

## CARPATHIAN EUROREGION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF UKRAINE'S EUROINTEGRATION STRATEGY

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### Preamble

One of the main current principles of establishing a United Europe is "Europe of regions". According to this, the basic element of the European Union as a State formation consists in separate regions, the state-members of the EU, meeting the determined criteria and, in general, being all sufficient. That is why, emphasis in the sphere of eternal co-operation should gradually shift to the level of regions.

In practice solution of numerous issues directly regarding separate territorial entities is more rational, efficient and strategic on a regional level.

At present there is a set of institutional and functional instruments of deciding issues in the sphere of external relations on an interregional level. Some of them are universal, while others are one-track.

Among the principal instruments of border and transboundary interregional co-operation the following stand out:

- 1 *Euroregions* – organizations of border (transboundary) interregional (intermunicipal) co-operation aiming at establishing and strengthening good neighbourly relations as well as addressing common problems singled out by the constitutional documents regulating the territories of three and more states.
- 2 *Bilateral organizations* – organizations of border interregional (intermunicipal) co-operation, set up to establish and strengthen good neighbourly relations as well as address common problems singled out by the constitutional documents regulating the territories of three and more states.
- 3 *Agreements on co-operation* in definite spheres between bordering and not bordering territories that provide for the establishment of institutions of coordinating actions.
- 4 *Agreements on co-operation* in definite spheres between bordering and not bordering territories that do not provide for the establishment of institutions of coordinating actions.

A Euroregion is the most universal institute among the above-mentioned institutes, which has a considerable potential.

In Central Europe such organizations started to appear in the 90ies of last centuries. Euroregions were among the first, founded on the borders of Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia, on the borders of Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia, on the cross-border of Hungary, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Poland.

The main objective set before Central European Euroregions was to harmonise relations among the neighbourly countries and reduce a negative effect of the border with the consideration of the fact that it was not always conditioned by ethical and historical factors.

Besides, the Euroregion had to become an institutional instrument-facilitating co-operation in various spheres of social life, which would satisfy the interests of the parties participating in it.

*Thus, Euroregions must become an instrument of external policy of some sovereign countries, which aspire to establish and maintain good neighbourly relations emerging on a regional (municipal) level.*

We must mention that certain Euroregions, as a rule, on a municipal level (e.g. Nisa, Pro Europa Viadrina), established without any support and custody of the national governments (mainly, the Polish and German border), were after a less lofty goal, for instance, to solve some local problems in the defined fields (tourism, ecology, communal infrastructure development). Nevertheless, their cooperation, in general, had a positive, though not direct, effect on the goals mentioned above.

We can claim for the time being that the main objective to harmonise the relations among the neighbourly territories, citizens populating them and governments of these territories predominantly has been achieved by the greater part of the functioning Euroregions. Thus, for example, due to the activity within the framework of the Euroregions, the implicitly unsafe territories of the Eastern Carpathians, at the watershed of the Tisza river (the area where the "Carpathian Euroregion is in operation), the Sudeten mountains (the area of the Euroregion Nisa's activity), etc, were not turned into zones of conflict.

Positive experience of the activity of the Euroregions can be also proved by the fact that today the setting up of the Euroregions in Southern Eastern Europe, on the Balkans is underway through the intermediary of and under the shelter of such respectable organizations as the Council of Europe, the Pact of Stability and others. At the conference "Polish experience in cross-border cooperation" which took place in the city of Rzeszow (Poland) on December 6-8, 2001, the representatives of different international organizations and diplomatic missions of separate countries stressed on an exceptionally positive experience of the Euroregional cooperation and on a great role of the similar institutes in a solution of good neighbourly relations harmonization. The representatives of a number of Southern and Eastern European states attended the conference as well, who, according to the organisers, might include the experience of the Euroregional activity in Central Europe into their tooling of external policy.

*Some of the advantages of the Euroregions' activity should be mentioned here:*

- a relatively high level of organization in their activity – existence of statutory documents, the structural formation of the governing and labour bodies;
- strong established links between the governing institutions and autonomous regions, their participants;
- a considerable volume of information about border and transboundary cooperation, cooperation with international organizations, the general state of affairs in various fields of the social life of neighbouring countries;
- finding contact points in transboundary and border cooperation, problem monitoring and search of the ways of their solution;
- political and material support on the part of the European organizations;
- creation of the structures that contribute to the development of border (transboundary) cooperation.

