodus”, only 36,000 Italians lived in Yugoslavia in 1953, 16% of the pre-World War Two population. Italians continued to emigrate in subsequent decades, most of them to the United States and other foreign countries. For this reason, the Italian population declined during each census taken until 1981.

The number of Italians continued to change in the last two decades of the twentieth century. In the 1991 census, a large increase in Italians was recorded as compared to the 1981 census. Many Italians who in previous censuses did not declare themselves as Italians did so in the 1991 census because they counted on the help of Italy in the forthcoming regional crisis. Once the situation in Slovenia and Croatia was settled and the countries became independent of Yugoslavia (and most importantly the war in Croatia ended), there followed a decrease in the numbers of declared Italians in both countries (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004).

#### The Italian population in Yugoslavia 1953-2001/2002

	1948	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001/2002
Slovenia	25,451	3,072	3,001	2,187	3,063	2,258
%	1.77	0.19	0.17	0.12	0.17	0.11
Croatia	85,803	21,103	17,433	11,661	21,303	19,636
%	2.27	0.51	0.39	0.25	0.45	0.44
Former Yugoslavia	113,278	25,615	21,791	15,132	26,108	-

%	0.72	0.14	0.11	0.07	0.11	-
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Source: Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004: 856.

The most recent population census in Slovenia (2002) shows a significant decrease in the members of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority. It should be noted, however, that the number of Slovenes (88.31% in 1991 and 83.06% in 2002) and other national affiliations (Montenegrins 0.23% in 1991 and 0.14 in 2002; Croats 2.76% in 1991 and 1.81% in 2002; Muslims 1.39% in 1991 and 0.53% in 2002; Serbs 2.48% in 1991 and 1.98% in 2002) also showed significant decreases (Šabec, 2005). According to Klemenčič and Zupančič (2004) the reasons for the statistical decrease in the numbers of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority can be found mostly in the changed methodology of the census rather than in actual sociological factors. During this period, there was no significant emigration of ethnic minorities and no significant pressures for emigration. Possible methodological changes include the fact that in 1991 and previous censuses, one member of the family identified nationality for the whole family, while in 2002 each person over fifteen years old was allowed to tell the census takers his or her ethnic identity. At the time of the census, many people were not available to report their ethnic identity to the census takers. It was possible for them to send a subsequent statement of ethnic identity to the census commission, but many did not do so. Therefore, some 126,325 persons (6.43% of the population of Slovenia) are included under the rubric "ethnic identity unknown". In 1991, the number had been only 2.21%. In addition, emigrants who were temporary workers abroad were not included in the 2002 census. In previous censuses, a person who had his or her permanent residence formally in Koper, for example, was included even if he or she had lived for a decade in Trieste or Hungary or elsewhere. The 2002 census included only those who actually lived at their official permanent residence.

There is also a problem with having to choose one ethnic identity at the census. Many people in ethnically mixed territories are from ethnically mixed families and didn't want or couldn't answer the question on ethnic identity. In the 2002 census, some 60,673 respondents simply didn't answer this question. As noted in the State of the Art Report, the number of inhabitants who declared their mother tongue to be Italian was greater than the number of people who declared Italian ethnic affiliation (3,882 and 3,762 in 1991 and 2002 respectively) and hasn't changed in total proportions (0.2% of total population in 1991 and 2002) (Šabec, 2005). The decrease in ethnic identity affiliation would have been significantly lower if mother tongue was taken into account. In sum, the reduction of the Italian minority group cannot be explained only in terms of assimilation or emigration; methodological factors must be considered as well.

## 2.2. *Minority rights in the former Yugoslavia and in the Republic of Slovenia*

From 1945 to 1991, during the period of Communist Yugoslavia, the equality of ethno-nations and national minorities and the policies for handling inter-ethnic relations were crucial matters of Yugoslav domestic politics. In November 1943, the federation of Yugoslavia was proclaimed by the second assembly of the Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) and two multi-ethnic autonomous regions within Serbia (Kosovo and Vojvodina) were created. The fourth paragraph of the proclamation stated the following: "Ethnic minorities in Yugoslavia shall be granted all national rights." As far as terminology is concerned, Yugoslavia was made up republics, each of which was comprised of a dominant ethnic group (*narod*) and ethnic minorities (*narodnost*). Bosnia was an exception, having been comprised of three ethnic

groups, all considered equal. The above principle regarding the rights of ethnic minorities was codified in the 1946 and 1963 constitutions and reaffirmed again in the last federal constitution of 1974, which gave even greater power and independence to the republics. It declared that all republics and ethnic minorities would have equal rights (Article 245) and that "each ethnic minority has the sovereign right to freely use its own language and script, to foster its own culture, to establish organizations for this purpose, and to enjoy other constitutionally guaranteed rights" (Article 274). Despite the fact that the federal constitutions (1946, 1953, 1974) and the constitutions of the republics and autonomous provinces, as well as various other laws, emphasized the protection of ethnic minorities, an ever-widening gap between theory and practice was emerging. In theory, Yugoslav standards were even higher than the standards in other European states (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004). Yet today, it appears that the discrepancy between theory and actual conditions persists in independent democratic Slovenia.

The system of special minority rights did not come into existence until after the independence of Slovenia. Though elements of minority protection were in place soon after World War II, the whole system was more or less completed only by the mid-1980s (Šabec, 2005: 25). The 1963 Constitution of the Socialist Republic (SR) of Slovenia already guaranteed the equal rights of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority as well as the possibility of development and progress in all fields. It also guaranteed the equality of languages in ethnically mixed territories, which included the maintenance and development of educational, print, radio, and cultural institutions (Article 77). The importance of both minorities was also emphasized in articles regarding the special rights of Italians and Hungarians in the last Slovenian Constitution promulgated in the former Yugoslavia (1974, Articles 250 and 251). These articles guaranteed both minorities free usage of their languages, expression of their national culture, usage of symbols, and establishment of special organizations. In ethnically mixed territories, the languages of minorities were proclaimed equal to the Slovene language, and members of minorities were guaranteed the right to bring up and educate their children in their own language.

With the creation of the new Slovene state in 1991, the protection of minority communities needed only to be adapted and upgraded into the newly pluralistic political system. The transition from communism and the process of constructing democratic political systems in Slovenia didn't radically modify the structures and forms of political representation for minority communities. The dissolution of Yugoslavia was certainly a major turning point in the post-war history of all of its successor states, but for the position of the Italian community, the turning point was more economic than political. The so-called historical Italian minority<sup>3</sup> in independent Slovenia had not undergone political mobilisation on an ethnic basis not had it demanded additional minority rights or protection since these existed already (at least in theory). The argument that the distinct cultural identity of the Italian community had been stifled in the former Yugoslavia and after 1991 in Slovenia could be proven only with great difficulty. The previous regime had trumpeted the presence of the Italian minority every chance it got for political and ideological reasons, in order to demonstrate to Western Europe (and above all to Italy and Austria) how open the Yugoslav state was and how well it treated its minorities. A similar phenomenon occurred during the process of Slovene independence when the newly emerging

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<sup>3</sup> Yugoslav and later Slovene legislation insist on the term "community" and not "minority", a difference which is still widespread today and emphasized among both the minority and majority population in Slovenia. For clarity sake, the English translation of this text will use the terms minority, ethnic minority, or minority community.

state needed international confirmation of its democratic standards, its legislation, etc. As indicated above, the crucial issue remains the consistent implementation of law into practice.

The starting point for the protection of ethnic communities in Slovenia is provided by the concept of ethnically mixed territories and the system of collective rights that the state grants irrespective of absolute numerical strength or the proportion of members of an ethnic minority in an ethnically mixed territory (the absence of a numerical clause). Representatives of the Italian (and Hungarian) ethnic community actively participated in the process of erecting legal norms that apply to all aspects of the existence of the ethnic community. They have the status of subject in this process, which is to say that their destiny cannot be imposed on them without the explicit consent of legitimate representatives of the ethnic community. Representatives of the ethnic community have the right to veto all decisions of the legislative body (from the state to the local level) in matters that relate to the special rights of the ethnic communities. This is the highest guarantee against possible attempts by representatives of the national majority to force directives on the ethnic communities to which they do not consent (Šabec, 2005).

Slovenia had placed special emphasis on the protection of its autochthonous communities, in part because of its international obligations after World War II, but also because it was in keeping with the process of decentralization and democratisation of the then Yugoslav federation and the "opening of frontiers" that took place at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s (i.e. the right of Yugoslav citizens to travel abroad which allowed tourism to become one of most important Yugoslav industries). Slovenes began to perceive ethnic minorities on both sides of the frontier as a sort of connecting tissue. Another important factor that determined the level of protection of autochthonous minorities was the concern for the well-being of Slovene minorities in neighbouring countries. This concern remained despite the fact that the level of protection of the Slovene ethnic minority in those countries was then and still is today significantly lower than that of corresponding minority communities in Slovenia. This contention is easily proved with a cursory study of the conditions of the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia, and specifically by comparing twenty-four categories of special rights, privileges and protection enjoyed by each of these minorities after the passage of the Special Protection Law by the Italian parliament in February 2001. Slovenia grants its Italian minority all twenty-four categories of special rights, privileges and protections. In marked contrast, Italy grants the Slovene minority living in the region of Trieste and Gorizia only fourteen categories of rights, of which four are fully applied and ten are partially applied. In the region of Udine, Italy partially applies four categories of rights and only one category of minority protection is fully applied (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004).

Minority protection in Slovenia is based on two principles: the principle of territoriality and the principle of collectivity. The first determines territories of autochthonous settlements, which includes all the settlements where Italians (and Hungarians) have been settled for centuries. The second emphasises the collective nature of minorities and their needs, in addition to general and special individual rights. These designated territories have two official languages: Slovene and Italian (or Hungarian). By law, visible bilingualism is not restricted to signs on streets and official buildings such as courts, county and municipal buildings, but is also guaranteed on private buildings and other state-owned enterprises.



Bilingual documents (identity cards, passports, driving licences, vehicle registration documents, medical insurance booklets, etc) are compulsory for all inhabitants of ethnically mixed areas, irrespective of ethnic affiliation. Bilingual procedures are also prescribed for judiciary institutions, with courts obliged to guarantee the equality of the minority language.<sup>4</sup> However, members of the minority must make an explicit demand to have the court proceedings in their languages or bilingually. This applies to other administrative procedures and correspondence as well. Employees are entitled to higher pay for their knowledge of the Italian (or Hungarian) language. Members of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority in ethnically mixed territories also have the right to use their language in dealings with the municipal administration. In any discussion of these legal rights, however, it is essential to recognise that these rights exist on paper, but the actual use of them depends on everyday practice by members of elected bodies and other citizens. As registered in State of the Art Report statement of the Committee of Experts on the Application of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML), there is a marked discrepancy between the provisions of the law and daily practice. Despite its co-official character in ethnically mixed areas, and the financial bonus for public employees with active or passive knowledge of Italian, it seems that Italian is almost never actually used in dealings with administrative bodies. In most cases, people are obliged to switch to Slovene and most written communication is issued exclusively in Slovene. Sometimes the use of Italian is refused by officials. A possible explanation for this might be found in the Slovene recruitment policy in the local offices of the state administration. Often, people from the inland part of the country with no knowledge of Italian and no awareness of the bilingual character of the coastal region are installed in the public administration of bilingual territories (Šabec, 2005).

The right to education in the Italian language is implemented within the monolingual school program for members of the Italian ethnic minority, though learning Slovene is compulsory. Italian is also compulsory in the ethnically mixed territory of the Slovene coast for students who are attending schools where Slovenian is the language of instruction. Schools with Italian as the language of instruction are not limited to members of the Italian minority. Because of limited opportunities to study in the languages of autochthonous minorities, Slovenia signed agreements with Italy (and Hungary) that allow members of minority community on both sides of the border – Slovenes from Italy (or Hungary) and Italians (and Hungarians) from Slovenia – to study at universities in either country. Another essential right of national minorities in Slovenia is the right to be informed in their own language. A radio station in the Italian language was established in 1949 and today transmits twenty-four hours of broadcasting in Italian. A television station was added in 1971. It broadcasts nine hours of daily television programme (two hours out of nine of its own informative, cultural and youth-oriented production) in Italian language.<sup>5</sup> Both TV and radio provide information to the Italian population in Slovenia and Croatia. The Italian-language radio and television stations function as part of the organizational framework of Slovene National Radio. The Italians minority in Slovenia and Croatia also put out their own newspaper, published by EDIT which is located in Rijeka (Croatia) and has a correspondence office in Koper. The Slovene government supports the print media with financial subsidies,

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<sup>4</sup> Court proceedings may be conducted monolingually if only one party appears or if both parties in the proceedings use the same language. Once the judicial process has been started on a bilingual basis, it will be conducted bilingually in higher courts as well, even when the seat of the higher court lies outside an ethnically mixed area.

<sup>5</sup> Data from the interview with the director of radio-television programmes for the Italian national community on Regional RTV Centre Koper/Capodistria, 2005.

though the amount represents only 20% of the sum allocated to these activities by Croatian government (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004).

The Italian (and Hungarian) minority also enjoy the constitutional right to fly their flags on the territories of their autochthonous settlements, although this right is not often exercised in practice (R10).

According to the Slovene Constitution, designated ethnic minorities have the right to two votes in the elections of members of the State Assembly as well as in elections for the organs of local self-government (city councils). The minority group may use the first vote in accordance with their political affiliation and the second to elect special minority representatives. Slovenia has authorized self-governing ethnic communities to compile electoral registers of citizens who are community members. The deputies of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority are elected by all members of the ethnic minority who have voting rights, regardless of whether they live in an ethnically mixed territory or elsewhere in Slovenia. Self-governing ethnic communities were established in every municipality inhabited by members of autochthonous ethnic minorities. The municipal ethnic communities then join together to form the so-called Italian (or Hungarian) ethnic community.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. European integration, domestic context of change, and cross border cooperation in the region

Within the framework of the former Yugoslavia from the 1960s on and especially with the increasing openness of political borders, the political, economic and geographical position of Slovenia had been growing stronger: first in the framework of the Alps-Adriatic Working Community in the context of Central Europe, then in the context of the Central European Initiative, and finally within the European space as a whole. “In comparison to other socialist countries in general and to the other Yugoslav republics in particular, the Iron Curtain began opening a good thirty years earlier in Slovenia. This was certainly the first significant step in opening Slovenia to Europe and the world” (Jesih et al, 1994: 11). Tendencies toward greater openness were also fostered by the concept of polycentric development, a trend that began to counter the depopulation of border regions and cause the rise of secondary regional centres along the borders with Austria and Italy. This ongoing opening was given further impetus by the collapse of the Eastern bloc. With the increasingly intensified development of the role of border regions and the linking of these with the regions across national borders, opportunities became available to Slovene minorities in neighbouring countries (in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia in Italy, in Carinthia and Styria in Austria, and in Porabje in Hungary) as well as to the Italian and Hungarian communities in Slovenia to play an important role in facilitating economic, cultural and other linkages between the Slovene state and its neighbours.

