CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME
POLAND-BELARUS-UKRAINE 2007-2013

Thematic handbook no. 7

SUPPORT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION
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8. SUMMARY
Social and cultural integration are very current and important issues that should be considered both at national, regional and local levels and from different perspectives in the area of the European Union. In the research on civil society and relationship of civil societies in the EU, social integration is treated as a special perspective value, without which it would be difficult to talk about the success of the European, political, economic and social project.

Social integration, as one of the fundamental concepts of functionalism, means “the relationship between parts of the system, whereby they operate so that, on the one hand, they could prevent the disintegration of the system and maintain its stability together, and on the other co-occur while maintaining its functioning as a whole”.

As G. Firlit-Fesnak notes, “apart from sociological perspective, in many social sciences the term is often used more loosely, as a synonym for social consensus, obtained from the relationship between different social actors, based on clear rules (conditions) allowing the involvement of various social groups in larger social communities”.

Generally speaking, it can be said that social integration is a process that has been defined in terms of sociology and other social sciences. It is the involvement of various, unspecified in terms of classification, social groups into larger social communities. Social integration allows the representatives of these groups, which typically include representatives of national minorities, refugees and emigrants, to gain access to certain rights or services that were previously impossible for them to get. This is done through the inclusion of minorities in a specific society. Social integration is a difficult and complicated process, because it requires functioning in harmony of more than one social group, which are assumed to be divided by cultural, social and economic differences. In addition, this process also requires the acceptance of some more specific conditions by both parties to the agreement, which also poses sometimes unimaginable difficulties. Acceptance in the process of social integration may require rejection by one of the parties (or both, depending on level of requirements) of certain elements related to their own sense of belonging in terms of culture or religion in order to integrate. Sometimes the situation causes conflict in a minority group, as well as in the receiving group, as the two sides need to come to some mutual concessions. Cultural identity of individuals, their defined social roles, values, norms of behaviour and patterns of conduct, cultural tradition, and the like sometimes suffer because of that. There are situations in which people stopped using their mother tongue in the group. The process of social integration is monitored top-down by the government and international organisations – for example, in the United Nations there is a special unit, the task of which is to monitor and provide support to participants of such process. Such interest is shown within the Office of Social Integration in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.

Social integration means community actions, which are based on the principles of conducting a dialogue, mutual cooperation of individuals treated as equivalent. Objective has been

2. Integracja społeczna jako wyzwanie dla polityki społecznej i pracy socjalnej, G. Firlit-Fesnak (red.), Warszawa 2012, p. 11.
The main objective of the project IPBU.03.DO.06-470/11 “Investment in culture. Comprehensive action for cultural education” is strengthening the potential and the role of community centres in fostering cultural cooperation.

defined as an attempt of some communities to create a democratic society, in which governance will be in accordance with applicable law, and in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation, without harassing each other because of the existing cultural and religious differences. In this integrated society human rights and responsibilities are treated as paramount. It is essential to try to achieve this state of affairs and to fight against the emerging symptoms of social exclusion phenomenon. Integration should be accounted for as transformation of social groups operating loosely into one larger community.

G. Firlit-Fesnak writes: “Social integration gives representatives of these groups – in any way excluded from the wider community or the whole system – a chance to gain access to specific rights, goods, benefits or services that were previously out of their reach. Social integration is a difficult process because it requires the cooperation and coexistence in general accord of culturally, socially and economically diverse social groups. Moreover, it often requires the adoption of difficult to accept by both parties – integrated group and receiving group – conditions which in some dimension deplete their existing status quo.”

Critics of European integration primarily indicated the threat in terms of culture and morality. A kind of fear of the Union expressed in emphasizing moral relativism, secularization, rejection of the Christian model of marriage and family, depreciation of patriotism and civic values. Threat to the nation’s cultural identity has become one of the slogans of the Eurosceptics, based on the opposition of the Polish culture to an unspecified European culture.

3. Integracja społeczna jako wyzwanie dla polityki społecznej i pracy socjalnej, op. cit., p. 11-12.
Speaking of Europe, we mean not only a specific geographic area, but most of all culture shaped over the centuries\(^5\). The concept of culture has evolved from ancient times through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment to modern times and is now used in various meanings. This term has its roots in ancient religious practices, aimed at giving honour to the gods (cultus), pleading for their favour or relieving anger\(^6\). Currently there are a lot of definitions of culture. Culture is “the whole output of humanity, socially accumulated and preserved in the course of its history, constantly enriched with new creative works and the work of all societies; also the level of development of societies, groups and individuals in a given historical period, conditioned by the degree of mastering the forces of nature, achieved level of knowledge and artistic creativity and forms of social intercourse”\(^7\).

\(^{6}\) Cf. ibid., p. 27.
\(^{7}\) M. Bogucka, Dzieje kultury polskiej do 1918 roku, Ossolineum, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1991, p. 5.