However, there is a number of other goals which have not yet been achieved in the result of the Euroregions' activity or have not yet been set at all. Considering a great organizational potential, the current relations and experience in addressing specific problems, it is possible to view the *Euroregions as the universal instruments of border (transboundary) cooperation*.

By this, it is reasonable to separate the objectives of their activity into the main two directions:

- continuation of carrying out external policy tasks within the European uniting process;
- economization of the Euroregions' goals, putting forward new tasks in the sphere of external policy and regional development.
- Proceeding from an opportunity to set such strategic aims, the Euroregions must fulfil the following tasks:
  - supporting and deepening good neighbourly relations among bordering territorial entities;
  - taking advantage of the labour bodies of the Euroregions as the centres of collecting information about the activity of the state bodies and economic agents of certain countries, international organizations, processes taking place in Europe, about the ways of resolving problems in some fields of life activity, of experience analysis and models of its use in modern circumstances;
  - transforming the Euroregions into information and methodical centres of border and transboundary cooperation that facilitate a search of partners, establishment of relations among them;
  - taking into view available information and relations, using the Euroregions as intermediary structures in attraction of investments and donor potential into the country;

- using the Euroregions and their labour bodies as structures that create a positive image of a country and its territorial entities as well;
- using lobbying opportunities of the Euroregions, first of all, those that concern the European structures;
- turning the Euroregions into organisers and partners of various international projects, considering their potential and experience in a solution of numerous issues in the field of border (transboundary) cooperation.

It comes as natural that the list mentioned above is open, it could be carried on depending on the tasks the external policy will face with time. Generally speaking, a Euroregion is a viable and rather efficient instrument of an external policy, which is able to adapt and change under the conditions of a definite situation, change an objective and manners of actions, thus, coming of use in the right circumstances in the achievement of strategic tasks of any country, particularly, of Ukraine, being one of the instruments of its European integration strategy.

### **On the history of the issue**

Transboundary cooperation among neighbourly countries on the level of regional and local governments is considered to be one of the most significant issues of the current agenda in Europe. At present more than 30 Euroregions are functioning in Europe, which have become part and parcel of the European integration and conflict solution. The “Carpathian Euroregion” (CE) is the only Euroregion in Europe including the bordering territories of the five post-communist countries on different economic levels with heterogeneous ethnic, religious and cultural structures. That is why, from the moment of its existence there arose a problem of creating *a system of mutual interests and cooperation* with the aim of minimization and avoidance of a potential tension, misunderstanding among the peoples populating these territories.

Significance of a Euroregion rises during the process of the EU extension and entering a number of states – EU members into its composition. By the way, it has become a contact area of the EU eastern border. This area can turn into a source of tension or into a source of stability. Therefore, taking into account the concept of “Europe of regions”, based first and foremost on safety and stability, it is in the interests of the CE and the EU to facilitate the process of vigorous activity and extension of the “Carpathian Euroregion”.

The model of the “Carpathian Euroregion” was developed in theory with the assistance of the experts from the Institute of Research East – West (the former name Institute of East-West), who promptly voiced that numerous local initiatives of transboundary cooperation are not supported and understood by the national

governments. This problem remained on the fringes of the interests of the EU structures. At the same time there emerged a threat of a new "iron curtain" between the countries of Central Europe and the former republics of the Soviet Union. For this reason, at the international conference "Regions in international cooperation" held in Mihalovtse (Slovakia) in November 1991, a concept and priorities of interaction of bordering administrative and territorial entities of the regional level of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine were set (1).

The conference in Nyíregyháza (Hungary) in May 1992 became the next important organization stage. The attending representatives of the Institute of Research mentioned above proposed to join the Ukrainian, Hungarian and Polish initiatives with the aim of setting up the "Carpathian Euroregion". There was established a committee which would prepare all the constitutional instruments of the union – Agreement and Statute – during the session of the representatives of the regions involved which took place in June in the same year in Uzhgorod.

