

## **Ukraine – Poland: strategic partnership**

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### **Introduction**

Scientists admit that the border can be considered a conflict that somehow affects the fate of people especially of those who are connected with it in the way of their place of living or area of activity. The border should be explored and regulated beforehand to avoid setting a wall between Europe and Ukraine. Ukraine is working to resolve this conflict by establishing partnerships with many countries. The most successful result of this cooperation is the evolution of bilateral relations from superficial level to the level of strategic partnership. The aim of this research was to determine the essence of a strategic partnership between Ukraine and Poland, the role and prospects of cross-border cooperation (CBC), search for raising the efficiency of scientific and educational cooperation, analysis of existing cross-border cooperation programmes and problems that were found. Cooperation between Ukraine and the EU is realised within the frames of European Neighbourhood Policy through the implementation of the Plan of Actions Ukraine – EU and Agreement on partnership and cooperation.

### **Importance of strategic partnership. Role and main aspects of cross- border cooperation**

Strategic partnership as an instrument of foreign policy is used by many countries. It happened so that Poland, one of the leading European countries is historically and geographically the closest country to Ukraine. Besides experts have identified – this western neighbour is the most effective partner in the system of bilateral relations with our country. The importance of strategic partnership „Ukraine – Poland” is not only in lobbying interests of Ukraine by Poland in the EU, but also in the common interests and solving important problems in the areas of science and education, ecology, energy, culture, etc.

Ukrainian scientists believe that in the second half of the 90s Ukrainian-Polish strategic partnership became an important stabilizing lever for Europe. Such relationship for Central and Eastern Europe according to their importance is compared with German-French relationship that once defined the post-war history of Europe in the west [Melnikova, Martynov 2001, p. 87, Hnydiuk 2010, p. 53].

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Table 1. Planned and actual costs involved in the „Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2004–2006” programme

Priority	Payment from			Payment of mutual financing			Total fund		
	Planned in euro	Mobilized capital in euro	Part of mobilized funds in %	Planned in euro	Mobilized capital in euro	Part of mobilized funds in %	Planned in euro	Mobilized capital in euro	Part of mobilized funds in %
Priority 1: strengthening of the competitiveness of border regions, modernization and development of cross-border infrastructure	21102,9	17097,5	81,02	7034,3	7662,6	108,93	28137,2	24760,23	88,0
Priority 2: development of human resources capital and cross-border cooperation	14068,6	2859,5	20,33	4689,5	967,8	20,64	18758,1	3827,36	20,4
Priority 3: technical assistance	2647,3	765,6	28,92	882,4	255,2	28,92	3529,7	1020,8	28,9
Program in total	37818,8	20722,6	54,79	12606,2	8885,7	70,49	50425,1	29608,38	58,7

Source: Prospects of the Neighbourhood Programme, (<http://>), Program sąsiedztwa INTERREG III A, 2005, p. 88

A powerful instrument for regional development in the system of bilateral relations is cross-border cooperation aimed at promoting economic and social development in the regions, solving common problems in different spheres of social and economic life, improving efficiency and security of borders and so on.

The main legal acts regulating the activities of cross-border cooperation are the Law of Ukraine „On Cross-Border Cooperation” № 1861-IV (of 24.06.2004), the State programme of cross-border cooperation for 2011–2015 (adopted by the Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 1088 on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010), the National Indicative Programme, Regional Programme of International and Cross-border cooperation, European integration and international technical assistance; European conventions, bilateral agreements between partner countries.

An effective mechanism for development of Ukrainian-Polish cross-border cooperation is the organizing of the international conferences, forums and meetings that provide opportunities for dialogue and exchange of positive experience in the functioning of local administration and transfer of experience by Polish regions in the use of funds allocated for their development by the European Union [Yankiv 2011, p. 222].

An important means for intensification of Ukrainian-Polish cross-border cooperation is the realization of „Neighbourhood Programme” Poland – Belarus – Ukraine INERREG IIIA / TACIS CBC” that has been operating since 2004, on which among all cross-border programmes of the European Union of 2007–2013 the greatest sum of money in amount 186,201,000 euro was allocated. However, despite the prospects of the „Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2004–2006” programme available funds that have been allocated for its financing were not entirely used (Table 1).