Posters and folders promoting activities of the project IPBU.03.01.00-60-753/11 „The Improvement of work with Teenagers of Deviant Behaviour“.
In other terms, culture is defined as a system of signs, which enable communication between people; this communication is significant for the culture of both individuals and social groups. It is worth to point out a few of the characteristics of culture – it is a social phenomenon, by its nature it connects people and is dynamic. Culture always defines itself, exists and develops in association with the person and for the person. Human creates culture and he/she is its recipient – so we cannot talk about culture in isolation from the human; even talking about its purely material creations (sculpture, painting, literary work, building, etc.), we mean not only the work itself but its creator and recipient, critic and enthusiast. This among other things represents a strictly personalistic nature of culture. The subject of social life can be not only an individual, but also the community, so it is reasonable to speak also of cultural identity in collective dimension. Leszek Kolakowski identifies five elements making up this identity. The first is the “national spirit”, which allows you to understand and accept historical experience; the second is the “historical memory”, which is the awareness of living in history, its continuation and prolonging in one’s own life. Another element is the anticipation, which is orientation toward the future, thinking and acting in terms of “tomorrow”. The fourth factor is the territory, and the last one awareness of a beginning defined in time, both in historical and legendary dimension (e.g. Polish Sarmatism).

Culture is, therefore, a binder which allows to discover and preserve one’s own identity and ties between individual members of the nation. In this context, one can speak of the existence of European culture as supporting and conditioning element of the process of unification. In addition to the culture of different countries, nations or ethnic groups, beyond divisions and borders, there is a culture, which can be described as European. The history of Europe, repeatedly changing boundaries of powers and countries favoured the creation and communication of various nations and ethnic groups, creating the basis for the formation of this universal culture.

Regional development in terms of administration is understood primarily as part of the national development planning system, the regions of which are component parts. An integral feature of this approach to the problem is the reduction of development activities to the area encircled by formal administrative boundaries. Planning cross-border strategy must be consistent with the priorities of regional policy of countries, inter alia, so that participants and beneficiaries of the planning process have a chance to access the funds which are possible to obtain supporting all aspects of the development of regions, with national funds of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine ahead and community support instruments of regional development and cross-border cooperation.

However, in the outlined administrative boundaries there are spatial configurations, the characteristics of which allows the planning of their own development in directions that are consistent with more detailed needs of inhabitants. This is especially important in the use of specific conditions and resources of a given area. They define directions of development and opportunities to use them in a sustainable way in the long, foreseeable time under the condition of agreement and then synchronization of joint activities.

Show and sports hall constructed in Przebród (Poland) in the scope of the project IPBU.03.01.00-20-371/11 “Cooperation – Activity – Future”.

It should be noted that Polish eastern border is a historically new phenomenon. In its present course it formed mainly in 1945, and on 2 small sections (which are currently fragments of Polish-Ukrainian border) in the year 1951. It is therefore a classic subsequent border, carried out at the same time on a number of fragments without due regard to the local, or even regional functional and spatial relationships. At the same time, until 1991, i.e. until the end of existence of the former Soviet Union it was closed and hostile towards contacts, characterized by a very “low permeability”. As a result, a vast majority of the current communication infrastructure running through the border and previously operated by this infrastructure economic ties gradually “expired” and ceased to exist within a few decades. In many cases, cutting economic ties also resulted from unfavourable attitudes of the authorities of the former USSR and then Russia - as is the case with blocking of shipping.

Polish eastern border – new historic phenomenon
to the port of Elbląg through Pilawa Strait lying on the territory of Russia. This state resulted in a systematic socio-economic peripherisation of these areas – very clearly noticeable even now. In the post-war period eastern border was much more hermetic than other Polish borders, and the possibilities of direct cooperation and contact between citizens and institutions were strictly limited and controlled by the authorities. This border for decades has been tightly guarded, and thus it was a real barrier separating communities close to each other culturally, residing in neighbouring countries. Any contacts were institutionalized, licensed and carefully controlled. As a result, societies which were close to each on both sides of the border, became impoverished not only economically, and border regions have undergone gradual and deep peripherisation. In this way, civilizational backwardness of the area deepened, which was supported by existing small endogenous possibilities of accumulation of capital. Attractiveness of the regions and the ability to attract and invest in the development of the internal and external capital was systematically declining. Political changes that have taken place in Poland in the late nineties, and then in other Central European countries, including the creation of independent states after the break of the former Soviet Union, have created relatively good conditions for free contacts and movement of people across borders, to establish direct cooperation between border area provinces, entities, companies, enterprises, institutions, economic and social organisations. Despite the real barrier, which is the border, better conditions for joint problem solving, overcoming the peripherality, using the opportunities arising from the neighbourhood, using available resources and potentials were created, and a much better perspectives of functioning of the Polish border regions such as the Subcarpathian, Lubelskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie in the enlarged with a new “ten” European Union. The new border of the European Union (after its enlargement in 2004) with Eastern European countries – Russia, Belarus and Ukraine – is approx. 3000 km (without 1313-kilometer section of the Finnish-Russian border). Among countries that joined the EU in May 2004 Poland has the longest border with the non-Union countries of 1185 km, of which: 232 km with Kaliningrad Oblast (Russian Federation), 418 km with Belarus, 535 km with Ukraine.

