

TOWARDS “CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION STRATEGY OF THE LUBELSKIE VOIVODESHIP, THE LVIV OBLAST, THE VOLYN OBLAST AND THE BREST OBLAST FOR 2014-2020”

Poland - Belarus - Ukraine programme has already contracted more than 100 cross-border cooperation projects in the current financial perspective, and up to 30 of them include the lead partner of the project, coming from the Lubelskie Voivodeship. It shows a very high activity of the region in this field, taking into account the fact that 4 voivodeships and 10 oblasts participate in the programme.

Certainly, the location of the voivodeship is of great importance. It is the only voivodeship that borders on Belarus and Ukraine. There are numerous natural links between partner organisations. This is also reflected in the number of joint projects. Cross-border cooperation of the Lubelskie Voivodeship has more than a 20-year tradition. Since 1992, the Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian cross-border area has developed various forms of cooperation, including the cooperation at the government and self – government levels.

Is it necessary to manage cross-border cooperation at the regional level?

Cross-border cooperation is an important factor stimulating the development of border regions. It is also a component



**Mr. Krzysztof Hetman,
Marshal of the
Lubelskie Voivodeship**

of the Development Strategy of Lubelskie Voivodeship. It has already operated at the strategic level in our region. In the absence of real prospects for accession of Ukraine and Belarus to the European Union in the coming years, our border will be one of the most important division lines in Europe. This situation poses a number of challenges for the EU, Poland, and its border regions. Therefore, it is necessary to develop mechanisms for effective border management. However, so as not to make it a serious barrier to the development of good neighbourly partner relationships, security issues should not be considered as the major issue. The impact of the border goes far beyond the above realm and has enormous social and economic importance, both at the nationwide and regional level.

What is then the experience of Lubelskie Voivodeship in the management of international cooperation with neighbouring regions?

The Lubelskie Voivodeship signed an agreement on cooperation with the Brest Oblast in 2000, the Volyn Oblast in 2002 and the Lviv Oblast in 2004. Also, it is worth mentioning the establishment of the Cross-border Union - Euroregion 'Bug' in 1995. It also provides cross-border

cooperation models. The directions of development of this cooperation and entities are numerous. The question arises what initiatives should be encouraged to maintain the results. What policy should be pursued at the regional level so as the results of individual projects converged and formed a consistent effect with a larger scale of the beneficial impact? That is why we want to establish the most important tasks for cross-border cooperation and to create a sort of guide that will describe the most important goals. We have already finished a project of 'Cross-border Cooperation Strategy of the Lubelskie Voivodeship, the Lviv Oblast, the Volyn Oblast and the Brest Oblast for 2014-2020'. Together with partners from Belarus and Ukraine, we want the document to serve as a reference point for all planned cooperation projects in the next financial perspective.

What strategic areas does this strategy focus on and what goals does it pursue?

Taking into account the premises for the establishment of the Strategy, the analysis of the potential of cross-border co-operation, SWOT analysis, identification of areas of strategic actions and the opinion of Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian experts, the general goal of the Strategy has been set. Its purpose is to improve the competitiveness of the socio-economic cross-border area at a European, national, regional and local level, through the effective use of endogenous potential and mitigation of the limitations arising from the functioning of the EU external border. The general objective has been specified through the formulation of objectives and directions for the four strategic areas of action, i.e.: economic cooperation; environment, culture and tourism; transport and border infrastructure; science and higher education.

Therefore, let us take a closer look at each of these areas. What exemplary courses of action need to be taken according to the developed strategy?

The strategy highlights the need to deliver complete and current information about the operating conditions and economic entities in the cross-border region. It also talks about the support of the specialisation of already operating business environment institutions in the area of services for the companies interested in cooperation in the cross-border area, and about the integrated economic promotion of cross-border region. Moving on to the next field, the strategy mentions the need for stimulation of actions to create and coordinate the functioning of cross-border protected areas, the need for stimulation of cross-border activities to maintain water purity of the Bug River basin, the development of cross-border tourism products as well as the need for making cross-border efforts to protect the world's cultural heritage. With regard to infrastructure, we together once again propose increasing the permeability of Polish - Belarusian and Polish - Ukrainian border by opening new border crossings, including pedestrian and tourist border crossings, improving the accessibility of road border crossings, increasing the number of cross-border communication links, as well as extending the zone of small border traffic, revitalizing cross-border rail infrastructure and supporting airports to open new air connections, including the cross-border connections.

