

The Concept of Cross-Border Development on the Example of Euroregions in Poland

Małgorzata Joanna Bielecka

Opole University of Technology, Poland

Abstract

The paper presents the issue of cross-border cooperation on the example of the functioning of euro-regions in Poland. This issue was taken up in connection with the vital importance of international cooperation and euroregional cooperation for local and regional development. Euroregions, which cover almost the entire Polish border area, offer extensive opportunities connected with regional and local development, and foster the development of cooperation in matters of great importance for local and regional communities. Cooperation under the initiative of regional and local communities will decide in future not only about the shape of cross-border cooperation, but also about relations between states, in the united Europe of the 21st century.

Introduction

Regional development is the result of continuous changes of environment, which shape the needs of local communities. It is also the result of attention paid to the growth of a local economy. Development in this area is the basis for desired changes in all aspects of life. Economic development creates new jobs, it stands at the base of the creation of entrepreneurial and public income, as well as increasing wealth among the population. Without an increase of abundance in these areas it is impossible to create regional development. Development in an economic area forms the basis for initiation, stimulation and duration of development processes. It should be emphasized that regional development combines the effects of three basic forces: public authority—local government, entrepreneurs and individual members of the local population. These activities should complement each other in such a way as to create the basis of the mutual concept and also they should contribute to regional economic development and the welfare of the local population. As the result of these actions, the concept of regional development and regional policy is created. It can therefore be concluded that regional development and regional policy are taking on great importance in the contemporary united Europe. This fact comes from the strong conviction that local development should be created on the basis of the fundamental rule of subsidiarity. It is therefore a transfer of powers and responsibilities for the fate of the local community to the lowest level of public authorities. Subsidiarity should be understood as both the relationships between an individual and the society living in the region as well as the relationships between the society and institutions. It should not be associated with the society in the strict sense, but with the rules that govern its organization. The concept of entrusting affairs of local communities to the lowest level of authority should be supplemented by coordinating and supporting activities at the highest level of self-government authorities. That is why subsidiarity requires the following principles to be upheld (Toczyski, Sartorius, and Zaucha 1997, 7–8):

- cohesion of action—applies to all levels, but also to efficiency of operation with the possibility of participation of representatives of local communities
- effectiveness—aims to improve the quality of life and degree of satisfaction of local needs
- solidarity—to understand the desire to strive for success and growth

- the increasing phenomenon (which is quite desirable) of local authorities joining forces to ensure dynamic development and meet the needs of the local community. Development policy should seek to create proper conditions for economic development, to maintain and expand the social structure, to use the natural resources in a rational way, to form the natural environment and to preserve the spatial order. However, the following processes have the most significant impact on the creation of development
- cooperation of municipalities and regions within the European Union

The basis for local community development is a realistic strategy set in the realities of a given unit of local government. The strategy of the development of a local government unit must be understood as a vision of how this unit is to function in the future. Tasks and programs which are part of the strategy need to have financial support. Without this support each concept of local or regional development loses significance and becomes only a document containing a set of desires and requests—not a realistic development concept to be implemented by a local authority.

The political, economic and cultural significance of regions is growing continuously. Regions achieve significance through generational inheritance, decentralization, administrative reforms, new competences and increasing political responsibility. Therefore they achieve an increasing influence on the European level. These two paths of development (local and European) are necessary and unavoidable. Regions refer mainly to the political and cultural identity of citizens while the national authorities are best aware of the process of European unification and are the main actors of established treaties. This process runs in the direction of balance between the three political levels: region, member state and European Union. Regions need to develop and take care of their own political, social and cultural interests. They must also have enough political power to shape all the necessary policies and particularly to influence economic development. Therefore the member state level and the regional level must cooperate. Involved in this process are some common orientations: democracy, solidarity, diversity, competitiveness, administration, proximity of power to citizens, transparency of the structures, participation, protection of ethnic minorities, decentralization, autonomy and subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is a key principle joining European Union and member states. Regions are involved in decision making by the Committee of the Regions only.

1 Regions and their priorities in the period 2014–2020

Since 2003 the Committee of the Regions has organized the European Week of Regions and Cities OPEN DAYS. Participants of this project include the European Commission's Directorate General (DG) for Regional Policy cooperating with regions and cities from all over Europe, but also companies, financial institutions and international associations, universities and academic organizations. This is a key annual event dedicated to local governments, which takes place in Brussels, the heart of the European Union. OPEN DAYS is the event of the regions which gives them the opportunity to present their achievements in realization of the European Union policy of cohesion and to share good practices in the field of strengthening competitiveness and social and economic cohesion. It is also an exceptional platform to find partners for all who want to carry out international projects which are co-funded by European funds. OPEN DAYS 2011 was unique because it took place during the intense political debate on cohesion policy in 2014–2020. In the period 2012–2020 the increase in funding for the regions is set out and stronger emphasis is placed on programs involving economic and employment growth through investment in human resources. Most support will go to regions, whose gross domestic product (GDP) is less than 75% of the average in the European Union (Kucharczyk 2011, 71). The ninth edition of OPEN DAYS was organized under the headline "Investing in Europe's future: Regions and cities delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth." Among the thematic priorities there is one which deserves special attention: geographical location—it relates to the regional community and regions and also shows the benefits of a territorial approach in the diagnosis of local needs and in the development of regional potential (urban development, territorial cooperation, macro-regional strategies, regions facing specific geographic and demographic challenges, etc.) (Kucharczyk 2011, 71). Within the main thematic areas of OPEN DAYS 2011 the theory of smart specialization was quite heavily

accented. This theory relates to the use of management methods in such a way that regions which are specialized in their predisposed actions are also compatible with other EU regions. It is about cooperation rather than competition among regions (Kucharczyk 2011, 73). EU regions which want to strengthen their competitiveness should develop themselves according to this theory. According to its strategies (first of all the Europe 2020 strategy) the European Union is to be competitive as a whole to the world's biggest economies.