Individual sections of the border with those countries are of vital importance for the European Union for: safety, economic and social reasons. In contrast to the southern and sea border of the Union, eastern land border poses a number of different challenges. The most important of these relate to the problem of so-called “soft security” (connected with smuggling, illegal migration, organised crime, etc.). In addition, almost all of the major transport corridors, communication and trade routes connecting Europe with an area of Eurasia run across this border. This border divides areas inhabited by people close to themselves cul-

Cooperation between border regions, which most often is referred to as cross-border, in Europe has a rich heritage and long history. Wide range of problems and opportunities on both sides of the borders of European countries make cross-border cooperation an indispensable factor stimulating the development. It is carried out at various levels and in various forms, but mostly on the basis of local and regional natural resources and intellectual potential.
turally and historically, connected by social, as well as ethnic relationships. For this reason, it plays a much more important role in a social dimension than the southern border of the Union. Belarusian minority lives in the Polish border regions (mainly in the area of Białystok, Hajnówka, Bielsko Podlaska, and Biała Podlaska). Poles live in the western part of Belarus (Grodno and Brest Oblasts) and western part of Ukraine (Lviv and Volyn Oblasts). A characteristic feature of the areas on both sides of new eastern border of the EU is their peripherality. The vast majority of these are agricultural areas, with much worse economic indicators than the rest of the country. In a similar extent this applies to regions on both sides of the border. They are also under-funded regions, with a much higher than the national average level of unemployment, without large industrial centres (apart from Kaliningrad, Grodno, Brest, Olsztyn, Białystok, Lublin, Lutsk and Lviv). On the other hand, however, peripherality is largely conducive to development of cross-border contacts, joint building of a new type of economic potentials and relations in the following areas: economic development.
and support of cross-border contacts, cultural and social relationships, the transfer of know-how, cultural exchange, exchange of experience among local governments.

Due to its immediate vicinity of the EU with three countries of Eastern Europe, with very high economic and social potential and geopolitically key located, there is a need to strengthen and build programmes supporting cross-border and interregional cooperation. Another stage of enlargement of the European Union completed in 2004 sparked the need for a new political concept for the countries neighbouring with the enlarged Union, which include, inter alia, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

Relationships of border regions created in the early fifties had a pioneering nature, mainly operating on the borderland of Norway-Sweden-Finland, Netherlands-Germany and Germany-France. Associations operating in specific areas of social and economic life, which were created back then, were one of the first forms of building structures of cross-border cooperation. There are many factors of development of cross-border cooperation in Europe, inter alia:

- historical – meaning that the shape of today’s Europe is a result of common cultural heritage which is often the base of local communities for cross-border cooperation
- political – where cross-border cooperation is a very important stabilizing and creating the development and neighbourly cooperation factor, and for the Member States of the European Union is an important factor in the process of European integration,
- economic – promoting economic activation of border regions and equal development opportunities,
- social – where the aim is to establish social contacts, breaking barriers and mutual prejudices, better understanding, building bridges between the inhabitants of neighbouring regions.10

The development of cross-border regions in all European countries is an important part of the national strategies and European development policy. Universal definition of cross-border region has not yet been adopted, hence the elaborations, literature and practice use a variety of its determinations, including, inter alia, as a potential region, which can be treated as a whole in terms of geography, history, ecology, ethnicity, economic opportunities, etc., but divided with a border into areas subject to government, and in historical perspective – as a territorial unit called region, dating back to the Roman Empire. It is derived from the Latin word rex (king) and regio (kingdom, country). This indicates that the concept was understood as territory subordinate to the monarch or managed in a democratic system. The original meaning of the region was related to legal and administrative unit. Prior knowledge of nature of the region helped to establish its universal structure. It can be considered that it consists of three components: central site, peripheral area and borders. The region does not exist on its own; by borderland areas (frontiers) it is related to the adjacent units, creating an organised spatial system. Borders of the region often cannot be clearly determined, and in sociological terms – are synonymous with the regional community, that is, human population, which is one of the types of territorial community. The essence of such an approach is a developed sense of separateness and ties based on

Cross-border region is an area divided by political borders and consisting of parts of the geographical spaces of a few countries, which in some respect constitutes a whole.

In the study of the expertise below, as a basis I assumed the scrutiny, comparison, analysis and inference according to the criterion of administrative division at the level of provinces on the Polish side and Oblasts on the side of Belarus and Ukraine. Development of international cooperation of Polish regions over the last fifteen years was very dynamic, regardless of whether the measure is the number of contacts, programs or joint projects. Accelerated processes of institutionalization of international cooperation of the regions and the strengthening of concern for their own interests in the European institutions can be observed. According to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, cross-border cooperation is any joint action designed for strengthening and further development of neighborly relations between communities and authorities of two or more Contracting Parties, as well as the conclusion of agreements and adoption of arrangements necessary to achieve the goals. The European Charter of Border and Cross-border Regions says that borders are “scars of history”. Cross-border cooperation among others has to help leveling of the adverse effects