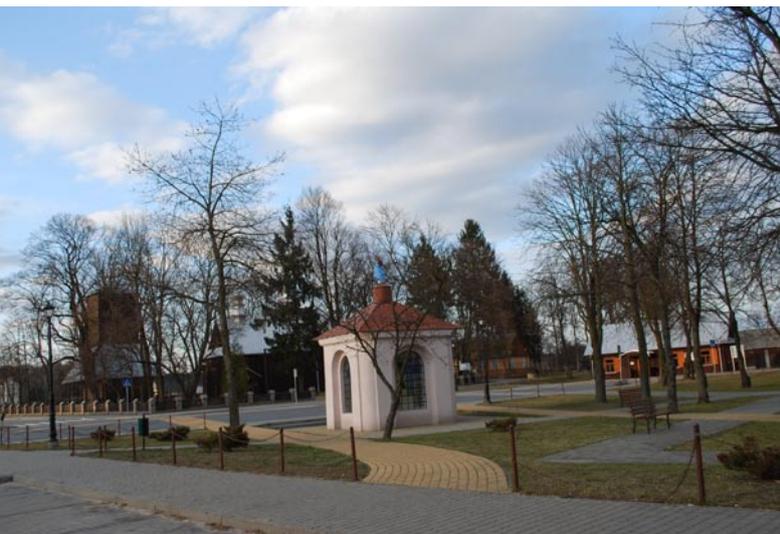
of cross-border communication links, as well as extending the zone of small border traffic, revitalising cross-border rail infrastructure and supporting airports to open new air connections, including the cross-border connections. With regard to science and higher education, the strategy highlights the need to spread the Bologna system in all cross-border region universities, to adjust the educational offer of the universities to the changing requirements of a knowledge- based economy, with a particular focus on

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cross-border economy and the development of inter-university partnerships in order to raise external funds for scientific research.

We know that the strategy goes into details – it contains a list of recommended projects. Can you give some examples in each field?

I want to mention that, after public consultation, the list may be expanded prior to the final approval of the strategy. However, now many projects come to the fore, e.g. creation of a consulting and training network in the field of cross-border economic cooperation on the basis of the existing business environment. This trend fits well with the already



The Commune of Hanna

implemented project under the Poland – Belarus - Ukraine Programme named 'The Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Rivne and Lublin', or 'The Creation of a Unique Information Base of Cross-border Agricultural Enterprises of the Euroregion 'Bug' cross-border union. The development of science and technology parks as well as logistics centers is also important. The examples of projects in the field of environment, culture and tourism include the establishment of sewer system and waste treatment facilities in rural areas within the Shatsky National Natural Park, institutional strengthening of cross-border biosphere reserve – 'Western

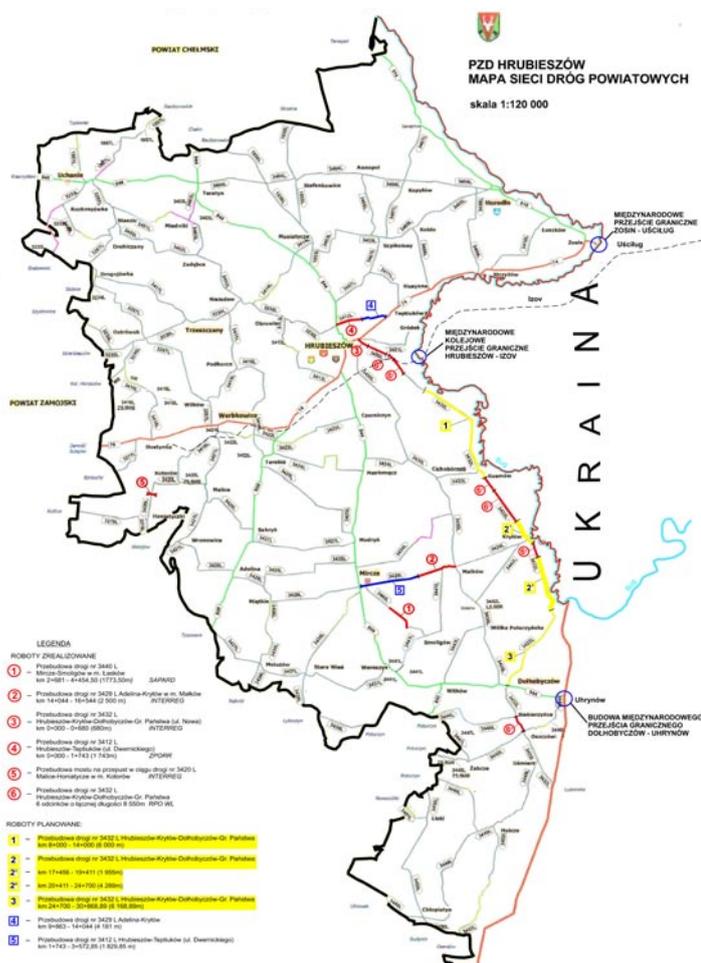
Polesie' and the improvement of ecological situation in the Bug River valley. It is encouraging that many projects already fit in these priorities. Another example of the current programme is 'Protecting the Ecosystems of the Bug River Valley in the Border Areas of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine', for which Hanna municipality is responsible. It is also important to further promote the development of mutual notification of emergency services in the border area between Poland and Belarus, among others, through the creation of the crisis management centres. The list also includes such projects as strengthening the development of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation for the preservation of cultural heritage protection, creation of an interactive map of hiking trails as well as the development and implementation of the twinning project named 'Zamość - Zhovkva – the Renaissance town with new challenges and opportunities.'

