

UDK 339.94(437.6+477):711.554

DOI: 10.24144/2218-5348.2022.1-2(25-26).70-76

Ing. Anna Kalistová,

*Head of the Institute of Social Sciences CSPS SAS
Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences Slovak Academy of Sciences*

Institute of Social Sciences

Košice, Slovakia

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION (NOT ONLY) IN THE CONTEXT OF GREEN CITIES

У статті обґрунтовується важливість транскордонного співробітництва для сталого розвитку країни. У європейських країнах таке співробітництво розглядається як спосіб вирішення спільних проблем і якнайкраще використання потенціалу сусідніх територій. Загалом у рамках великих економічних союзів стійке співробітництво є надійним способом зміцнення зовнішньоекономічних зв'язків у культурній, економічній, технологічній, туристичній та екологічній сферах. Обмін ресурсами зменшує відмінності в рівні життя населення країн, залучених до нього

Ключові слова: *транскордонне співробітництво, сталий розвиток, громадський діалог, словацько-українська співпраця, спільні проекти.*

Cross-border cooperation is one of the most important challenges for the sustainable development of a country. In European countries, cross-border cooperation is seen as a way of solving common problems and making the best use of the potential of neighbouring territories. In general, within the framework of major economic unions, sustainable cooperation is a good way to strengthen foreign economic ties in the cultural, economic, technological, tourism, and environmental spheres. The exchange of resources reduces differences in the standard of living of the population and the income levels of countries.

Keywords: *Cross-border cooperation, sustainable development, public dialog, Slovak – Ukrainian cooperation, joint projects, green cities, European Green Deal.*

Sustainable cross-border cooperation strengthens the economic capacity of countries involved in cooperation and provides a common basis for economic growth and well-being. The key objective of cross-border cooperation is to support activities which lead to sustainable development in bordering regions and to achieve improvements in

the quality of life of the population living in this area while leveraging opportunities stemming from cross-border exchanges.

Cross-border cooperation defined as a form of international cooperation between countries and regions along their borders in the interests of mutual positive results or the achievement of common goals [5] shows, that the main problem of development of such cooperation is overcoming of traditional approaches to interstate relations based on the principle of national and state sovereignty [2]. It is therefore quite understandable that the occurrence and development of cooperation between border regions of neighbouring countries brought the need for a certain reinterpretation of border functions, which has been dealt with theoretically, but gradually becomes a question of practice.

Formation and development of cross-border cooperation between European countries has been since its beginning under the patronage of the Council of Europe, which enabled its creation and promotion in all European countries, regardless of the status and the level of their involvement in integration structures. International legal basis for these activities of the Council of Europe is the European Framework Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation¹. It is defined in Article 2 of the Convention as “any joint action aimed at strengthening and support of neighbourly relations between territorial units and bodies is subject to the jurisdiction of two or more parties and the conclusion of any treaty or agreement necessary for that purpose.”²

Promoting cross-border relations and cooperation between cross-border regions by European structures is definitely not accidental. Integration processes are of particular importance for sustainable political and economic development of all countries and a key factor in stabilizing internal and external policies of European countries. Cross-border cooperation between bodies, institutions and organizations at the level of neighbouring states regions also greatly strengthens political and economic ties between them and the integrationist tendencies in Europe as such. Naturally, it helps successful implementation of joint projects aimed at tackling global problems and removing tensions at the borders of European countries [7].

¹ *The European Framework Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation between Territories or Authorities* was signed in Madrid on 21 May 1980. The Slovak Republic acceded it by a resolution of the NA on 26 October 1999. President R. Schuster ratified the Convention on 10 January 2000 under condition that its fulfilment is pursuant to interstate agreements. It was published under No. 78/2000 Coll. 15 March 2000, the validity in the Slovak Republic took effect on 1 May 2000. On the same day, the *Supplementary Protocol to the European Framework Convention for Cross-Border Cooperation between Territories or Authorities*, concluded in Strasbourg on 9 November 1995, was published under No. 79/2001 Coll. with effect from 2 May 2000, which, among other things, also makes it possible to obtain legal subjectivity of the authorities of cross-border cooperation. *Protocol No. 2 to the European Framework Convention for Cross-Border Cooperation between Territories or Authorities*, agreed in Strasbourg on 5 May 1998 and published under No. 116/2001 Coll. 30 March 2001, in effect in Slovakia from 1 February 2001, allows implementation of cross-border cooperation, in full, also between regions which do not border each other, i.e. Inter-territorial cooperation.