In the 1960s, for example, communist Yugoslavia and Italy signed several bilateral agreements that enabled the substantial flow of people, goods and services between the two countries. The increasingly liberal regime in the border region is also proven by the fact that, by the 1970s, there were seventy border crossings of various categories over the 235 kilometres of the Slovene section of the Yugoslav-Italian land border. In 1980, there were 17 million individual crossings of the Yugoslav-Italian border, most of them through Slovene border points

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the special rights of ethnic communities in Slovenia, see the State of the Art report (Šabec, 2005).

(Klemenčič and Klemenčič, 1997: 291). The open frontier facilitated the rapid economic development of the region, particularly on the Slovene side. In Slovene and Croatian Istria, the tourism industry developed quickly. In the 1970s and 1980s, Italians were buying the cheaper gasoline to be had in Slovenia (and Croatia), while the residents of Yugoslavia left millions of American dollars in Trieste and Gorizia purchasing goods they couldn't find in Yugoslavia. "The importance of this region for the economic development of the wider Central European region is shown in the expansion of its ports. Three large ports developed on fifty kilometres of coastline: Trieste, Rijeka, and Koper" (Klemenčič and Klemenčič, 1997: 291).

To summarize, the dissolution of the federal Yugoslavia, the establishment of two new sovereign and independent states (Slovenia and Croatia), the transition from a socialist to democratic system, the implementation of a free market economy, and last but not least the European integration process in the 1990s and its (financial) opportunities, have all had an impact on the border region and the position of the Italian community within it. Interview results suggest that the following three consequences have been the most noteworthy:

- the division of the Italian ethnic community between two independent and autonomous states (Slovenia and Croatia), complicated further by the fact that only one of the two states became an EU member in 2004;
- economic weakness and dependence of the Italian minority community on government subsidies;
- European integration and cross-border cooperation opportunities.

All three many-sided factors are mutually and interactively linked so it is impossible to analyse them individually, that is without at the same time taking into account influences one each other. Nevertheless, these factors represent major turning points for the community under study in this report.

### *3.1. The transition to democracy*

The conditions of change which began in the late 1980s and continued into the 1990s with the fall of communism and the subsequent restructuring of political, social and economic conditions and institutions was followed almost immediately by Slovene preparation for European integration processes shortly after 1991. Full Slovene membership was achieved in May 2004. The situation needs to be understood from the historical perspective of the so-called Yugoslav legacy: namely, in terms of the relationships and circumstances in the former Yugoslavia that were briefly described in section two, the relationship of Yugoslavia toward the Italian community, and last but not least the relation of the Italian minority community to the Italian state. The Yugoslav legacy inherited by Slovenia and Croatia as former Yugoslav republics and as formal successors of the common state continues to effect Slovene-Italian relations on the one hand and Slovene relations with its own minority community on the other.

To summarize, the period immediately after 1945 was marked by Italian-Yugoslav disputes and a variety of arrangements regarding the new frontier between Italy and Yugoslavia, the emigration of Italians from Yugoslav territories, the settlement of their property etc. (Šabec, 2005). After years of discord, the Italian-Yugoslav Osimo Treaty in 1975 formally established minority protection of Slovenes in Italy and Italians in Yugoslavia, but Article 8 was always subject to different interpretations and remained a source of trouble in the relationship between

the two countries. In 1992, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Slovenia as one of the successor states of Yugoslavia accepted all of previous treaties with Italy. In fact, from the point of view of international law, relations between Slovenia and Italy contain no open questions. However, the legal aspects of relations between the two countries are burdened by a series of political and pseudo-legal interpretations, the sources of which can be found in various institutions. Most significant perhaps was that shortly after an exchange of memorandums in July 1992, Italian foreign policy gradually began to incline towards certain principles that the Triestine neo-irredentist circle<sup>7</sup> had been attempting to revive since 1985 and which had their roots in the principled rejection of the Yugoslav-Italian Osimo Treaty (Drčar-Murko, 1996). This issue is still open today, despite the fact that some ongoing disputes over Italian property have been settled, and in particular the dispute over the Manzioli Palace in Izola where the seat of all three Italian community organizations are located (the Self-governing Community of the Italian Minority, the Dante Alighieri Italian Association and Pasqual Besenghi Italian Association).

In fact, the Slovene-Italian frontier was not the most important “new” border in the region. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, not only Italians in Slovenia but the whole border region has felt the new border between Slovenia and Croatia that emerged with the independence of both countries. The border was felt even more acutely with Slovene accession to the EU. Previously there had been close and intense connections between people on both sides of the border, not only in terms of familial ties but also in terms of economic, cultural and other interactions all of which became more tenuous after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and emergence of the new EU border. The Italian community had felt much stronger in the former Yugoslavia when Italians from Slovenia and Croatia were perceived as one community and enjoyed close ties. After the changes, Italians on both sides of the newly established frontier began to lose the will and interest to engage in border matters with one important exception: namely, the Italian community in Croatia which is numerically superior (approximately 20,000) than the corresponding community in Slovenia (approximately 2000) and feels a stronger affiliation to its Italian identity. In Slovenia, there is a certain division within the Italian community itself and this has only become more palpable since Slovene independence. Specifically, the community is divided among so-called “autochthonous” Italians or “internal” Italians (these are Italians who have lived in Slovenia for centuries) and “external” Italians (those who immigrated to this area, mainly from Croatia). The great majority of the Italian community in Slovenia are not the locals (or “internal”) because they immigrated from the Croatian part of Istria during 1954, 1955, and 1956 when the *optanti* chose to leave the area. According to some,<sup>8</sup> it is precisely the differing

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<sup>7</sup> Adherents of Triestine neo-irredentist circle resurge claims for areas of the former Yugoslavia that had been a part of Italy between the world wars. Prompted partly by this irredentism, in the spring of 1993, Rome raised the abovementioned issue of property rights of post-World War II refugees, Italian president Ciampi summoned Italian filmmakers to return to the cinema screen stories of the »fathers of the homeland« from the age of *risorgimento*, an incident happened when the BBC started airing a broadcast about Italian crimes from Ethiopia to Yugoslavi entitled *Fascist Legacy*, but which was withdrawn after protests from the Italian ambassador, in 2005 the Italian state proclaimed and celebrated Memorial Day (February 10<sup>th</sup>) etc. Part of the Memorial Day celebration was meant to reawaken memories of the “Italian Exodus” from Istria and Dalmatia after World War II and the issue of “fojbe”, which were the caves where Tito’s army and post-war Communist government took revenge on anti-communists and the Italian people.

<sup>8</sup> R8 was told by some members of the Italian community the origin of Italians in Slovenia (i.e. whether they were so-called locals or from the inside of Croatian or southern Istria – that is from Pula, Poreč, Rovinj) and that these differences were certainly the cause of ongoing internal conflicts within the Italian community in Izola, and possibly, according to the respondent’s opinion, in Koper and Piran as well. “There are more than just a few from Croatia.

origins of Italians in Slovenia (locals versus those from Croatian or southern Istria, Pula, Poreč, Rovinj) that might be a cause of the ongoing internecine conflicts in Italian community in Izola certainly, but also perhaps in Koper and Piran as well. These conflicts have served to weaken the community.

It is paradoxical that, despite the fact that the Italian community in Croatia has fewer legal rights (at least on paper), it probably has better possibilities for development and prosperity because of its size. Perhaps because of this situation, the process of assimilation is occurring with more intensity in Slovenia than in Croatia. This situation could change, however, when Croatia becomes an EU member state as the Italian community in Slovenia has already started to invigorate its relations with Croatia as well as with Italy. With independence, Italians in Slovenia lost the great majority of the Italian community to Croatia. This has handicapped the community in Slovenia both on the symbolic level and in the socio-economic areas of employment and education. New borders meant new legislation and employment laws. School systems, curricula and school terms are no longer compatible between the two countries. School textbooks are no longer the same. Within the common Yugoslav state, for example, many Italian parents from Croatia sent their children to Italian (mostly secondary) schools in Slovenia. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, it has become much more difficult for Italians from Croatia to attend Italian schools in Slovenia at all, still less for adults to be employed in Slovenia. These incompatibilities have grown even more pronounced since Slovene membership in the EU. Nowadays, very few Italian students from Croatia attend Italian gymnasium in Piran<sup>9</sup> or secondary school in Izola.<sup>10</sup> The dissolution of Yugoslavia affected the entire system of Italian schools in Istria. In Yugoslavia schools had been systematically established for the whole Istrian territory (both Slovene and Croatian), usually with different programmes in different locations. For example, the economics high school was located in Koper, Slovenia, the construction secondary school in Buje, Croatia, and so on. Today this system is no longer valid and students have fewer choices about what and where to study in the Italian language school system. There is the additional problem of so-called nostrification (equivalence) of school certificates and diplomas. This particularly affects the validity of Slovene degrees in Croatia, as Croatian legislation demands supplementary examinations in Croatian language, history and geography for those students who attended Italian school in Slovenia. The nostrification process is costly and time-consuming. Other forms of cooperation between the minority community in the region which is now divided among two separate states has without a doubt become much more difficult.<sup>11</sup> As previously mentioned, European integration will have an important effect on the Italian community in the

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“We” (i.e. the Slovene majority) are not able to distinguish them. But “they” (Italians in Slovenia) are well aware of this internal split.”

<sup>9</sup> R6.

<sup>10</sup> In terms of secondary vocational schools, Pietro Coppo in Izola remained the only Italian vocational school in Slovenia after its independence. Prior to independence about 25% of students came from Croatia (Buje, Umag, Novigrad), but after independence this percentage has started to fall. In 1994, before problems with equivalence of school certificates emerged, 200 students were enrolled. Only 120 students attend this school today (R10).

<sup>11</sup> Slovenia continues to at least partially finance the activities of certain common institutions that work on behalf of the Italian minority in Slovenia but have their headquarters in Croatia (for example, the Italian Theatre in Rijeka/Fiume, the EDIT Publishing House in Rijeka/Fiume, the Centre for Historical Research in Rovinj/Rovigno). Regarding the right to information, the Slovene state is committed to support, among other things, the development of non-commercial public media that are intended to inform the Italian (and Hungarian) ethnic communities in Slovenia and Croatia. Slovenia also supports the publishing of printed media, but in an amount that is only 20% of the sum allocated for such activities in Croatia (Šabec, 2005).

whole Istrian region including its Slovenian part when Croatia becomes an EU member state and when the border between Slovenia and Croatia will become less rigid again.

### *3.2. From planned economy to free market conditions*

Despite the fact that the former Yugoslavia was grounded in socialist ideology and a planned economy and the independent Republic of Slovenia is a democratic state with free market capitalist system, at least one resemblance exists between the two countries in terms of the Italian minority community. Not all minorities in the former Yugoslavia had the same status. During Yugoslav times, the Italian minority possessed special privileges because it had connections with and bordered on Italy, a Western country. This situation contrasted with that of the Hungarian minority in Slovenia, the Romanian community in Serbia, and the Albanian one in Kosovo. Because of its position in the border region between Yugoslavia and the West, and also because of its equivalent position between the Iron Curtain and western capitalist countries, the Italian community represented a handy means for the former state to show the West how well and correctly Yugoslavia treated its minority populations. Two motivations stand out above the others:

1. To prove something to the rest of the world (and above all western countries) was more important than the proper treatment of all minorities in Yugoslavia. Accordingly when it came to economic problems, the state often intervened on behalf of the Italian minority, and the Italian minority never had to worry about acquiring additional state financing for events (albeit cultural not economic ones).
2. To justify the demands of the Slovene minority in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region (Italy) and in Carinthia (Austria), both of which represented an economic segment of the Slovene republic in the West. It was impossible for Slovenia or Yugoslavia to import from Italy (or Austria) without Slovene minority companies from Italy (or Austria) acting as mediators and the other way around (i.e. exports from Yugoslav republics had to go through Slovene minority companies). The main consequence was that the Slovene minority communities in Italy and Austria were economically strengthened during these years. According to R21 even the bankruptcy a few years ago of the Trieste Credit Bank (the bank of the Slovene Italian minority) did not destroy the economy of the Slovene minority in Italy.<sup>12</sup>

The special treatment of the Italian community did not end with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but continued through the process of Slovene independence and for several few years afterwards during the period when independent Slovenia was striving for international recognition as a modern, democratic, pluralist state. After independence, Slovenia was determined to integrate into Europe and to become a full member of the EU, and its two ethnic minority communities represented a legitimisation and confirmation of Slovene democratic values.

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<sup>12</sup> As R21 pointed out: “The Slovene minority in Italy waited for the dissolution of the Yugoslav state in relatively good condition. But thanks to the new Slovene state, they were left on their own when they lost Trieste Credit Bank a few years ago. The same policy of Slovene state continues today. The Slovene minority in Italy doesn’t really enjoy the support of its mother state except on rhetorical level. They have, however, their initial accumulation of capital and it is at their disposal to use it for the needs of the minority. The capital is private, of course, but it is social as well in its ability to support the development of the entire minority community.”

This situation changed after Slovene accession to the EU a decade later. Today the minority communities are no longer needed to legitimise the democratic values of Slovene state and the Slovene government lacks the political will to help the Italian minority become economically independent (R14, R26). A certain continuity from the Yugoslav period to the independent Slovene period can also be observed as regards the economic position of the Italian community in Slovenia and the absence of a strong economic foundation and the ability to generate their own financial resources independent of state subsidies (for example, from private sector sources within the Italian community).<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the transition from the socialist central planning system to free market conditions has proved to be a disadvantage for the Italian community. This stands in marked contrast to the Slovene community in Italy. The sources of the problem, which has been pointed out numerous times by community representatives,<sup>14</sup> can be found in socio-historical conditions. After World War Two, the Slovenes living in Italy simply continued their normal economic and business activities. Unlike on the other side of the border, neither the political nor the economic system changed after 1945. During that period and particularly after 1954, not only did a substantial majority of the Italian population emigrate from this territory but particular policies were put forward that reduced the economic freedom of the Italian minority – and this despite the London memorandum (1954) that called for the foundation of a minority bank also in Yugoslavia (similar to the Trieste Credit Bank for the Slovene minority in Italy). This idea was not put into force on the Yugoslav side of border for ideological reasons.

One of the consequences of this Italian emigration was the weakening of the Italian community, as not only workers but Italian tradesmen, small entrepreneurs and intellectuals emigrated as well. The majority of Italians who remained in Yugoslavia were farmers dependent upon their land and their cattle, older people, fishermen and other individuals “who had nothing to lose in the new system” (R23). They didn’t want to leave what little property they had behind. On the other hand the general socio-economic conditions in post-war Yugoslavia did not foster prosperity in business and development of trade in general or for the Italian community in particular. As a result, today, sixty years later, there is still a poor economic foundation for the Italian community. The economic foundation of a community, however, has an important influence on all of the other activities of that community (culture, sports, etc.) and their overall financial condition, which has the potential to build independence and autonomy. In the absence of a vibrant economic life – and this is precisely what afflicts the Italians in Slovenia – the community becomes dependent on state and local governments. In addition, current measures to cut state spending on all levels extend to minority protection as well, despite the fact that broader community organizations are financially dependent on state support. The ideological and socio-economic changes that occurred after the disintegration of Yugoslavia have shaken the Italian community and have forced it to adopt the new principles of the free market economy and the common market, and to accept cutbacks in state subsidies. Yet the main deficiency remains the same: the Italian community in Slovenia doesn't have its own economic sphere of activity and is not economically independent. “Of course, individuals and businesses finding themselves in new conditions have the opportunity to establish themselves and to initiate economic activity, but

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<sup>13</sup> According to many respondents as well, e.g. R6, R8, R9, R10, R11, R14, R15, R16, R18, R21, R23, R24, R25, R26, R27, R28.