Priority 1– strengthening of the competitiveness of border regions, modernization and development of cross-border infrastructure (28,137.2 thousand euro and 88% respectively) were completely funded. Priority 2 is realized only on 20.4%, and priority 3 – on 28.9% [Prospects of the Neighbourhood Programme... (http); Raport końcowy... (http)]. According to the analysts there were a number of reasons that can explain such a result of the programme from which we can highlight the following:

- lack of potential beneficiaries awareness of the attracting financial resources possibility;
- declining a considerable amount of cross-border projects because of incorrectly filled applications for participation in the programme;
- little experience of the beneficiaries in the programmes of cross-border cooperation participation

Therefore, one can identify the main problems to be solved in the process of implementation the programme of cross-border cooperation “Poland – Belarus – Ukraine 2007–2013” as well as other cross-border programs in the future:

- insufficient number of experts for the evaluation of applications;
- poor quality of the information programme centre;
- ineffective system of conducting seminars and consultations with potential beneficiaries and lack of feedback from them.

In addition, there are other problems of the cross-border cooperation implementation in Ukraine:

- limited role and fulfilment of local authorities functions and public organisations in the institutional and legal providing of the cross-border cooperation system;
- low activity of the border regions because of insufficient knowledge and lack of the persons, interested in cooperation to develop and implement programmes involvement;
- non-agreement of the Ukrainian and Polish legal framework and differences in administrative and budgetary structure of the state;
- lack of proper border infrastructure;
- small amount of CBC scientific projects.

Although there are a number of problems and difficulties what arise out of the cross-border cooperation process between two countries. The potential of strategic partnership has not been revealed to a considerable extent.

### **Scientific and educational activities as a priority direction of the cross-border cooperation**

Cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and neighbouring countries is many-sided and covers many areas. Interest of European countries in Ukraine is caused primarily by doing business on its territory. Taking into consideration that foreign employers set very high demands to employees both in Ukraine and in their countries, there is a need for better training of highly qualified personnel that will be quite competent and opened to European traditions and work style. The main priorities and goals, aimed at developing science and education, are determined at the international level and fixed in international documents.

Higher education in Ukraine is not on the proper level to compete with European higher educational establishment. This is partly due to the fact that today all the possibilities of international cooperation are not completely used. Despite these tendencies, some positive developments have taken place. An important step towards Ukraine's accession to scientific-educational space of Europe was the involvement of many Ukrainian universities to the Bologna process, Great Charter of universities and modernisation of educational programs in accordance with international standards, including development and implementation quality management system in higher educational establishments in compliance with the requirements of State Standards of Technical Terms and Conditions BS ISO 9001–2008 and 2 IWA [International Workshop Agreement. Quality management systems – Guidelines for the application of ISO 9001:2000 in education].

After Poland's joining the EU in 2004 on the basis of the European Collegium of Polish and Ukrainian Universities there appeared a plan to create European Polish-Ukrainian university of full value in the conditions of financing of this project within the frames of the „Eastern Partnership” program, but due to the fact that the Governments of both countries failed to agree on the status and priorities of the new educational establishments, the project is put off to undetermined term.

Taking into account the above mentioned information, we can claim that scientific and educational partnership between establishments gain importance in cross-border

cooperation. Recognition of national universities diplomas in Europe is in prospect for Ukraine. Guaranteeing and expanding opportunities for students and teachers for studying or training abroad is always useful and thoroughly educating experience that requires considerable efforts, but are rewarded in the future and are properly evaluated at the labour market.

Lviv oblast' is a region for which cross-border cooperation is extremely important, because in one of four strategic objectives in the Strategy of Lviv region development for the period of 2007–2015 it is mentioned that “Lviv region is the gate of Ukraine to the European Union” [Regional Program on International and Cross-Border cooperation... 2011, p.1]. The most important reason to assert this is the fact that Lviv region has the longest state border with the European Union.