2 Cross-border cooperation in Europe and euroregional cooperation in Poland

The concept of cross-border cooperation has been defined in the European Outline Convention On Transfrontier Co-operation Between Territorial Communities or Authorities, convened at Madrid, the 21st day of May 1980. According to its 2nd article: "For the purpose of this Convention, transfrontier co-operation shall mean any concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighborly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more Contracting Parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose. Transfrontier co-operation shall take place in the framework of territorial communities' or authorities' powers as defined in domestic law."¹ One form of cross-border cooperation at the local level is euroregional cooperation. Therefore cross-border cooperation is a wider term than euroregional cooperation. This follows from the fact that "cross-border cooperation often amounts to one particular problem while a euroregion is formed for the various issues it will have to deal with in the long term" (Greta 2003, 73). Euroregional cooperation is distinguished from cross-border cooperation through the higher degree of institutionalization of cross-border cooperation structures (appointing councils of the regions, secretariats, work groups, etc.), numerous links with specialized national and international coordination bodies and the specific nature of the appointment of a euroregion with the possibility of prioritization within local, regional and national initiatives.

The term 'euroregion' consist of two terms: euro and region. The first term relates to the spatial localization and to the integration processes taking place in Europe. The second term is an indication of a territory with specific features (Jastrzębska 2008). The term euroregion can be understood as: "a separate European region, located on the border of two or more neighboring countries as well as an organization set up to coordinate the cooperation of the euroregional convention parties on that area and accepted by the European Union that can financially support its activities" (Jastrzębska 2008). In turn, according to the definition taken from the "Practical Guide to Cross-border Co-operation" a euroregion is a "formal structure of cross-border cooperation, bringing together representatives of local and regional levels and also, in justified cases, local partners" (Wahl 2003, 55). When it comes to cross-border cooperation, attention should be paid to the very concept of the previously mentioned cross-border region. A cross-border region is located on both sides of the border. Regions of this type have certain features in common, such as trade and industry and complement each other. Most people living in this regions are multilingual. The reasons for beginning cross-border cooperation in Europe are primarily: reshaping the border area into a place where neighbors come together; overcoming mutual prejudices among residents of border areas arising from cultural heritage; developing democratic and functional administrations on the regional and local level; overcoming peripheral location and isolation; economic growth and raising the standard of living; rapid convergence and integration with the European Union (Praktyczny podręcznik współpracy transgranicznej 2000). Most euroregional cooperation covers such areas as: environmental protection, development of technical infrastructure, spatial planning, tourism, culture, protection against disasters and restructuring of industry and agriculture (Dobrowolski and Łata 2001, 20). It is characterized primarily by "the highest degree of institutionalization and cross-border cooperation structures. Cross-border cooperation takes on the character of euroregional cooperation with the introduction of permanent, institutional forms of cooperation through the creation of associations (union of communities), councils, secretariats, work groups,

1. See: Europejska konwencja ramowa o współpracy transgranicznej między wspólnotami i władzami terytorialnymi, sporządzona w Madrycie dnia 21 maja 1980 r. (DzU z 1993 r. nr 61 poz. 287).

management committees, etc., and also numerous links with national and international bodies specialized in coordination of cross-border cooperation” (Greta 2003, 15).

Euroregional cooperation is mainly carried out by the local or regional authorities. It may be linked to specific joint projects and investments which require the coordination of adjacent communities. This type of euroregion is now most often created. The formation of euroregions is mainly conditioned by political or economic interests. They are intended to be used to deliver the benefits of working together despite the presence of boundaries (borders).

Euroregional cooperation may include traditional issues related to transit, border crossings and border control, but it can also be linked to specific investment projects that require close coordination of action of the adjacent local communities (this type of euroregions are the most common now). This cooperation can also take a higher form, which means that it takes up the conducting of joint social and economic policy focused on the labor market, health care, problems of developing local industry, services and border cities (i.e. this stage has been reached by the Pyreness cooperation) (Ejsmont 1999, 119).

Existing euroregions have developed many cooperation principles. The most important amongst these principles are: the principle of subsidiarity, the principle of partnership rule, the principle of solidarity of the cross-border areas rule or the principle of existence of cross-border development strategy (Dobrowolski and Łata 2001, 22). Equally important principles that have been developed in the practice of the functioning of the euroregions are first and foremost the principles of: good neighborliness, preservation of identity, voluntarism, striving for symmetry and parity, pragmatism, friendship and trust, rotation and consensus (Borys 1999, 90–91).