On February 14, 1993 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Poland and Ukraine ratified a declaration in the city of Debrecen (Hungary), which claimed that the "establishment of the "Carpathian Euroregion" would greatly contribute to strengthening of friendship and prospering of the countries of the present region as well as guarantee active application of the principles the Act of the Conference on the issues of Safety and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki, 1975), the Charter of Paris for a new Europe (Paris, 1990) and other instruments. The creation of the "Carpathian Euroregion" will direct the efforts of the Council of Europe and the European Union into the sphere of regional cooperation development". That date is considered to be the day of the official registration of the international association the "Carpathian Euroregion". The representatives from the regions of Ukraine, Poland and Hungary, signing the program and statutory documents, became the founders of this international Association.

The territories belonging to the "Carpathian Euroregion" are still at the periphery of their countries from a social and an economic point of view. The greater part of them suffers from the problems connected with the environment, an inconsistent infrastructure, unemployment, economic cooperation problems, unequal accessibility to various EU funds.

Information concerning the size of the territories belonging to the CE and the population living on these territories can be found in the table.

On February 14, 1993 the Hungarian, Polish, Slovakian and the Ukrainian parties signed a basic agreement on the "Carpathian Euroregion". The international association the "Carpathian Euroregion" was defined as a consultative and coordinating body directed at the expansion of transboundary cooperation of its members as was provided by the Project of the European Convention on transboundary cooperation among the geographical communities and authorities No 106 of the Council of Europe.

The Association was provided to be aimed at:

- organization and coordination of the activity in supporting economic, scientific, ecological, cultural and educational cooperation among its members;
- development of separate projects on border cooperation among its members in the sphere of mutual interests;
- facilitation of contacts among the peoples of the regions-members of the Association, in particular, contacts among experts in various branches;
- support of good neighbourly relations among its members;
- support of the regional development of all its members;
- determination of the potential areas for a multilateral border cooperation of its members.

The existence of an associated transboundary association of local and regional communities, whose interests are presented by the government bodies as well as local self-administration offered the following opportunities:

- common exploitation of energy resources;
- common policy making in the sphere of environmental protection;
- increase of a foreign capital flow;
- working out of regional development programs;
- production of competitive goods, facilitation of local initiative implementation (3);
- development of transportation links on the territory of the “Carpathian Euroregion”, overcoming the problems of an insufficiently developed infrastructure;
- development of a modern economic structure of the region;
- harmonious development of man’s activity;
- development of the health protection system, social and cultural protection system;
- diversification of tourism;
- strengthening of the European and Atlantic cooperation (4).

However, for absence of a strategic approach to the vision of the development prospects of the “Carpathian Euroregion” within the ten years of its existence the greater part of opportunities rising after its formation in 1993 were not taken.

### System problems of the CE after the EU expansion

The entrance of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to the EU on May 1, 2004 had a great impact on the role and place of the "Carpathian Euroregion" in the field of cooperation between Ukraine and its Western neighbours and the European Union in general. From a geopolitical point of view, the status of the "Carpathian Euroregion" has undergone changes.

If before the EU expansion the "Carpathian Euroregion" took a somewhat narrowed and local function of the organization of transboundary integration of border administrative and territorial entities of the states of the Carpathian states basin, after the entrance of Poland Slovakia and Hungary into the EU it assumed quite a different role of a higher organizational form of transboundary cooperation on the new Eastern borders of the European Union with closest neighbours, Ukraine in particular. The Euroregional cooperation development in this way has transformed into an integral part of the EU general Western strategy and has become a matter not only of the states-participants of the Euroregion bordering on Ukraine but also a matter of the European community in general.

Such geopolitical changes have become a positive push to the development and improvement of cooperation within the EU framework. The Euroregion's status, higher than it used to be, is an actual reaching by the Euroregion the level of the relations system between Ukraine and the EU, but not only the bilateral interstate relations between Ukraine and its neighbours; it also conditions the lengthy existence of the "Carpathian Euroregion".

