

WACŁAW KOTLIŃSKI, Ph.D.

Faculty of Economics, University of Technology in Rzeszów, Poland

THE CARPATHIAN EUROREGION AS A PLANE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN THE FIELD OF TOURISTIC ECONOMY

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Review

At present in Europe one may notice integration processes and establishment of a great number of Euroregions. It is connected with advantages of cooperation, especially in the borderline areas. In Poland one may notice many transformations in political and economical system and some changes with cooperation with neighbourhood countries. In many cases it is the tourism which has become a common issue. The Carpathian Euroregion plays the significant role in the development of the area.

Key words: integration, borderline cooperation, touristic economy.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays we can see many integration processes of European countries and countries all over the world. They are connected with changes in economical and structural systems. Integration is a process whose participants create new socio-economic systems which have their own aims, methods and coordination¹.

The awareness of uniformity of societies is very intense in the borderline areas, where we can notice a well – developed touristic movement, but on the other hand, there are many common businesses and problems which result from close neighborhood, economical connections, condition of natural environment, family connections, etc. Due to this fact the integration is possible in such the borderline areas where there are many conditions and factors of integration. The transborder cooperation is indicative of integration processes and euroregions are the significant example of this cooperation.

In the paper an attempt of showing the advantages of establishing touristic euroregions for the transborder areas as far as economical, social and cultural areas are concerned has been presented.

¹ Obrębalski M., *O poziomie integracji samorządowej zbiorowości terytorialnych subregionu jeleniogórskiego*, Materiały poseminaryjne nt. Proces demokratyzacji a rozwój lokalny, Karpacz 1993, s.67

1. THE NOTION AND CONDITIONS OF ESTABLISHING EUROREGIONS

According to the definition accepted by the European Convention of the European Council about the transborder cooperation between the communities and authorities on 21st May, 1980, the transborder cooperation is „[...] a common activity whose aim is to reinforce and develop the cooperation among communities and local and territorial authorities of two or more countries”². The area where the transborder in line cooperation takes place is called the euroregion.

Euroregion is an institution of cooperation of individuals who represent the regions of two or more countries. Each institution is set up on the basis of local, internal law of the country. There might be local corporations or authorities among which the agreements about the cooperation are signed.

It is important to remember that euroregion does not replace the country, does not abolish borders, it is a body which is out of control of the governmental administration. The basic feature of the euroregion is its voluntary character, especially on the local level. Frames of such cooperation are determined by the governments of the countries which are interested in cooperation and, on the other hand, are based upon international agreements such as Madrid convention and European Card of Social Government.

The major causes of euroregion establishment:

- existing inter – borderline cooperation in the region and traditions of such cooperation,
- taking use of earlier tendencies of such cooperation in the borderline areas for instance: protection of natural environment, managing water supplies, technological specialization, problems with communication and conveying information.

Euroregions are set up from the down wards initiative but belong to the new European order. In the European Union we can notice the growth of importance in the system of provinces and regions. It is caused on the one hand by the evolution of european democracy and, on the other one by the growth of competition among regions and provinces.

This phenomenon raises due to the lack of borders, flow of labour force, services, capital and people. Therefore, in the European Union we can notice not only the process of globalisation but also the role of local policy which aims at equalization of differences between the poorest and the richest, mainly economical and social differences,

² Skrzydło A., *Euroregiony z udziałem podmiotów polskich jako forma współpracy transgranicznej*, Strawy Międzynarodowe, 3/1994, s. 43

The regional policy of the European Union is based upon five fundamental rules³:

1. Concentration – that is choosing so-called problematic areas which can take use of the funds.
2. Partnership – cooperation of community, country and local authorities as well as law and financial institutions of each of partner. The role of the partners is significant and they mainly express their opinions. The businesses of the local and regional authorities in Brussels are presented by the Regional Committees.
3. Programming – establishing integrated and developing programmes and planning the schedules of aid funds. All operation programmes have the priority.
4. Additionality – that is supplementing the funds of European Union with the money of the countries. According to this principle the Union's aid is to increase its financial expenses on regional development and not replace national expenses on this aim.
5. Subsidiarity – all the decisions should be made on the possibly lowest level which is able to perform them.