The cooperation of states within the euroregion is assumed to rely on joint activities which lay in the area of interests of each state. Acceptance of those activities by each state is the main objective of euroregional policy. Other important objectives are exchange of experience and information; constant improvement of living conditions; exchange of experience and information on the labor market; development of the economy, trade and tourism; infrastructure development (particularly technical infrastructure); improvement of border traffic; protection and improvement of the natural environment; cooperation in preventing and combating natural disasters and catastrophes; cooperation in spatial planning; cooperation in humanitarian and social activities; cooperation in schooling, sport and health care; cultural exchange and care of cultural heritage (Jastrzębska 2008).

Two models of euroregions can be distinguished. The first one is the local government model resulting from “the local communities and their authorities and associations initiatives that operated on the Polish side only at the level of municipalities” (Borys 1999, 103). This model is the most common in Poland, especially on the western and southern borders. The second model is a model of local government administration, which is most common on the eastern and south-eastern border of Poland. This model is distinguished by the “active participation in the process of formalization of cross-border cooperation of regional and/or central and local authorities” (Borys 1999, 103).

3 EU programmes and institutions supporting cross-border cooperation

It wasn't until the 1990s when the European Union drew attention to cross-border cooperation. It came about mainly due to the presence of border areas of high unemployment, low income and poorly developed infrastructure. Cross-border cooperation is a very important element of European Union structural policy, whose main tools are Structural Funds. Their goal is to support restructuring and modernization of European Union economies, influencing the growth of Union economic and social cohesion. These funds are mainly directed to those sectors of the economy and regions, which would not be able to match the average economic level of the European Union without this financial aid. Already in 2000–2006 there were four Structural Funds of this type, which implemented objectives of European Union cohesion policy. These were: the European Social Fund, the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance. However, for the period 2007–2013 these funds were reduced to just two: the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. Besides these funds, two programs can also be mentioned: the program of community

initiative and programs of the community activities. They originate from the main objectives set out by the European Union.

In 1988 special funds were raised to support cross-border cooperation and its further development. One of these community initiative programs is INTERREG. Its main task is to finance from the European Regional Development Fund the cross-border, international and interregional cooperation both inside and outside the European Union. This program played a significant role in the development of cross-border relations. It is primarily aimed at supporting small and medium enterprises. As time passed, it was renamed INTERREG I, which targeted projects within the European Union. In 1994 there was another change—the program was once again renamed—to INTERREG II and from this moment with the help of this program projects outside the Union in the areas adjacent to it, could be supported. At present, cross-border cooperation is supported by the INTERREG III program: it consists of three components: A, B and C.

Component A includes cross-border cooperation of public authorities of neighboring regions to develop cross-border economic and social centers through the implementation of infrastructure projects. Within the framework of the INTERREG III program in 2004 a tool for micro project funding was created, which replaced the PHARE CBC Small Project Fund. Within the INTERREG III A program there are seven programs being implemented in Poland—five bilateral and two tripartite. The bilateral programs are: Polska-Meklemburgia Pomorze Przednie, Polska-Brandenburgia, Polska-Saksonia, Polska-Czechy and Polska-Szwecja. The tripartite programs are: Polska-Litwa-Federacja Rosyjska (Obwód Kaliningradzki) and Polska-Białoruś-Ukraina.

Component B includes transnational cooperation between national, regional and local authorities within large pan-European regions. This cooperation is aimed to ensure sustainable and coordinated spatial development. Within the Component B the possibilities for development of trans-European infrastructure development and spatial strategy on an international scale are created taking into account cooperation of cities and rural areas for sustainable development. Moreover, projects that include environmental protection and development of an information society are being funded. Within this Component Poland participates in two programs: CADSES (Central Adriatic Danubian South-Eastern European Space) and BSR (Baltic Sea Region). Both of these programs cover the entire area of Poland.

Component C includes interregional cooperation on the European scale, whose main objective is to develop network connections in regional policy, disseminate the examples of appropriate problem-solving, and exchange information and experiences which concern regional development and cohesion techniques and policies.² Within this Component Poland participates in two programs: “Strefa Północ” which includes the following voivodships: zachodniopomorskie, pomorskie, warmińsko-mazurskie, podlaskie, kujawsko-pomorskie, and “Strefa Wschód” which includes the following voivodships: dolnośląskie, lubelskie, lubuskie, łódzkie, małopolskie, mazowieckie, opolskie, podkarpackie, podlaskie, śląskie, and świętokrzyskie.

INTERREG support is mainly directed at joint development plans, supporting small and medium size enterprises, tourism, protection of natural environment, education, employment, development of rural areas, etc. INTERREG is the largest initiative of the European Union in supporting cross-border cooperation. Poland joined the INTERREG III initiative with its entry to the European Union (2004.05.01). In the 2004–2006 period Poland received an amount of about EUR 221,4 million.³ Within the component A Poland received EUR 177,09 million (80%), within the component B—EUR 30,99 million (14%) and within the component C—EUR 13,28 million (6%).⁴ In the 2004–2006 period, within the 14 Polish euroregions, 1 581 micro projects were completed.

Another program of this type, designed to support and develop cross-border cooperation, was the PHARE program. It was created in the year 1989 to provide financial support for the EU

2. See: Portal Funduszy Strukturalnych, [a:] <http://www.interreg.gov.pl/>.

3. [In the journal (in both Polish and English texts) European practice of number notation is followed—for example, 36 333,33 (European style) = 36 333.33 (Canadian style) = 36,333.33 (US and British style). Furthermore in the International System of Units (SI units), fixed spaces rather than commas are used to mark off groups of three digits, both to the left and to the right of the decimal point.—Ed.]