Therefore, in the author's opinion, "the dramatic forecast" of the possible closing down of the transboundary cooperation through the "Carpathian Euroregion" after the entrance of some Central European states to the EU are groundless. On the contrary, both the states-members and the EU in general are insisting on the expansion of the Euroregional cooperation with Ukraine. Generally speaking, *transboundary cooperation is considered by them as one of the most perspective directions of interaction* with the Ukrainian state aimed at admitting it to the general European integration processes. Accordingly, Ukraine regards the development of transboundary and Euroregional relations in the Western direction as an *additional essential "integration bridge" for its approaching the EU*.

There are a number of advantages facilitating the further functioning of the "Carpathian Euroregion". The attitude to the Euroregion and to transboundary cooperation of the central governing bodies of these countries as well as those of Ukraine has changed. The problems of functioning of the Carpathian and other Euroregions have reached the general state and interstate level. The "Carpathian Euroregion" has gained general European recognition.

It could be claimed that the "Carpathian Euroregion" has formed as transboundary integrity. In the author's opinion, the factors of a system character have

been detaining the development of cooperation within the framework of the "Carpathian Euroregion" till present time the most obvious among them being a considerably different level of reform processes in the countries, bordering administrative and territorial entities in the composition of the Euroregion. On the one hand, Poland and Hungary left their neighbours far behind in their paces and depth of social, political and economic reforms. In 1999 they became the NATO members. At the end of the 90ies Slovakia also quickened system transformations and promoted the Euroregion cooperation. Thanks to these purposeful actions it managed to catch up with Poland and Hungary with its reforms and enter together with them into the EU on May 1, 2004. On the other hand, Romania and Ukraine did not justify reforming expectations. Nevertheless, Romania has an opportunity to join the European Union in 2007 while Ukraine will still remain beyond the EU boundaries. That is, a gap in system reforms is going to have an undesirable effect especially in the field of cooperation within the "Carpathian Euroregion" between Western Ukrainian regions and its foreign partners.

System differences regard first of all the spheres of economic transboundary cooperation. The market regional economy and the regional agriculture that was not gradually reformed because of the administrative interference have a lot of interconnected elements in common. This base makes it almost impossible to create an ideal system of economic interrelations, which would lead to the formation of an integral in an agricultural respect international transboundary region.

On the other hand, differences in reforms did not allow to realize within the framework of the "Carpathian Euroregion" a binding requirement of the general European institutions concerning transboundary, Euroregional cooperation, particularly, concept coordination of the social and economic development of the bordering territories.

At present it can be stated that the development of the "Carpathian Euroregion" is going through a critical moment after the EU expansion. It is the time when they should shift from a political and declarative economic Euroregional cooperation to the priorities of economic cooperation and realization of specific mutual agricultural transboundary projects. This is shown, for example, by an appearance of new institutional forms of transboundary cooperation, which are being used to minimize the challenges connected with the EU expansion. By the way, these new instruments are emerging on the both sides of the Eastern EU border and are being implemented by the local governing bodies, particularly, in Transcarpathia during the realization of the "Europe of regions" motto.



### **What is it about?**

“The strategy of transboundary cooperation development in the Carpathian region “Carpathians 2003–2011 (October, 2003) has been initiated by the Transcarpathian regional state administration as well as the Transcarpathian regional council and supported by the regional governing bodies of the bordering regions of Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. The basic ideas of the Programme of Ukraine’s integration to the European Union in the field of bordering policy lie in the foundation of the Development Strategy.

Analyzing a specific character of the bordering territories (sector, political and territorial), the Development Strategy consists of the preferred strategic programmes of the development of these territories (infrastructure, economy, environment, nature and country development, tourism, social and cultural integration), which is sure to smooth possible negative results of the EU expansion in a short-term period.

Another programme – “Nyíregyháza initiative” (October, 2003) – has been initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian Republic as well as the local authorities of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg region as an instrument of practical realization of the New Policy of the EU Neighbourhood. The main objective of the Initiative is to strengthen the links between the local and the regional bodies on the both sides of the EU Eastern borders.