² *Európsky rámcový dohovor o cezhraničnej spolupráci medzi územnými celkami alebo orgánmi*, p. 1. Available: <http://www.epi.sk/zz/2001-78>.

The aim of cooperation of neighbouring bodies, institutions, governmental organizations and private entities is to compensate for the structural disadvantages of various parts of the regions due to the proximity of interstate borders. It is quite understandable that cross-border relations and mutual cooperation are occurring and developing more rapidly and more successfully between border areas, which are relatively close to each other, due to geographical, pragmatic or utilitarian reasons. In this context, substantial facilitation and simplification of processes of creation but also enhancement of cross-border cooperation of border regions, brings overlap of certain interests, common historical conditions, as well as the interdependence of regions due to economic, environmental or other objective reasons [3]. Further cooperation is aimed at promoting sustainable development on both sides of the border, reducing differences in living standards, tackling problems and using opportunities for cooperation within the European Union.

Cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine is of crucial importance for both countries. Numerous international bilateral agreements are constituting standard framework for development of bilateral relations. Nevertheless, real life experience and examples from other countries reveal that while the role of official relations at national governmental level is the fundamental backbone of cross-border cooperation, there must also exist the counterpart at the micro level of border regions. The micro level of cross-border regions and localities is not only equally important, but also a necessary component for effective and successful cross border initiatives. Consequently, the transnational and bilateral structures at the national level can be balanced at local levels and get successfully delivered in daily practice and actions [4].

As the authors state below, current cross-border cooperation is a very powerful and, importantly, a constructive resource for development of the international relations system. Active cooperation has a positive effect on solving the problems of participating cross-border regions, creates conditions for accelerated growth of welfare, directs partner countries policy towards equalizing level of life between more developed and depressed and peripheral regions. This is confirmed by development of cross-border cooperation in the geopolitical area of the Carpathians. European Union enlargement has opened entirely new opportunities for its expansion and deepening.

However, analysis of the issues of cross-border cooperation dynamics in this important part of Europe shows that its management requires significant optimization. In particular, currently there is an urgent need for using such efficient management tools as a support in macro policy coordination, state economic incentives and bilateral and multilateral financial cooperation.

This may mean that innovation in neighbouring countries has a major impact on cross-border cooperation, as it is a strong reason for working together. Moreover, joint

innovative projects are supported by European funds and programs, including Interreg, European Economic Area and Norway grants and other schemes.

Institute of Social Sciences CSPA SAS has been cooperating with scientific institutions and universities in Ukraine for several years and participates in the development of Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation and the entire Carpathian region.

Our joint work has resulted in the implementation of many successful projects that have brought outcomes and recommendations for the development of our relations at various levels. I would like to mention the Norwegian project, in which we participated together with the Institute of Cross-Border Cooperation in Uzhhorod and other partners from Slovakia and Norway during years 2016-2017. The aim of the project was to analyse the activities of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Regional Council and their application for individual decision-makers in Slovakia and Ukraine, using practical experience and their application to increase the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation of border regions of individual countries on the one hand, and at the same time the cross-border Carpathian region as a whole. Based on a detailed analysis, many practical recommendations and suggestions were adopted. One of the recommended steps was to support the idea of implementing the so-called Carpathian Summit, which would create a framework for further Cross-border cooperation development in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and the European Commission with the adoption of a joint declaration as a basis for more effective cooperation and definition of commitments regarding its support and development.

Within the scheme of Interreg Danube Transnational Programme, our Centre of social and psychological sciences SAS is currently participated in the project called Danube Region for improved Access and empowerment of Roma Development – Dream Road. The underlying premise of the project is to empower members of the Roma community through implementing innovative approaches to bridge the existing gap between the Roma and non-Roma inhabitants of the region in the field of information, digital and functional literacy, thus advancing the basic and varying education levels obtained by the members of Roma minority across the region, providing them with the long-term possibility to contribute to their own personal and economic development as well as the development of society as a whole. The leading partner of the project is the Research and Educational Centre Mansion Rakican (Slovenia). In the project there are other 14 project partners involved which are well-renowned and established organizations dealing with Roma inclusion from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. Besides, other 14 local associative partners participate in implementation of the main project objectives.

