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THE ASSEMBLY OF UKRAINIAN BORDER REGIONS AND EUROREGIONS:
STATE AND PROSPECTS
OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

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One of the important components of the cooperation of the Association of European Border Regions with the border regions of Ukraine is related to the support of the Ukrainian initiative to create the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions.

The origins of this initiative lie in two international events held in Kharkiv [1] and Odessa regions with the support of the Association of European Border Regions and the personal participation of the Secretary General of the AEBR, Martin Guillermo Ramirez, which, in our opinion, had a significant impact on the conclusion of the Declaration on the Establishment of the Assembly of Ukrainian Border

Regions and Euroregions by the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine in 2010.

Thus, on November 7, 2008, in Kharkiv, in the premises of the Kharkiv Regional State Administration, the International Forum “Slobozhanshchyna – “Euregio”: 5x50” was held, dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the Euroregion “Slobozhanshchyna” and the 50th anniversary of the Euroregion “Euregio”. The Forum was attended by Gerald Krebs, Secretary General at that time, and Bart Piet Josef van Winzen, a member of the board of the Euroregion “Euregio”.

On October 15-16, 2009, in Odesa, in the premises of the Odessa Regional State Administration, an International Conference on Cross-Border, Regional Cooperation and Development of Euroregions was held.

The purpose of the events was to organize cooperation within the framework of Euroregions as one of the most important institutions for the development of European integration, which demonstrates the best practices in managing the development of territories, optimal use of opportunities and resources to solve common problems and socio-economic development of border regions.

For Ukraine, which directly borders the countries of the European Union, the activation of the development of cross-border, regional cooperation and the study of the positive experience of the functioning of Euroregions is one of the important tools for managing the development of territories and a step on Ukraine's path to membership in the European Union.

The analysis of the initiative to create the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions and the reproduction of information on its development are based on the collected and stored information materials in the Information Center of the Association of European Border Regions, which was created on November 12, 2013 in Kharkiv, at the Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the participation and steps taken by the Association of European Border Regions to support the development of cooperation between Ukrainian border regions, implement the initiative to create the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions, analyze the current state and steps taken

to implement it in the conditions of the military state of Ukraine and Ukraine's European integration course.

An expert assessment of the provisions of the Declaration on the establishment of the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions indicates the following.

Firstly, the text of the Declaration was developed by representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction in Ukraine, has not lost its relevance and defines the timely goal of regional policy in promoting sustainable socio-economic and spatial development of border regions of Ukraine in an innovative and investment manner, strengthening the coordination of cross-border cooperation policies, promoting the exchange of experience and best practices in the implementation of cross-border projects, resolving urgent issues of cross-border cooperation development, taking into account the recommendations of European institutions and the current legislation of Ukraine.

Secondly, the Declaration was signed at the level of authorized representatives of:

Euroregion "Lower Danube", Carpathian Euroregion, Euroregion "Upper Prut", Euroregion "Donbas", Euroregion "Slobozhanshchyna", Euroregion "Yaroslavna", Euroregion "Dnipro",

Donetskiy, Transcarpathian, Sumskiy, Zhytomyrskiy, Khmelnytskyi, Chernivtskiy, Ternopilskiy and Volynskiy regional councils.

The text of the Declaration contains important provisions, in our opinion, from the point of view of actions to implement European standards of good governance and multilevel partnership in the development of territorial and cross-border cooperation of Ukrainian border regions and Euroregions on a bilateral and multilateral basis, the formation of relevant databases, the creation of detailed reports on the status and prospects, the organization of expert activities, and the holding of annual events.

An important new stage in the intensification of actions to hold the Assembly was the fixation of the coordination role of the Information Center of the Association of

European Border Regions at S. Kuznets KhNUE in establishing a multi-level partnership between Ukrainian border regions, Euroregions, representatives of the Committee on European Integration of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine, which was reflected in the recommendations of the parliamentary hearings held on June 8, 2016 in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine [2].

The next stage of preparation for the Assembly was targeted events with the participation of Johannes Moissio, Head of the AEBR Task Force on External Borders, namely: on June 21, 2017, a meeting was held at the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on European Integration and on January 18, 2018, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine.

The next stage of discussion of the Assembly was held at the meeting of the AEBR Task Force on External Borders as part of the annual events of the Association of European Border Regions in Dresden, Germany, Euroregion Elbe/Labe in October 2019, where representatives of the AEBR Information Center and the Center for the Development of Bessarabia presented the vision for the development of the Assembly, and the Odessa region, the city of Izmail, as a possible venue for the Assembly in 2020.

As part of the visit to Ukraine of Martin Guillermo Ramirez, Secretary General of the Association of European Border Regions, from January 13 to 17, 2020, meetings were held in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction of Ukraine, and the Odessa Regional Council in Izmail on the development of cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU and the holding of the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions in 2020 in the Odessa region[3].

The COVID-19 pandemic that has spread to all countries of the world has made it impossible to hold the Assembly in 2020 as a public international event in Ukraine, which already had proposals developed by the AEBR regarding the Assembly program, which proposed creating a permanent dialogue between Ukrainian border

regions and Euroregions in the field of developing territorial and cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, discussing the functioning of the Assembly of Ukrainian border regions and Euroregions, the features of the formation of the new EU budget and programming period 2021-2027 in the context of the EU Neighborhood and Eastern Partnership policies, the development of culture, renewable energy, green hydrogen, and the development of cross-border cooperation between the Odessa region and Ukrainian Bessarabia.

In the context of new challenges for Ukraine, in our opinion, the following actions are relevant for the spatial development of Ukrainian border regions and Euroregions: synchronization and harmonization of regional development policies of Ukraine and territorial cohesion of the European Union, establishment of interregional multilevel partnership in the field of development of territorial and cross-border cooperation, development of tools for adapting priorities from strategic planning of local and regional development of Ukrainian border regions and Euroregions to the modern practice of prioritizing the development of European border regions as living laboratories of European integration..

Reference:

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2. On holding parliamentary hearings on the topic: "Cross-border cooperation as a factor in Ukraine's European integration processes": Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of May 11, 2016, № 1347-VIII. – URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1347-VIII#Text>
3. Secretary General of the Association of European Border Regions Martin Guillermo Ramirez visited Ukraine. – URL: <https://hneu.edu.ua/news/generalnyj->

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The materials of the conference are published in the author's editorial office.