

Joint implementation of the project “Index of cross - border cooperation”

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Abstract

In the article have been analysed the issues of quantitative, including statistical assessment of cross-border cooperation (CBC) between neighbouring regions at the new Eastern border of the European Union. Have been considered the content and objectives of the international project "Index of cross - border cooperation", which is implemented by the institutions from Norway, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. Have been characterized the theoretical and practical aspects on indexation and monitoring of cross-border cooperation. Grounded practical significance of the methodology on statistical indexing to obtain the most complete and objective information and optimize the management of modern cross-border cooperation in Europe.

Keywords: methodology on quantitative estimation of cross-border processes, statistical assessment of cross-border cooperation, the new Eastern border of the European Union.

1. Introduction.

The idea of this project emerged as a result of discussions between the staff of the Barents Secretariat, Barents Institute (Norway, Kirkenes), the Institute for Transfrontier Cooperation (Ukraine, Uzhgorod) the Carpathian Foundation (Slovakia, Kosice) and the Institute for Stability and Development - ISD (Czech Republic, Prague) during late summer 2009. These discussions were further continued in the framework of the conference “European Border Dialogues: “Good Governance and Best Practices in the European Borderlands” that took place in Kirkenes in October 2009. The parties mentioned above came to the conclusion that there is a strong need to analyse the very diverse experience with cross-border cooperation in different parts of Europe and to share this experience within Europe as well as with other parts of the world. As a result, ISD submitted a proposal for the “Preparatory and Conceptual Phase” of the project to the Barents Secretariat and received a grant from the Barents Secretariat supporting these initial efforts. An international, cross-institutional Working Group was created to guide the work on a further development of the project “Border Dialogues: Promoting Cross-Border Cooperation in a Wider Europe”.

The goal of this project is to promote cross-border cooperation as a tool for European integration, regional stability and conflict mitigation, as well as to build the capacity of local, national and regional actors of cross-border cooperation on the eastern borders of the European Union.

The project is based on a practical and human approach to cross-border co-operation, meaning that it takes its rationale from both the manifested and “hidden” needs of bordering regions, which often go unheeded, and from the needs of the people who live in the bordering areas. Most of these regions are located in European peripheries and consequently the realization of the interests of these regions is weak. The project aims to enhance the voice of these regions and better utilize their economic and social potential through cross-border co-operation. The experience of all the organizations involved in the project is that the practice of cross-border co-operation in its various forms has a direct and tangible impact upon the border communities and on the wider regions where such projects have been implemented. The introduction of cross-border co-operation mechanism has helped to overcome a wide variety of problems associated

with borders – restrictions to the movement of people, goods and ideas. As Central-East European experience indicates, cross-border cooperation and border regions play an important role in European integration and in mitigating possible conflicts.

Nevertheless, cross-border co-operation remains little understood and therefore undervalued by many of those who could make best use of its methodology and mechanisms. In spite of various attempts by the European Union (as well as other bodies such as the Council of Europe) to foster cross-border co-operation as a means towards improving relations with its eastern neighbours, reducing tension, mitigating conflict, and – particularly in the case of funds provided under Component II of the Instrument for Pre-Accession, as a means to promoting the integration of candidate and potential candidate countries with one another and their EU neighbours, the practice of cross-border co-operation remains underutilized for a number of reasons, which can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of information about the existing CBC experience (projects already being implemented, partner organizations, relevant experts and practitioners, results, tools, problems etc.) and new initiatives undertaken in different border regions.
- Lack of trained and experienced human resources (both trainers and animators from partner organizations (NGOs and municipalities).
- Lack of joint or coordinated projects with partners located in different regions but dealing with similar problems.
- Lack of understanding among some local, regional and national authorities of the importance of CBC both for local (regional) development of border regions and for improvement of international cooperation in general (when in some respect local cross-border partnership in border regions could in fact serve as a practical model for bilateral and multilateral relationship on the international level).

Project will focus on the eastern side of EU's neighbourhood, ranging from the Norway-Russia and Finland-Russia borders in the North, through Baltics and Polish eastern border regions, the Carpathian area, and the Balkans and Turkey in the South.

Project Implementing Partners have a strong, on-the-ground experience in these areas:

- Norway-Russia border region - Barents Institute, Barents Secretariat)
- Kaliningrad and the neighbouring region - Kaliningrad Development Agency
- Carpathian Euroregion area, covering the bordering regions of Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine – Carpathian Foundation Network
- Eastern Partnership countries covering Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia - International Centre for Democratic Transition, Institute of Cross-border Cooperation
- South-Eastern Europe - Institute for Stability and Development (practical project experience), Jefferson Institute (also present in U.S.).

This gives the project a wide geographical scope and with the partners having the ability the ability to research, present and exchange experience in various contexts, but all having in common a strong “east-west” dimension. Additional partner organizations will be invited to join this project as it evolves.