The other, currently solved cross-border cooperation project entitled “Cities in the Enlarged European Area” is being solved in cooperation with the cities of Košice, Uzhhorod, Kharkiv and the Norwegian Research Centre (through the scheme of EEA grants). In addition to developing cross-border institutional cooperation, creating new networks and partnerships aimed at bringing Ukraine closer to the European Union, the project aims to support long-term and sustainable cooperation between public institutions in the nearby regions of Slovakia and Ukraine, to transfer the approaches and experiences in climate and environmental policy, and to exchange experience and capacity building.

Castanho and his co-workers [1] identified success factors of cross-border cooperation, like connectivity, strong territorial strategy, coordination on infrastructure, increase sense of belonging, diverse infrastructure offer, strong economy, increased quality of life, attractiveness for youth and talents, alignment of strategic documents/plans, strong political commitment, citizen involvement and political transparency. These and other factors were analysed with respect to their impact on success of cross-border

cooperation on individual case studies. Summarizing the findings with relevance for the Slovak Ukrainian cross-border cooperation development the following factors are most relevant:

1. definition of clear objectives and strategic plans
2. political transparency and involvement
3. promoting connectivity and movement between cities
4. attract young and talented people
5. grow cities' cultural and economic potential
6. promote citizen involvement and participation
7. increase quality of life for the population and consequently improve quality of environment for the visitors.

There are also several key issues in the future cooperation development for boosting social/economic development in the region and simultaneously preserving valuable Carpathian environment, resulting from the SWOT analysis [4]:

- Long-term bilateral problems should be formulated as shared challenges for the management and sustainable development.
- We should stick to local characteristics that are created over the centuries;
- Regional cooperation is intended not to change priorities, but to change the attitude to borders and border regions.

Cross-border cooperation in practice rests on successful results for local economies. The local development nexus is therefore logical focus point for outlining priority areas of socio-economic development at specific local areas including bordering regions. The success of development strategies in bordering regions and places is closely linked with their ability to deal with cross-border cooperation challenges and respond to cross-border cooperation opportunities. Integration of cross-border cooperation with local development goals is a success condition as argued in preceding section [4].

Local development varies across regions and countries and local places can draw on rich practice experience from other developed countries comprising EU non-EU and world economies on how particular local issues have been addressed and cared for and what defines the successful outcomes for local communities.

Balancing city/urban objectives with regional/local objectives is becoming increasingly complex task. For illustration, supporting job creation and employment opportunities locally decreases pressures to commute to urban areas and improves conditions for sustainability of local areas and their ecosystems.

In order to achieve good delivery of growth oriented strategies good governance needs to be in place and design and implement policies for competitiveness and prosperity. Inclusiveness of policies has become a must for any area and inclusive entrepreneurship is being promoted as way to tackle contemporary problems of excluded groups and troubled generations of youth with limited access to employment opportunities [4].

The role of cities as local governments as well as living organisms is to provide a balance of services for the lives of their inhabitants. From education, through health care, accessibility, diverse cultural offerings to a dignified silver economy, this balance allows each individual inhabitant, living community, and the city as a whole a sense of well-being and home. Cooperation at different levels brings a culture of dialogue.

A very effective way to increase the professional capacity is to network nationally and internationally with cities of similar size, character or facing similar challenges. The exchange of experience and knowledge from the implemented projects speeds up one's own decisions, which without these consultations and visits would cost time and other resources in the search for new starting points. Examples include involvement in international communities such as the Covenant of Mayors¹, the Basque Declaration² or the Green City Accord³.

There are currently more than 80,000 cities in the European Union, which are responsible for implementing 70% of European legislation, managing one third of all public expenditure and two thirds of public investment [6]. In many respects, cities are a political, administrative but also historical and cultural space with a key role to play in the ecological and social transformation we face today. Slovakia, together with the European Union, has committed itself to the goal of climate neutrality by 2050. It has thus joined the club of countries that already account for 75% of world GDP and include the world's most advanced economies. However, pursuing this goal means a deep and rapid economic and social transformation towards a decarbonised economy.