They are very interesting examples. What investment does the Strategy opt for with respect to communication and border infrastructure?

The list, among others, includes the construction of the second bridge over the Bug River at the 'Ustilug – Zosin' international road border crossing, the construction of 'Kryłów – Krecziw', 'Gródek- Ambukow', 'Zbereże – Adamczuki' new international road border crossings at the Polish – Ukrainian state border, the restoration of a direct rail link between Chełm and Kovel, the creation of Lviv - Lublin - Zamość - Warsaw high-speed rail link, the construction of a bridge over the Bug border river at the Terespol - Brest border crossing, or the expansion of Chełm - Hrubieszów - Witków - Dołhobyczów – state border voivodeship road No. 844, with a view to opening a new border crossing in Dołhobyczów.

The waiting time at the border or the average travel time between Lublin and oblast capital cities is of great importance in the use of socio-economic potential of the analysed cross-border area.

No doubt, the average travel time to Brest, Lutsk, Lviv and Lublin from the selected European cities or the number of regular cross-border bus, rail and air connections is also important. The barrier for the proper handling of



Localization of the project "Improvement of accessibility and quality of the border road infrastructure Stage II - redevelopment of the 2nd section of the poviato road No. 3432L Hrubieszów - Kryłów - Dołhobyczów - the State Border and a repair of the road in Uhryniv" with the EC funding of 3 678 591,24 euro. The road planned to be redeveloped runs through Kryłów, where the new border crossing 'Kryłów - Krecziw' is planned (the island on the river Bug in Kryłów is also a scene for the European Days of Good Neighbourhood.

growing cross-border traffic is insufficient density of border crossings. Therefore, their low accessibility is a problem of great importance. The border crossings functioning in the East largely support the communication links of supra-regional or at least regional character. There are no sufficient numbers of small border crossings of local importance, focused on small border traffic services.

The previously mentioned investments are the expensive undertakings. What system of implementation has been adopted for the strategy?

The system of implementation of the 'Strategy for Cross-border Cooperation of the Lubelskie Voivodeship, Volyn Oblast, Lviv Oblast and the Brest Oblast for 2014-2020' should be based on a model of multi-level governance. The system of entities involved in its implementation includes four main sectors: public (government administration, self-governments), private (business entities), social (NGOs) as well as research and development sector (higher education institutions, research institutions). The sources of financing of the Strategy reflect this system. They include all available funds, which may be involved in the implementation of development activities, i.e.: national public funds, foreign public funds, including funds from the EU budget under the new European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Norwegian Financial Mechanism funds, the EEA Financial Mechanism funds, the Swiss-Polish Cooperation Programme (Swiss Contribution) funds and others, including private funds, co-financing projects under the public-private partnership. The Strategy will be sort of an integrator of various stakeholders, who see opportunities for the entire region in the cross-border cooperation.

Thank you for the interview.