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Carpathian euroregion as an example of euroregional cross-boundary cooperation

Scientific problem. Cross-boundary cooperation are important elements of the regional policy system and security factors of the European Union and Ukraine. These relationships have been already established at regional level among local governments. They make a solid foundation for cooperation, and contribute to a successful policy and European integration. One of the main tasks of euroregional cross-border cooperation is a complex development of nearby border regions through the extension of commercial, economic, humanitarian, cultural, educational, academic links; cross-boundary cooperation in the realization of common interests in the sphere of environmental protection, preservation of cultural heritage, development of logistics of border infrastructure.

Sustainable development strategy of the European region is impossible without taking into account the interests of civil society and local authorities of border areas, without coordination of joint actions of related regions in order to realize common interests. Decentralization with subsidiarity and partnership should be basic principles of daily activities of Ukrainian euroregions for their active involvement in spatial development of Europe.

Elaboration of a cross-border spatial development strategy of the region is very important as it must be common with the regions of the European Union. Development of such joint strategy is especially relevant in the Ukrainian-Slovak relations. Summarizing the experience of euroregional cross-border cooperation of "Slovak" regions is extremely important for Ukraine because of its European integration.

The dynamics of "Slovak" euroregions shows its formation as actively integrated oper-

ating system with the aim of leveling asymmetries and transparency of borders.

Today euroregion is a basic form of cross-border cooperation including Ukraine and Slovakia. As a result of European integration development and its strong regional influence on the internal and external border zone, western regions of Ukraine have changed their status qualitatively and have the opportunity to increase financing from EU funds which is particularly important.

So, relevant issue of the current euroregional cross-border cooperation of Ukraine is the best possible qualitative improvement actions of euroregions in terms of European integration. Also, it is necessary to optimize the priority of Ukrainian-Slovak cross-border cooperation in terms of the immediate neighborhood of the European Union and Ukraine.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. Problems of euroregional cross-border cooperation are highlighted in fundamental works of Ukrainian economists such as Mikula N. (Ukrainian-Polish relations) [11, 12], Balyan A. (Ukrainian-Hungarian relations) [1]. Significant contribution to the development of theoretical and methodological foundations of euroregional cross-border cooperation was made by our researchers Lutsyshyn V. [9], Makogon Y. [10], Prikhodko V. [16], Storonyanska I. [19].

Research studies of Sokolenko C. [18] include theoretical generalizations, justification of innovative measurement of cross-border cooperation which is also essential. However, the issue of Ukrainian-Slovak cross-border region is insufficient and requires in-depth research. Most publications of Ukrainian researchers are focused on the characteristics of the Carpathian Euroregion, which also includes Slovak regions and Slovak-Ukrainian border (for example, research studies of Kish E. [6; 7], Lendyel M. [8], Mytryayeva S. [13;14].

Research works of Bilchyk V. [2], Duleba O. [3] are devoted to issues of euroregional cross-border cooperation in Slovakia. Comparative analysis of European regions on internal and external borders of the European Union in the Slovak context is insufficient. Therefore, issue of euroregional development of the Slovak Republic requires comprehensive academic research primarily in the analysis of the Carpathian Euroregion.

The objective of the article is analysis of modern trends of development of the Carpathian Euroregion (which boundaries pass through the EU) in the context of research of the European dimension cross-boundary cooperation.

Statement of the main results of the study. Political, legal, institutional and functional principles of cross-border cooperation are defined by international documents and laws of Ukraine. First of all, it is generally accepted by the provisions of European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid, 1980) and by the Additional protocols to the Convention [4; 5]. According to the article 2, transfrontier co-operation means any concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighbourly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more Contracting Parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose. This category is fundamental because determines the structural and functional properties and cross-border cooperation. Transfrontier co-operation shall take place in the framework of territorial communities' or authorities' powers as defined in domestic law. The scope and nature of such powers shall not be altered by this Convention [4].

According to the Convention, the main tasks of a cross-border cooperation are realization of the potential social and economic opportunities of the cross-border area on the basis of their natural and labor resources, cultural traditions; activation of the movement of production factors, especially capital and labor; development of cooperative relations and create a more favorable economic relations in the border areas; forming material and technical conditions for international cooperation; finding new sources

for investment projects and joint research programs of cross-border development [4].

Legal regulation of transborder cooperation in Ukraine is determined by law of cross-border cooperation, which entered into force on 24 June 2004 [5] and by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "Some Issues of the Cross-border Cooperation and Euroregions Development" of 29 April, 2002 [15]. The aim of cross-border cooperation is the development of social, economic, academic, technical, cultural and other relations and good-neighbor relations among the actors and participants of cross-border cooperation on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders; considering power and authority of the subjects of cross-border cooperation during conclusion of relevant agreements; coordinated removal of political, economic, administrative and other obstacles for mutual cooperation (Article 2) [5].

Cross-border cooperation is possible within the created euroregion, on the basis of cross-border agreements in individual areas; through the establishment and development of mutually beneficial contacts among actors of cross-border cooperation.