4. See: <http://www.karpacki.pl/>.

candidate countries. In 1997 it was transformed into an instrument for pre-accession assistance. However, it was abandoned in favor of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance program. Initially the PHARE program was directed only to Poland and Hungary, hence its name—Poland and Hungary Assistance for Restructuring their Economies (PHARE). Since 1990 it also included Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Seventeen European countries had benefited from it by the year 2000. Within the cross-border cooperation in 1994, from a European Parliament initiative, the Cross Border Cooperation program was created within PHARE (PHARE CBC). To support cross-border cooperation 25% of PHARE program funds were allocated. The PHARE CBC program contributed to the unification of legal regulations and standards of living among the cross-border population. Also in 1994 within the cross-border cooperation of Poland and Germany the Small Project Fund PHARE CBC was created. Initially it was directed only to four euroregions but in later years it took all euroregions along the borders of Poland. Within this fund 4038 projects were done in Poland, for a total cost of EUR 34 million (Czekaj 2007, 33). This programme was completed in 2003 and was replaced by the INTERREG III A program.

In 1995, to support cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea area, the PHARE BSR (Baltic Sea Region) Programme was launched. In addition, also within PHARE, the following programs were created: PHARE CREDO, the priority of which is to support cross-border cooperation in the countries of South-Eastern Europe, and PHARE TACIS, which is to support cross-border cooperation in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Poland has benefited most from the PHARE program. The Polish budget in 1993–2003 was about EUR 3,9 billion, whereas within the PHARE CBC program 503 projects were completed by the end of November 2006, for a total amount of EUR 150 million (Czekaj 2007, 31). In addition to these programs mentioned above the European Union has launched other programs, whose purpose was to support and develop cross-border cooperation. Among these additional programs there is the MEDA program (for countries outside of the EU in the Mediterranean Sea region) and the CARDS program (for countries in the Western Balkans region). These programs were created due to the belief that further development of cross-border cooperation, and thus integration in Europe, will be a lot easier if the development gap between regions will be filled.

When it comes to institutions which support cross-border cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe played a significant role. This organization was created in 1949 and it is the oldest European organization, which brings together 46 states. Cross-border cooperation is a priority for the Council of Europe. The objective of this organization in this field is to provide support in drafting cross-border cooperation agreements, creating specific projects and searching for funding sources. State authorities also play a significant role for cross-border cooperation in Europe. Nowadays, two non-governmental organizations can be distinguished at the European level. The first one is the Congress of the Council of Europe. This organization has operated since 1987, but was still under the name of the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe. This is an advisory body whose main purpose is to represent local and regional authorities, and to strengthen contacts with foreign countries. The Congress is currently comprised of 636 members. It consists of two Chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. The second organization is the Committee of the Regions established in 1994 under the Maastricht Treaty. It represents the interests of about 250 regions within the European Union area. The role of the Committee of the Regions in this area is primarily to represent the views of local and regional authorities at the EU forum.

Besides these bodies there are also representations created by the regions themselves in order to increase their role in European cooperation. These representations are designed to represent their interests at the EU forum. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions belongs to this type of organizations. It was created in 1951 and its main objective is to develop and defend the autonomy of territorial units. Another institution of this type was the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, created in 1987 and reshaped as the Assembly of European Regions in 1987. In March 1990 the East-West Committee was created within this Assembly. This body has been developing strategies and providing resources for the development of regions of Central and Eastern Europe as well as providing assistance to third countries.

In Gronau in June 1971 the Association of European Border Regions was created. This association is a voluntary non-governmental organization and a lower level of institutionalization. Its main objective is to support and coordinate cross-border cooperation throughout Europe. The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions created in 1973 is another institution of this type. Its main objective is to develop transport, inland and sea fishing and projects of Mediterranean integration. Within the area of Poland, cross-border cooperation is supported by specialized central institutions and commissions. These specialized central institutions are the Department of Cross Border Cooperation in the Council of Ministers (created in December 1993) and the Department of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (created in January 1995). Commissions are: the German-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation (western border of Poland), the Czech-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation and the Slovakian-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation (southern border of Poland), the Ukrainian-Polish Intergovernmental Coordination Council for Interregional Cooperation, the Belarusian-Polish Coordination Committee for Cross-Border Cooperation and the Lithuania-Polish Intergovernmental Commission for Cross-Border Cooperation (eastern border of Poland) and the Russian-Polish Commission for Interregional Cooperation (Borys and Panasiewicz 1997, 47–49).

4 Euroregions in Poland

Within Poland increase in cross-border cooperation is observed since the early 1990s, which is closely linked to political transformation. In practice it manifests itself in the creation and operation of euroregions (Seweryn 2002). During this period Poland has signed and concluded most of the agreements on cross-border cooperation. On Polish territory 16 euroregions have been established so far, including: 4 on the western border, 7 on the southern border, 3 on the eastern border and 2 on the northern border. In April 2003 the agreement on cross-border cooperation known as Euroregion Szeszupa was signed. This euroregion is located on the border areas of Poland, Lithuania and Russia. Two Polish municipalities (Gołdap and Kowale Oleckie — Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship) and one Swedish municipality have expressed their interest in joining the agreement. However, the formal and legal procedures related to the official appointment of this euroregion are not yet finished.