<sup>14</sup> In early January 2004, when the state and its special organs did not respond to the representative's calls for proper sanctions, the deputy of the Italian minority in the Slovene parliament, Roberto Battelli, resigned his position as President of the Special Commission of the State Assembly for Ethnic Minorities.

start-up capital is needed” (R21). The Italian community, looked at as a collective subject, cannot take advantage of these opportunities because it doesn’t have the capital to do so, or even to lobby political parties for additional resources. The process of lobbying for political advantages is extremely difficult for the minority community, because in principle it avoids taking political sides.

When denationalisation and the privatisation of social property began in the 1990s, ethnic minorities in Slovenia strived to get a piece of the privatisation cake. Certain measures were passed in Slovenia that looked promising in terms of the initial accumulation of capital for the Italian (and Hungarian) minority. In 1995, a law on the use of funds acquired from the sale of property was passed on the basis of the already existing law for capital (ownership) transformation of assets that under the former socialist regime had been treated as “social property” (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 45/95, ..., 47/02). According to Article 7 of this law, 2.5% of the funds generated would be allocated to building an economic foundation for the Italian (and Hungarian) minority community.<sup>15</sup> The Slovene government took some important first steps in this direction, but with few concrete results (R26). In the end, too little effort was made by the Slovene government and, worse still, several bad loans were extended under the program and it was considered a failure. As a result, the Italian minority has remained economically weak and has lagged behind the average in the Littoral-Karst regions, which otherwise is one of the most rapidly developing regions in Slovenia. Because of insufficient community funds and state cutbacks, social and cultural activity has become even more restricted. However, the Italian community continues to struggle for greater financial independence, knowing that its own economic foundation will make its existence easier (Jesih, 1994: 16). The procedure to establish its own financial company (*FINEURO*) began six or seven years ago because the community wanted to use funds acquired by previously mentioned sale of common social property (from the former socialist system). For this, it needed to have a financial organization founded as a business company with its headquarters located in bilingual territory. The Slovenia government supported this project, giving EUR 25 million to both minority communities (two-thirds of the amount went to the Hungarian ethnic community and one-third to the Italian community). Thus far, however, the project exists only in the planning stage. The process needs time and, according to minority protection measures in the Slovene constitution and legislation, it is not sufficient to merely ensure conditions for the existence of these communities, but for their development as well (R25). In short, the Slovene government lacks the political will to resolve this issue by approving the establishment of a financial company that would serve the Italian (and Hungarian) community and would represent the basic starting-point for economical independence of the minority.

The southern Littoral-Karst region, which contains three of the main bilingual municipalities (Koper, Izola, Piran), is among the most developed region in Slovenia (R26).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the economic difficulties experienced by the Italian minority cannot be blamed on general development problems in the region. There are, however, a number of specific problems that plague the three main bilingual municipalities although there are some important distinctions

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<sup>15</sup> These resources are earmarked for investments in the development of the agricultural economy, for supplementary activities in the rural area, cooperative organizations, small businesses and other economic infrastructure (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 33/97, Article 3).

<sup>16</sup> This cannot be seen on the regional GDP table because only whole regions are described, not internal differences in individual regions and not differences between urban centres and rural areas.



between them. One of the problems is traffic infrastructure, which is insufficient in terms of land transport from Koper and the Port of Koper to the north of Trieste (i.e. the northernmost port with access to the hinterland). The other are socio-economic conditions at least in one of the three municipalities. Izola, in comparison to Koper and Piran and Slovenia as a whole, has relatively high unemployment, and particularly among women in the last five years. The companies that previously employed unskilled female workers, *Delamaris*, *Mehanotehnika* and *Droga* to some extent, all confront a downturn in their businesses. Because of high daily labour migration (some thousand people in the region commute each day to go to work), this downturn has also been felt in Koper and Piran. Unfortunately, people are commuting to Koper and Piran for better paid work and in the other direction, from Koper and Piran to Izola, for unskilled and semi-skilled work (R8). Izola, however, does not fall below the Slovene average, but only under the average of the southern Littoral-Karst region, and particularly under the average of the Istrian area (especially in terms of education levels). This municipality suffers from low educational standards in general and this fact is responsible for many of its other problems. For example, it has caused difficulties in the socialization of certain population groups, and in particular immigrants (first, second and even third generation) who came to this region from other republics of the former Yugoslavia. Approximately 20% of Izola's inhabitants originate from this particular immigrant pool. Integration of this segment of the population has not been satisfying, particularly in terms of education. The level of education achieved by the children of these immigrants is below the level of Slovene children (R8). It is hard to explain the reasons for this situation, but it is repeated over generations. According to some, a combination of social conditions lead to this situation and its consequences are not restricted to education. There is a high level of drug addiction and alcoholism in the region, though again broader social factors should be taken into consideration in order to find a more nuanced explanation for these phenomena.

Gross domestic product by statistical region, 2002 - current prices:

	<i>Gross domestic product</i>				<i>Gross domestic product per capita</i>			
	billion SIT	million EUR	million USD	<i>regional structure %</i>	1000 SIT	EUR	USD	<i>index Slovenia = 100</i>
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	<b>5314,5</b>	<b>23492</b>	<b>22121</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2664</b>	<b>11775</b>	<b>11088</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Pomurska	227,5	1006	947	4,3	1839	8128	7653	69,0
Podravska	714,5	3159	2974	13,4	2234	9876	9299	83,9
Koroška	157,5	696	656	3,0	2130	9415	8866	80,0
Savinjska	611,1	2701	2543	11,5	2372	10487	9875	89,1
Zasavska	89,3	395	372	1,7	1938	8567	8067	72,8
Spodnjeposavska	156,6	692	652	2,9	2235	9881	9304	83,9
Jugovzhodna Slovenija	332,2	1468	1383	6,3	2401	10612	9993	90,1
Osrednjeslovenska	1861,8	8230	7750	35,0	3778	16701	15726	141,8
Gorenjska	461,7	2041	1922	8,7	2339	10338	9735	87,8
Notranjsko-kraška	105,7	467	440	2,0	2080	9197	8660	78,1
Goriška	309,1	1366	1287	5,8	2575	11383	10719	96,7
Obalno-kraška	287,5	1271	1197	5,4	2753	12170	11460	103,4

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, <http://www.stat.si>, 25. 2. 2006

### *3.3. European integration and cross border cooperation programmes*

Slovenia's entrance into the European integration process has not yet had a substantial impact on the (over)developed Slovene regions and the ongoing reduction of centralist regulation. Indeed because most measures and arrangements were defined and implemented during the pre-

accession period, any effect has been muted. In this respect, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and subsequent foundation of the first independent democratic state in Slovene history represented a far more noteworthy change. Nevertheless, certain new (economic) potentials have emerged, though it would not be accurate to see EU accession as a distinct turning point in terms of practical economic factors (R26). EU membership has had significance particularly on the symbolic level. In any event, the official accession of Slovenia as an EU member state in May 2004 proved that Slovenia's economic, diplomatic and political efforts since independence, as well as the orientation of Slovene policy after 1991 toward (Western) European countries and away from the Balkans, had been successful.

Slovenia is perceived within the EU as a less-developed area. Since European regional policy refers not to small territories but to economically encircled areas, Slovenia is registered as one region in accordance with European criteria. Because of this definition, Slovenia as a whole lags behind the EU average and receives the maximum amount of EU aid. The state organs of Slovenia are authorized, however to decide (independent of the EU) whether EU development funds will be regionally directed to particularly needy regions or whether the aid will be invested in augmenting GDP and the competitive position of all of Slovenia (which some argue would result in strong development for all regions). Thus far, the Slovene government has decided for the second solution, though there is an internal agreement that 60% of all EU funds will be directed to underdeveloped regions within Slovenia. The Littoral-Karst region where most of the Italian community is settled is defined as an (over)developed regions, second only to the Central Slovene region with Ljubljana as its centre. Therefore it is not entitled to regional development assistance.<sup>17</sup> However, it should be noted that the whole issue of regional development opportunities in Slovenia is part of a broader problem that has to do with Slovene regional structure and the size of separate regions. Currently, Slovene regions are so-called "statistical regions" and therefore do not accurately represent regional structure. There are currently twelve statistical regions that are too small in size to have any functional validity. If Slovenia were divided into two or three regions (this is currently being debated by the Slovene government), the regions could feasibly exercise an influence on centralised state organs. As it is, however, regions are too small and weak to have any effect on regional policy, to play a role as a serious negotiator or competitor with the state, or indeed to participate in the decision-making processes, and ultimately achieve greater decentralisation of the state. To the contrary, the process of increasing state centralisation continues with the establishment of even smaller municipalities within Slovene regions.<sup>18</sup>

Whether or not European integration will bring additional value to everyday life in border regions is difficult to predict. According to R2, it depends above all on the officials who are responsible at the state and local level, and secondly on the mentality and attitudes of the population as a whole. As far as minority populations are concerned, EU accession should offer

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<sup>17</sup> Since the Littoral-Karst region is among the most developed regions in Slovenia, it has not significantly benefited from state subsidies. For two years, it received only about EUR 200,000 annually. These funds were earmarked as stimulation funds for the eight municipalities of the Littoral-Karst region. Considering that the annual municipal budget of Koper alone is approximately EUR 42 million, this sum is almost inconsequential (R15).

<sup>18</sup> At the moment, there is strong pressure from some political parties in the Slovene parliament to separate the Koper municipality into two smaller municipalities (Koper and Ankaran/Hrvatini) on the grounds that the current Koper municipality is too large with a total population of less than 50,000.

new opportunities but in practice it will take a long time for any real change to occur. The fact is that EU CBC funds as a real factor in European integration are extremely limited (0.3% of Slovene GDP) (R22). Moreover, because Slovenia is at the beginning of the programme period, the effect of EU programmes will be evident only at the end of the period in 2010. It is unlikely, however, that there will be any substantial change since EU funds are so limited and they don't represent ongoing investment funds, but start-up funds to trigger change (the long-term goal being to make the state and individuals to begin thinking in developmental terms). Typically, Slovene pre-accession expectations were quite different from the actual situation. During the pre-accession negotiations, the EU treated all candidate states the same and used the same methodology, regardless of national specificities. Slovenia and Malta cannot be compared to Poland, for example. But since EU cohesion policy is regionally orientated, small states were compelled to establish new regions even if it didn't make any sense to do so. However, the EU persisted with the rule that every state must be divided into a certain number of regions, out of which a few regions would be selected to receive EU funds. Having no choice in the matter, Slovenia selected three pilot regions (Pomurje, Savinjska and Zasavje) and, in 1999, the Slovene parliament passed a law on regional development. In the meantime, the European Commission belatedly discovered that all candidate states were not equal and comparable, and that it was nonsensical for small states to be further broken up into smaller regional units. The situation became completely confused, as Slovenia had already begun the process of regionalisation. Pilot studies had been conducted, regional developmental agencies established, etc. The situation is still not resolved today, despite the fact that Slovenia should have completed the regionalisation process (NUTS 2) before it became an EU member state. To this day, Slovenia lacks the political will to resolve this situation even internally. Statistical regions, as they exist today, do not in anyway contribute to decentralisation of the state. The idea of establishing from two to four provinces, and later three regions, was also not achieved because of the lack of political will. In sum, Slovenia continues to have only statistical regions, which are useless in terms of real regionalisation and decentralization. "The inescapable fact is that the Slovene failed utterly to complete either the regionalisation or decentralisation processes prior to accession. Since Slovenia is now a full member state of EU, any subsequent decision on whether to have one, two or three regions (these are the options currently being negotiated) as well as non-decisions will have serious financial consequences on regional development" (R22).

Cross border cooperation (CBC) between Slovenia and its neighbours, including Italy, existed already in the framework of the former Yugoslavia. As previously mentioned, most of the economic cooperation between the two states occurred through Slovene minority companies in Italy. The formal beginning of the Italy-Slovenia CBC took place in 1995. In Slovenia, a small state with many borders, only one among the twelve statistical regions (the Zasavje region) is not entitled to CBC funds according to current regulation. Its borderland status is of great significance to all of Slovenia in terms of development of entrepreneurship, agricultural and environmental issues, cultural and social cooperation, etc. At first CBC projects were mostly initiated by the central government and were orientated toward the development of physical infrastructure (border crossings, etc). As such, they had no higher purpose in terms of real collaboration. The main goal at that point was to use the money that was available. There was no real cross border cooperation, as each partner involved in the project simply worked on its own side of the border (R1). However, since 1998, intensive cooperation projects have been launched, some as a result of the modified European legislative framework. After 2000, the European Union demanded some common structures to decide upon projects, though there were still

separate calls for application in Italy and Slovenia. Since that time, cooperation has expanded not only between Slovene and Italian partners, but also within the Slovene territory. Some modest improvement in terms of social, economic and institutional cooperation, if not actual integration, has been achieved during this period.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless because of the small budget allocation (which became even smaller since Slovenia's accession into the EU), only non-profit organizations and institutions can apply for those projects. This remains true after May 2004.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, according to analysis based on hard data and to most member states involved in CBC projects, the programme has been one of the best instruments for European cohesion policy. According to R22, CBC projects are low-budget, moderate in terms of funding, transparent, and by their nature and the philosophy of their implementation highly accommodated to real regional needs. CBC projects are small, usually already existing projects that people in the region originate. They are often highly effective in terms of increasing regional stability and maintenance of peace. Namely, CBC projects are often implemented in border regions that have been the location of specific historical tensions. The Slovene-Italian CBC region is characterised by regions or provinces where the political influence of the prevailing regional governmental is decisive. As a result, the selection of CBC projects and their approval have generally been politically motivated, though in theory and according to project rules, project selection should be entirely professional and independent of political influence.<sup>21</sup> Because of this, some problems and frictions have emerged in certain projects, though where the minority group is a partner, good cooperation tends to prevail (R22).

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<sup>19</sup> Three stages can be differentiated in the evolution of CBC programmes in Slovenia. During the first stage, from 1995 to 1999, CBC was extremely weak, existing more on the rhetorical level. Italy and Slovenia each had its own separate CBC programme document. The second stage took place from 2000 to 2003. For the first time, the Slovene and Italian governments ratified a joint CBC document. Since then, there has been more cooperation and contacts between both sides and their respective administrations. Although projects became more cross-border in orientation, many were not real CBC projects, not "orthodox" CBC projects. The third stage began in 2004 (after EU accession). Standards and regulations became more unified. Prior to 2004, Slovenia was in the process of implementing pre-accession standards. Afterwards the rules changed and cooperation with Italians increased. Authorized institutions and agencies maintained regular weekly contacts. For the first time, they managed a simultaneous call for applications on both sides of the border in Slovenia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto (the last two calls for applications were in 2004 and 2005). For the first time in CBC history, all applicants and partners were prepared for the project. Calls for applications have been made more uniform because of the specificity of administration and national legislation. Yet one obstacle still remains in the current programme period: separated accounts for Slovenia, FVG and Veneto (R2).