Euroregion is one of the higher organizational forms of cross-border cooperation of territorial self-governing border communities. Euroregions include two or more administrative and territorial units of the neighboring states; associate cross-border international associations with mutual coordinating administrative and institutional structures.

Euroregional cross-border cooperation has vast experience of cooperation among border regions of Western Europe since the 1950s.

Madrid Convention (European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and Additional Protocols to it) is the main document of European cross-border cooperation but it doesn't give definition of euroregion. However, the Law of Ukraine «On cross-border cooperation» contains definition of euroregion (Article 1): it is an organizational form of cooperation of administrative and territorial units of the European states, performed according to two - or multilateral agreements about cross-border cooperation.

In comparison with other forms of cross-border cooperation, European regions due to the main provisions of such respectable and dynamic European institution as Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), have such features:

- *institutional aspects*: permanent international territorial cooperation - regional, local communities and local authorities along both sides of the national border with the creation of common structures; cross-border organizations with a permanent secretariat, experts and administrative staff; established according to the private law based on national associations or foundations from both sides of the border, operating under public law; established according to public law based on international treaties which also regulate the participation of regional authorities in international cooperation.

- *methods of work*: strategic approaches of cooperation but not ad hoc joint action; internationally- and cross-border oriented methods of cooperation, not only within the national border region; not new administrative level; citizens, politicians, institutions, economy, social partners, organizers of cultural events take part in cross-border cooperation; trimming among different structures and powers on both sides of the border; partner cooperation - vertical (European, governmental, regional, local) and horizontal; implementation of cross-border decisions at national level due to the procedures which are acceptable to all parties to avoid competent and structural power conflicts; common cross-border participation of citizens, institutions and social partners in programs, projects and critical processes; direct initiative and use of own resources as a precondition for receiving assistance and support from third parties.

- *by volume (content)*: defining action fields according to common interests (infrastructure, economy, culture etc); cooperation in all spheres of life: residence, work, recreation, culture, etc.; equal emphasis on social, cultural, economic and infrastructural cooperation; implementation of agreements and arrangements concluded at European level among countries to achieve cross-border practice; consultations, assistance and coordination of cross-border cooperation, particularly in such spheres as eco-

nomic development, transport and traffic, regional development, environmental protection and nature conservation, culture and sports, recreational activities, energy, waste management, tourism and leisure, agriculture, schools and education, social cooperation, emergency service and prevention of disasters, communications, public safety [22, s.11-12].

Euroregional cross-border cooperation is significant as it is effective in the context of regional policy. We should stress that practical intensification of the euroregional policy in Ukraine has particular importance due to the spread of European integration process to the east. This also includes searches of theoretical and methodological foundations of subject field of euroregional studies.

The Carpathian Euroregion is one of major ways of improvement actions of European regions in terms of the European integration. The Carpathian Euroregion is the subject matter of the study of many researchers (Balyan A.V., Kish E.B., Lendel M.O., Mytryayeva S.I., Mikula N.A., Prikhodko V.O., etc.).

However, after the entry of Slovakia into the European Union in 2004, significant changes had occurred in the functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion. The important matter of research is institutional issue, as well as problems of improving its efficiency as a whole.

Researches of Carpathian Euroregion are important and urgent as it is one of the highest institutional forms of transborder cooperation. Moreover, it is the only euroregion where both Ukrainian and Slovak border regions are involved and cooperate at multilateral level.

The Carpathian Euroregion is an international association formed on February 14, 1993 in the city of Debrecen.

According to the third article of the Charter, the main objectives of the Carpathian Euroregion are:

- coordination and organization of joint activities;
- promotion of cooperation in economy, science, ecology, education and culture among its members;
- support in the implementation of cross-border projects in the conditions of common interest;

- promoting contacts among population of the territories included in the euroregion, promotion of good neighborly relations among its members;

- cooperation with international institutions and organizations [27].

According to the forth article of the Charter, organizational structure of this organization includes the following institutions: the Council of the Carpathian Euroregion, Presidium Council, Chairman, International Secretariat, national delegations, permanent national representatives of states-members and working committee. The main body is the Council of the Carpathian Euroregion, which brings together representatives of five national delegations, in proportion, ten people from each country (from administrative regions of the Carpathian Euroregion).

Political and humanitarian issues had priority in the 1990s. As we think, one of the most important dimensions of collaboration is economic which still has not received proper development. As quite rightly states Doctor of Economics Balyan A.V., territories that are members of cross-border cooperation within the Carpathian Euroregion have low level of social and economic development, compared to the national average, underdeveloped transport and communication infrastructure. All this doesn't conduct mutually beneficial economic cooperation: "Despite the diversity of languages, religions, nationalities and communities, the Carpathian region has many similar features like geographical location, history, historical memory" [1].

