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СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВА



FINNMARK FYLKESKOMMUNE  
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# PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

for the supreme institutions  
of the European Union,  
the government and local authorities,  
non-governmental organizations  
on the effective implementation  
of the northern cross-border  
cooperation experience

ICELAND  
LIECHTENSTEIN  
NORWAY

eea  
grants



norway  
grants

## From the authors

Today, the international community of members and supporters of cross-border cooperation are more and more likely to use the *buzz-word "efficiency"*. This means that a variety of CBC subjects increasingly are more and more concerned with *a pragmatic component* of cross-border communication, its *concrete* and *tangible results*. The project "Information support and implementation of innovative approaches to CBC of Slovakia and Ukraine" (funded by a grant from the Norwegian kingdom with the help of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and co-financed from the state budget of the Slovak Republic) was intended to provide *a possibly complete response to this challenge of time*.

Of course, the effectiveness of a scientific and practical development is not always measured by tons or the quantity of money. But *it can be said with confidence that the correct implementation of policy conclusions made by the project can significantly streamline cross-border cooperation, including the rational use of financial, information and human resources*.

So, getting adequate, relevant and comprehensive information about the practice of cross-border cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic region is only part of implementing the social experience of northern CBC.

Another part of it covers *a) preparing the information received, giving it a user-friendly form; b) communicating this information in a way acceptable to the subjects of transborder cooperation management and persuading them in its practical applicability; c) clearly calibrating the practical tasks set timewise: short, medium and long term*.

*These tasks should be done, primarily, through the preparation and adoption of reasonable and effective practical recommendations to CBC management subjects.*

With this, *there should be taken into account* the principles of the Barents cooperation, in particular:

- long-term bilateral problems must be formulated as common challenges for the management and sustainable development. This expands the significance of the paradigm that states sometimes are too large to solve minor problems or too small to solve big problems;
- practical issues should be addressed not ideologically, but rather in view of practical results. Practical and functional dimensions of cross-border cooperation are important not only as a tool, but also as a goal;

- local characteristics should be retained. Regions operate in the system of relationships, yet they also exist in their own legal system and are influenced by specific characteristics of neighbouring regions and contacts that have been created over the centuries;
- Regional cooperation aims at changing not the priorities but attitudes to the borders and border regions. It is important to emphasize the differences between national priorities and global challenges. Globalization threatens national states, while internationalization strengthens them. Good neighbourly relations strengthen the ability of nation states to govern.

Practical recommendations are a synthesizing result of significant analytical and organizational work done by the project management and experts, representatives of state and local authorities of Kosice and Presov self-governing territories (Slovakia), province of Finnmark (Norway), Zakarpattia region (Ukraine), diplomats, representatives of public organizations.

*Part of the practical recommendations has been already described in the analytical reports on the results of the project implementation. Others are going to be set out below.*

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# Practical recommendations

**In order to implement into practice of the European Neighbourhood Policy towards Ukraine in the Carpathian (Central and Eastern) European region it is considered necessary and appropriate to recommend that - the Supreme EU institutions - the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions of the European Union should:**

1. If the Carpathian region countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic) approve the initiative of creating specialized international and regional organizations, similar to the Nordic cross-border cooperation institutions (the CBC): Carpathian Forum of Cooperation, Carpathian Regional Forum, the International Carpathian Secretariat, take part in their establishment (as is done in Northern Europe, where the European Commission is a member of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council).

2. Support the idea of and attend the Carpathian summit of the cross-border cooperation.

3. In the significant and most sensitive issue of European integration course of Ukraine, implement the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU and comprehensive free trade area - the visa issue, complete as soon as possible the process of granting the citizens of Ukraine visa-free travel to the EU countries, including the Slovak Republic.

4. In implementing the Eastern policy, given the experience of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, avoid unification and simplification, adequately considering the specific features both of socio-economic realities and geopolitical, civilizational, social and psychological factors that significantly affect the process of cross-border communications in different segments and new areas of the EU Eastern border, including in the Slovak-Ukrainian border.

5. Ambitious and far-reaching plans, proclaimed by the European Union, for cross-border cooperation with new neighbours, including in the Carpathian region: promote sustained economic and social development of the border regions of Europe, in particular by bringing the economy of border regions "neighbours" to the European markets; solve jointly the problems of environmental protection, health care and organized crime; ensure the efficiency and security of borders, including the fight against illegal immigra-

tion; facilitate human contacts in the border regions backed up with sufficient financial resources (as it is being done in the Barents Euro-Arctic region). Otherwise, their practical implementation may be threatened.

6. It is necessary to increase the efficiency of already allocated funds. The Northern experience shows that this can be done, first, through better coordination of the existing programs of financial assistance, secondly, better quality training and well thought-out selection of projects to be funded, thirdly, simplification of procedures, maximum possible de-bureaucratization of decision making on allocating financial assistance in ensuring proper control over the subsequent intended use of the funds provided.

7. For efficient use of financial resources at the new Eastern border, including in the Carpathian region, as well as for testing new mechanisms of cooperation it would be appropriate, as is done in the Norwegian-Russian border region, to determine the most prepared areas - a kind of "experimental laboratory". Successful results of cross-border cooperation in these areas would be a demonstration of perspectives, a "business card" of CBC. On the other hand, solving the problems that arose, would allow avoiding potential errors by the cross border cooperation entities in other border areas.

Due to the high level of development, the segment of Slovak-Ukrainian cross-border cooperation could be one of such "test tracks" of the European cross-border cooperation.