<sup>20</sup> According to R2, project funds vary from period to period as per EU instructions. During the first CBC phase (1995-1999), the European Commission aimed at middle-size projects (EUR 200,000 – 400,000). There was also a Small Project Fund that targeted smaller projects (below EUR 50,000). After 2000, when intensive preparations for European structural policy had just begun, only large investment projects were undertaken: for example, the ECO Adria project on the Slovene-Italian border for construction of sewage system purification plant, the Jesenice business zone on the Slovene-Austrian border (EUR 4 million of with the EU commission invested approximately EUR 2 million). After Slovene accession to EU, Slovenia tried to stimulate and lead investors to medium projects (from EUR 200,000 to 800,000). The motivation for this shift was limited funds. Before 2004, Slovenia, being a non-member state, had extremely limited access to CBC projects. Funds were restricted to a relatively low amount (somewhere between EUR 2 and 2.5 annually) and the smallest investment project cost roughly EUR 2 million. This meant only one project each year. During that period, mostly public institutions applied for the funds. The Governmental Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy also negotiated an additional EUR 500,000 each year from the European Commission for the so-called Small Project Fund. The Small Project Fund basically became a sort of mini-CBC with very restricted funds covering all investment aspects: social care, cultural activities, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Something similar happened in Austria when the Governor General of the province turned down approximately ten projects in which the Slovene minority in Austria were slated to take part (R22).

Up until now, the national minorities have not received special treatment within the CBC programme or only to a limited extent. There was one particular financial line from 2002 to 2003, dedicated only to cross border cooperation between the Slovene-Italian minority groups (either minority 1 – minority 2 or minority – home state cooperation). The reason for this exception was that some additional funds were found and a decision was made to earmark the money for minority projects. In general, each member state (or, in the case of CBC programmes, both member states) must decide whether the minority issue is crucial enough to be handled separately, that is if minorities should be treated in a special way because of their minority status and have priority with respect to EU funds. For the last ten years, minorities in Slovenia have always been involved in CBC projects at least as applicants. However, there is sometimes a difference between the theoretical readiness of minorities to cooperate in EU programmes and the actual proposal and implementation of a concrete project.

Without a doubt, the allocation of funds for regional development and particularly cross border cooperation (Phare, Interreg) creates new opportunities for minority (and majority) activities. The question remains to what extent the community itself seizes these opportunities for cross border cooperation and what objective restrictions (such as financial incapacity) prevent it from participating as a partner or coordinator in these programmes.

#### 4. Changing opportunities and constraints for minorities

##### *4.1. The socio-economic position of the Italian community in the context of European cross border cooperation opportunities*

The Italian ethnic community in Slovenia has been most cooperative with the Slovene minority in Italy, predominantly in the spheres of sports, culture and education, though not in sphere of economics. Their collaboration began in the 1970s with sports activities, and namely with the Minority Sports Competition. Today not only the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia compete, but also the Slovene minority living in Austria and minority groups from Croatia. At various times, between ten to thirteen minority groups have participated in this particular CBC as well as in other educational or cultural activities. In terms of CBC programmes funded by the EU the Italian minority community in Slovenia became active after 2000. The most important consequence of this collaboration is that the ongoing relationship between the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian from Slovenia has become more intense, close and fruitful (R2). The initiative came from the Slovene community in Italy that had established an entrepreneurial team called Euroservis that aimed at building intensive cooperation with and giving support to minority groups and others. Often they called for applicants from the Slovene side who needed a partner on the Italian side. The Euroservis team can locate partners on the Italian side of the border because they know the territory. Cooperation between the Italian community and the Slovene minority in Italy emerged entirely on the basis of concrete mutual interests and the need to achieve certain goals through cooperation. The format simply hadn't existed in the past. Real concrete possibilities spurred real concrete cooperation as both sides were compelled by self-interest to get involved in these projects. As a result, a unified commission with members from Slovenia and from the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia has been established that includes special minority board members from both Italian and Slovene minority

communities. Some common European projects in which both the Slovene and Italian minority groups are systematically included arose from this particular context.<sup>22</sup> The advent of such close and positive cooperative between the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia has generated some important findings. One of them is that minorities should not be used as a state instrument for manipulation in negotiations between state institutions and governments. Minorities sometimes suffer from the same or similar problems as majority populations, and cooperation and interaction are a far better and more powerful method of seeking solutions than state instrumentalisation.

According to the development agencies and some community members (R2, R16, R21), one goal of CBC projects should be to lift minorities out of their own isolated space or reservation. Minorities need to mix with the broader environment and be integrated as equals into Slovene and Italian institutions of the majority population. The principle problem experienced by the Italian minority in Slovenia is that there is little connection and cooperation with members of the majority community. The same situation exists among the Slovene minority in Italy. The goal is to give the minority its own “added value” so it can contribute to the wider community, and not remain segregated in a ghetto. The Italian and Slovene governments need to organically and systematically include the Italian minority in European CBC projects. Because this has not yet been achieved, it is difficult to assess the real effects of EU projects. It is simply too soon to judge. More practise and experience will be needed to evaluate the real impact of European projects, though they are certainly welcome because they provide motivation for cooperation.

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<sup>22</sup> The following are some major CBC projects:

*INTERREG 3A SLOVENIA-ITALY 2000-2006*: 1. AGROMIN: agricultural products of minority communities, typical produce, food products, and old recipes in the territory of Slovene Istria and Slovene Karst in Italy. The main goal of the project is to establish cross-border trade in typical local products, notably farming products such as olive oil, honey, and wine. A special book in connection with the project will be published. AGROMIN will be carried out by the Slovene Regional Rural Association (an organization of the Slovene minority in Italy) in Trieste and the Coastal Self-governing Community of the Italian minority in Slovenia. 2. MIN-TOUR: minority tourism. The objective of MIN-TOUR is the restructuring and expansion of tourism in the border area (the coastal and Karst regions in Slovenia, and the Trieste and Gorizia region in Italy). The restructuring is aimed at creating sustainable development in versatile and modern tourist services that highlight the local (minority) particularities of the area. The project, which has a value of EUR 356,210.35 is carried out by the Slovene company, Euroservis, in Italy and the Italian Union in Slovenia ([www.slowwwenia.net/novice](http://www.slowwwenia.net/novice), 10/8-2005). Both projects are part of the EU programme Interreg III A Slovenia-Italy and are valued at somewhat less than EUR 750,000. The project term is between April 2005 and April 2007. The Slovene partners in the AGROMIN and MIN-TOUR projects (Italian Union and Coastal Self-Governing Community of Italian minority community) need SIT 24 million (EUR 100,000) for their share. The Slovene government decided to help the Italian community in these projects drawing on the Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy and the Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Regional Development and Preservation of the Settlements of Slovene Rural Areas (Ribnica). However, because no financial aid actually came from these two sources, the Italian minority applied to the Governmental Office for Minorities to give funds to the community.

*INTERREG 3A SLOVENIA-HUNGARY-CROATIA 2004-2006*: IQ-EURO: The project is carried by the Italian Union in Koper/Capodistria and the Italian Union in Rijeka/Fiume (Croatia). The objective of IQ-EURO is to establish a special service in Koper/Capodistria on the model of Euroservis in Trieste that is specialized in the planning and implementation of EU projects. (In December 2005, the Europa Office was opened in Koper. Using EU funds, the Europa Office will organize a special course for some fifteen people who will become “euro-planners” i.e. professionals who are able to negotiate extensive EU documentation, draw up quality applications and tenders, and actually implement projects. This project has been valued at EUR 145,000.

The major uncertainty remains that these projects will not really affect minority members and the minority community will underestimate their potential.

As far as CBC projects and the Italian minority community in Slovenia is concerned, one of the most troubling obstacles is that the community lacks skilled and trained specialists who would be able to handle project documentation, preparation, implementation etc. As a result, the community often doesn't manage its own project initiatives, but more commonly participates as a partner. Hopefully, the Europa Office will be successful in correcting this shortfall. The second problem that prevents the Italian minority community from a more active role in CBC projects is the start-up capital that is condition for participation. Although these means are eventually refunded, the Italian minority community does not even have the short-term resources to participate in CBC projects. The stagnant relationship of the Italian minority community with the Slovene government paralyzes cross-border cooperation and hinders relations between Italy and the Italian border regions. Without the indirect interference of the Slovene government (though ironically in accordance with its legislation), a more vibrant relationship with Italy would help the Italian minority community to achieve greater economic independence. Together with the Slovene minority in Italy, the region of Friula-Venezia-Giulia and its financial company Fines (Port Koper, Istrabenz, the Slovene company, and Bank of Koper) want to establish a consortium in which each of the partners contributes certain funds to be invested in various projects in and outside of the region. The Slovene and Italian minority (on either side of the border) should each put up 10% of the starting capital. The Slovene minority in Italy has already provided funds in the amount of EUR 1.5 million while the Italian minority in Slovenia has not done so because it has no independent resources. As a result, it may secede from the project, which is extremely important for the creation of development opportunities for the Italian community in Slovenia. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Italian government strategy to economically penetrate Yugoslavia (in the past) and Slovenia and Croatia (today) explicitly shuns the Italian minority communities in those countries despite the fact that four-fifths of all Croatian banks are owned by Italians. In Slovenia, the Bank of Koper is now Italian-owned, but the local Italian community is not even recruited as a linguistically skilled labour force. The reason for this is presumably the still acute historical memory and prejudice according to which Italians in Slovenia and Croatia are considered "communists" by the Italian state and "*Lahi*" (a pejorative name for Italians) by the Slovene government and inlanders in general.<sup>23</sup> This is a pity since the programs represent an attractive way for the younger generation to become more active in community activities. In addition, they have the potential for creating interesting employment opportunities and making the Italian minority community more visible to and integrated with the broader majority population.

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<sup>23</sup> The Italian government does finance the Italian community in Slovenia and Croatia in accordance with legislation that guarantees certain protective measures for the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian minority communities in Slovenia and Croatia. The Italian government finances the Italian community through the so-called Italian Union, which has the status of association in Slovenia. In accordance with this status, the Italian government earmarked EUR 4,650,000 in 2004 for the Italian community in Slovenia and Croatia to flow through the Trieste Adult Education Institute (*Università Popolare di Trieste*). EUR 2,200,000 earmarked for Italian kindergartens and schools, for the new gymnasium in the Pula Elementary School (in Croatia), for textbooks and other pedagogical material including computer equipment. The rest of the money went to Radio Koper/Capodistria (Slovenia) and Radio Pula/Pola (Croatia), the publishing house EDIT (Rijeka – Croatia), the Rovinj Research Institute (Croatia) and other associations. This procedure was part of implementation of an updated three-year-old law (No. 193/2004) that dealt with relations between Italy and the Italian minorities in Slovenia and Croatia (Primorski dnevnik, 25. 11. 2004, p. 3).

In this sense, Interreg programmes aim to achieve greater social and economic cohesion in regions. They are not large investment projects programmes, they are more or less “soft” projects, and yet they could lead to more substantial investment projects in the future (R1).<sup>24</sup> The intermediate goal is to build and increase the level of trust between partners in the programme. Recognition, knowledge and trust are preliminary conditions for further cooperation, collective planning, investment, and the solving of common problems. The most positive and long-lasting result of EU and CBC programmes is that cooperation between regional communities will continue after the project has formally ended.

#### *4.2. The political participation and cultural mobilisation of the Italian community*

The political and cultural organization of the Italian community is comprised of self-governing communities of ethnic Italians, the Italian Union, and various so-called communities of Italians. All of these entities are engaged in political, cultural and, lately also, economic activities, but there is an important distinction. The self-governing communities are corporate entities regulated as of 1994 by the law of self-governing communities which is the fundamental law dealing with minority communities and their rights and is binding on both the state and local level. The Italian Union and its communities of Italians are corporate entities regulated by their own private laws and by the state laws governing associations.<sup>25</sup> It is important to recall that they all existed in the former Yugoslavia.

Self-governing communities originated in a provision of the 1974 constitution of the Slovene republic (Article 251). This provision allowed the Italian minority community to found of self-governing communities to work in the interests of Italian education and culture. These were established in February and March of 1975 and functioned as the immediate representatives of the Italian minority in municipality assemblies, though only in Slovenia, not in the rest of Yugoslavia.<sup>26</sup> Delegates of the Italian community were elected in accordance with territorial

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<sup>24</sup> The municipality of Izola provides one of the few examples of effective regional cooperation. This is true despite the fact the state government notably failed to improve economic conditions for the development of sea fishing in Slovenia. The municipality of Izola recently finished a common project with the Italian region of Veneto in this area. According to local regional authorities, the professional-economic condition of the Slovene fishery industry lags behind the Italian and for this reason the project experience was very positive. As the Slovene ministry has failed completely in this industry, the Izola municipality, precisely through participation in the Interreg (*CACES*) project, gained important and useful knowledge and experiences about the common EU fishing policy. The Izola municipality is improving its knowledge in this area without the assistance of the responsible ministry on the state level, but instead with EU (Interreg) funds. “It comes to such paradoxes. Imagine the two partners in this project: on the one side you have the region of Veneto with approximately one million inhabitants, and then you have Izola with 15,000 people. But it is absolutely pointless to wait for the ministry to move when there are Italian partners who are interested in cooperation with us. And our municipality benefits” (R8).

<sup>25</sup> The Italian community in Slovenia is not organized in the form of a political party because its members have heterogeneous political affiliations and worldviews. Before the first democratic elections in 1990, the Italian community (*Comunità Italiana/COMI*), a political party from Piran, was formed but it was abolished several years later. The self-governing interest communities of the Italian minority are the key counterparts in the relationship with the government of Slovenia. When deciding on matters effecting the status of ethnic minorities, state bodies must acquire the opinions of the self-governing communities and these opinions have priority. A similar provision applies on the local level.

<sup>26</sup> The provisions from the 1974 Croatian constitution did not provide for the foundation of minority organizations that would be integrated into the political decision-making system. The position of the Italian communities in



principle. All self-governing communities in bilingual municipalities were then integrated into the coastal self-governing community for education and culture. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the transition to a new political system brought only minor reforms to matters concerning the Italian community. The most substantial change was that representatives of Italian community were and still are elected directly in local and federal elections. On the initiative of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority communities, the new Slovene constitution of 1991 retained the self-governing communities as legitimate representative elected bodies of the Italian (and Hungarian) minority community in the territories where the minority community is settled. A special law on self-governing communities of interests was passed at that time (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 65/94). According to the law on organization and financing of educational activities (Article 41, Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 12/96), the self-governing communities should be cofounders of Italian language public kindergartens and schools (or bilingual schools in the case of the Hungarian minority) and they also have an important role in mass media production. As noted previously, the Italian (and Hungarian) community has its own radio and television broadcasting (Šabec, 2005).<sup>27</sup>

Next to the self-governing communities, the Italian Union is the second most important organization for the Italian minority community. As noted at the beginning of this section, it has the status of an association in Slovenia, whereas in Croatia, it is registered as the main organization of the Italian community.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, occasional disagreements arise because of differing legal status of the Italian Union in Croatia and Slovenia (R26). The Italian Union represents the Italian community in the territories of both former Yugoslav republics – Slovenia and Croatia. As such it is formally recognized by the Italian government. Its seat is in Rijeka (Croatia) and Koper (Slovenia). The Italian Union's predecessor in the former Yugoslavia was called the *Italian Union of the Istrian District and Rijeka*. It was established on the initiative of the communist party and Italian anti-fascists in 1944 to direct the Italian anti-fascist forces within the Liberation Front. After the end of World War Two, the organization was transformed and its main focus became the cultural mobilisation of the Italian ethnic community (R4). Maintaining Italian identity was the most important aim of the Italian cultural circles that were founded in 1946 in the territories where Italians were settled. These cultural circle operated under the auspices of the Centre of Italian Popular Culture (*Centro di cultura popolare italiana*) in Koper and were renamed *Unione degli Italiani del circondario dell'Istria* in 1950. After the London Memorandum, all Italian cultural circles were incorporated under the protection of the Italian Union of the Istrian District and Rijeka. Renamed Communities of Italians in 1971, these were not only cultural but socio-cultural organizations and they still exist in this form. When the self-governing communities were founded in 1974, the Italian Union of the Istrian District and Rijeka didn't have any political authority; its primary function was the coordination of social and cultural activities. The Italian Union of the Istrian District and Rijeka began as organization again in

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Slovenia and Croatia within former Yugoslavia departed substantially when Croatia rejected the powers of the Italian community as they existed in Slovenia.