2. Results

We will focus on analysing lessons from the current cross-border cooperation providing an objective and independent evaluation of the status of cross-border cooperation in different parts of a wider Europe, with primary focus on the outer borders of EU. The CBC Index will use objective criteria and an international group of experts to measure the development of cross-border cooperation in the European Neighbourhood and to provide policy recommendations to local, national and EU policy- and decision makers. The CBC Index will also contribute to develop the typology of border regions (e.g., non-conflict, conflict, post-conflict, integration, reintegration, etc.), while identifying successful experience as well as failures and

providing an overall analytical framework for decision makers to track trends in cross-border regions, to identify positive developments or trouble on the horizon. The centrepiece of this component will be an annual published index on cross-border co-operation aimed at EU and other policy- and decision makers.

The project will focus on strengthening human resources and increasing organizational as well as absorption capacity of mainly local organizations in bordering regions aiming to foster cross-border cooperation and networking stakeholders, local, national and European actors of cross-border cooperation. The Capacity Building include the following components: trainings for officials, civil society actors and businesses engaged in cross-border cooperation (including distance learning), introducing CBC-related curricula to education institutions in the European Neighbourhood and organizing annually Border Dialogue conferences, which bring together practitioners, researchers and policy- and decision makers at local, regional and European level.

One of the first attempts of practical application of methodology for indexation of transborder cooperation was done within the project «CBC Index – Informing Decision». The project was implemented in 2010-2011 under auspicious of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway.

Project partners:

- The Barents Institute (applicant) – Norway (Kirkenes);
- Institute for Stability and Development (ISD)–Czech Republic (Prague);
- Murmansk Humanities Institute– Russian Federation (Murmansk);
- Jefferson Institute– USA (Washington);
- Kaliningrad Regional Development Association– Russian Federation (Kaliningrad).

The main focus of the work within the project was the comparative analysis of the EU states and its neighbour's efforts in the sphere of cross-border cooperation as well as introducing annual indexation of the cross-border cooperation development level in one of the northern segments of the new Eastern EU border.

Implementation of the project served as a proof of concept for the synthetic CBC Index. Simultaneously it provided an opportunity to find out what adjustments should be made to the indexation methodology for geographical expansion of its implementation.

To assure free access to the materials of research the visualization of the synthetic index was made. Accompanying analysis and primary data set are placed on a public web-site (borderdialogues.eu).

Another practical experience of application the methodology on indexation of transborder cooperation resulting from the project “Let's consider the borders” implemented in 2011-2012.

Project partners:

- Association of Polish Communes in Euroregion Baltic (Elblag, Poland)
- Statistical Office in Olsztyn (Poland)
- Statistical Office in Białystok (Poland)
- Regional Economic Development Agency in Kaliningrad (Russian Federation)
- Ministry of Municipal Development, State Administration of Kaliningrad Oblast (Russian Federation)

Project authors point out that guided by the system on indexation and monitoring of transborder cooperation developed by the Institute for transborder cooperation (Ustych, 2012) they focused on the usage of cross-border statistics data. For this matter to the research the specialists in Statistics were involved.

Within the project the analysis of the border regions development level from Poland (Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship) and Russia (Kaliningrad region) was conducted as well as the problems in cross-border cooperation between them.

The research was conducted on the basis of indexes built up on the principle "from specific to general".

Within the project proposed to determine the general index of CBC via 10-point scale based on specific indexes and indicators.

In research the following special indexes of CBC were used:

- Geographic and climatic.
- Demographic.
- Historical, political and spiritual factors.
- Conflict-causing factors: risks and challenges.
- Infrastructural and organization.
- People to people contacts and institutional partnerships.
- Socio-economic potential and competitiveness of the region.
- Criminal phenomena and fight against them.
- Conditions of environmental protection.

On the basis of this methodology a primary data analysis was conducted using the resources of governmental statistical offices at border regions of Poland (Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship), Russia (Kaliningrad) and Belarus (Grodzenska oblast). Unfortunately, due to the lack of finance the research has not been fully completed.

However, the achievement of the project became the application of the system for assessment and monitoring of cross-border cooperation at the important segment of the new Eastern EU border.

More information on the progress of the project and its results can be found on the website (eurobalt.org).

One of the main problems for transborder cooperation indexation is correct use of score assessments by the experts. There were some attempts to build ranks for qualitative and quantitative characteristics (Kenneth D. Bailey, 2007) of cross-border cooperation, corresponding to a given score. In other words, it is a kind of manual for score assessment, which should unify the work of experts.

3. Conclusions

Thus it can be concluded that indexation, based on data of cross-border statistic, is an important tool for understanding the contradictory nature of modern cross-border processes, in particular, at the new Eastern border of the EU. In addition, the methodology for indexation provides an effective solution of practical tasks to optimize the management of cross-border cooperation.

In my point of view, in the nearest future it would be useful for the researchers and practitioners to deepen and specify the methodology for the index, and first of all, the statistical evaluation of cross-border cooperation, particularly paying attention to its implementation component.

References

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