emotional approach to the inhabited territory\textsuperscript{14}, and the cross-border region is a region covering a part of geographical space (natural, socio-economic, cultural), which is directly adjacent to the state border and includes areas of neighbouring countries. An important issue is to determine the width of the territory located on both sides of the border\textsuperscript{15}, and cross-border region is defined as an area distinguished on the basis of socio-cultural and economic criteria located on both sides of the border. The basis for its separation may be determined by features of geographical, economic, cultural and ethnic nature, having a common character, i.e. similar to adjacent areas across the border. On a given area the occurrence of features which determine its geographical, historical or cultural-linguistic homogeneity, and also complementarity or economic compactness, may prove an important factor for the development of cross-border cooperation, understood as a number of different relationships between communities living in it, and in the future – the factor of institutionalization and structuring this cooperation. On the other hand, the development of cross-border cooperation\textsuperscript{16}: as an area located in direct contact with the border of at least two countries. To fixed criteria of distinguishing regions of this type are, inter alia: level of homogeneity of the region (economic, cultural community, regional awareness, etc.), low formalisation of the state border, level of development and status of the region, location of the region, existence of cross-border cooperation and degree of its institutionalization\textsuperscript{17}. Region is also a compact and a separate area with specific internal relations: social, economic, institutional and cultural. Its shape, as well as the size and scope of problems, which are a subject of common interest, depend entirely on the will of the neighbouring states and regional communities\textsuperscript{18}. There is also cross-border region which is based on administrative division of units directly adjacent to each other.

15. Z. Ziolo, Czynniki i bariery rozwoju obszarów transgranicznych, [w:] Polska i jej współdziałanie transgraniczne z sąsiadami, PAN IGiPZ, Warszawa 1995.
17. B. Kawałko, Stymulowanie rozwoju w regionie transgranicznym, “Gospodarka Narodowa” no. 6, 1997.
of location of borderland terrains on the national outskirts of countries. Ratings and opinions about the nature of the cross-border region are very diverse among theorists and between representatives of practical activities relating to cross-border integration. However, you can generally recognize that cross-border region is an area divided by political borders and consisting of parts of the geographical spaces of a few countries, which in some respect constitutes a whole. Criteria for the identification and delimitation of the cross-border region are primarily economic, but reasons of a different nature are also important – in particular geographic, historic, ethnic, cultural, political and administrative. Political factor creating and determining the spatial extent of cross-border region is its importance for the processes of European integration.

Constitution of proper principles and legal norms in the form of international contracts and agreements for cross-border cooperation is a condition of targeted and structured actions in this area. It is difficult to examine internal relations of the neighbouring areas when the state border is tightly closed. The border usually weakens the ties and cooperation between different parts of the cross-border regions belonging to different countries, subject to their own legal and political systems. In the studied area various forms of cooperation have developed. Formally, there are two system forms of cross-border cooperation, i.e. government and self-government cooperation. The first is related to the functioning of local government administration, the second mainly to the activities of local government units. The existence of these systems is conditioned by references of partners. Specific formula is combining of those two elements at regional level. This is a very important factor of success of cross-border activities. On the border with Belarus and Ukraine the following institutionalized forms of cooperation are the most common:

Euroregions – they include the area of voluntary border cooperation in economic, social, cultural, tourism, environmental protection matters, etc. between two or more countries and their local authorities. Euroregion is a geographically limited area consisting of parts of territories of countries that have agreed to coordinate their activities in various fields, are not supranational structures, are not organisations separate from the national jurisdiction, administration or control, cannot be in conflict with the internal legislation and the system of international agreements.

Euroregions operate on the Polish eastern border for a few, and in some cases even more than ten years. Those are generally government associations located in 2 (or more) countries, the purpose of which is to encourage, and even stimulate cross-border cooperation, and facilitate the elimination of effects of political border as a barrier for economic and social contacts. On the Polish border with Belarus and Ukraine so far, among others, the following euroregions have been created:

19. The Charter was passed on 20 November 1981, and finally adopted on 1 December 1995 in Szczecin.
21. I do not take here into account Euroregions, which belong to countries other than Belarus and Ukraine.
● Carpathian Euroregion – founded on 14th February 1992, including borderland areas of Poland and Ukraine, and also Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, with a total area of 61.2 thousand square kilometres,
● “Bug” Euroregion – created on 9th September 1995, including borderland regions of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, with an area of 80.9 thousand square kilometres,
● “Białowieża Forest” Euroregion – created on 25th May 2002, extending over the border areas of Poland and Belarus, occupying a total area of 8.0 thousand square kilometres.

Euroregions are assumed to fulfil one of the main tools for cross-border integration. Their set by international agreements operating range gives you the ability to take up and implement a number of actions key for cross-border actions (inter alia, economic development, environmental protection, public infrastructure, education, spatial planning, etc.). Unfortunately – due to its widespread financial weakness (and hence – organisational) they were generally not in a visible scale able to effectively contribute towards stimulating economic or social contacts. Activities of the majority of such structures is not based on payments made by their constituent self-governments, but on external supply – coming e.g. from the European Union, and sometimes even from the United States. What’s more – the hope of obtaining external support was often the main motive for the accession of many self-governments to Euroregions. As demonstrated by the present practice, especially fulfilling information and promotional function carried out by Euroregions which provided a range of information needed, e.g. to economic operators, as well as contributed to the growth of mutual trust between the citizens of the Polish border areas and neighbouring areas of Belarus and Ukraine should not be underestimated. The necessity to look for partners on
the other side of the border itself in order to benefit from EU funds contributed to the gain by the Euroregions of a relatively good and strong institutional position, and at the same time experience. They could successfully and effectively, in addition to local government units, develop and promote cross-border cooperation, particularly in the new programming period 2007-2013. This is evidenced by implemented projects within the framework of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland–Belarus–Ukraine 2007–2013.