▼ **the central authorities of Ukraine's neighbours – the European Union member states should:**

1. Consider the opportunity to establish *specialized international and regional organizations* on cross-border cooperation development (by analogy with the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, Regional Council and the International Barents Secretariat):

– *the Carpathian Cooperation Forum* - the body of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives from the participating countries - for *macro-political support and management of cross-border cooperation*.

– *the Carpathian Regional Forum* - the body of the border regions' heads *for systematic and close cooperation of border areas to solve common problems*.

- *the International Carpathian Secretariat* - a standing body of the participating countries' representatives - for *organizational and technical support of multilateral cross-border cooperation*.

2. Submit the following geopolitical configuration of the participating countries in the institutions indicated: *Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, the European Commission, and Ukraine*.

The following *criteria* for this configuration are accepted:

- geographic affiliation to the Carpathian region.
- location at the new Eastern border of the European Union.
- historical relationship and contemporary integrity.

3. in order to create these *specialized international regional organizations*, initiate the *Carpathian CBC Summit* of the leaders of Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, the European Commission, and Ukraine with adopting an appropriate "*Declaration*".

4. By analogy with the Northern countries, including Norway, actively pursue at the institutions of the European Union the decision-making aimed at expanding and deepening cross-border processes at the new Eastern border of the EU, primarily with Ukraine, create new effective financial instruments to stimulate CBC; coordinate their efforts more in this direction, including the use of regional association of the Visegrad Group countries.

5. Following the example of Northern Europe, including Norway, provide full support, financial one included, to the efforts of local authorities of the Ukraine border regions in developing joint concepts of social and economic development, border management, solving environmental problems, developing humanitarian ties.

▼ **the central authorities of Ukraine should:**

1. support the initiative to create *specialized international and regional organizations* for cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian region and to hold the Carpathian CBC Forum.

2. complete the establishment of legislative and regulatory cross-border cooperation system and institutional arrangements for its implementation, develop effective methods and forms of state support for cross-border relations, proceeding from the universally accepted European standards, particularly those used in Norway.

3. define clearly the legal framework and the framework of local government, self-governance and communities' participation in the system of international cooperation, provide *the improved competence level of the regions in foreign relations, as is done in Northern Europe, particularly in the Barents Euro-Arctic region*.

4. *following the Scandinavian example:*

- in the matters of cross-border cooperation state regulation: *prevent substitution of regional and municipal authorities, micromanagement, and activity overlap;*

- ensure effective control over implementing the state programs of cross-border cooperation that define its strategic goals and tactical tasks, control mechanisms and stages of implementation. If needed, make necessary amendments to these programs;

- synchronize these programs with intra-state and international economic and social projects aimed, in particular, at levelling the border regions' development.

5. ensure the specificity and efficiency of existing institutions of state support to cross-border cooperation, bilateral intergovernmental CBC commissions (Slovak-Ukrainian ones included).

## ▼ Regional and local authorities of border territories should:

1. by Scandinavian analogy:

a) provide an active support to the initiatives to establish mutually beneficial and fruitful bilateral, in particular Slovak-Ukrainian, or multilateral cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian region, comprising various entities of economic, political and social life of cross-border regions;

b) seek to develop agreed concepts of economic and social development of border areas, in particular Slovakia and Ukraine, as a basis for joint project proposals to the supreme institutions, structural foundations of the EU and other donors;

c) promote the creation of a diversified system of cross-border cooperation institutions, such as regional development agencies, the European information centres, etc. and customize their joint constructive activity;

d) intensify international cooperation activity of local authorities of border areas, providing them with sufficient *independence and capacity* from the government agencies on the issues of cross-border cooperation.

2. Solve general economic and social problems of border areas like in the North of Europe, always paying attention to establishing and effective functioning of civil society institutes as a prerequisite for social life democratization in the regions, effective cross-border cooperation.

3. As this has been done in the North of Europe, ensure allocation of sufficient funds for budget financing (or co-financing) of the projects promoting cross-border cooperation, Slovak-Ukrainian in particular.

## ▼ Public organizations should:

1. contribute to the approval by their governments of the initiative to create *specialized international and regional organizations* for cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian region and to hold the Carpathian CBC Summit.

2. In case this initiative has been approved, the representatives of cross-border cooperation associations of regions and communities (Carpathian Euroregion as a whole and its national parts, Euroregions "Slovakia-North", "White Carpathians", Association YEUTS "UNR-Tisa-Tour-Slaná-Hornád- Budva -Shinva") should actively participate in them as observers.

3. Initiate the establishment of a Council (Public Council) of the Carpathian Cooperation society comprising representatives of ethnic, gender, religious and other public associations of the Carpathian region.

4. follow the Scandinavian model, initiating the creation of the Carpathian Centre for training and retraining of management and personnel of cross-border cooperation in order to reorient CBC subjects in the Carpathian region to the European forms, methods and technologies of public and business administration;



How to start the process of implementing the above mentioned practical recommendations? For this, it is needed, in particular, to:

a) get the support of the initiatives from the relevant governmental and parliamentary circles, the EU institutions and the EU and Visegrad countries;

b) attract experts as the initiative promoters on the part of Slovak and Norwegian partners, other members of the expert community in the analysis of cross-border cooperation;

c) identify target groups for support and influence in the regions and among local communities of the Carpathian region;

d) engage existing associations of Euro-regional cooperation in the region into the work;

e) identify target groups for support and influence among business leaders, supporters of creative and cluster development, NGOs;

e) analyse the environment of potential opponents to the initiative and prepare the relevant arguments for them;

The authors of the above mentioned practical recommendations are confident in their relevance and constructive character. So they rely on proper understanding and support of transborder cooperation subjects – of those whom they are addressed.