Amongst currently operating euroregions nine are conducting bilateral cooperation and five are conducting trilateral cooperation. Within Baltic Euroregion and Carpathian Euroregion five states are cooperating. The largest and at the same time the most important model for the creation of euroregions in Poland is Euroregion Nysa which was created on December 21, 1991. This is the oldest euroregion in Poland. Euroregion Nysa and three euroregions on the western border (Pomerania, Pro Europa Viadrina and Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr) constitute a model for creating various forms of cross-border cooperation within the Polish area.

The most important factors for creation of euroregions on the western border of Poland are: new political shape of the western border (the Polish-German border has become the external border of European Union) and activity of local and regional communities in establishing cooperation (Seweryn 2002). But then again on the southern border of Poland favorable political changes have great importance for creation of mutual interregional connections. The important fact is that the Polish-Czech border is both between members states of EU and between members of the Visegrád Group and members of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). There are euroregions functioning on this border, such as: Polish-Czech Euroregions Glacensis, Pradziad, Śląsk Cieszyński and Silesia, Polish-Czech-Slovakian Euroregion Beskydy, Polish-Slovakian Euroregion Tatras and Polish-Slovakian-Ukrainian-Romanian-Hungarian Carpathian Euroregion. On the northern border of Poland only two euroregions have been created to date: Euroregion Baltic, created on February 22, 1998, which includes border areas of Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia and Sweden and the youngest euroregion in Poland — Euroregion Łyna-Ława created in 2003 on the Polish-Russian border. Euroregional cooperation on the eastern border of Poland began in 1995 with the creation of the Polish-Ukrainian-Belarusian Bug Euroregion, the first

euoregion in Eastern Europe. At present on this border area there are two additional euoregions: the Polish-Ukrainian Puszcza Białowieska Euroregion and the Niemen Euroregion, situated on the border area of Poland, Belarus and Lithuania.

Euroregions situated on the Polish areas adopt their names from the surrounding environment, for example: from the border or near-by rivers (Bug and Niemen Euroregions), from a mountain range (Carpathian and Beskydy Euroregions), from a marine area (Euroregion Baltic), or from a historical area (Euroregion Glancesis and Cieszyn Silesia) (Greta 2003, 131). Presently euoregions in Poland occupy a total area of 165 859 km². The largest part of Polish territory is occupied by the Euroregion Baltic (42 487 km²) and the smallest by the Euroregion Cieszyn Silesia (967 km²). Euroregional cooperation occurs between Poland and its neighboring countries but also with other countries such as: Hungary and Romania (Carpathian Euroregion), Sweden (Euroregion Pomorania and Euroregion Baltic) and Latvia and Denmark (Euroregion Baltic).

5 Goals and objectives of euoregions in Poland

Euroregions in Poland are functioning according to specific rules and are assigned to specific purposes. Rules and objectives of euoregions are established by the statutes and agreements and by the regulations of the authorities of the euoregion. Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa is the first euoregion created on Polish territory. States participating in the cooperation within this euoregion—Poland, Germany and Czech Republic—according to the statute should aim to create on their territory a common space for cross-border cooperation. These states will be involved in actions to improve exchange of information and cross-border communication as well as the determination of the development priorities for the area of the euoregion. A particularly important element in achieving this objective is to create from all three national parts “the common integrated holiday and tourist region of Nysa.” This community within its jurisdiction takes into account the euoregional interests using and managing appropriate funds and assistance programs that affect the area of the Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa. Within its capabilities this community⁵ is supporting the interests of municipalities, cities and districts, as well as actions of individuals if they are consistent with the euoregional development objectives.⁶ According to the Statute of the Interregional Association of the Carpathian Euroregion the priority objectives and goals of the association are: coordination and organization of joint actions for development of cooperation between the members of the association in economics, ecology, culture, science and education; help and support for particular projects and plans in the field of cross-border cooperation which are of common interest; developing and facilitating contacts between the inhabitants of the association, including contacts between experts from different fields; development of good neighborly relations between the members of the association; support of the regional development of the members of the association; identifying areas of possible multilateral cooperation between the members of the association and international organizations, agencies and institutions.⁷ Their primary goals and objectives as provided in the statute of the Euroregion Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr are as follows: versatile work for the prosperity of the region, its ecological sanitation, economic expansion and constant improvement of living conditions. These goals are accomplished by: cooperation of the Polish and German municipal administrations within the Euroregion Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr with the respect and protection for natural and cultural resources; harmonization of communal activities in developing areas within the Euroregion; sustained efforts to remove barriers related to the existence of national borders; actions for accelerated development and mutual adjustment of technical and social infrastructure with the cross-border range; striving for the increase of the region’s economic potential while maintaining ecological principles and rules; creation of favorable conditions for cross-border cooperation of different bodies in the fields of culture, science, education, tourism, health and social care and others approved by the members of the association; creation of conditions for and

5. The Treaty of Lisbon removes the European Communities, leaving in their place the European Union.

6. See: Statut Euroregionu Neisse-Nisa_Nysa, [a:] <http://www.neisse-nisa-nysa.org/fileadmin/documents/intern/rahmenvereinbarung.pdf>.