<sup>27</sup> For more on the function of self-governing communities, see Šabec 2005.

<sup>28</sup> In contrast to Slovenia, Croatia doesn't have self-governing associations acting as the main legal representative of the Italian minority community. In Slovenia, the role of these organizations as the only legal partner in the Republic of Slovenia that can act as mediator/negotiator between the ethnic minority communities and the government was enacted by the constitution and adopted by the special Law on Self-Governing National Associations. In Croatia, the Italian Union is the main representative of the Italians living in this neighbouring state and it has a more elevated status than association (R26).

1990. One year later, it was renamed the Italian Union and its activities were no longer limited to the cultural and social, but encompassed the sphere of economics and politics as well (R26). The Italian Union is organized as a delegation system of separate communities of Italians, i.e. representatives or delegates of separate associations of Italians allocate the interests of their associations on the level of the Italian Union (Jeglič, 2000: 75-77).<sup>29</sup>

There have already been some problems for these associations in the independent Slovenia. These occurred when Italians tried to formally register the associations under the basic minority right to organize and other applicable laws. From 1992 to 1998, the government and local authorities hemmed and hawed, refusing to register the associations. Ultimately, they were not registered until 1998, despite the fact that they had existed since Yugoslav times. At the beginning of independence, only the municipality of Izola decided to change its statute and register the Italian associations. This provoked a heated response along with the absurd statement that the establishment of Italian associations was unconstitutional. Every move that the Italian community made to establish political representation on the local level provoked (at least in certain circles) initiatives for the evaluation of the constitutionality of such representation. The Constitutional Court considered the registration of the Italian associations for nearly five years before it finally made the decision that the Italian communities could be registered as associations (R17). After Slovene independence, the Italian community began to reorganize and to become more diverse in terms of their representative organization. Numerous new associations were established not only among the minority, but also among the majority population. Members of the Italian community began to establish new associations on the basis of separate or special interests (sport, music, culture, etc.). New associations were also created on the initiative of the Italian Union as result of internal differences and disagreements. These associations have played an important role in socializing their members and mobilizing the culture community after the creation of Slovenia. This is in contrast to the self-governing associations that remained (at least until the beginning of the 1990s) political entities and the main negotiating partner with the government. Members of the community (or at least some of them) are striving to become more engaged in the life of the community and this can be perceived as increased cultural mobilization (and political mobilization to the extent that we understand civil engagement as political action as well). The reactions of the majority representatives to this increased organization tendencies on the part of the minority have been varied. In some municipalities, the community's activities were perceived as a normal democratic process of organizing people according to their private interests. In others, the enthusiasms of the transitional period had yet subsided and the post-independence outburst of Slovene nationalistic feelings still prevailed.

Despite their differing legal status, both the Italians associations and the Italian Union on the one hand and the self-governing communities on the other are important actors in the social, cultural and political mobilisation of their members. The question has been raised whether it is rational for such a small minority community to have so many different associations and whether efforts must be squandered because of lack of communication and coordination between some of the groups and their leaders. There are two associations of Italians in Izola alone, while the situation in Piran and Koper may be closer to cooperative dialogue and constructive

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<sup>29</sup> For more on the Italian Union and its activities, see Šabec 2005 and the appendix with the organizational chart of the Italian national community in the Republic of Slovenia.

cohabitation.<sup>30</sup> There is also the need for wider recognition and visibility of these associations throughout the entire region and among the majority population as well.

The goals of virtually all organizations in the Italian minority community are more activities, more effective political participation, and more socio-cultural mobilisation. They focus on economic development to a somewhat lesser extent. Some tensions can be discerned within the Italian community itself as the interests and authorities of the organizations have started to grow more complex and overlap. According to a number of minority members and majority representatives as well (R8, R9, R14, R16, R29), the activities of the self-governing communities and the Italian Union have started to look redundant, though both play an important role in the preservation of Italian culture and the cultural mobilisation of the Italian community. The Italian Union has become a sort of representative body of the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia, Croatia and particularly in Italy, representing it in interactions with the Slovene, Croatian and Italian governments. Indeed, the Slovene government has consented to the demands of the Italian Union on several occasions. However, the Italian Union's interactions with Italy and with Slovenia are considered not sufficiently transparent by some. The law permits members of the Italian community to establish other organizations that will express their political will, and maintain and preserve their ethnic identity. However, these organizations cannot replace self-governing communities in their primary function as sole legal counterpart in negotiations between the ethnic community and the government (Komac, 1999: 64).

In terms of cross-border cooperation opportunities, European integration has undoubtedly opened a wider space of interaction and communication in the border region. At the same time, the countervailing force of globalisation poses new challenges to minority communities. If the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia has any ambition to become a relevant actor, not only in the region but also in cross-border cooperation processes in the broader European space, it is essential that internal conflicts within the minority community be minimised as much as possible. The various Italian organizations and associations should make an effort to combine their critical potential. This is especially important because the minority community is so small (in absolute numbers). By augmenting its position in the region, the Italian minority community might be able to circumvent two of its major problems: the internal problem of aging community members and deficit of younger members, and the external problem of the new relations with the government that occurred with the independence of Slovenia. Minority rights in democratic Slovenia have become no different from individual rights and must be demanded by each individual. This is a new state of affairs for members of minority ethnic communities in Slovenia. In the former Yugoslav state, the community was treated as collective body in the first place, and as a group of individual citizens in the second. Today minority status is no longer a collective matter; it is the

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<sup>30</sup> The Italian community in Izola is an example of such confusion. There are three Italian organizations in the Manzioli Palace in Izola. This causes tensions, conflicts and internal disputes between the Pasqual Besenghi Italian Association (approximately 400 or 500 members), the Dante Alighieri Italians Association (180 members), and the Self-governing Community of the Italian Ethnic Minority in Izola. When the latter tries to compensate for the lack of coordination (and hence of activities), it is attacked by both associations. The Dante Alighieri Italians Association was originally founded because of disputes about allocation of money that took place between the members of the only association at that time. As the disputes continued for years, a breakaway group formed their own organization (first called the Giordano Bruno Italians Association and then Dante Alighieri). The latter was registered in October 1998, and as such is formally distinct from the other Italian association in Izola - the Pasqual Besenghi Italian Association.

individual right of each citizen person to declare (or not) himself or herself as a member of a minority group.<sup>31</sup> This requires a special effort and not all community members are willing to invest that effort.

#### *4.3. Social-economic integration and cultural vitality of the Italian community in new conditions*

As previously mentioned, the system of legal protection for autochthonous minorities in Slovenia grants more rights than proscribed by European standards. Yet the problems the minority communities face do not result from the laws themselves, but from their flawed implementation. According to some authors, the main reason for the inconsistency is the lack of a culture of law-enforcement in Slovenia (Klemenčič and Zupančič, 2004). This could have been influenced – though not excused – by Slovenia’s Yugoslav heritage. An additional factor that contributes to the new conditions for minority communities in independent democratic Slovenia is the historical economic weakness of the Italian community described in the previous section.

Political and economic factors undoubtedly affect the social manifestations of community identity as well as its cultural vitality and integration with the majority population in otherwise bilingual regions. After the establishment of the independent Slovene state, the Italian minority community found itself in new political, economic and social conditions. The vitality of an ethno-linguistic community could be defined as “that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations” (Štrukelj, 1993: 230). Therefore, a variety of different factors influence vitality. First, **(1)** there is the interaction of the community's economic wealth, social status, socio-historical prestige, and language status all of which influence the vitality and identity of a particular minority community.<sup>32</sup> Demographic factors **(2)** are no less important. These include population numbers and distribution, birth rate, endogamy as well as immigration and emigration rates.<sup>33</sup> The third essential factor for community vitality is institutional (governmental) support **(3)**. This category includes the representation of the language in various institutions in the region: education, government services, media, culture, religion, industry.<sup>34</sup> Complicating matters, these factors are not independent, but highly interrelated. The relative economic status of the in-group and out-group impinges on their social and cultural status, social status may be also draw on socio-historical status, and both may be dependent in various ways on elements of institutional support. In short, equivalent weight is given to each of the factors determining community vitality (Giles et al., 1977).

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<sup>31</sup> One of the respondents remarked: “It doesn’t help to say on the spot that it is my legal right as a member of the Italian minority to speak Italian in public. Of course it is my right, but the right only exists when the person you interact with concedes this right and is prepared to speak in your language” (R6). A practical example can be found in the current forms for assessment of income tax that are in Slovene. If a minority member wants this form in his/her native language (Italian or Hungarian), he or she must ask for it individually, though this is not in accordance with existing law. A similar situation exists with electronic forms found on the state administration web site. They used to appear in Italian language but do not any longer.

<sup>32</sup> According to Giles et al (1977), the more a community has economic and political control over its present and future, the higher its social status, the stronger its tradition and history as a source of pride, the more highly valued its language, the more vitality that community has.

<sup>33</sup> According to Giles et al (1977), the higher the population of the minority community and its birth rate, the greater concentration of the ethnic community in the territory, the lower the incidence of emigration of community members out of the territory (and the lower the immigration of majority members into it), the more vitality the community has.

<sup>34</sup> According to Giles et al (1977), the more institutional support the minority community is given, the more vitality it is likely to have.

In 1993, an exploratory study examining perceptions of vitality and positive identity elements of the Italian community in Istria (both Slovene and Croatian Istria) was published (Štrukelj, 1993). Research results revealed the low ethno-linguistic vitality of the Italian community in Istria. The study concluded that, considering their objective situation in terms of control over economy and business, political power, the amount of Italian spoken in government offices, businesses and majority schools, social mobility in general, “Italians may find serious reasons for undergoing a crisis of self-esteem” (Štrukelj, 1993: 232). In the then period of political and socio-economic transition, the community perceived itself as a subordinate group that was restricted in its development. Consequently, their ability to oppose assimilation decreased. Community connections with a wealthy historical state and a rich cultural heritage contributed to the Italians satisfactory identity. Yet all the same, once the regional component (itself a result of a minority population well integrated into majority that inhabits the same region) was added to their ethnic identity, a large number of community's members identified themselves as primarily Istrians (60.1% of the respondents declared themselves as Italian Istrians) and not only Italians.<sup>35</sup> “Taking into consideration the socio-structural variables influencing psycho-sociological attitudes, it is possible to conclude that the strategies at present available to the Italian minority to avoid being progressively assimilated are restricted and will remain so until the group members are able to reverse their status position in terms of socio-economic power” (Štrukelj, 1993: 233).

Important elements in the socio-economic power of a minority community are its socio-economic integration into the majority environment on the one hand, and the willingness of the latter to accept the minority on the other. Tensions between majority and minority community cannot be easily avoided, particularly when national and ethnic affiliations are added to the brew. In the former Yugoslavia, such tensions did exist but not in such an acute form as today. This was in part because of general ideological principles (“brotherhood and unity” etc.), and in part because of the association of republics and their minorities, in which minorities were viewed as constitutive elements of the system and its mechanisms. Slovenia, in contrast, was founded in 1991 not as a federation, but as a nation state with all the elements of a modern democratic state. As a result, the relationship between minorities and the state has changed. Today, the Slovene state needs to arrange its relations with all of its minorities. That includes, of course, recent immigrants from former Yugoslav republics which changes the situation for the so-called autochthonous minorities (the Italians and Hungarians).

Enough time has not elapsed since transition for all the elements of the current period to be clearly understood. It will take some time to perceive the consequences of this intermediate period of the 1990s. Likewise, the effects of Slovene membership in EU, which took place in May 2004, cannot be entirely assessed because so little time has passed. But one thing is certain: Slovene independence definitely provoked an increased sense of national affiliation. The most negative manifestations of this new sense of national affiliation is, of course, nationalism along with a brand of ethnocentrism that is comparable to the old Central European comprehension of cultural affiliation within a nation. As compared to the last census taken in 1991, the sense of national affiliation decreased in the 2002 census. This includes minority ethnic groups living in

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<sup>35</sup> A substantial number of respondents in 2005 and 2006 interviews declared themselves as Italian Istrians (Šabec, 2005-2006).

Slovenia (except Roma and Albanians). Nevertheless, it is difficult to pinpoint how much and in what circumstances non-Slovene ethnic groups might have felt carried away with Slovenia's outburst of national feelings on the threshold of the first independent and sovereign Slovene state.

Generally speaking, there exists in Slovene society a peculiar kind of continuum between the relatively positive coexistence with the Italian minority community (established during the late 1970s and lasting through the 1980s), the so-called great revolution that took place in the 1990s, and the current period of quasi-tolerance after the 1990s when it has nevertheless become normal in certain circles to speak openly about "removing the Italian influence from this area". The former Yugoslav state had formally legislated minority protection. Though the Yugoslav system and ideology did not allow public criticism of minority members, it also didn't always act when laws were not upheld but the (public) speech of the majority population parroted the government line. After Slovene independence, a different system of values and norms was established. It has not gone so far that the assimilation process of minorities in Slovenia has been legislated, but the multiparty democratic system permits political parties to openly express their opinions, and not surprisingly those of the nationalist parties are usually against people with a different ethnic identity. Although these nationalistic opinions are occasionally heard in public and read in newspapers, they could not be said to define or characterise Slovene discourse. Nevertheless, as regards the general atmosphere, there has been a recent escalation in nationalism and intolerance of minorities and this has particularly affected young people of different ethnic nationality. There hasn't been what one could call a real outburst of hatred or intolerance, but debates have revealed the existence of more explicit nationalistic feelings in Slovenia that sometimes trigger inter-community antagonism and consequently may lead to the forced assimilation of non-Slovenes. A segment of the majority population in the region, mostly youth, has become explicitly intolerant and hostile toward Italians in Slovenia (see [www.obala.net](http://www.obala.net), for example, which is the most visited website on the Slovene coast or certain regional newspapers (*Primorske novice*, for example) and particularly their letters-to-the-editor pages). According to the views of the ethnic minority, this is a direct consequence of the general political atmosphere of intolerance toward all minority groups in the country. "Most of the people who participate in the above-mentioned website are young people who are xenophobic toward all minorities and perceive the coastal territory as explicitly monocultural, which is to say Slovene" (R21). This attitude reflects the ongoing tension that has characterized official Slovene-Italian relations.