Difficulties connected with the crossing of border are not the only legal and formal problems hindering the use of border as a stimulating, and not complicating factor of local and regional development. In Belarus and Ukraine (although also in Poland) companies wishing to operate on both sides of the border are often exposed to the reluctance or incomprehensible difficulties on the administrative part, especially in Belarus and Ukraine. An important problem, which influences negatively the possibilities and scope of cooperation between public entities are different management systems and illegibility of competences of public and business administration. In general terms, administrative structures of Belarus and Ukraine, are very similar in their solutions, they are also close to the Polish administrative division. Everywhere there is in fact a local level (city/district/village), sub-regional (poviat or region) and regional (province or oblast). In reality, however, there are significant differences both at the level of real self-government, as well as the real powers of local public administration – to the disadvantage of the eastern neighbours of Poland. Those differences are particularly evident at the level of very limited powers of contacts and conduct of cross-border cooperation aimed at the development of the border regions. Hence, a lot of the key issues for this cooperation must be agreed and resolved at the central level. This happens also in Poland, despite the fact that the scope of competences of districts and provinces in this area is relatively high. Dependence of the local government units of government administration is additionally exacerbated by important financial weakness of most of these entities. Even relatively strong and having their own tax base districts usually do not have sufficient resources to effectively support their economic development. In an even worse situation in this respect are the provincial self-governments, and especially poviat, performing mainly a strictly administrative role.

22. See B. Kawalko, Wybrane problemy polsko-ukraińskiej współpracy trans granicznej, op. cit., p. 38
Characteristics of the regular projects

Implemented projects are part of the activities that level obstacles on the path to Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian cooperation. Beneficiaries of the projects are both entities from the sector of non-governmental organisations, as well as local governments. There are also those involved in education and higher education.

There are without a doubt many concepts of determining the borderland area. You can make the delimitation e.g. on the basis of morphological criterion referring primarily to the geographical features (in particular sculpture of surface area) or functional criterion understood as interdependent production, consumption, and related to exchange and administration actions. An extension of this issue may be cultural borderland, as more useful for ethnography, sociology and cultural anthropology of course. Social and cultural reality of the borderland is characterized by Grzegorz Babiński in several dimensions: geographic, historical, political, ethnic, social and cultural. The term “borderland”, although non-acute by nature, is quite unambiguously associated with a variety of social integrations with non-acute boundary between the two social entities, usually with the nations and national cultures.

For a complete characteristic of the phenomena occurring in the socio-economic area, it is necessary to show the activity of communities living in the borderland. For the formation

23. Regular projects are understood as distinct from umbrella projects.
24. Publication of B. Surmacz deserves some attention. The author has applied test method, which makes the familiar to scientific literature problem of Polish-Ukrainian relations, their complexity, projection of their content, possible political “alliances” and configuration in an international environment in the short and long term, an intriguing research topic. See B. Surmacz, Współczesne stosunki polsko-ukraińskie. Polityczna analiza traktatu o dobrym sąsiedztwie, Lublin 2002.
Level of social and cultural integration of the area covered by the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007-2013 requires more resources and active activities of different entities. The situation in this respect has gradually improved through cross-border cooperation. Sustainable social and economic development of the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian border area requires further deepening and widening of cross-border cooperation in order to increase the degree of integration. The aim of this priority is to support social and cultural activities, which will lead to better conditions for the development of Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian border region.

In the analysis, the author presents the collected different opinions on the topics of the project, taking into account the point of view of the Polish, Ukrainian and/or Belarusian side (depending on partnership in projects). Most of the respondents notice that the performance of a task itself is carried out without major disruption and on time. Very competent and professional assistance of project implementation team in the Ministry of Infrastructure and Development (formerly the Ministry of Regional Development) is worth mentioning. Open attitude allows beneficiaries to implement specific tasks of the project, as well as parallel to answer any documentation requirements of the undertaken work. Beneficiaries are very happy that thanks to these measures they may pursue such a wide range of works. Cooperation with the Ukrainian/Belarusian partner also results in saving European cultural goods and building new, positive relations between nations.

Partners of the projects do not hide that the situation in Eastern Ukraine creates new conditions for cooperation with Ukraine. So the anxiety that inevitably moves into the relationship related to the implementation of the project, is a new, completely unexpected companion. Partners do not hide satisfaction with the implementation of the projects. They say that the projects are carried out according to plan. They manage to cooperate well with the partners from Ukraine or Belarus.

Cooperation between partners of the projects is shaped in the following areas and includes inter alia:

- supporting of sustainable economic and social development of border areas on both sides of the border in all its aspects,
- provision of community assistance for the development of regions to promote cross-border cooperation between Member States and partner countries implemented in regions adjacent to their shared part of the external border of the community,
- promoting cooperation within the scope of higher education and mobility of lecturers, scientific and research workers and students,
- development of multicultural dialogue, promoting cooperation within the scope of protection of historical and cultural heritage and promoting its development potential including through tourism,
- supporting of cross-border cooperation through local initiatives, to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development in border regions and integrated territorial development on external borders of the community,
- fight against “soft” risks associated with the functioning of the border (smuggling, migration, organised crime, etc.).
- security of the border and development of interpersonal contacts clearly indicates the importance and significance of this border for the EU and active role that the EU intends to fulfil in this regard.