7. See: Statut Euroregionu Karpackiego, [a:] <http://www.karpacki.pl/>.

fostering personal contacts between the inhabitants of neighboring countries; regular information provided to the general public on both sides of national borders about goals, objectives, programs and specific actions in the cross-border cooperation.⁸ The main objective of the Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina is to represent and protect common interest of municipalities associated in the Euroregion Por Europa Viadrina and also to cooperate in: communal economics, environmental protection, health care, education, culture, tourism and public transport. These goals are realized by: supporting economic projects and initiatives, exchanging experiences, disseminating economic knowledge, advising the regional authorities, organizing courses, exhibitions, performances, talks, discussions, symposia, etc., disseminating ecological knowledge, sport and physical culture, taking care of the monuments of material culture especially architectural objects and also by supporting and developing the idea of the local government.⁹ For the Euroregion Tatras the main objective is the versatile activity for the creation of proper conditions for cooperation of Polish and Slovakian border areas especially in the field of environmental protection and utilization of tourist, recreational and therapeutic attractions. Activity of this euroregion is aimed at the cooperation of the Polish side with Slovakian communal bodies and associations in the field of: planning and spatial management, communal economics, industry, agriculture, environment and nature protection, transport and communication, passenger traffic, transport across the border, trade and services, science and education, health care, art and culture, contacts and exchange of youth, tourism, recreation and sport and other areas of common interest.¹⁰

According to the statute of the Euroregion Bug the main goal of the euroregion is to inspire, support and coordinate cross-border cooperation of self-governments, local communities and authorities from the border areas situated along the Bug River. In particular its objective is to: support and promote cross-border forms of cooperation, disseminate the cultural heritage and traditions of border communities, support local initiatives on the improvement of border areas infrastructure, especially when it comes to gas and water supply, construction of roads and telecommunication networks, promotion of environmental protection, support for the activities of local authorities towards the creation of special economic zones in border areas and the system of local and supra local border crossings and to promote various forms of cooperation in education, sport, tourism and health. These goals are to be realized by: undertaking economic and cultural projects, tasks of information, consultation and design, publishing, promoting and educating activities about the Euroregion Bug and its members, cooperating with government institutions and authorities and with Polish and foreign social organizations, active participation in design and realization of projects funded by the European Union and by the acquisition of funds under the external forms of support from domestic and foreign sources.¹¹

The main objectives of the Euroregion Pomerania specified in its statute are as follows: training and education for young people talented in sports; popularization of sport, tourism and recreation among society and promoting their therapeutic and health values in rural and urban communities and among the disabled; development of the environment for people at risk of social exclusion; supporting the development of civil society; creating the conditions for proper educational and moral development. Detailed tasks of this euroregion are: providing social assistance, including assistance to families and individuals in difficult situations; equalization of opportunities for these families and individuals at risk of social exclusion; shaping the moral and social attitudes; rising awareness of education through sport; stimulating social activity with a sense of responsibility; broadening and deepening of the educational and social knowledge; protecting environment; leading interdisciplinary dormitories for physically gifted youth from rural areas and communities at risk of social exclusion; developing sport and educational activities. These tasks are realized by: creating the right conditions for sport, rehabilitation, recreation and tourism, providing staff coaching, medical care, organization of sports, recreation, tourism and sporting events; organizing and conducting training classes, trips, camps and colonies; educational activities in the field of education such as:

8. See: Statut Euroregionu Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr, [@:] http://pliki.euroregion-snb.pl/statut_2006.pdf.

9. See: Statut Euroregionu Pro Europa Viadrina, [@:] <http://www.euroregion-viadrina.pl/statut.php>.

10. See: Statut Euroregionu Tatry, [@:] http://www.euroregion-tatry.eu/_pliki/statutIdee, bb992.pdf

11. See: Statut Euroregionu Bug, [@:] <http://www.euroregionbug.pl/content/view/10/8/>.

appointment, promotion and organization of universities, schools, kindergartens, therapeutic centers and other educational institutions; taking care of the environment and specific social groups; organization of holidays for children and youth; organization of classes and courses on issues of education, rehabilitation, recreation, tourism and sport; organization of charitable events; appointment, promotion and organization of foundations and companies; establishing and maintaining international sport, educational and tourism contacts; cooperation with state institutions and organizations with a similar profile of action, supporting its activities; recognition of communities threatened by pathologies; actions to prevent addiction; aggression and violence; prevention of crime and social maladjustment; counteracting the negative effects of stress; providing assistance to children and their families particularly by implementation of street projects.¹²

The priority objectives of the Euroregion Glacensis are: the versatile activities for the prosperity of the region, ecological sanitation, economic prosperity, development of tourism, culture and sport, and continuous improvement of the living conditions of its inhabitants. These goals are realized by: cooperation of the Polish side with Czech communal bodies within the Euroregion Glacensis, harmonization of the communal activities in the field of programming of municipal development by coordinating the work of relevant bodies and departments of both countries; the desire to remove obstacles arising from the existence of the state border; actions for the accelerated development and synchronization of systems, technical infrastructure and social services across borders within the cross-border impact range; efforts to increase the region's economic potential while maintaining the environment; creation of conditions and support for development of direct contacts between citizens of both border countries.¹³

The most important goal of the Euroregion Niemen is: versatile activity for economic development of the region, including promotion of sustainable development in accordance with the laws of nature and improvement of the living conditions of inhabitants. These goals are brought to life by: organization and coordination of the cross-border cooperation of the Polish side with bodies from foreign countries; management of the European Union's cross-border cooperation funds; running the European Information Point in Euroregion Niemen; implementation of projects under the aid programs and conducting training and educational activities.¹⁴