However, because of a general environment that is not particularly hostile, explicit ethnic identification is also not particularly strong and as a result integration with the majority population continues. There are other reasons for this: globalisation, the decline among younger generations of marrying within the Italian community, the relative openness of the Italian community to mixed marriages which are now the substantial majority of all marriages, school bilingualism which indicates a decline in the social use of Italian language in the Italian schools (i.e. not as the language of instruction, but as the language of informal communication in interactions among students and teachers). All these factors have diminished the tendency for minority members to strongly identify with the community, and this in turn has decreased the vitality of the Italian minority community.

## 5. Responses and perceptions of local actors

It should be pointed out that issues such as political participation and socio-economic integration, cultural mobilization and recognition, political and cultural demands of the community and the ongoing perception of ethnic-national vis-à-vis European identity, are interconnected and are only analysed separately for the purpose of clarity. All of them depend on the changing perceptions of both the minority and majority, on their mutual communication, and on a host of other objective and subjective factors. Some of these factors have been discussed in previous sections and others will be discussed in the following chapter. In looking at these matters it needs to be remembered that the Italian minority community is internally heterogeneous and not all of its members have the same opinion about things. All the same, certain general conclusions can be made.

One of the primary observations regarding the recognition of Italian minority community (and this holds not only in the bilingual territories but in the rest of the country as well) is that the majority perceive the Italian (and Hungarian) community through the prism of folklore. People from the centre of Slovenia often think, for example, that the Italian minority community exists only on paper, that there are no real members of this minority group. Of course, people living in the centre of Slovenia are not burdened with the same historical memory as people from the Primorska (Littoral) region. Bilingual topography and other visible bilingualism, such as Italian television and radio programmes, contribute to the realisation that not only ethnic Slovenes live in particular territories, but that only effects perceptions within the region itself. The urban characteristics of the major bilingual towns and municipalities on the Slovene coast (Koper, Piran, Izola), their Mediterranean and Venetian appearance testify to the historical and contemporary Italian presence in the area. All the same, many people in Slovenia are not aware of it, and if they are, they often don't know the historical facts. There is a general belief among Slovenes that Italians in Slovenia are remnants from the period when this territory was part of Italy (after 1918 and through the Fascist era). Slovene textbook could be more thorough and precise on this point. The Slovene state should provide its citizens, and particularly its young ones, with the knowledge that not only Slovenes live in Slovenia, but other nationalities and ethnic groups as well. As it stands, the Italian minority community is not much discussed in Slovene textbooks (R6, R12, R13, R17, R20, R21, R24, R27). Mention of it is limited to a few school courses. According to some, recognition of the Italian minority community among the broader Slovene population has been declining recently, particularly after the 1990s. The bilingual territory is an exception to this rule, though less so now since immigration patterns have also caused changes in the population structure of Slovene Istria (R26). "We have to explain over and over again about bilingualism and the Italian presence in this territory. Some people still think bilingualism is for the Italian tourists who come to the Slovene coast" (R16). One important reason for this situation is that the majority mass media are less and less interested in minority issues. In the former Yugoslavia, dealing with the Italian (and Hungarian) minority presence in Slovenia had been a sort of institutional obligation. The situation today is very different. "We were actually part of the system in the former Slovenia. Today we have only a democratic right to be so" (R16).

Community members, at least the active ones, realise that the community must not remain isolated from the majority environment, and events and meetings are arranged not only for Italians but also for the majority population (R7, R16, R23, R28, R29). However, ongoing

intensive interaction with the government is also necessary. It is simply not enough for the government to refer to legislation and written norms. This must also be followed up with implementation of laws, the financing of this implementation, and punitive actions when laws are not administered. It also includes mechanisms for the implementation of various cohabitation projects and for the participation of minority population in decision making about matters essential to its existence (special minority rights to education, cultural activities, and above the future of the bilingual territory). In the councils of all three bilingual municipalities (Koper, Izola, Piran), the Italian minority community along with some allies are resisting current building projects that would change the ethnical structure of the territory. Improved traffic infrastructure would enable more intensive commuting of the so-called middle-management population from the border region to central Slovenia (above all Ljubljana). In general, these commuters moved from the interior of Slovenia to the coast, settled, but still work in Ljubljana. Quite often, “such people don’t understand why on earth their children need have four hours of Italian language per week” (R21). This is a burning issue not only for the majority population, but for the Italian minority community which has to make its needs heard despite its smaller numbers. The prices of apartments on the coast are no longer accessible to young people. This is leading to an exodus of the young, which will cause even more problems for the Italian minority community. Indeed the problems have become so complex and multifaceted that not even the majority coastal population has an answer for how to solve them. Common regional problems call for a common regional solution. Such an approach could also have the added-value of improving the cohabitation of minority-majority populations.

In keeping with the above approach, the following political, cultural and financial demands of the Italian community need to be considered.

1. *Consistent implementation of bilingualism:* We found that the most significant problems with bilingualism exist mostly on the government level.<sup>36</sup> Local officials of the government administration regularly break the rules of bilingual oral and written communication. However, inconsistencies appear within the local municipal public offices as well, and this despite the fact that the municipal decree on bilingualism is very precise and calls for sanctions when its provisions are violated (R4, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R18, R20, R26, R27). The following violations can be observed in all three bilingual municipalities:

- Not all signs and inscriptions are bilingual.
- Italian language on public signs and inscriptions is often deficient and despite punitive measures and warnings were not been corrected.
- Public officials on the state and municipal level are often not able to speak Italian. When people use Italian in public offices, it is increasingly common that the official responds in Slovene and provides forms (written and electronic versions) in the Slovene language.
- Italian symbols are not present in bilingual territory. Provisions published by the Ministry of Public Administration after Slovene accession to the EU require that Slovene and European flags be hung at all public institutions. When the minority community lodged a complaint, the official

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<sup>36</sup> One example of the government’s attitude toward the Italian minority community and bilingualism in general could be observed during the printing of new citizenship certificates in 1992. They were published only in Slovene which caused protests to be made by various political parties, city councils, etc. The official explanation was that the certificates were printed in Ljubljana (not a bilingual territory) so there was no requirement that they be bilingual! To this day, the certificates are only in Slovene. Paradoxically, voting ballots, also printed in Ljubljana, are bilingual (R8).



response was that it was not required that the Italian flag be flown next to the Slovene and European ones. “The Italian flag need only be displayed nine times per year on national days. According to Italian community members, the presence of minority symbols is not necessary for the minority only but for the entire population, because the territory is bilingual. Bilingualism means more than just use of two languages; it has to do with the representation of a territory where two different cultures, histories and traditions intermingle” (R10).

*2. Financial factors, economic autonomy, and development opportunities for the minority community.* The Italian ethnic community is financed by state and municipal budgets, but the amount the community receives is not increasing with the rising cost of living. The amount received is no longer sufficient for the community’s needs. The system of financing needs to be changed in an effort to enhance the economic autonomy of the Italian community. The government should provide starting capital for projects that would have a long-term benefit to the community.

*3. Educational problems:* In addition to insufficient bilingualism on the state level (Ministry of Education)<sup>37</sup>, there are other shortfalls. There is insufficient state financing for the training of Italian teachers and professors in Italian language in the Italy. This is well defined in the statutes (Article 23 of the *Law on the special rights of the Italian and Hungarian minority communities in the field of education*, 2001), but they are not properly implemented. Many teachers and professors in Italian schools in Slovenia studied at Slovene universities, which often means a lack of skills in Italian language that could be corrected by additional training in their mother tongue. Despite daily use of Italian within the Slovene environment, minority members are not able to follow ongoing changes in his or her native language. Therefore, Italians in Slovenia often lag behind in contemporary usage of their native language. Additional courses and seminars in Italian and professional visits with their Italian colleagues in Italy for these teachers are urgently

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<sup>37</sup> A few examples are illustrative. One of the respondents, a headmaster in an Italian-language school said: “The Ministry of Education and Sport is the first among others to not respect the law. It does not provide bilingual documents, regulations, laws – at least not the most important ones – that we must give to our students. The last time school rules were translated into Italian was 1998! For seven years now, we have been working without translated school rules. It is impossible to tell you how many times we have written or contacted the ministry about this problem, and each time they say that a new book of rules is about to be published so we should wait. We got the last book of rules in October 2005, only in Slovene of course. Despite our requests for translation, and despite the fact that we already found a translator, there was only silence from the other side. This is extremely frustrating because there is simply no answer, no response, a wall. We speak, but to no purpose” (R6).

There are many other problems related to getting material in the Italian language. Italian schools receive essential material in Italian, but there are a great number of other things that take place in Slovene schools and Italian schools are left out of: for example, school competitions in logic, geography, and other subjects. It’s normal for Slovene pupils, but not for Italian children, to have the opportunity to participate in such country-wide competitions. The reason is that the translation of the competition material is not assured. Teachers and school administrators have to demand minority rights over and over again, as Italian children are routinely deprived of the number of required points needed to register at secondary schools (R12).

Translation problems occur with school material for parents as well. There are no translated notices about the school rules made available to parents. Indeed all documentation and material are in Slovene language only. This problem is being dealt with, but very slowly (R12). School material sent from Ljubljana (which is most material) is in Slovene only and the minority has the feeling of gradually losing its status as equal partner. At the same time, the use of Italian in public is declining as well.

needed.<sup>38</sup> Another problem has emerged with the decreasing enrolment in Italian schools. This is not only a problem for Italian schools. Nevertheless, Slovene schools are still better attended than Italian schools, which are all also proportionately fewer in number. There are several reasons for the ongoing decline: one is the decreasing birth rate, a second is the general atmosphere in which Italian parents prefer to send their children to Slovene schools (though there are some Slovene parents who send their children to Italian schools), and a third is the fact that Italian ethnic children from Croatia are no longer part of the Italian school system in Slovenia. Italian minority members in Slovenia who are not entirely sure about their identity or are the product of mixed marriages tend to assimilate. All the same, high quality education, good teachers and modern working conditions would ensure that Italian schools won't be empty. Not only the Italian minority community is responsible for the conditions in Italian schools, but the responsibility rests also with Slovene state and local authorities.

As noted above, not only the children of Italian minority members attend Italian kindergartens and schools but the children of other groups, including Slovenes. Most minority members are aware that it's not advisable for the Italian community to be isolated from children whose parents are not Italians (R6, R12, R24). Such an approach would lead the Italian community to ghettoisation and an increasing discrepancy between minority and majority populations.<sup>39</sup>

One last problem has appeared in the Italian schools. The students tend to speak Slovene in their social interactions at school (R19). The number of mixed marriages is an important reason for this phenomenon. Parents, or at least one parent, must speak Italian with the child at home or the child will feel like a foreigner in Italian schools despite his or her Italian ethnic identity.

4. *Mass media*: An increasing amount of pressure is being felt by the Italian programme at RTV Centre Koper/Capodistria for excessive use of public money. It is difficult to know whether these complaints are made for political reasons, or because of the bias of particular individuals (for example, the former general director of RTV who stated that the Italian community bears the blame for a wider financial crisis at RTV), or indeed there is an actual financial crisis at RTV. But in any case, no real deterioration has taken place since the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the emergence of the independent Slovene state; despite the constant pressure, the quantity of Italian programming has not decreased (R18). All the same, other problems have emerged during this time. TV Koper/Capodistria is not aired in Italy, not even in neighbouring Trieste. If the Italian programme were aired in northern Italy, it might be possible for Radio-Television Koper/Capodistria to raise additional money through advertising. Worse still, TV Koper/Capodistria is not aired in Croatia. Some minority members think there should be reciprocity: just

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<sup>38</sup> The real problem is not instruction of the Italian language, but instruction of all courses in the Italian language. In this respect, the Italian language used in schools is not always on the highest level because many teachers and professors studied in Slovene and lost contact with the living Italian language. A similar problem can be found in textbooks. The Italian language in the books is simply not correct or current (R27).

<sup>39</sup> In the 2001/2002 school year, the Italian language kindergarten was attended by 268 children. The network of Italian language elementary schools (one autonomous, two parent schools, and six local school branches) was attended by 434 children. Secondary schools with Italian as the language of instruction were attended by 278 pupils in the same school year, which means that a total of 980 children received education in Italian language schools (Klopčič and Novak – Lukanovič, 2004: 13-14).

as the Croatian-based publishing house EDIT sells its newspaper to Italians in Croatia and Slovenia, so should RTV Koper/Capodistria broadcast its Italian programming in Slovenia and Croatia. Though the Croatian state doesn't subsidize RTV Koper/Capodistria, only a little extra money would be enough for the Italian programme of TV Koper/Capodistria to be broadcast via satellite (R4). Recently, the Italian Union in cooperation with the Italian Foreign Ministry and the region of Friuli–Venezia Giulia, provided funds for the three-year-lease of a satellite channel to air four hours of the RTV Italian programme each day. This proposal has not yet received the consent of RTV's general director.

*5. Socio-demographic issues:* The principle socio-demographic issue faced by the Italian minority in Slovenia is its low population.<sup>40</sup> This represents a serious handicap for Italians in Slovenia. One reason for the overall problem is that the Italian population in Slovenia is aging. A second reason is the increase in mixed marriages, which have become extremely frequent. According to R16, more than 90% of all "Italian" marriages in Slovenia are mixed marriages.<sup>41</sup> Of course, this is the best proof of the Italian's community multicultural nature and successful coexistence. On the down side, mixed marriages weaken the Italian affiliation of community members. Ultimately, it is difficult to say whether mixed marriages are a net positive or negative for the Italian community. The third reason for the recent demographic decline is the increasing movement of people. The Slovene-Italian border is close and many people find jobs outside Slovenia. Eventually, they often move to other places, especially to Italy. Lastly, as in many communities, young people are marrying and having children later, and this also contributes to a general decline in the population. Of course, this is a general trend, but it has a more crucial effect on minority communities than it does on the majority. Another important issue for the community is employment options. The education laws of the former Yugoslavia (after 1982) favoured members of the Italian community for teaching and professorial positions. In the new democratic Slovene constitution, this article of the law no longer exists (R10). Consequently, anybody who is proficient in the Italian language can be accepted for a teaching job in Italian language schools, and ethnic Italians no longer have priority. This has caused problems among the younger generations who no longer see any benefits in officially declaring themselves Italians. There are few working places where Italian language is officially used. There are no special economic safety nets for Italian youth and Italian schools don't offer special interest programmes for Italian students. Journalism and education have been virtually the only areas where the community regularly offers working position in Italian language to its members (R8).

Nevertheless, proficiency in the Italian language can be extremely useful in businesses and CBC projects with Italy. Here, members of the Italian community have an advantage because they know Italy, speak Italian fluently, and are familiar with both cultures and mentalities. As previously mentioned, this bridging function between the former Yugoslavia and Italy has mostly been undertaken by the Slovene minority in Italy, that is through Slovene companies in Italy respectively. The community and indeed the whole society will need to continue providing circumstances that will make young people recognise the benefits of their ethnic affiliation and begin to identify themselves as minority members. The first condition for this would be the creation of a general atmosphere (and the Slovene government should be instrumental in this) where being a minority member has a positive connotation. According to many minority

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<sup>40</sup> Regardless of the 2002 census and changes in the statistical methodology of census taking.