Classes for children organised in one of 48 pre-schools opened in eight districts in Ukraine in the scope of the project IPBU.03.01.00-76-257/10 “Development of Alternative Pre-school Education System in Rural Communities”.
REGULAR PROJECTS

Impact of the regular projects on a regional scale

How will the implemented or planned for implementation projects under Priority 3. Networking and local community initiatives (Measure 3.1. Regional and local cross-border cooperation opportunities) affect social and cultural integration of the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian borderland?

Implemented projects will contribute to strengthening cross-border cooperation at the local level. Built and expanded or renovated infrastructure will increase educational, sports, cultural offer, and thus increase its availability to inhabitants of partner places of this region and tourists visiting them. Especially given the fact that places away from large urban centres participate in the projects, which clearly defines their access to wider culture and recreation. This will greatly improve the existing insufficient participation of inhabitants in cultural phenomena and will prevent the deepening of civilization stratification of society in the border areas and strengthen the insufficient tourism competitiveness of regions covered by the project activity.
This is very important because the Programme area is characterized by a decrease in the number of inhabitants in the recent years, although in four Polish sub-regions (rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski, krośnieńsko-przemyski, ostrołęcko-siedlecki and łomżyński) there is a positive population rate. Depopulation is caused by the negative migration balance across the border area and additionally negative population growth in most terrains covered by the Programme.

While the modernization of educational infrastructure for handicapped people, including levelling of architectural barriers, e.g. in culture institutions in order to facilitate better access for users with disabilities will affect their social integration. Activities that contribute to improving the quality and availability of rehabilitation and educational services targeted at people with intellectual disabilities are also very important.

In accordance with the assumptions of the Programme, implemented projects will largely improve cross-border cooperation capacity to cooperate at the local and regional level. Equipment of entities, actors of cross-border cooperation with the necessary infrastructure and instruments of action strengthens the existing potential of cooperation at the level of local government, institutions, and non-governmental organisations. Hence it is important to equip these activities with a very important factor, which is the institutional potential of cooperation.

Implementation of the projects with the cooperation of partners from borderland areas influences the development of this potential. It is possible through creation of institutionalized forms of cross-border cooperation and initiatives of searching or matching of partners. Within this scope you have to take into account the exchange of information and network forms of cooperation, including the use of Internet even more.

28. The Programme includes mainly support regions and adjoining regions, and consists of the following administrative units in Poland sub-regions: krośnieńsko-przemyski (in Subcarpathian province), białostocko-suwalski (in Podlaskie province), białskopodlaski and chelmisko-zamojski (in Lubelskie province), ostrołęcko-siedlecki subregion (in Mazowieckie province) as well as adjoining regions: rzeszowsko-tarnobrzeski subregion (Subcarpathian province), tomaszyński (in Podlaskie province) and Lubelski (Lubelskie province); in Belarus: Grodno oblast, Brest oblast, seven western districts of the Minsk oblast Madal, Vileika, Molodechno, Volozhin, Stolbtsy, Niesvizh, Kletsk, as well as adjacent regions: Minsk (city) and the eastern part of the Minsk Oblast (15 districts) and Gomel Oblast; in Ukraine: Lvivska, Volynska, Zakarpatska Oblasts and the adjoining regions: Rivneriska, Ternopilska and Ivano-Frankivska Oblasts.

29. Regional development is a process of positively targeted changes of all elements of a given spatial arrangement, i.e. potential and economic structure, natural environment, infrastructure equipment, standard of living of inhabitants, order and land management. It is important that entities participating in projects have the institutional capacity of cooperation from the local government or government.
Cooperation for culture (folklore, music, arts/crafts)
Cooperation for education and sport

Number of established pre-schools: 6
Trainings: 6
Built Stadiums: 42
Created Gymnasiums: 6
Bicycle race: Property
Football tournament: Property
Swimming competition: Property
Nordic Walking marathon: Property
Running: Property
Scientific research: Property
High-tech learning centre: Property
Laboratory equipment: Property
New educational products: Property
Safety trainings for kids: Property
Cooperation for non-exclusion of disabled people

Rehabilitation
Specialised equipment
Internet portal
Renovation/creation of specialised establishments
Guidebook for the disabled
Study visit, workshops for the disabled
Trainings
Created information centres
Workshops in art-therapy (pottery) organised within the project IPBU.03.01.00-18-450/11 „Joint cooperation network within culture and welfare on behalf of the development of the cities of Polish – Ukrainian borderland“.
While analysing implemented projects or ones in the phase of implementation within the scope of the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007-2013, under Priority 3. Networking and initiatives of local communities (Measure 3.1. Regional and local cross-border cooperation opportunities) actions that will affect a better social and cultural integration on the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian border should be introduced.

- It should be noted that in many projects main partners are entities from major centres such as inter alia: Lublin, Rzeszów, Chelm, Zamość, Przemyśl, Suwałki, Lviv, Lutsk, Iwano-Frankivsk, Uzhgorod, Brest, Kamieniec, Grodno. To a large extent the main axis of cooperation runs along the lines of those cities. This positively affects social and cultural integration of diverse backgrounds. I noticed that there are few projects in which on the Ukrainian side Lutsk community integrates with other communities of, e.g. Lviv or Iwano-Frankivsk. Therefore greater attention should be paid to social and cultural integration of Lutsk with other cities in Ukraine. Since there are no projects that would enhance the cooperation.