Euroregion Pradziad in turn supports cross-border cooperation in such fields as: spatial economy planning, protection of the natural environment, economic development, trade and services, tourism, sports and recreation, transport and communication, education, science, culture, art and health care, interpersonal relations, youth exchange, crime prevention, mutual assistance in case of emergencies and disasters and other areas of common interest.¹⁵ Priority goals of Euroregion Baltic are: improvement of living conditions of its inhabitants, facilitating mutual contacts, closer acquaintance between local communities, overcoming historical prejudices, programming work to ensure the sustainable development of each contracting party, supporting activities in cooperation between regions and local authorities. These goals are to be achieved by: supporting joint trans-border projects for social and economic development in different fields, cooperation joint communal projects in border areas, cooperation in the spatial economy in border and euroregion areas, development of border crossing infrastructure, improvement of professional qualifications, exchange of scientific and sports groups, exchange of individuals responsible for culture, youth and children, cooperation in the field of tourism development, supporting the learning of the neighbor's language, preservation of common cultural heritage, organization of information systems, supporting programs for the media network development in order to provide current information for all sides of the agreement, cooperation in combating natural and ecological disasters, fires and other emergencies and mutual information on the occurrence of the threats mentioned above.¹⁶

Euroregion Cieszyn Silesia supports the development in the border areas in such fields as: exchange of experience and information about regional development; exchange of experience and

12. See: Statut Euroregionu Pomierania, [@:] <http://www.pomerania.org.pl/file.php?id=86>.

13. See: Statut Euroregionu Glacensis, [@:] <http://bip.um.jedlina.pl/pliki/Statut.doc>.

14. See: Statut Euroregionu Niemen, [@:] http://euroregion.dtp.p9.pl/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=11.

15. See: Statut Euroregionu Pradziad, [@:] <http://www.europradziad.pl/index2.php>.

16. See: Statut Euroregionu Bałtyk, [@:] <http://eurobalt.org.pl/media/pliki/4.pdf>.

information about the labor market; cooperation in spatial planning; solutions to common issues in the field of transport, communication and public safety; solutions to common issues in the field of ecology and natural environment protection; cooperation in prevention and liquidation of consequences of natural disasters; cooperation in economics and the market; development of tourism and passenger traffic; activities supporting development of culture, education and sport especially, exchange of information concerning these actions; cultural exchange and attention to common cultural heritage; joint cooperation of rescue and mountain services in the euroregion's area; cooperation between schools and youth within the euroregion. The euroregion within its capabilities supports the interests of cities and municipalities which are parties of the euroregion and also will support the initiatives of those associations whose objectives are consistent with the objectives of the euroregion.¹⁷ The main activity of Euroregion Silesia is: supporting and realization of Polish-Czech cooperation in the border areas of Polish Silesia and Czech Moravia in order to minimize the negative effect of the existence of the state border and to ensure balanced development of the border area on both sides of the border, and thus enable the integration of the area within the European Union. Within the Polish-Czech cooperation Euroregion Silesia performs the following tasks: solves common issues in the field of transport infrastructure and border crossings; solves common issues in the field of environmental protection; supports cooperation between schools and youth on both sides of the state border; supports cross-border cooperation of other bodies on both sides of the state border; raises awareness of common cultural heritage; supports development of culture, education and sports in the border areas; supports exchange of experiences and information about the labor market; supports cooperation in the economy and market; supports prevention and resolution of the effects of natural disasters; supports joint planning of the development of the border region; provides information about the border region and ensures its presentation and also supports the idea of European integration.¹⁸

Euroregion Beskydy is designed to: undertake joint activities for balanced and sustainable development of the region and to bring closer their inhabitants and institutions on both sides of the agreement. This goal is to be realized by cooperation in areas such as: exchange of experience and information on development of the region, exchange of experience and information about the labor market, architecture and spatial planning, solving joint problems in transport, communication and telecommunication, solving joint problems in ecology and natural environment, economy, market, industry, small and medium enterprises, agriculture, forestry, food industry, tourism development, passenger traffic and improvement of tourism in the border area, education, youth exchange, sports, cultural exchange and awareness of common cultural heritage, prevention and elimination of the effect of natural disasters, care for public safety, and joint cooperation of rescue services in the euroregion.¹⁹ The main goal of cooperation in Euroregion Białowieża Forest is to undertake joint efforts to promote economic development, bring closer their inhabitants and institutions on both sides of the border and address joint actions in the field of: natural environment prevention and rational use of natural resources; bringing both nations closer; preservation of (unique on a European scale) the natural area that impacts to a large extent the continental climate, the Białowieża Forest; improvement of the living conditions of inhabitants of the euroregion by attracting investment and implementing cross-border economic programs; cooperation and exchange of social, scientific, professional, cultural, sports and youth groups, particularly those forms that foster better mutual understanding between communities living in border regions; spatial planning of border areas, including expansion of cross-border infrastructure; maintenance and the drive to improve the environmental resources and municipal waste management; cooperation in preventing and liquidating the effects of natural disasters; creation of a modern uniform system of municipal and industrial waste disposal.²⁰ The statutory objective of Euroregion Łyna-Lawa is to: strengthen the bond between countries forming the euroregion for the purpose of safeguarding and realizing