<sup>41</sup> According to R7, R8, R12, R17, R21, R24 as well.

representatives, Slovene society intensifies – through media and other channels – “the significance of being Slovene and young people especially do not want to be different from everybody else” (R6).

Finally, the Italian community needs to undergo certain changes in terms of its own internal organization with the goal of increasing its activities. It functions on the level of decision-making, but when it comes to actual operations there is simply not enough energy or people prepared to work on events, projects, implementation all of which could significantly contribute to the cultural recognition and visibility of the Italian ethnic minority in Slovenia and Italy.<sup>42</sup> If the minority would demand it, the Italian language might become more present not only in terms of formal bilingualism, but in everyday public life. This would in turn allow a more open discussion of minority issues. Without the critical voice of the Italian minority, it will be extremely difficult to address the discrepancy between adequate formal legislation regarding minority rights and everyday practice. At the same time, such activities would make the minority more noticed and recognized in the (majority) surroundings and increase general visibility. In addition to better internal organization of Italian community and more cooperative relations with the Slovene state, the Italian ethnic minority in Slovenia could achieve higher visibility if the Italian government would formulate a more cohesive attitude toward its minorities. Despite a limited amount of state subsidies from the Italian government for cultural and other activities, the Italian government (similar to its Slovene counterparts) doesn't want or doesn't understand the necessity for the economic independence of ethnic Italians in Slovenia.<sup>43</sup> Until the 1980s or 1990s, the Italian community in Slovenia was all but invisible to the Italian state and particularly to the Italians who opted out of Yugoslavia after World War Two. To them, the Italians who remained in Yugoslavia were traitors. The Italian government woke up to this minority population about fifteen years ago when Yugoslavia began the process of disintegration. At this point, the Italian government began to follow the fortunes of the Italian community in Slovenia, though negative historical memories still clouded the picture. Most Italians who left post-war socialist Yugoslavia perceived the Italians who remained as communists or Titoists, as people who betrayed Italian interests (R16). However, an important distinction should be made between the Italian government in Rome and the regional government in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, that is in the border region of Slovenia. The latter at least understands the situation on the border much better than they do in Rome. They have absorbed the historical fact that though the border moved

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<sup>42</sup> One of the respondents worked a few years ago on an Interreg project IIIA Italy-Slovenia called “*Majorities Perceive Minorities*”. The project was coordinated by the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian community in Slovenia acted as a partner. The project, dealing with the Italian and Slovene minorities, was presented to majority (Slovene) secondary schools on the Slovene coast as a bilingual territory and to majority (Italian) secondary schools in the Trieste region and Udine. The results were astonishing. Italian students knew virtually nothing about the Italian minority in Slovenia and Croatia or about the Slovene minority in Italy. Slovene students, on the other hand, were familiar with both the Slovene and Italian minorities, but were not aware of the historical roots and the concept of autochthonism of Italians in Slovenia and Croatia. They showed a great interest in the topic (R13).

<sup>43</sup> In 2004, the Italian government (through the Trieste Adult Education Institute) budgeted EUR 4,650,000 for the Italian minority communities in Slovenia and Croatia. EUR 2,200,000 was earmarked for Italian kindergartens, schools, a new gymnasium for the Pula Elementary School (Croatia), textbooks, and other educational material and computer equipment. The rest of the money went to Radio Koper/Capodistria (Slovenia), Radio Pula/Pola (Croatia), the EDIT publishing house (Rijeka – Croatia), the Rovinj Research Institute (Croatia), and various other associations. This new money represents the implementation of part of a modernised three-year old law (No. 193/2004) regarding relations between Republic of Italy and the Italian minority abroad (Primorski dnevnik, 25. 11. 2004, p. 3).

after World War Two, not all the people moved with it. According to minority members, the Italian government in Rome doesn't necessarily understand the basic historical facts and textbooks in Italian schools don't present the situation correctly. In any case, perceptions remain blurred. During recent times, Italians have gotten a somewhat clearer notion of this history, but it is a slow process. Moreover, Italy as a whole is hardly aware of the existence of the Italian minority in Slovenia. When the Italian state refers to Italians living abroad, it almost never mentions Italians living in Istria who are – besides Swiss Italians - the only autochthonous Italian community outside of Italy (i.e. not the product of economic or political migration). One reason for this omission may be the eternal rivalry between the Trieste and Koper regions. The other may be politics, which still dominates relationships and perceptions on the regional level and is usually far from constructive. Unfortunately, negative historical memories are still pervasive throughout the whole area. "When I go to Trieste," says one of the respondents, "I am a Titoist and a communist, when I'm in Slovenia I'm a Fascist" (R10).

The above statement brings us to the last issue of this report and that is the perception of ethnic, national and European identity among Slovenes and Italians in Slovenia. One of the most important common observations regardless of ethnic or national affiliation of respondents was scepticism about the European Union, though many of them also expressed hope for better (cross border) cooperation and cohabitation despite historical disputes and divisions. A certain nascent identification with Europe therefore could be observed, though affiliation to the national/ethnic identity still prevails particularly among the majority population. Explicit, though more frequently implicit, associations with the former Yugoslav identity as "transnational" identity do appear in people's responses, while people express a certain tentative optimism about common European values (solidarity, freedom, peace, cooperation, communication, interaction etc.). These values presuppose the cohabitation of numerous heterogeneous identities, which is more evident to the minority members who have more identities to juggle than do members of the majority population. However, it can be difficult to harmonize numerous identities. When it comes to the members of the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia many of them perceive themselves as Italians, but at the same time they recognise that they are not the same as Italians in Italy (R18, R23, R27). Most likely, they identify themselves as Italians living outside Italy, but again it is a different sort of identification than, say, the identity of Italians who emigrated to Brazil or Argentine after World War Two. To Italians residing in Italy, the members of the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia are seen as somehow foreign, as not being perfect Italians. The Slovene ethnic community in Italy is regarded in the same way from the Slovene side of the border. "Minority members in general are neither fish, flesh nor fowl" (R23). This in-between position allows minority members to simultaneously have the insider's and outsider's viewpoint on particular matters. This can be an extremely advantageous perspective. The identity of the Italian minority in Slovenia is rather like a collection of things in small portions: Istrian according to the place they live, Italian by ethnic identity, Slovene by citizenship, and European now as well. It's an odd identity, and perhaps because of it, Italians in Slovenia are in fact the first real citizens of a nascent Euroregion. "We do have one advantage: we are familiar with the situation in Slovenia, in Italy, and very often in Croatian Istria as well. And we are able to notice the positive and negative aspects of all three regions" (R18).

When we speak of perceptions of Italian ethnic identity among members of the Italian community in particular, an important change regarding language as the most explicit identifying symbol has taken place. Specifically, the national education programme no longer considers the

Italian in its curriculum, final examination, and catalogues to be the mother tongue of pupils attending Italian language schools, but rather their first language. This modification took place on the initiative of teachers and professors in Italian schools themselves. The phrase “mother tongue” appears only in brackets and unless otherwise indicated Italian is considered to be the first (but not mother) language (R6). The distinction has to do with what language is spoken in the family (mother tongue if it is Italian). For most minority members, Italian is understood but not routinely spoken at home. Speaking Italian as the mother tongue or home language is no longer widespread. Usually only one of the two parents regularly speaks Italian, sometimes only one grandparent.

The general opinion of respondents was that identities should not be exclusive but inclusive and complementary. Every individual should be familiar with and respect his or her roots and history, otherwise he or she will not be able to understand his or her present condition and the place where he or she lives. In this respect regional (cross-border) cooperation is welcome and advantageous because people of different identities no longer perceive each other as competitors and rivals but as partners whose collaboration continues even after a specific project ends. This is not yet achieved, but remains a worthwhile goal. It is in the interest of all parties involved and the European context can provide an inspiring and stimulating environment. For now, a negative historical memory is still present in the border region between Slovenia and Italy, and every now and then it flares up. Immediately after Slovene accession to the EU, provocative graffiti appeared in public places (*Viva Italia* on the Italian side, *Viva Tito* on the Slovene side) that proves the point. “Historical events need not be forgotten and interpretations of recent history are still urgently required, but they also needn’t dictate people’s current thoughts, behaviour, and interactions with others” (R10). It will take some time for this region to achieve truly cooperative and unburdened relations between people on both sides of the borders. Even today, political events are still used as opportunities by Slovenes and Italians to stir up past differences and nationalist sentiments. Nationalism, while submerged, remains a vivid force.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The case study of Italians in Slovene Istria responded in particular to four research questions. In terms of the first objective (1), the implementation of minority rights for the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia, little improvement has been perceived either in the context of EU integration and cross border cooperation initiatives affecting the Italian national community, or in the comparative context of the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the communist system and the subsequent formation of the first independent Slovene state and a democratic system. To the contrary, members of the minority community perceive even greater tensions with the majority population (although it is generally limited to small or specific groups of individuals). Interestingly enough, the economic autonomy of the minority community has become even more tenuous under the new market conditions. The government has yet to fulfil its obligation to provide a foundation for the greater economic independence of the community. Both the federal Yugoslav constitutions (1946, 1953, 1974) and the constitutions and various laws of the republics and autonomous provinces explicitly provided for the protection of ethnic minorities. In theory, Yugoslav standards were even higher than the standards in other European states, but in fact an ever-widening gap between theory and practice was already emerging in the former Yugoslavia.

Today it appears that the discrepancy between theory and actual conditions persists in the independent democratic Slovenia as well.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia was a major turning point in the post-war history of all of its successor states. For the position of the Italian minority community in Slovenia, the turning point was more economic than political. The previous regime had, for political and ideological reasons, trumpeted the presence of the Italian minority every chance it got. It wanted to demonstrate to Western Europe (and above all to Italy and Austria) how tolerant the Yugoslav state was and how well it treated its minorities. A similar phenomenon occurred during the process of Slovene independence when the newly emerging state needed international confirmation of its democratic standards, its new legislation, etc. But as indicated above, the crucial challenge remains the consistent implementation of law into practice.

The second objective referred to the involvement of the Italian national community in cross border cooperation programmes (2). A certain continuity can also be observed in this respect. Already within the framework of the former Yugoslavia (especially from the 1960s on with the increasing openness of borders), the political, economic and geographical position of Slovenia became stronger. This came into play first in the Alps-Adriatic Working Community in the context of Central Europe, second in the Central European Initiative, and finally within the European space as a whole. The advantages of this position continued to increase, especially with the collapse of the Eastern bloc and subsequent EU membership. The intensified development of border regions and the linkage between regions and across national borders provided additional opportunities to Slovene minorities in neighbouring countries and to the Italian and Hungarian communities in Slovenia. These included the potential of playing an important role making economic, cultural and other linkages between the Slovene state and its neighbours. The open frontier made the rapid economic development of the region possible, particularly on the Slovene side of the border. To summarize, the dissolution of the federal Yugoslavia, the establishment of two new sovereign independent states (Slovenia and Croatia), the process of transition from a communist to a democratic system, the implementation of a free market economy and last but not least the European integration process and its financial and other opportunities, all had an affected on the border region and on the position of the Italian community within it. The interviews highlighted three noteworthy consequences of these changes: the division of the Italian ethnic community between two independent and autonomous states (Slovenia and Croatia), complicated further by the fact that only one of the two states became a member of the EU in 2004; economic weakness and dependence of the Italian minority community on government subsidies, and; the political significance of European integration and cross-border cooperation opportunities. After the changes, Italians on both sides of the newly established Slovene-Croatian border began to lose the will and interest to engage in border matters. There was one important exception: that the Italian community in Croatia, which is numerically superior (approximately 20,000) to the corresponding community in Slovenia (approximately 2000), feels a stronger affiliation to its Italian identity. Therefore the European integration will have an important effect on the Italian community in the entire Istria region, and in its Slovenian part in particular only when Croatia becomes an EU member state and when the border between Slovenia and Croatia becomes less rigid again.

After Slovene accession to the EU, minority communities were no longer needed to legitimise the democratic values of Slovene state. Moreover, the Slovene government lacks the political will

to help the Italian minority become economically independent (perhaps the most burning issue effecting minority members). The transition from the socialist central planning system to free market conditions proved to be a disadvantage to the Italian community. This stands in marked contrast to the Slovene community in Italy. Socio-economic conditions in post-war Yugoslavia did not foster prosperity in business and development of trade in general, or for the Italian community in particular. As a result, today – sixty years later – the Italian community still suffers from the lack of a poor economic foundation. The economic foundation of a community has an important influence on all of the other activities of that community (culture, sports, etc.) and on their overall financial condition, which in turn has the potential to foster independence and autonomy. In the absence of vibrant economic life – and this is precisely what afflicts the Italian community in Slovenia – the community becomes by necessity dependent on state and local governments. Worsening the situation of the Italian community in Slovenia, current measures to cut overall state spending extend to minority protection as well, despite the fact that community organizations are financially dependent on state support. As far as cross border cooperation programmes are concerned, EU CBC funds are extremely limited and are not made up of ongoing investment funds, but of start-up funds intended to trigger change (the long-term goals being to make both the state and individuals begin thinking in developmental terms and that cooperation between regional communities will continue after the project has formally ended). Because Slovenia is at the beginning of the programme period, the effect of EU programmes will be evident only at the end of the period, in 2010.

CBC projects are often implemented in border regions that have been the location of specific historical tensions. The Slovene-Italian CBC region is characterised by regions or provinces where the political influence of the prevailing regional governmental has been decisive. This may be one of the reasons why CBC sought above all the cooperation between the two minorities in this region, rather than between the minority and majority. Cooperation between the Italian community in Slovenia and the Slovene minority in Italy emerged on the basis of concrete mutual interests and the need to achieve certain goals through cooperation. This format simply didn't exist in the past. Real concrete opportunities spurred real concrete cooperation as self-interest compelled both sides to get involved in projects. The advent of such close and positive cooperation between the Slovene minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia has generated important findings. One of them is that minorities should not be used as an instrument of state for negotiations between state institutions and governments. Minorities sometimes suffer from the similar problems as majority populations, and cooperation and interaction are a far better and more powerful method of seeking solutions than instrumentalisation. Another important finding is that CBC projects have the potential to lift minorities out of their own isolated space or reservation. Minorities need to mix with the broader environment and be integrated as equals into Slovene and Italian (majority) institutions. The principle problem experienced by the Italian minority in Slovenia is that there is little connection and cooperation with members of the majority community and this problem has not yet been solved. As far as the Italian minority community in Slovenia is concerned, one of the most troubling obstacles is that the community lacks skilled and trained specialists who would be able to handle project documentation, preparation, and implementation. Hopefully, the Europa Office will be successful in correcting this shortfall. The major problem preventing the Italian minority community from taking a more active role in CBC projects is the lack of start-up capital that is a condition for participation. The Italian state could be an important actor in providing its Slovene minority with financial means, but the historical memory and prejudice on both sides of the border are still



acute. The Italian government (similar to its Slovene counterparts) still doesn't seem to understand the necessity for the economic independence of ethnic Italians in Slovenia. Until the 1980s or 1990s, the Italian community in Slovenia was all but invisible to the Italian state and particularly to the Italians who opted out of Yugoslavia after World War Two. To them, the Italians who remained in Yugoslavia were traitors. The Italian government woke up to this minority population about fifteen years ago when Yugoslavia began the process of disintegration. Though negative historical memories still clouded the picture, the Italian government began to follow the fortunes of the Italian community in Slovenia via the Italian Union. Moreover, Italy as a whole is hardly aware of the existence of the Italian minority in Slovenia. When the Italian state refers to Italians living abroad, it almost never mentions Italians living in Istria who are – besides Swiss Italians – the only autochthonous Italian community living outside of Italy.