All the initiatives of the formal regional and transborder actions should be performed according to the rules above.

The number of euroregions in the Western Europe is hard to determine. Along the well – known euroregions, there are a lot of minor local initiatives which comprise a few border towns, whose cooperation is regulated by the international agreements. Actually, there is no country in the Western Europe which has no transborder cooperation. The premise of such cooperation has different aims: from the historical sentiments and reconciliations to the trials of common overcoming stagnation or economic old – fashionedness and withdrawal of ecological disaster. It is voluntary cooperation which was established on economical, geophysical or social connections with respects to different national statuses of territories which create the euroregion. The euroregion is headed by the Board elected in a democratic way by the society. The Board's decisions are the result of consensus. Although the principle of transborder cooperation is voluntarity, decentralization and autonomy, some of the euroregions have their own patrons and even are created from an initiative of European organizations.

In some of the initiatives it is the European Council which takes the patronage, however it does not impose anything but only supports and advices. Over thirty countries which cooperate with themselves belong to the Society of European Borderline Regions. Among them there is the German – and – Dutch Euroregion which comprises one hundred towns and provinces with 2 million inhabitants on both sides of the border.

³ Wolińska A., Jurkowska A., *Polityka regionalna w aspekcie integracji z Unią Europejską*, Rzeszów 2000, s. 5

In the recent years, especially after 1998 in the European Union some of the major points concerning the transborder cooperation changed. At the beginning the main aim was to unify the economical discrepancies and also to make speeckes about the situation in post-war Europe. Now it aims at establishment of different communication structures and other forms of cooperation which are of the government's control.

2. OBSTRACLES AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF ESTABLISHING EUROREGIONS IN POLAND

In Poland after 1989 there were some changes as far as the relation with transborder regions which resulted from transformations in political and economic system. It resulted in lack of stabilisation and long-term effects. The cooperation on the Polish-German border was very active, on the Polish-Czechoslovakian much less, and on the Eastern border there was scarcely any initiative.

The possibility of undertaking economical cooperation with regions on the border depends on the following conditions⁴:

- existence in all countries which border with Poland such a political and economic system which is based upon market economy and principles of democracy,
- new international law – and – institutional agreement resulted from Polish treaties,
- recognition by the Polish government principles existing in the European Union including those concerning transborder cooperation,
- existence of common problems which require solutions; among them problems with communication links, the role of local authorities and their participation in cooperation and an initiative to start new relations.

Poland is very proud of its output as far as the transborder cooperation. There are over 15 euroregions on the borders. The cooperation is done with all the countries on the border with Poland but not only. There is cooperation with Hungary and Romania (the Carpathian Euroregion), with Sweden (the Pomerania and Baltic Euroregion). There is almost no place for new euroregions.

The oldest euroregion is the Polish-Czech-German Euroregion „Neisse-Nisa-Nysa”. It was established in December 1991. The youngest eurorgion is the Polish-Czech Euroregion „Dobrava” established in January 2001. In table 1 there is an index of euroregions in chronological order according to the date of establishment, which is the date of signing the treaty or agreement about the establishment of the euroregion.