- A very positive element of projects is high activity of small border area villages and regions, such as for example: Hajnowski powiat – Brest Oblast, Stara Wieś town – Zólkiew city, Łosice district - Ivanovo region, Włodawski powiat – Szacki region, Werbkowice district – Alojzów town, Hrebenne-Mychlyn, Sędziszowski powiat – Stryjski powiat. This allows the integration of small local communities, development of their integration structures.

- Particular attention should be paid to an increased activity of the Belarusian local communities from border regions and non-governmental organisations in order to strengthen civil society in these areas.

- Lack of a good understanding of Belarusian partners of the mechanisms governing the programme and rules for implementation and settlement of projects can be observed. This requires some joint work.

- Social and cultural integration in the border regions of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine is evidenced by a high number and structure of partnerships that affect the integration of various communities or social organizations. It can be said that social and cultural integration at the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian borderland is going well, but particular attention should be paid to the achieved results.
Visualisation of renovated building for the needs of the sterilization and veterinary centre in Lviv to be realised within the project IPBU.03.01.00-76-230/10 “SOS – Safe Coexistence of People and Homeless Animals in Polish-Ukrainian Border Territories: Lviv, Lublin, Lutsk, Ivano-Frankivsk”.

PHOTOGRAPH: LVIV CITY COUNCIL
The Corrective-Development Learning and Rehabilitation Center in Kamianiec (Belarus) was renovated and additionally equipped in the scope of the project IPBU.03.01.00-20-068/10 „Didactic Infrastructure modernization for Poland-Belarus cooperation in aid of the handicapped“.

Recommendations and comments for umbrella projects and micro-projects

Supporting the initiatives of local communities on the Polish – Ukrainian – Belarusian borderland are the main goals and assumptions guiding the umbrella projects and micro-projects. The study analyzed 6 umbrella projects, including 32 micro-projects. Due to their diverse forms, the micro-projects affect the selected target groups in the range as broad as possible. Youth and children as well as selected groups of local authors and artists, folk bands participate in joint classes or workshops, which enables mutual learning of culture and traditions, and then its further promotion in native country, inter alia, by taking inspiration from neighbouring regions. Public outdoor promotional events destined for recipients from both sides of the border are a great way to become familiar with the tradi-
tions (including culinary ones) and customs of the “neighbours” and mutual integration of all community groups including their youngest recipients. Permanent effects affecting the communities are, inter alia, numerous multilingual publications and brochures presenting a variety of borderland cultural resources designed for the recipients at home and abroad. An important element of the umbrella projects is that Internet platforms, such as e.g. Cross-border E-Centre for Cultural Cooperation Lublin – Lutsk are activated within the scope of the micro-projects.

While analyzing these umbrella projects and micro-projects, I would like to note with full conviction, that the actions undertaken as their part integrate borderland communities.

- There is no doubt that culture of the borderland is a bridge for integration of local communities. It is worth noting that the promotion of common cultural and historical heritage of Poland and Ukraine, which draws attention of the projects’ partners, is also important.

- Granting professional support to current and potential participants of the cross-border labour market in their professional development seems to be an important issue. Lack of work is the primary motive of social exclusion. People without permanent employment are subject to social alienation. The specificity of changes taking place on the borderland labour market, linked to the dynamics of socio-demographic changes, as well as continuing high level of unemployment and economic stratification of society pose new challenges to labour market institutions, welfare and social integration. This raises the need to search for new and more adequate system solutions, in line with the guidelines of the revised Lisbon Strategy, objectives and priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy and the provisions of national strategies for employment and social policy. Poverty and social exclusion in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus are very closely related to being left jobless and low level of economic activity, and unemployment is one of the main reasons for using social assistance. It is therefore important to provide complementary support in both areas and creating conditions for wider access to employment and obtaining income by persons functioning in communities at risk of social exclusion. Combining active labour market measures and tools for social integration is an effective way to combat social exclusion phenomenon and overcoming a situation of social and professional helplessness. Particularly important in this context is also the creation of conditions for building cooperation and coordination of actions undertaken by labour market institutions, including public employment services, and various types of entities acting to promote the welfare and social integration. Relevant in projects are modules concerning shaping of personal and social competences of young people, needs and educational opportunities and employability of students from borderland areas.

- Certainly, an important part of the project is to strengthen the Polish-Belarusian integration on the borderland of the Białowieża Forest Euroregion. Valuable initiatives are: building and maintaining cultural and historical awareness of inhabitants of Białowieża Forest, social, educational and cultural integration of local communities in Poland and Belarus.

Due to their diverse forms, the micro-projects affect the selected target groups in the range as broad as possible.
Willingness and commitment of target groups in the implementation of the planned tasks can be seen. Revival of cross-border contacts in the Białowieża Forest Euroregion is noticeable, which results in closer cooperation and contributes to the social and cultural integration.

● There is no doubt that the development and harmonization of cross-border cooperation among Ukrainian and Polish organizations and local governments has an impact on the social and cultural integration. Cross-border health tourism cooperation of the Polish-Ukrainian border will contribute to a better use of border health resorts.