17. See: Statut Euroregionu Śląsk Cieszyński, [@:] <http://www.olza.pl/pl/o-nas/statut/>.

18. See: Statut Euroregionu Silesia, [@:] http://www.euroregion-silesia.pl/files/strony/dokumenty/statut_euroregion.doc.

19. See: Statut Euroregionu Beskidy, [@:] http://www.euroregion-beskidy.pl/pl/images/stories/pdf/statut_erb.pdf.

20. See: Statut Euroregionu Puszcza Białowieska, [@:] <http://bip.orla.samorzady.pl/att/?id=806cb7b047acf52be0b01f62cd31108e>.

the ideals and principles which are their common heritage; maintain and develop good neighbor cooperation; support and undertaking activities for local economic development; increase of the economy and to equalize the standard of living of the residents; support the development of business in the area of operation of local government and to prevent unemployment; solve common ecological and environmental problems; prevent unusual threats to life and human health and the environment; support tasks for the promotion and development of health care and services in accordance with applicable regulations; solve common problems in transport, communication and public safety; undertake actions for the development of culture, education and sport and exchange of information about these activities; develop tourism and coordinate passenger traffic including, improved border traffic; cooperate and inspire common initiatives in economics, trade and social areas; provide cultural exchange and awareness of common cultural heritage; support actions to raise the living standards of the inhabitants; cooperate with the authorities and local government, economic and financial organizations and business representatives; maintain educational activities especially: organize training courses, lectures, talks, conferences, seminars, conferences and demonstrations; organize cooperation between schools and youth; support construction and development of new border crossings; exchange of legal and organizational information; publish newsletters, training materials and other material from the scope of their statutory activities. Euroregion Łyna-Ława pursues its objectives by: promoting its activities in the media; publishing, information and advisory activities; coordination of sports organization, situated in the area of the agreement activity; exchanging information about environmental protection; cooperation with social organizations, state and foreign institutions acting for the benefit of local communities; cooperation with government and local government authorities and also with local and foreign economic organizations.²¹

6 Conclusions

Since the creation of the first euroregion on Polish territory more than 21 years have passed. At that time, euroregional cooperation in Poland focused mainly on problems related to regional and economic development, spatial planning, cooperation in the social sphere, environmental protection and cross-border statistics. Euroregions, which at this moment cover almost the entire area of Poland, offer extensive political opportunities, “as one of the ways of the evolutionary creation of a united Europe in the 21st century. They seem to be most effective in creating a new European order, covering with their actions the basic administrative structures and allowing the establishment of direct contacts between the people of border areas” (Wendt 1998).

Euroregions encourage networking and further development of cooperation in matters of great importance to local communities. Cooperation of these communities in the scope of problem solving for example in ecology, economy, transport or simply social problems, promotes the formation of local ties, provides mutual knowledge of culture and history, reduces existing prejudices and stereotypes that are the result of a lack of knowledge and previous contacts. “This collaboration at the local level, resulting from the initiative of local people, will be decisive for shaping the future of relations not only in border areas, but also between countries, and thus the whole united Europe” (Wendt 1998).

References

- BORYS, T. 1999. *Obszary transgraniczne w statystyce regionalnej, Statystyka w Praktyce*. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.
- BORYS, T., and Z. PANASIEWICZ. 1997. *Panorama Euroregionów*. Jelenia Góra: Urząd Statystyczny w Jeleniej Górze.
- CZEKAJ, M. 2007. *Euroregiony na granicach Polski 2007*. Wrocław: Urząd Statystyczny we Wrocławiu.
- DOBROWOLSKI, P., and M. ŁATA. 2001. *Wielki Region Saar-Lor-Lux. Przykład współpracy transgranicznej w Europie*. Wrocław: “Atla 2”.

21. See: Statut Euroregionu Łyna-Ława at <http://kaliningrad-rda.org/>.

- EJSMONT, Z. 1999. "Idea euroregionów w warunkach Polski północno-wschodniej." *Studia Regionalne/Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna w Białymstoku* no. 1:118–124.
- GRETA, M. 2003. *Euroregiony a integracja europejska. Wnioski dla Polski, Rozprawy Habilitacyjne Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego*. Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki.
- JASTRZĘBSKA, W. 2008. "Rola euroregionów i współpracy transgranicznej w procesie integracji europejskiej." In *Spójność ekonomiczna a modernizacja regionów transgranicznych*, edited by M.G. Woźniak, 95–105. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego.
- KUCHARCZYK, A. 2011. "Porozmawiajmy o Europie." *Europejski Doradca Samorządowy* no. 4:70–74.
- Praktyczny podręcznik współpracy transgranicznej. 2000. Gronau: Stowarzyszenie Europejskich Regionów Granicznych, Komisja Europejska.
- SEWERYN, M. 2002. "Euroregiony w Polsce." *Euroregiony — Polska* no. 3 (10): 21.
- TOCZYSKI, W., W. SARTORIUS, and J. ZAUCHA. 1997. *Międzynarodowa współpraca regionów. Wybór ekspertyz*. Warszawa: Przedświt.
- WAHL, P.T. 2003. *Europejska polityka regionalna*. Szczecin: WSIE.
- WENDT, J. 1998. "Współpraca regionalna Polski w Europie Środkowej." *Studia Europejskie/Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego* no. 4:133–146.