Cross-Border Cooperation in Mountains: Case of the Carpathian Euroregion

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What the Euroregion is?

- A European concept of cross-border cooperation
- Emerged after WWII, the first euroregion established in 1958 at the German-Dutch border
- It is an instrument for peace building
- A tool for building confidence, good neighborhood between states and regions and prevent conflicts.
- There are more than 300 euroregions are in Europe
What the Euroregion is?

- A defined geographical area embracing bordering regions from two or more countries, which agreed to cooperate and make coordinated actions developing the given bordering region

- Established by regional municipalities

- Its legal form could be a legal personality or a loose network of participating organizations
The European Union and euroregions

*Strategic goals*

- Reduce territorial disparities/inequalities
- Strengthen economic and social cohesion
- Eliminate internal borders and strengthen external borders (Schengen)
- Cohesion of border regions
- Strengthen European integration
- Link between EU and non-EU countries and regions, a tool for pre-accession (EaP)
The Carpathians
The Carpathian Euroregion

**Territory:** 161,135 km²

**Population:** 15,948,468 fő

**Hungary**
- Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok és Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties

**Poland**
- Subcarpathian region

**Romania**
- Bihor, Botosani, Harghita, Maramures, Salaj, Suceava and Satu Mare counties

**Slovakia**
- Presov and Kosice counties

**Ukraine**
- Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Lvivska and Zakarpatska oblasts
Carpathian Euroregion

Common characteristics
• Peripheral location
• Corpus alineum between countries
• Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity (micro-cosmos of Central-East Europe)
• Shared history
• Rich tradition of inter-ethnic, intercultural interactions
• Common natural components (Carpathian Mountains and Tisa River Watershed) - biodiversity
• Common aspirations
• Regional identity
Carpathian Euroregion

Population in the regions by country

Ukraine: 6,367,900
Romania: 3,321,438
Hungary: 2,574,545
Poland: 2,128,605
Slovakia: 1,555,980

Ethnic structure of the Region

Ukrainians: 5,534,436
Hungarians: 3,484,294
Romanians: 2,616,372
Poles: 2,139,158
Slovak: 1,280,998
Roma: 485,382
Others: 400,048
History of the Carpathian Euroregion

- Initiated by local municipalities and citizens supported by the EastWest Institute and the Council of Europe in 1991-92
- 1993. February 4. – four countries (H,P, Slo and Ua) signing the funding documents
- Founders: Hungary (4 counties); Zakarptskaja oblast (Ukraine); Przemysl és Krosno voivodships; and 6 districts from Slovakia
- Romania joined in 1994
- Today 19 administrative units are the members of the Carpathian Euroregion
Carpathian Euroregion

Mission: improving the quality of life for people living in the Region; promoting peace and good neighborhood; bridging divides and physical and mental borders

Goals and activities:
- Promoting social, economic, educational, ecological, scientific and sport co-operations
- Supporting the implementation of transfrontier co-operation, identify fields for joint development (infrastructure, e.g.) and joint planning
- Generating cross-border cooperation projects and bring closer citizens
Carpathian Foundation: „Five Nations- One community”

The Carpathian Foundation is an independent grantmaking organization, which main mission is to

- Improve the quality of life for people living in the Carpathian Euroregion
- Create a common, Carpathian, identity
- Preserve ethnic, cultural and environmental values of the Region
- Promoting sustainable development
- Enhance cross-border and interethnic cooperation
- Support grassroots
Map of the Carpathian Euroregion
The Carpathian Foundation was established in 1995 as a complementary but independent organization to the Carpathian Euroregion. The founders were the EastWest Institute and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation adapting the community foundation model in Eastern Europe and support citizen initiatives in the Carpathian Euroregion.
Carpathian Foundation

Activities:

- Supporting local initiatives of local governments and civil society organizations
- Providing financial and technical assistance to local communities
- Organizing regional level meetings, conferences, trainings and networking local actors

Role of the Foundation:

- Convener
- Assistaunce
- Innovator
- Service
- Supporter
- Mediator
Carpathian Foundation

Grantmaking programs:
- Cross-border Cooperation
- Interethnic Cooperation
- Best Practice Award Local Governments
- Integrated Rural Community Development Program
- Carpathian Research Program
- Cultural Heritage Program
- RomaNet Program

Operational Program
- Capacity Building
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Stories Exchange
- Carpathian Handicraft Fair
- Annual meetings of local governments
- Community Economic Development
Institutional disintegration of the Carpathian Euroregion

The institutional disintegration of the Carpathians begun in the mid of 2000 and continued after four of the Carpathian countries joined the European Union. The multi-lateral Carpathian Euroregion has become a pile of bilateral cooperation and the Carpathian Foundation lost its coordination center and local offices have become legally independent local organizations focusing only on their own sub-region of the Carpathians. So, the Carpathians remained without institutional representation.
Initiatives for re-integration

- Creation of the Carpathian brand
- Via Carpathia – North – south ax
- Three Seas Initiative
- Gaining European macro regional status (like the Alps or the Danube region)
- Carpathian Civil Society Network and Hub to involve grassroots
Lessons: Complexity of cross-border cooperation (CBC)

CBC is just as complex a phenomenon as the border regions themselves, which those institutionally represent. While the complexity of border regions rests upon those geographical, historical, inter-ethnic, cultural, and geopolitical factors, which shaped the given border region, the more compatibility complexity of CBC involves institutional structures, cross-border governance, and legal as well policy issues. The more the complexity of a border region in an institutionalized structure is reflected, the greater the efficiency of cross-border cooperation.
The main attributes of cross-border cooperation

- Compatibility
- Complementaribility
- Competency - subsidiarity
- Confidence
Lesson

Mathematics of cooperation

1+1= 3
Thank you for your attention!
Euregions in CEE