Recently active cooperation under the programme “Interregio” has span up. Signed a couple of years ago, it had a formal character only. At present eleven common projects in humanitarian and economic spheres have been prepared. It is planned to set up transboundary territories of environmental protection and landscape the Tisza water gap and protect it. The issue of a further cooperation of the bordering regions was discussed during a working meeting in February 2004 of the heads of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg region (Hungary) and Satu-Mare region (Romania).

We cannot but mention the “Concept of the common development of the Ukraine’s and Hungary’s bordering territories” approved by the Transcarpathian Regional body in June 2003. Its strategic objective was to exploit to the full the opportunities of transboundary cooperation between the two countries in order to improve the conditions of the social and economic life of the people on the both sides of the border.

The Programme of the strategic development of the “Carpathian Euroregion” is also of utter significance. It was prepared by professor Istvan Suli-Zakar (the University of Debrecen) (5), and deliberated at one of the last sessions of the “Carpathian Euroregion’s” Council. It consists of regional and local programmes of the strategic development of the bordering territories in the EU composition.

A successful model of *regional cooperation* under the new conditions will become an indicator in our common relations and demonstrate our capability to take an active part in the development of new (transboundary) relations over the common borders of the expanded EU. Common challenges should lead to common actions and suggestions.

### **Propositions**

Proceeding from the mentioned above, a conclusion can be made that there are at least *three ways* of making contribution to the development of transboundary cooperation after the EU expansion under the conditions of joining the efforts of the regional structures of Ukraine and its Western neighbours.

*Firstly*, there is an opportunity for the regional structures and bodies to put the most important issues of transboundary cooperation on the agenda;

*Secondly*, on the basis of such an agenda there is an opportunity to find an influence lever on the central governments of the states – the expanded EU members – to make them raise some issues on the EU level.

*Thirdly*, the regions may become active participants of various common transboundary projects if they apply for them.

In addition, the regions should play a visible role in the EU expansion but predominantly in the sphere of additional efforts and measures aimed to support actions taken by the states and the authority of the European Union.

### **New programmes of the neighbourhood: opportunities for the CE**

According to the experts' estimates, the bordering regions of Ukraine are most susceptible to the changes that have arisen and are still to arise in future in the process of the EU expansion to the east. Therefore, transboundary cooperation as a form of cooperation between the bordering regions of Ukraine and the eastern regions of its Central European neighbours requires to be profoundly renewed and transformed so that they could adapt to the new conditions determined by the EU expansion.

At present it is possible to rely on the positive changes as the European policy of neighbourhood offers an instrument, which should give an impetus to transboundary cooperation. Moreover, this instrument can in prospect be spread to all the regions of Ukraine that will promote interregional cooperation in general.

The programmes of Neighbourhood are expected to function on the whole territory of the countries bordering on the European Union. Such an expansion of the

programme will become possible only in 2007 when the Programmes of Neighbourhood will gain a separate status and a budget. But till 2007 these programmes will be in operation only on the territory of the bordering regions on the both sides of the border, particularly, to the east of the EU – the regions of Ukraine, Russian, Byelorussia and Moldova which are subject to the TACIS programme on transboundary cooperation (TACIS CBC). In Ukraine these are the following regions: Volynska, Lvivska, Transcarpathia, Ivano-Frankivska, Chernivetska and Odeska. In 2002 the Council on the matters of cooperation Ukraine – the EU singled out one of the main priorities of further cooperation between the European Union and Ukraine – transboundary and interregional cooperation.

The fact that the mechanism of financing the transboundary projects under the TACIS CBC existing scheme is still in force in Ukraine shows the “transitory” status of the Programme of Neighbourhood till 2007. During the years of 2004–2006 about 20 million Euros were allocated to the Ukrainian partners involved in the projects directed at the strengthening of transboundary and transnational cooperation between the expanded EU and its new neighbour Ukraine within the framework of the programmes mentioned above. The new EU members – Slovakia, Poland and Hungary are financed under the projects INTERREG, while Romania (prior to its entrance into the EU in 2007) will be financed through the programme PHARE (6).

In July 2004 the common Working groups (Task Force) comprising the representatives of Ukraine and its Central European neighbours together with the EU experts completed and submitted for consideration to Brussels the projects of the Common programme documents of such Programmes of Neighbourhood: “Poland–Ukraine–Byelorussia”, “Hungary–Slovakia–Ukraine”, “Romania–Ukraine”.

