

Welcoming Address

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On behalf of the Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network (TEIN), it is my great pleasure to welcome readers to this special issue of the ABCD Journal dedicated to the TEIN Annual Conference 2025: **‘Beyond Borders: Culture, Language and Identity in European Integration’**.

Following the last issue of the ABCD Journal on **‘What future for the concept of Borderless Europe?’**, this new edition consolidates the collaboration between TEIN and the ABCD Journal. TEIN’s mission is the same as the ABCD’s: to unite theory and practice, and, through this, to influence policy-making in the European Union.

We are particularly pleased to foster this partnership through a collection of contributions that so closely reflect the interests of our communities. European integration and cross-border cooperation, of course, as well as the many ways in which culture, language and identity shape our understanding of borders, borderlands and Europe itself.

TEIN brings together universities, research institutes and training centres that are dedicated to the practice of cross-border cooperation in Europe. TEIN’s objective is to build capacity in cross-border contexts to strengthen European integration. TEIN’s annual conferences are one of the initiatives designed to achieve this aim.

Borders are too often understood as lines on a map but we should be aware that they are also, first and foremost, living spaces. In an increasingly interconnected world, the overlap of identities, languages, and other cultural elements represents both a challenge and an opportunity for cross-border territories and European integration. These elements can serve as bridges that unite citizens of different countries, but they can also become excuses for communities to turn their backs on each other. Understanding phenomena such as interculturality, multilingualism and multiple identities is therefore crucial to the process of European integration. Currently, more than half of Europeans (according to Eurobarometer 422) consider linguistic differences to be problematic for cross-border cooperation, and one third believe that cultural differences are problematic. Similarly, around half of Europeans believe that social, economic, legal or administrative differences pose an obstacle to cooperation. Cross-border regions provide a unique perspective from which to explore this reality. These regions are places of innovation where different identities and languages coexist, where institutional boundaries meet everyday practices and where the meaning of belonging is continually negotiated.

In this respect, the 2025 TEIN annual conference, organised with the support of the Borders in Globalization 21st century borders project¹ offered a particularly timely opportunity to collectively reflect on the following aspects:

- How broad cultural expressions can foster mutual understanding and cooperation between neighbouring regions.
- Success (and failure) stories where culture has been a driving force for cross-border cooperation.
- How different identities can enrich cooperation initiatives.
- Strategies to promote, question, hybridise, and preserve cultural and linguistic identities in border regions and throughout Europe.
- The role of languages as a vehicle for communication and cultural exchange.
- The role of shared cultural heritage.
- Educational programs that promote multilingualism, intercultural understanding, and cross-border cultural exchange.
- How local, regional, and national identities can coexist with a broader European identity.

The conference brought together scholars, practitioners, students and representatives of cross-border institutions to examine these dynamics from different and complementary perspectives and we are delighted that this special issue provides a space in which some of these reflections can reach a wider audience.

We hope that the contributions will encourage further debate about the relationship between borders, culture, language, and identity, while also inspiring new forms of cooperation across Europe.

We extend our warmest thanks to all conference participants, contributors, organisers, partners, and colleagues whose commitment made the 2025 TEIN Annual Conference possible. We are equally grateful to the editors of the *ABCD Journal* for their openness to this collaboration and for providing this valuable opportunity to preserve and disseminate the ideas generated through our collective exchange.

As Europe continues to navigate political, social, cultural, and linguistic complexity, the task of going “beyond borders” remains both challenging and essential. It calls for institutions that cooperate, communities that engage with one another, and individuals who are willing to see difference not as an obstacle, but as a resource.

We invite you, the readers of this special issue, to join us in that endeavour—and we look forward to continuing this dialogue together.

1 <https://www.biglobalization.ca/>