⁴ Winiarski B., *Polityka gospodarcza*, PWN, Warszawa 1999, s. 615

Table 1. Chronology of euroregions' establishment

Lp.	Name of euroregion	Date of establishment	Area in km ²
1.	Nysa	21.12.1991	12193
2.	Carpathian	14.02.1993	132651
3.	Sprowa-Nysa-Bóbr	21.09.1993	9656
4.	Pro Europa Viadrina	21.12.1993	11645
5.	Tatra	26.08.1994	8524
6.	Bug	29.09.1995	82212
7.	Pomerania	15.12.1995	31108
8.	Glacensis	5.12.1996	8351
9.	Niemen	6.06.1997	55633
10.	Pradziad	2.07.1997	4078
11.	Baltic	22.02.1998	58109
12.	Śląsk Cieszyński	22.04.1998	1528
13.	Silesia	20.09.1998	1469
14.	Beskidy	9.06.2000	12684
15.	Dobrava	25.01.2001	5649

Source: Author's elaborations

Euroregions occupy one third of the country's territory. As far as area is concerned the largest part of the Polish territory belong to the Baltic Euroregion and the smallest to the Śląsk Cieszyński Euroregion. On the eastern and northern border there are euroregions much bigger than on the rest of the borders. It result from the fact that in case of the Carpathian and Bug Euroregions the signatories were voivodes, which resulted in the cooperation of all the voivodeships. The Baltic Euroregion was established in a similar way. On the western and southern border the agreements were made by the territorial and local authorities and associations which caused that the particular provinces joined the euroregions.

In the recent 10 years Poland has achived a great success as far as transborder cooperation is coucerned. One can see both material and non-material effects of this cooperation. After changes in 1989 regions on the borders started paying their attention to the cooperation with neighbours. It was, in a way, the first step to the idea of establishing euroregions in Poland and a very quick progress in this area.

Here are the features which characterise the Polish transborder cooperation⁵:

- the principle of mutual help and proper attitude of local authorities,
- the development of local and governmental model of cooperation (taking into account the peculiarity of foreign partners),

⁵ Heliński P., *Euroregion Karpacki – wykorzystując nowe możliwości w nowej Europie*, Euroregion Karpacki 1993-1998, Krosno 1998, s. 46

- aiming at cooperation and principles of equality and consensus as far as making decisions about transborder cooperation,
- efforts to come up to expectations in the field of transborder cooperation, mainly in this concerning protection of natural environment and also economical cooperation (the transborder flow of workforce).

3. CARPATHIAN EUROREGION

In the years 1989-90 the countries of Middle-East Europe were exposed to very serious changes. Along with political and structural crisis they were affected with a loss of markets in the region.

After this period all the economic, cultural and human relations were broken and hopes set on western countries couldn't be fulfilled. There was a need to establish new relations among the countries of the regio and also to start cooperation and exchange information.

Such difficulties esppeared especially in the economic field: marketing of goods, searching for new partners, deadling with the changes in law regulations and difficulties resulted from improper financial systems. Entrepreneurs and enterprises had to cope with all the above problems. The problems were even more serious due to the out-of-date infrastructure, lack of capital, growth of unemployment, distrust of society and especially difficulties in crossing the borders.

On 14th February 1993 in Debreczyn, the representatives of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraina signed the Status of the Carpathian Euroregion. According to the 106th Convention of European Council the aims of such an initiative have been presented⁶:

- cooperation of mutual actions,
- promotion of cooperation in the field of economy, education, science, ecology, culture and sport,
- supporting transborder ventures,
- cooperation eith international institutions and organizations.

All the beginning the area of the Carpathian Euroregion was 53200 km² and there were 5 inhabitants. After the year 1997, e.i. Romanina accession, the area was 132651 km² and the number of inhabitants grew to 14 million. The aim of the Euroregion is to improve the quality of life and conditions of inhabitants and to get rid of difficulties in crossing the borders.

Euroregion may bring many advantages: taking use of common sources of energy, mutual policy in the field of regional development and protection of natural environment. Following the status, the task of Carpathian Euroregion is to organize and

⁶ Zilahi J., *Euroregion Karpacki*, Euroregion Karpacki 1993-1998, Krasno 1998, s. 20

coordinate the economic, scientific, ecological, cultural and educational cooperation, to support the projects in the area of transborder cooperation, as well as with international institutions and organizations.