The Commission has singled out the following general priorities for the Programmes of Neighbourhood:

- facilitating economic and social development in the bordering regions;
- implementing common actions aimed at a solution of common challenges in such spheres as environmental and health protection and combating organised crime;
- maintaining border efficiency and safety;
- contributing to the organisation and conducting local social activities.

Further on, the Working groups set general and specific objectives, priorities and tasks within the framework of a separate Programme of Neighbourhood. During the session in May 2004 in Odesa the EU Commission offered to exclude from the Programme of Neighbourhood “Romania-Ukraine” the preferred objectives and measures concerning the development of transboundary transportation infrastructure for lack of funds so that later these measures should be included into the following EU infrastructure programmes. However, all the regions on the both

sides of the border declined their suggestion and offered to preserve them at least on the level of technology and economy as otherwise it would be only possible to preserve the cultural heritage under this Programme of Neighbourhood.

The main problems that the Ukrainian side faces regarding the further implementation of the Programmes of Neighbourhood are absence of funds for their development and for further working out of specific project proposals as well as maladjustment of the mechanisms of the simultaneous co-financing of transboundary projects at the cost of the EU programmes, national and regional budget outlays and extra budgetary funds.

In accordance with the EU requirements the Law of Ukraine "On transboundary cooperation" provides two main kinds of the projects and programmes of transboundary cooperation: joint and national. Under the final provisions of the mentioned above Law the State Budget of Ukraine of 2005 must allocate funds and determine mechanisms of co-financing the chosen projects on the part of Ukraine.

On the part of the European Union there is also work conducted to process the mechanisms of co-financing of the "matching" transboundary projects at the expense of the programmes INTERREG III in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, PHARE in Romania, TACIS CBC in Ukraine. At the same time a part of the joint transboundary projects of the mentioned above Programmes of Neighbourhood are expected to integrate to the so-called "Initiative CADSES" (Central European, Adriatic, Danube and Southern Eastern European areas) which include the territory of the "Carpathian Euroregion", the Euroregions of the "Higher Prut" and the "Lower Danube".

It can be forecasted that the matching of the Programmes of Neighbourhood and, mainly, have the mechanisms of the further co-financing of transboundary projects is going to be delayed. Nevertheless, the actual financing of the specific projects will start in 2005.

But the most significant conclusion lies in the fact that we at last have started understanding transboundary cooperation not only as the arrangement of the borders, customs-offices, etc but also as cooperation and interaction of the regions. The concept is filled with a new meaning, and, accordingly, new tasks are set. This leads to new responsibilities and obligations. Thus, further strengthening of the borders, constructing of new modern transfers and modernisation of the already functioning ones, developing the bordering infrastructure and other matters have been included into the agenda.

Today Ukraine and other adjacent territories should actively take advantage of the "Carpathian Euroregion" as a functioning instrument of the development of the bordering regions and European integration on their way to "Europe of regions".

The Ukrainian bordering territories enter into the four Euroregions at the same time: the "Carpathian Euroregion", the greatest one, unites the territories of Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary as well as Transcarpathia, Lvivska, Ivano-Frankivska

and Chernivetska regions of Ukraine; the "Lower Danube" includes Romania, Moldova, Odeska region; the "Bug" covers Poland, Byelorussia and Volynska region; the recently established "Higher Prut" unites the territories of Romania, Moldova and Chernivetska region. The Prime Minister of Poland L. Miller mentioned in his speech at the last economic forum in Lviv that "we must use the EU expansion for the development of this part of Europe so that it would not turn into a great depressive region in future".

So far the mentioned Euroregions have not lived up to the set objectives. It is understandable as the structures are functioning exclusively on a community project basis. It could seem at first sight that the "Carpathian Euroregion" that has existed for more than ten years already is well known in Europe as successful and extensive. It has been involved in numerous European programmes. But if we look at the Ukrainian regions the most active region (particularly, financially) is Transcarpathia, which is in a traditional close contact with Hungary and Romania. But lately Ivano-Frankivska and Chernivetska regions have picked up with Chernivetska facing the "Higher Prut". This cannot be said about Lvivska region despite its powerful potential. It is cooperating more or less actively with Polish regions on a bilateral level. From the point of view of the European community if a bordering territory (region) enters the European structures together with its administration and financial provision it is dealt with at the same high level as with the local governing bodies. In such a way, the Euroregions become the subjects of international activity.