Climate neutrality⁴ is a huge challenge for cities while maintaining social peace, and immediate but thoughtful action is needed. Promoting green and social innovation and entrepreneurship is one of the important pillars of this transformation.

Although the debate on a European Green Deal in Ukraine is just getting under way and the government is far from concrete, Ukraine has reaffirmed its commitment to developing a “green” economy. The National Economic Strategy sets out Ukraine's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2060. The country has the ambition to move forward rapidly in aligning its exchange rate with the European Green Deal. To this, Ukraine has set up an inter-agency working group on climate, which coordinates the ministries and the European Union-Ukraine bilateral group and which develops European Union-Ukraine partnerships in the framework of the European Green Deal⁵.

As in many European Union countries, including Slovakia, Ukraine lacks a more comprehensive understanding of transformation. This is often seen as just an environmental issue, although in reality, transformation and European Green Deal are much

¹ <https://www.eumayors.eu>

² <https://sustainablecities.eu/endorsers-basquedeclaration/>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/green-city-accord_en

⁴ <https://europeangreens.eu/climate-action/news-climateneutrality/>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

more about the economy and social challenges than just the environment. Ukrainian cities can become agents of change and help prepare capacity for future European Union enlargement. At the same time, efforts need to be stepped up and keep up with European Union cities, at least those in Central Europe.

Sustainable public dialogue is an important tool of the city for the formulation and verbalization of long-term goals, leading to clear and truthful information and communication with the public, interdisciplinary planning and participation of the inhabitants. The transformative power of cities provides equal opportunities and environmental justice for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, age and origin – leaving no one behind. A just city provides opportunities for everyone to integrate in society. All social groups, including the most vulnerable, should have equal access to services of general interest, including education, social services, health care and culture¹.

All citizens should be empowered to acquire new skills and education. This requires affordable and accessible high-quality pre-school and school education, qualification and training for young people, as well as lifelong learning opportunities, in particular for digitalisation and technology.

REFERENCES

- [1] CASTANHO, R. - LOURES, L. - FERNÁNDEZ, J. - POZO, L. 2018. Identifying critical factors for success. In Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) development projects, Habitat International. Volume 72, p. 92 – 99, ISSN 0197-3975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2016.10.004>.
- [2] DAHOU, K. 2004. Towards a Euro-African dialogue on cross-border cooperation. Paris: Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (OECD), 53 p.
- [3] DE SOUSA, L. 2012. Understanding European Cross-border Cooperation : A Framework for Analysis. In Journal of European Integration, p. 1-19. Available on the Internet: https://repositorio.ul.pt/bitstream/10451/6856/1/ICs_LSousa_Understanding_ARI.pdf (2.2.2022)
- [4] GAJDOŠ, M. - USTYČ, S. - BENCHAK, O. - BILAK, O. - FILČÁK, R. - FORDAL, L. G. - KALISTOVÁ, A. - KONEČNÝ, S. - MAZUR, S. - MIROŠNIKOV, D. - MUŠINKA, A. - NEŽINSKÝ, E. - PRYKHODKO, V. - PIASECKA-USTYČ, S. - RAFAELSEN, R. G. - SÁPOSOVÁ, Z. - STUDENÁ, I. 2017. From analyses to interventions: Innovative approach to fostering cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine : Summary of expert analyses carried out by the expert team of project CBC01030. Košice : Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 57 p. ISBN 978-80-970850-9-4.
- [5] GERFERT, S. 2009. Cross-Border Cooperation : Transforming Borders. Enschede: University of Twente, p. 10. Available on the Internet: https://essay.utwente.nl/60149/1/BSc_S_Getfert.pdf (3.2.2022)
- [6] ICLEI. 2021. Local green deals : a blueprint for action : the European Commission's 100 intelligent cities challenge, Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2826/94389>
- [7] KOSOV, Y. - VOVENDA, A. 2012. The traditions of Russian and European perception of the state frontier in the conditions of transborder regional cooperation. In The Baltic Region scientific journal, No. 1, p. 6.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/new_leipzig_charter/new_leipzig_charter_en.pdf