● Projects contribute in a positive way to building and strengthening of cooperation on both sides of the border. Positive effects of implementation of projects are visible in activities carried out jointly within the scope of such projects as, e.g. mutual learning of Polish language in Ukraine and Ukrainian language in Poland, sharing common experiences, learning about cultural heritage by participating in organized regional cultural events. Positive effects are also reflected in the established working contacts between the groups participating in the study visits, thematic meetings, conferences, working groups.

● Ukrainian partners are particularly interested in how the Polish cities/districts raise funds to carry out their tasks, which investments are implemented by Polish cities, for example Rzeszów or Lublin. Ukrainian partners are interested in maintaining cooperation with Polish cities through the implementation of further/new undertakings, are willing to take up the subject of preparing new proposals of joint undertakings.

● Certainly, in all projects attention should be paid to the fact that the combination of the relatively poor economic situation and significant potential of the borderland areas of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus with the reality of blocked border shows how big losses are borne by entrepreneurs, and indirectly by the inhabitants of this region as a result of unused opportunities for development. More detailed studies of entrepreneurs and inhabitants would allow estimating these losses. It seems that any improvement of the situation on the border could give those regions an impulse for development, which in turn will facilitate the creation of new jobs and reducing undesirable phenomena at the border.

● Difficulties in implementation of the projects began to appear in connection with the unstable political situation in Ukraine (the war in the East of Ukraine), however, they affected and affect only the delays in project execution schedules and required introducing changes in the projects.

Specialised equipment purchased for Teaching and Diagnostic Center (of Lviv National Stefan Gzhytskyj University of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology) within the project IPBU.03.01.00-06-755/11 “Creating the Veterinary School of Advanced Diagnostic Techniques with specialized laboratories”.

PHOTOGRAPH: JTS
**SUMMARY**

This synthesis of the total effects of 58 ongoing projects (analysis includes 26 common projects and 32 micro-projects) within the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007-2013, under Priority 3. Networking and local community initiatives show that they meet the expectations for the effective impact of these projects on a regional scale. Application of the recommendations for similar projects implemented in the future will develop a model that guarantees an increase in the efficiency of implementation of objectives of the projects in the area of social and cultural integration.

Both Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian part forming the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian border, despite its potential, does not play a significant role in the economic system of both countries, but due to its location on the outer border of the European Union it is an important element in relations between the Community, Ukraine and Belarus. However, it should be kept in mind, that the Polish – Belarusian – Ukrainian borderland region is a strategically important area. If we use the positive aspects, it can act as a bridge between the EU, Ukraine and Belarus, with major benefits for Poland. An important element of strengthening ties between Poland, Ukraine and Belarus is interest of the entities in the described area, especially those that have international experience in cooperation, which will have a positive impact on the development of the borderland zone. In addition, it is necessary to minimize these problems, which
result from communication difficulties and peripheral position of the described area. Important objectives are investments, concerning the improvement of cross-border infrastructure, leading to spatial integration of an area and making it more accessible and attractive for inhabitants, and most importantly for investors and tourists. Infrastructure investments in the area of major transport routes or corridors are of particular importance.

Cultural cooperation between institutions from neighbouring countries is becoming more and more popular, so the objective of a part of the project activities and micro-projects will be creating the foundations for its future development. These actions include, inter alia, development of a common strategy for cross-border cooperation in the field of culture, trainings for representatives of local governments, increasing their competences in the field of cultural cooperation. They constitute an excellent base for the continuation and expansion of the scope of cross-border cooperation in the field of culture between institutions from the areas covered by the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007-2013.

Synthesis of 58 projects and micro-projects implemented under the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007-2013 presented in the study confirms intensively developing Polish - Belarusian - Ukrainian cooperation, especially at the level of non-governmental organizations and self-government entities. It is expressed in a number of completed and ongoing projects, unparalleled in the region. This cooperation is also becoming increasingly important for governmental cooperation. Both due to European funds, as well as Polish financial assistance, non-governmental organizations and self-government entities implement a number of projects the beneficiaries of which are many Ukrainian and

Belarusian non-governmental organisations, social and professional groups, as well as government institutions. These projects, in particular working visits, meetings, conferences and other forms of cooperation, are intended to provide experience in the field of European integration, simplify administrative system, strengthen the economy, etc. This cooperation is already at such a high level that the statement that from the point of view of intensity of actions in recent years, it surpassed even the dynamics of action at the governmental level will not be exaggerated. One can even risk saying that it was thanks to the efforts of the non-governmental and local-government sector in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus there is a strengthening of the Ukrainian and Belarusian government institutions, the level of services they provide is increasing, and Western standards are transposed into Ukraine and Belarus.\(^{32}\)

Social and cultural integration are evidenced by a high number and structure of partnerships and positive results of evaluation of partnerships. Results of the author’s survey, which show integration of professional businesses and groups, are also positive premises. Smaller projects, especially micro-projects, build the foundations for major initiatives.

It is worth to consider the creation of new and support the existing Polish-Belarusian-Ukrainian or only Polish-Ukrainian or Polish – Belarusian border cooperation networks of local and regional organizations in social, cultural, educational, economic and tourism fields. It would serve as a support of direct contacts between the inhabitants of the borderland areas and put foundation for the drafting of projects on a larger scale.

Projects’ data as of January 2015.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author only and should not be considered as representative of the European Union or the CBC Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013 official position.

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