A striking example of the implementation of measures to provide the development of the cross-border cooperation according to the State Program for 2011–2015s in the field of education is the activity of core higher education of the IV level of accreditation – Lviv Institute of Banking, which is a structural branch of the University of Banking of the National Bank of Ukraine. In 2003, the educational activities of this institution were updated according to the Bologna Convention. The concept of multilevel and continuous education was implemented. International Relations of Lviv Institute of Banking with more than two dozen universities of such countries as Poland, Germany, Spain, Japan, Czech Republic, Latvia, Russia and Belarus have been established.

Within the CBC this higher educational establishment together with Polish universities organizes and conducts international seminars, conferences, student study exchanges, semester studying of students at Master's degree, exchange of scientific and pedagogical workers for retraining and implementation of best practices in teaching. Students of Lviv Institute of Banking can take practice and training in leading commercial banks in Poland.

Nowadays mutual discussions, signing and implementation of grant projects within the framework of the European Union Programme play an important role in the development of cross-border cooperation with the Polish universities. This allows us to expand the range of both countries educational institutions activities, to solve important problems of the banking sector and problems of region-wide scale with the possibility to be financed by the European Union. Under conditions of limited resources directed towards the development scientific and innovative potential of regions, this type of cross-border cooperation is essential.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Taking into consideration elements outlined in the circle of cross-border cooperation problems, it becomes more important to increase the number of educational programmes for border regions, to provide training for highly qualified personnel to work in this area, to activate initiatives that give us some enlightenment and promotion of cross-border cooperation as an important means of bilateral relations between Ukraine and Poland.

Moreover, taking into account the opinions of various scholars and practitioners, there should be main measures that will be aimed at developing cross-border cooperation. They are:

- promotion of the border infrastructure development by facilitating the process of crossing the border;
- increasing the role of local authorities in cross-border cooperation through the decentralization of power by using European principles of regional policy and by conducting budgetary and administrative reforms;
- improving the institutional and regulatory framework as at the regional, national and international levels according to European standards;
- establishment of working research groups and conducting international scientific seminars on improving mechanisms of using target financial assistance;
- propaganda and popularization of advantages and positive effects of cross-border cooperation among the border regions population;
- intensification of cross-border cooperation in cultural, educational, scientific and social sectors as priority areas;
- creation of a joint programme to attract European partners in reforming and improving the system of higher education (including work on mutual recognition of diplomas among neighbouring countries);
- creation in the border regions the information-analytical centre network (incl. with the purpose of developing cooperation in the educational and social field to create a university-based information and consulting centre, focused on deepening cooperation between Ukraine and Poland in teaching, educational and scientifically-research areas);
- training of qualified personnel in the areas of providing advice on the procedure for preparing and presenting project applications to participate in international cooperation programmes, fulfilment of the projects and reporting after their implementation;
- creation of transparent informational system and common database of previously completed projects of international cooperation programmes, funding opportunities and priorities for new programmes to increase awareness of local authorities, NGOs, academic institutions and other persons concerned.

In a global sense, introduction of these measures will increase efficiency of financial and advisory assistance of EU within the framework of implementation of projects, extending the territory of cross-border projects by bringing more areas for cooperation, development of investment and innovation infrastructure of the border regions, the growth of foreign investors confidence, international organizations and EU countries to Ukraine as a potential partner.

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## Ukraina – Polska strategia partnerstwa

### Streszczenie

Artykuł jest poświęcony roli partnerstwa strategicznego w aspekcie perspektyw współpracy transgranicznej pomiędzy Ukrainą a Polską. Partnerstwo postrzegane jest jako mocne narzędzie rozwoju regionalnego w systemie stosunków dwustronnych. Wykazano przykłady, które przyczyniły się do intensyfikacji transgranicznej współpracy polsko-ukraińskiej. Jako obszar priorytetowy zaprezentowano współpracę w zakresie edukacji i nauki pomiędzy instytucjami szkolnictwa wyższego. Na podstawie analizy bieżących problemów współpracy transgranicznej zaproponowano działania mające na celu poprawę współpracy. Słowa kluczowe: partnerstwo strategiczne, współpraca transgraniczna