The leading body of the Carpathian Euroregion is the Council which consists of three representatives of each side. The Council gathers every three months and makes the strategic decisions. The Executive is responsible for up-to-date functioning of the Euroregion and presenting it outside. The tasks are realised by the Secretarial Office and Local Representatives. Local Representatives take different initiatives and coordinate the activity of working commissions. Nowadays there are five working commissions which deal with: protection of natural environment and tourism, regional development, social infrastructure, commercial exchange and also the Revision Commission.

In 1994 the Fund for Development of the Carpathian Euroregion was established an independent institution which supports the transborder cooperation. The Fund has its headquarter in Kosice, Slovakia. The Fund wants to engage local societies in an activity for their regions. The Fund offers technical and financial support. Under the patronage of the Carpathian Euroregion many expos has taken place. In Poland there are Euroregional Expos „Contact” in Krosno (organised in spring and autumn), InterRes Expos in Rzeszow (four times a year) and the Expos of the Galicia Region in Jaroslaw. There were also many euroregional expos abroad: in Użgorod, Lvov, Kosice, Solnok, Miskolc and Debreczyn. The aim of the expos was to present the economic potential of the region to do businesses with partners from abroad and also to make new acquaintances.

As far as the achievements of the Carpathian Euroregion are concerned, one can enumerate the following:

- international expos exhibitions organized in the cities of the Carpathian Euroregion,
- conferences during which many problems are discussed,
- the Association of Universities of the Carpathian Euroregion established in 1994,
- opening new border crossings among the membership countries,
- cooperation with international organisations, e.g. the Committee of the United Nations for European Economy and the Moza Ren Euroregion,
- organizing competitions, e.g. „Itinerant Journey-man”, Charity Festival for the Disabled, Festival of Traditional Sports and Folklore.

Lots of merits go to the Committee for the Regional Development and Economic Cooperation of the Carpathian Euroregion which deals with the system of information exchange about law principles concerning economic activity of the countries which participate. In preparation there is a barter center for the Carpathian Euroregion which stimulates the transborder trade in the conditions of indigence of other financial instruments⁷.

⁷ Wizimirski A., *Granica wschodnia RP a proces integracji z Unią Europejską*, Szanse Polsko – Ukraińskiej współpracy gospodarczej, Krasieczyn 2001, s. 16

The condition of roads and rail routes as well as the border crossings is an important issue in the development of cooperation. However, it cannot be overcome on this level as the significant decisions are made by the leading administration. Besides, some misunderstandings appear for the transborder areas. One can also notice some positive effects, for instance in the quality of telecommunication connections⁸.

However, there exist some barriers which concern customs and tax regulations in the countries of the region and also the lack of banks which specialise in doing accounts among partners of Euroregion and which will be able to allow credits and guarantees for the transborder ventures.

Other forms were accepted in the field of tourism and protection of natural environment. The Committee which deals with this matter (managed by the Polish side) has prepared the first map which shows the Carpathian Euroregion and information about possibilities of tourism development in the region. The Committee is also planning to prepare the catalogue with monuments worth seeing. There are also some expos organised: in autumn in Krosno and in winter in Kosice. There is also a concept of establishing nets of transborder touristic routes in the Carpathian Region.

The major obstacle is the lack of funds. Most of the incomes to the Euroregion budget come from the members fees. Besides, in 1995 the Euroregion got the irreclaimable loan from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (USD thousand) and Institute for East-West Studies (USD 20 thousand). Within the Fund for Small Euroregional Projects PHARE the Euroregion is supposed to get 114 thousand ECU and within the programme PHARE Credo 331 thousand ECU (49 thousand ECU for the ventures on the Polish-Slovakian border and 282 thousand ECU for the initiatives on the Polish – Ukrainian border).

