

Foreword

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"I have always felt that the action most worth watching is not at the center of things but where edges meet. I like shorelines, weather fronts, and international borders. There are interesting frictions and incongruities in these places, and often, if you stand at the point of tangency, you can see both sides better than if you were in the middle of either one." (Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*)

The Subject File '**Multilevel Dynamics: The European Integration Process and the Evolution of Contemporary European Borders**' constitutes one of the main research and dissemination results of the project '**Initiative and constraint in the mapping of evolving European borders**', funded by the award of a Jean Monnet Action through the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission's Education and Culture DG. It is devoted to the analysis of voluntarism v. determinism as key factors in border creation and evolution and as parameters in prospective border studies, focusing on the specific case of contemporary Europe and, particularly, on the European integration process.

The results of this research project will lead to the drafting of policy recommendations to guarantee constructive European neighbourhood relations as well as the establishment of a more thoughtful, integrative and 'border-sensitive' EU external communication policy. In this sense, the project starts from the premise that an in-depth interdisciplinary critical analysis of the active role of borders in shaping European policy-making is particularly urgent in order to offer tangible and comprehensive solutions to the challenges of past and future enlargements and for the consolidation of a fruitful and proactive external role for the EU in an increasingly interdependent world.

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The subject file has been published following the unanimous positive evaluation of the committee.