Today, the Carpathian Euroregion includes border administrative units and some population centers of five countries - Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Slovakia and Romania. International Secretariat, national offices and representative offices perform everyday work in the Carpathian Euroregion. Specific work is performed by working committees such as: Commission for Regional Development (Coordinator - Hungarian side); Commission for Tourism (coordinator - Polish side) and Environment (Coordinator - Hungarian side); Trade Development (Coordinator - Romanian side); Commission for Prevention of Natural Disasters (coordinator - Slovak side); Commission for Social Infrastructure (coordinator - Ukrainian side); Audit and Control Committee (coordinator - Hungarian side)

[24]. After the entry of Slovakia into the European Union in 2004, significant changes had occurred in the structure and functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion. To our opinion, it has determined the new format of Ukrainian-Slovak transborder cooperation.

First of all, functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion was adapted to the new geopolitical challenges. New Development Strategy of the Carpathian Euroregion was developed with the following objectives: infrastructure development of the region, solution of the geographical peripheral infrastructure issue (corridors of the EU, ways, highways, roads, regional airports); formation of a competitive economic system; coordination of the human resource development; improvement of health-service system, social and cultural environment; comprehensive growth of tourism in the Carpathian Euroregion; development and protection of the environment; enhancing of the external relations, preparation for the adoption of the financial support of the European Union. [26, c.49].

The development strategy of the Carpathian Euroregion contains clearly defined priorities. Major geopolitical challenges of the Carpathian Euroregion are next tasks: contribution to Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine; improvement of education, competitiveness of the economy, development of employment, services sector and infrastructure of the region, intensification of sectors (industrial parks - enterprise zones); diversification of economic activity, achievement of multi-functionality in the rural areas; nature and environment protection, focused on the new employment opportunities in the sphere of nature protection; cultural heritage preservation, strengthening and development of cultural traditions, intensification of protection of rural attractions; human resource development, support of local initiatives, increasing level of education [26, c.50-51].

Carpathian region has such strengths: favorable natural and ecological conditions, the region's location along special infrastructural ways; favorable travel conditions for thermal, hunting and cultural tourism; cultural heritage; a significant amount of cheap, relatively well-qualified labor force; developed secondary and higher education, the network of universities; strong relationship among mem-

bers of regions, positive cooperative attitude, desire of partnership; developed business (agricultural) services, high-quality agriculture, food and industrial existing vertical; significant food production capacity of the economy, a substantial proportion of agricultural and commodity sector; growing interest to the possibilities of the EU, close location of the eastern markets.

Weak points of the Carpathian Euroregion (negative internal conditions and circumstances) and still actual problems in Slovak-Ukrainian dimension include: semi-peripheral location in the spatial structure of the states; possible adverse demographic trends; increasing unemployment; unfavorable employment structure; low income and consumption; low concentration of capital, continued lack of capital; poor road conditions and poor accessibility of the area; underdevelopment of tourism; lack of market information system, isolated industrial and commercial interests; depreciated and technically obsolete agricultural means of production; economic infrastructure collapses quickly; lack of financial resources; lack of transport links in the north-south direction [26, c.39-40].

Development opportunities of the Carpathian Euroregion (external positive determinants) include reconstruction of a common marketing policy for the euroregion; strengthening external relations, the growth of foreign capital; harmonious development of infrastructure; coordinated human resource development, enhancement of training and professional level; rational use of regional transit; development of tourism and information services; further development of public services; improving social protection; reproduction of competitive agricultural production, dynamization of the food economy; development of forest replanting; efficient use of water resources; introducing new industrial sectors, domestic and foreign capital raising, rapid technical development; growth of agrarian and innovation activity; increasing international support, EU sources; Euro-Atlantic integration of Ukraine.

Threats of the Carpathian Euroregion (external negative determinants) are still the same: increasing gap between Carpathian region and

central regions; deterioration of the indicator of economic strength, industry structure cannot adapt to conditions and market requirements; increasing unemployment and internal market will not expand; acceleration of emigration of highly skilled segment of the population, the overall population is shrinking and ageing; low remittance flows, intensification of competition among regions; continued deterioration of the roads, slowdown of modernization of the main motorways; increasing of water pollution, drought and floods continue to constitute a threat; problems with attracting external capital, technological innovation will expand slowly; local producers will be superseded; there will be no vertical integration, and organization state purchases and sales; political, social and economic asymmetry; problems with minorities and political tension [26, c.41].

Modern development of the Carpathian region needs fundamental institutional changes, new philosophy for its further existence and tools for cooperation with European structures.

Conclusions. Today, euroregions still remain the basic form of cross-border cooperation of border regions, including Ukraine and Slovakia. As a result of European integration and its strong regional influence in the "internal" and "external" border, the western regions of Ukraine significantly and qualitatively changed their status, and have the opportunity to increase financing from the EU funds. Urgent issue of the present euroregional cooperation of Ukraine is the qualitative improvement in functioning of euro-regions in terms of European integration. Also, it is the need for optimizing priority of Ukrainian-Slovak cross-border cooperation in terms of the immediate neighborhood of the European Union and Ukraine. This issue is important for Ukraine as it is the only state-member of the first international inter-regional association (Carpathian Euroregion) but non-EU member. That's why eurointegration is particularly important for Ukrainian foreign policy at regional level.

Prospects for further research related with cross-border cooperation we see in the study of experience of strategic planning of euro-regional cross-border cooperation of Ukraine.

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