The third objective of the study was to define the main threats to the minority identity, its culture and interests (3). According to respondents, inconsistent implementation of bilingualism, the lack of economic autonomy, problems in educational, mass media, and several socio-demographic issues are the main obstacles to community mobilization. Mobilization has occurred within the Italian Union whose activities are no longer limited to the cultural and social, but encompass the sphere of economics and politics as well. After Slovene independence, the Italian community started to diversify and its organizations to multiply. Numerous new associations were established not only among the minority population, but the majority as well. Members of the Italian community began to establish new associations on the basis of separate or special interests (sports, music, culture, etc.), on the initiative of the Italian Union, internal differences and disagreements. Associations have played an important role in the socialization of their members and in cultural mobilization following the foundation of the new independent Slovenia. This is in contrast to self-governing associations that remained, at least at the beginning of the 1990s, more or less political entities, a partner in dialogue with the state. Reactions of the majority representatives have been varied. In some municipalities, the community's activity was perceived as a normal democratic process organizing people according to their private interests. In others, the transition period had evidently not ended and the post-independence outburst of Slovene nationalistic feelings, still prevailed. In addition, some tensions can be discerned within the Italian community itself, as the interests and authorities of the self-governing organizations and the Italian Union have started to become more complex and to overlap. More accurately, the activities of the self-governing associations and the Italian Union have started to look redundant, though both have played an important role in the preservation of Italian culture and the cultural mobilisation of the Italian community. The Italian Union has become a representative body of the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia, Croatia and particularly in Italy, representing it in interactions with the Slovene, Croatian and Italian governments. Indeed, the Slovene government has consented to the demands of the Italian Union on several occasions (R25, R26).

However if the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia has any ambition to become a relevant actor not only in the region but also in cross-border cooperation processes in the broader European space, its various organizations and associations should make an effort to combine their critical potential. This is especially crucial because the minority community is so small in absolute numbers. By augmenting its position in the region, the Italian minority community might be able to circumvent two of its major problems: first, the internal problem of an aging community and a deficit of younger members, and second, the external problem of establishing new relations with the government of the independent Slovenia.

Finally, the fourth objective was to research respondents' perceptions of their regional or national-ethnic identity in relation to the EU and European values in general (4). One of the most important common observations, irrespective of ethnic or national affiliation, was scepticism about the European Union although many also expressed hope for better (cross border) cooperation and cohabitation despite historical disputes and divisions. A certain identification with Europe therefore can be discerned, despite the fact that affiliation to national/ethnic identity still dominates (particularly among the majority population). Explicit (though more frequently implicit) associations with the former Yugoslav identity as a "transnational" identity appeared in responses. Some respondents also expressed a certain tentative optimism about common European values (solidarity, freedom, peace, cooperation, communication, interaction, etc). These values presuppose the cohabitation of numerous heterogeneous identities and are in any case more evident to members of the minority community who have more identities to juggle than to members of the majority population who have fewer. However, it can be difficult to harmonize numerous identities, and the identity of the Italian minority in Slovenia is rather like a collection of things in small portions: Istrian in accordance to the place they live, Italian by ethnic identity, Slovene by citizenship, and European now as well. It is a complex identity and, perhaps because of it, Italians in Slovenia are the first real citizens of the nascent Euroregion.

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8. List of interviewees:

<p><b><u>Respondent 1</u></b> Development public officials (Majority) Head of cross-border cooperation and the INTERREG initiative Female 19 August 2005, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 2</u></b> Development public officials (Minority/Majority) Head of Regional development office Female 7 September 2005, Štanjel</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 3</u></b> Development business people, commerce chambers ... (Majority) Project unit for the European Regional Development Fund, Ministry of the Economy Male 5 October 2005, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 4</u></b> Minorities politicians – community leaders (Minority) President of association of Italian minority Male 29 September 2005, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 5</u></b> Development private/business people (Minority) Director of commercial company Male 29 September 2005, Ljubljana-Trieste</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 6</u></b> Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Headmaster of Italian Gymnasium Female 16 January 2006, Portorož</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 7</u></b> Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Chair of Cultural and Research Association Female 26 January 2006, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 8</u></b> Elected representatives (Majority) Mayor Female 9 November 2005, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 9</u></b> Elected representatives (Minority) Deputy mayor and president of self-governing community of Italian nationality Male 9 November 2005, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 10</u></b> Elected representatives (Minority) and Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Deputy mayor, headmaster of Italian secondary, elected member of self-governing community of Italian nationality Male 10 January 2006, Izola</p>

<p><b><u>Respondent 11</u></b>  Elected representatives (Minority) and Business People (Minority)  Deputy mayor and business director  Male  22 December 2005, Piran</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 12</u></b>  Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority)  Headmaster of Italian elementary school  Female  11 January 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 13</u></b>  Main project beneficiaries (Minority)  Chief of business office  Female  23 January 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 14</u></b>  Minorities politicians and community leaders (Minority)  Chair of Community of Italians and town councillor  Male  23 January 2006, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 15</u></b>  Development public officials (Minority)  Director of regional development office and representative of self-governing community of Italian nationality for public tenders in state office  Male  11 August 2005, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 16</u></b>  Civil society, think tanks, media (Minority)  Director of Radio-television programmes for Italian national community, former chief editor of Italian programme, former president of local self-governing community of Italian nationality and vice-president of self-governing community of Italian nationality  Male  21 December 2005, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 17</u></b>  Elected representatives (Minority)  Member of National assembly of Republic Slovenia  Male  10 January 2006, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 18</u></b>  Civil society, think tanks, media (Minority)  Editor of Italian cultural programme on Regional RTV Centre Koper  Male  23 January 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 19</u></b>  Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority)  Chair of Community of Italians, former headmaster of Italian gymnasium  Female  12 December 2005, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 20</u></b>  Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority)  Chair of Community of Italians  Male  20 January 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 21</u></b>  Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority)</p>

<p>Managing committee's member of Community of Italians and town councillor Male 22 December 2005, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 22</u></b> Governmental representatives (Majority) Deputy chief of EU Cohesion Policy Department in the government office for local self-government and regional policy, former national coordinator of assistance for Phare CBC programmes Female 25 August 2005, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 23</u></b> Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Cultural coordinator of Community of Italians, town councillor and member of programme council of Regional RTV Centre Male 10 November 2005, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 24</u></b> Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Headmaster of Italian Kindergarten and town councillor Male 27 January 2006, Izola</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 25</u></b> Governmental representatives (Majority) Director of government office for nationalities Male 8 August 2005, Ljubljana</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 26</u></b> Elected representatives (Majority) Deputy mayor Male 23 December 2005, Piran</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 27</u></b> Civil society, media, think tanks (Minority) Chief of Community of Italians Female 2 March 2006, Piran</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 28</u></b> Civil society, think tanks, media (Minority) Editor of Italian programme on Regional RTV Centre Koper Male 23 March 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 29</u></b> Politicians and community leaders (informal) (Minority) Professor Female 21 March 2006, Koper</p>
<p><b><u>Respondent 30</u></b> Elected representatives (Majority) Deputy mayor Male 29 May 2006, Koper</p>

The interviews were conducted among members of the Italian ethnic community in Slovenia and among members of the majority population in the period between August 2005 and May 2006. The selection of the socio-professional categories of respondents was generally in compliance with the agreement from the second Euroreg meeting in London.

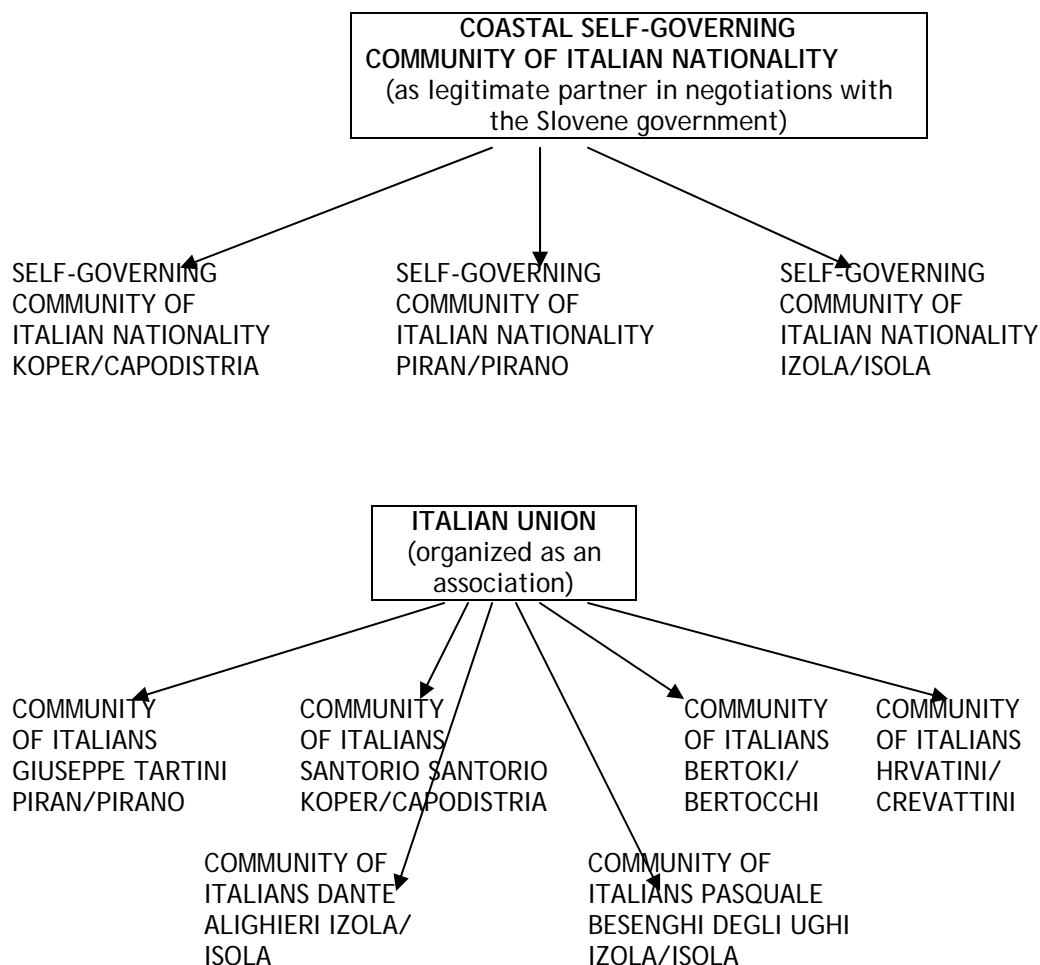
Some difficulties did emerge in the selection and contacting the people because many of the minority representatives discharged a variety of different public functions (deputy mayors, town councillors, coordinators and presidents of Italian organizations, etc). All the same, many of the respondents (particularly those employed at governmental institutions such as the National Agency for Regional Development) provided me with relevant material in response to the specific issues I raised. In addition, a number of well-organized websites exist. These are mostly run by the majority population. In contrast, the Italian minority in Slovenia is less current as regards ongoing information bulletins, web sites, etc.

I encountered no significant problems conducting the interviews, which lasted from twenty to ninety minutes. All of them except three were recorded on tape. The only exception took place during an interview with a governmental representative on the majority side. Eight minutes into the interview, he demanded that the recording device be switched off. I encountered great and almost unimaginable problems in my attempts to contact the mayor and deputy mayor of the bilingual municipality of Koper/Capodistria.

As presented in the list of interviewees thirty interviews had been conducted. The time, place and the position of the respondents can be seen in the list.

9. Appendix

Organization of the Italian community in the Republic of Slovenia



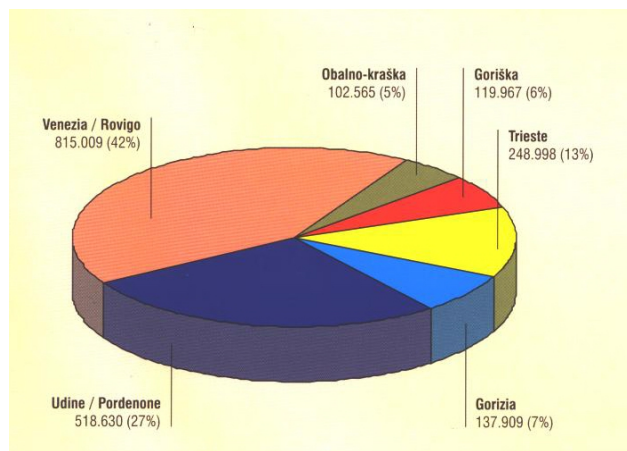
Principal characteristics of Slovene-Italian border region:

	BORDER REGION		
	Slovene	Italian	Together
<b>Area (km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	3.369	8.031	11.400
<b>Population (1998)</b>	222.532	1.720.546	1.943.078
<b>Density (inhab./km<sup>2</sup>)</b>	66	170	170

Source: Rener, Tatjana (2005): Intermediate Report Interreg IIIA.



Number and share of inhabitants within statistical regions in Slovenia and regions in Italy, which are entitled partners in Interreg IIIA Slovenia-Italy programme



Source: Rener, Tatjana (ed.) (2004): Čezmejni programi med Slovenijo in Italijo: z izkušnjami novim izzivom naproti. Štanjel, Ljubljana: Regionalna pisarna, Urad Vlade RS za informiranje.

Allocated EU funds by periods, numbers of projects and average values of projects:

Period	1994-1999	1999-2003	2004-2006
EU funds	18 mio €	8.6 mio €	4.5 mio €
Numbers of projects	139 projects	58 projects	19 projects
Average value of project	130.000 €/project	148.300 €/project	206.400 €/project

Source: Rener, Tatjana (2005): Intermediate Report Interreg IIIA.

GDP of the Republic of Slovenia (in million €)

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
15704	16345	17456	18761	20240
2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
20974	22099	23673	24876	26171

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, <http://www.stat.si>, 25. 10. 2005

Registered unemployed rate by regions

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Central Slovenia region	10,5	10,1	9,2	8,3	7,9
Littoral-karstic region	10,6	10,1	9,2	9,0	8,6
Gorenjska region	12,6	11,9	10,1	9,0	8,5
Goriska region	9,2	7,7	6,2	5,8	6,3
Savinjska region	16,7	15,3	13,6	13,5	14,0
South-Eastern Slovenia region	12,0	11,7	10,8	9,9	9,9
Pomurska region	18,7	18,2	17,2	16,7	17,6
Notranjsko-kraška region	12,5	12,2	10,8	9,7	9,1
Podravska region	22,0	20,6	18,7	17,9	17,6

Koroska region	13,0	11,7	10,3	10,2	11,6
Spodnjeposavska region	15,9	14,9	13,9	14,3	14,4
Zasavska region	19,2	17,5	15,5	14,7	15,3
<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>14,4</b>	<b>13,5</b>	<b>12,1</b>	<b>11,6</b>	<b>11,7</b>

Source: Single Programming Document 2004-2006, by Government Office for Structural Policies and Regional Development, Ljubljana, 2004