The anomaly lies in the fact that the European and other structures are ready to finance useful and interesting programmes, but, according to some experts, serious and efficient programmes are ignored. For instance, the "Carpathian Euroregion" has spent during the last years 1 million USA dollars on an integration programme and employment for the Romanies, 120,000 dollars on establishment and development of enterprising, 500,000 dollars on communication systems development. Ukraine has virtually received nothing besides this. However, when Poland and Hungary as the EU members apply for thirty-forty projects, Ukraine applies for two or three only.

The bordering countries on the both sides of the EU eastern border have not lost the previously established relations and understanding of the mutual problems, which were of a bilateral nature. The following step within the Euroregion is to reach the general European level. In order to do this in such Euroregions it is necessary to set up serious executive structures, which would have their action, programmes, a methodological basis (7) and a legal status.

The role of the bordering territories of the "Carpathian Euroregion" in international cooperation is of great significance from a political and territorial point of view. This Euroregion is regarded as an area of immediate interaction of the economies of Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. In a result of the

EU expansion to the East in 2004 the bordering regions of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary gained the status of contacting areas of partner interaction of the countries-neighbours with a considerably different geopolitical status: Ukraine – an out of the bloc nuclear-free state-member of the CIS; Poland, Slovakia and Hungary – states-members of the EU and NATO, Romania – a member of another group of candidates for the entrance to the EU and NATO.

Therefore, the bordering regions of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary have been on new external borders of the EU with Ukraine since 2004. Only the states and their bordering regions through their mutual projects, particularly, in an economic sphere and using a Euroregions as an instrument are able to reduce to a minimum the possible negative consequences of the dividing lines in Europe of interstate and interregional cooperation between Ukraine and Hungary, Ukraine and Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia, Ukraine and Romania. That is why, transboundary cooperation, particularly in the “Carpathian Euroregion”, cannot be effective without the guidance and coordination of branch and territorial projects. Harmonious development of the bordering regions is possible only through the joint development programmes and “matching” branch projects. Transcarpathia has made its first successful steps in this direction actively using the Euroregions as an integration instrument.

Thus, the EU expansion process in 2004–2007 may come to a standstill on the Western border. Nevertheless, Ukraine feels its effect, is actively preparing for a new neighbour and does not lose hope of making its European dream come true. Generalisation and usage of a positive experience of the modern stage of European integration on a regional level should contribute to the realisation of practical tasks of Ukraine's entrance into European political, economic and legal space. Much depends on Ukraine only whether it remains an EU neighbour, a privileged one, or it moves ahead and deepens relations with this powerful European organisation.

## **Conclusion**

At present we can state the fact that the Carpathian region is one of the most stable regions in respect of safe peaceful co-existence in Europe. Despite the fact that the borders of the five states have their points of coincidence here sometimes made without considering ethnic principles. These states have their own political, economic and cultural interests in the region. The stability factor in the “Carpathian Euroregion” is undoubtedly a credit of the activity of the national governments of the autonomous bodies and a respective model of a tolerant behaviour of the population of the bordering territories.

In spite of the fact that the “Carpathian Euroregion” carries out its main mission it now faces one of the most important tasks of becoming an efficient instrument of Ukraine’s European integration.

The gained experience of setting up such associations as the “Carpathian Euroregion” in Western Europe proves the fact that it takes a long time to achieve an efficient level of functioning for the similar structures, harmonisation of the participants’ interests, development of mechanisms of transboundary cooperation and of finding influence levers on the level of the national governments with the aim of establishing a favourable legal environment. As for Ukraine the bordering territories make up a certain “area of research” to study different situations where it is possible to predict the consequences of the entrance of the Euroregional institutions partners to the European Union and, thus, to introduce changes to the tactics and strategy of European integration.

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