In order to fulfil the tasks of the development of the Carpathian Euroregion some suggestions have been presented⁹:

1. The development of different means of transport and getting rid of transport – and – geographical isolation. In this area it is very important to open new crossing borders, to develop new communication routes, new motorways, new airports and modernisation of the system of transit roads in the Euroregion.
2. The development of competitive economic structures in the region; an improvement of economic transformation and more effective use of natural resources, dissemination of technical innovations and development of infrastructure indispensable for them, development of businesses, implementing of integrated catering economy, improvement of export and marketing, development of sector for firms and investors, development of economic relations inside the Carpathian Euroregion.
3. Harmonious development of human infrastructure. For keeping the population at the certain level and improvement the average length of life it is necessary to adjust primary and secondary education to the requirements of the labour market.

⁸ Drozd S., *Stan oraz perspektywy rozwoju współpracy transgranicznej pomiędzy Ukrainą I Polską*, Polska Europa-Ukraina, Krosno 2000, s. 83

⁹ Zakar I., *Eroregion Karpacki w Europie Regionów*, Euroregion Karpacki 1993-1998, Krosno 1998, s. 90

It is also very important to strengthen the role of the university education as well as organizing different workshops for entrepreneurs. All these tasks are in the local authorities' hands.

4. The development of medical services, socio and cultural environment. It includes such issues as: modernization of the system of medical care, health and social benefits, development of cultural life and also rebuilding the chain of educational institutions.
5. The development of different forms of tourism in the Carpathian Euroregion. Tourism is a future industry which promotes peace and also plays an important role in the economic development and improvement of style of life. This aim includes the selection and development of health resorts, development of tourism based upon the specification of area, development of quality of services (running workshops and development of net of touristic information).
6. Protection of environment and nature. Within this aim municipal services play an important role (sewage drain and waste disposal) and proecological agricultural programmes, protection of National Parks, reserves, subprogrammes of environmental protection in microregions, raising the national consciousness and development of proecological economics.
7. Tightening the bonds of friendship within the European Union, the European Council and the Association of European Borderline Regions (AEBR), making new contact and development of the old ones.

Summing up, we can say that the Carpathian Euroregion plays an important role for the countries which belong to it. Present achievements and future plans speak well for it. However, further development of the Euroregion will require not only the engagement of local authorities but also financial support from the governments and the European Union.

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Sažetak

KARPATSKA EUROPSKA REGIJA KAO PLAN EUROPSKE INTEGRACIJE NA POLJU TURISTIČKE EKONOMIJE

Danas se u Europi zapažaju integralni procesi i osnivanje velikog broja evropskih regija. Prednost suradnje u pograničnim područjima tome uveliko pogoduje. U Poljskoj se primjećuju mnoge transformacije u političkom i ekonomskom sustavu kao i neke promjene u suradnji sa susjednim zemljama. U mnogim slučajevima turizam je postao zajednički interes. Karpatska evropska regija ima značajnu ulogu u razvoju tog područja

Ključne riječi: integracija, pogranična suradnja, turistička ekonomija.

Zusammenfassung

DIE KARPATEN EUROREGION ALS EIN PLAN EUROPÄISCHER INTEGRIERUNG IM BEREICH DER TOURISMUS ÖKONOMIE

In der Gegenwart Europas werden Integrierungsprozesse und die Gründung grosser Anzahl von Euroregionen bemerkbar. Die Verbindung ist im Vorteil der Zusammenarbeit in den Grenzgebieten gesehen. Im Polen sind enorme Transformationen im politischen und ökonomischen System wie auch gewisse Änderungen in der Zusammenarbeit mit den Nachbarstaaten festzustellen. In vielen Beispielen ist der Tourismus ein gemeinsames Interesse geworden. Die Karpaten Euroregion spielt eine bedeutende Rolle in der Entwicklung dieses Bereiches.

Schlüsselwörter: Integrierung, Grenzgebiet Zusammenarbeit, Tourismus Ökonomie.