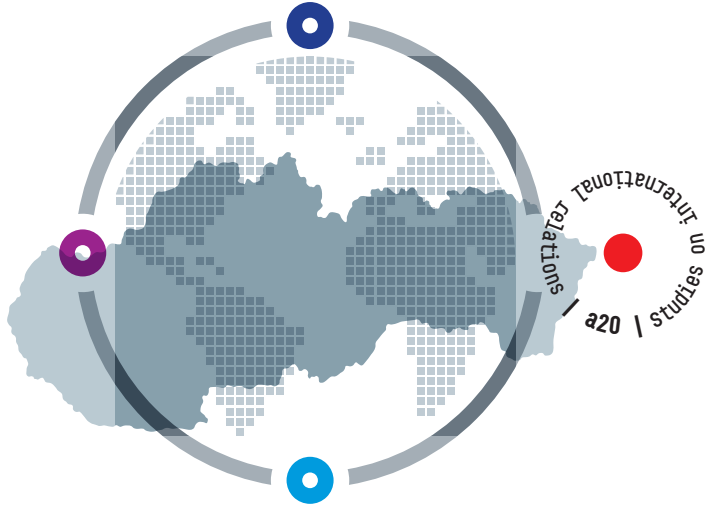




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Cross-border cooperation between regional and local actors

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Yuliia Fetko
Yaroslav Lazur
& Mariya Mendzhul

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway grants



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The overall goal of the SIBSU project is to facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, information and experience among border and custom services of Slovakia, Ukraine and Norway. The aim is to analyze the opportunities for deepening integrated border management and increase awareness and understanding about the work of the border police and custom services in border regions and municipalities in Slovakia and Ukraine. The project also includes an analysis of the impact of the border on the socio-economic development of the border regions, as well as on opportunities for further cross-border cooperation on both sides border.



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Cross-border cooperation between regional and local actors

Slovakia's territorial government consists of local self-government and regional self-government. Local self-government exists on both the municipal and city level.¹ International cooperation is governed by Act no. 369/1990 on municipalities. Paragraph 21 states that a municipality may, within the scope of its competences, cooperate with territorial and administrative units or with the authorities of other states performing local functions. Municipalities have the right to become a member of international associations of territorial units or territorial bodies. The municipal council, elected by the inhabitants of the municipality, approves international cooperation agreements and decisions to join international associations. In Slovakia, the traditional form of international partnerships is a partnership or town-twinning. We define this as cooperation between two or more municipalities based on

¹ The city of Košice – the main city in eastern Slovakia – has a special status, as there is a separate law applying to cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants. Law no. 401/1990 on the city of Košice allows the city and, with the prior consent of the city and the city district, within the scope of its competence, to conclude agreements, establish associations and engage in international cooperation. There is also a separate law applying to the capital city of Slovakia, Bratislava, but there are no sections on international cooperation.

a partnership agreement, agreement, or memorandum.² It must be approved by the local/city council for a long-term period.³

Regional self-government consists of higher territorial units (known as self-governing regions). The international cooperation undertaken by self-governing regions is regulated by § 5 of Act No. 302/2001 on the self-government of higher territorial units. A self-governing region may, within the scope of its competences, cooperate with territorial and administrative units or with offices of other states performing regional functions. They have the right to become a member of international associations of territorial units or territorial bodies. Cooperation can only be conducted on the basis of a cooperation agreement⁴, which

² The contractual relations of cross-border cooperation can be divided up by type of legal force, into agreements, memoranda, declarations, letters of intent, etc. Examples of partnership cooperation between the two largest cities in eastern Slovakia: City of Košice, available online: <https://www.kosice.sk/mesto/partnerske-mesta-mesta-kosice> (accessed on January 13, 2022). City of Prešov, available online: <https://www.presov.sk/partnerske-mesta.html> (accessed on January 13, 2022). Interestingly, the City of Prešov stated that in the cooperation agreement with Mukachevo in Ukraine cooperation is complicated despite its geographical proximity, given that is a non-EU country and so there are a number of bureaucratic obstacles to mutual cooperation.

³ Z. Špačeková, A. Labátová, S. Ďurechová “Medzinárodné partnerstvá miest a obcí. Príklady dobrej praxe – inšpirácie na úspešnú spoluprácu,” [International town and city partnerships. Examples of good practice – inspiration for successful cooperation] Združenie miest a obcí, 2012, p. 14. Available online: https://www.zmos.sk/download_file.php?id=1172422 (accessed on April 30, 2022).

⁴ Prešov Self-Governing Region signed a cooperation agreement with Transcarpathian Region in Ukraine on March 15, 2005. More information is available in Slovak online: <https://www.po-kraj.sk/sk/samosprava/medzinarodna-spolupraca/bilateralna-spolupraca/zakarpatska-oblast-ukrajina/dohoda-spolupraci.html> (accessed on January 22, 2022) and a declaration on cooperation with Ivano-Frankivsk Region on June 2, 2004, but this cooperation is on a formal level. Košice Self-Governing Region has only a memorandum of cooperation with Transcarpathian Region in Ukraine, signed in October 2006. Available online: <https://web.vucke.sk/sk/fakty-kraji/ine/partnerske-regiony/> (accessed on January 22, 2022).

must contain the statutory requirements. Co-operation agreements must be concluded in writing and approved in advance by an absolute majority of the self-governing regional council. There are other less substantial forms of cooperation that do not fall under this law (declarations, memoranda, cooperation protocols, cooperation intentions, etc.). In our past research experience⁵ the cooperation agreements are often merely of a formal nature.

The key role in managing and organizing international cooperation between municipalities and cities is played by their highest elected representatives (presidents of higher territorial units, mayors). Under the law these elected representatives can set up permanent or temporary advisory and control bodies (commissions) and these can handle cross-border cooperation, foreign relations and the like. They can also set up agencies/organizations (for tourism, regional development, etc.) under the association law or other laws (for example Act no. 539/2008 on supporting regional development or Act No. 91/2010 on promoting tourism). Organizational units can be created within the municipal and regional offices to handle foreign relations and protocol. The point of these units is to develop foreign relations and support cross-border (project) cooperation.



⁵ For example, an SFPA project titled “Improving European cooperation between local and regional authorities in order to make territorial self-government more efficient.” The project outputs are available online in Slovak at <https://www.sfpa.sk/sk/project/zlepsenie-europskej-spolupracuvuc-za-ucelom-zefektivnenia-uzemnej-samospravy/> (accessed on April 28, 2022).

Slovakia does not have a separate law on cross-border cooperation, but EU membership gives Slovak self-governments additional opportunities to engage in institutional cross-border cooperation. The law on supporting regional development defines a Euroregion as a territorial cooperation structure of representatives of socio-economic partners operating at the regional and local level in neighboring countries, established for the purposes of cross-border cooperation. Under cross-border cooperation law, Euroregions located partly in Slovakia are interest associations of legal entities with a registered office in the Slovak Republic. Under Act no. 90/2008 on European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, municipalities and higher territorial units can become members of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The local or regional authorities must consent to membership. According to the List of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation⁶, Ukraine belongs to only one EGTC (Tisza EGTC based in Kiszvárd, Hungary).⁷

Municipalities, cities, and self-governing regions initiated mutually beneficial partnership cooperation with counterparts in Ukraine, especially after Slovakia's accession to the EU, via mainly joint cross-border projects relating to the European Structural Investment Funds, but also other sources and grant schemes (e.g., the Good Governance

⁶ "European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation," European Committee of the Regions January 20, 2022. Available online: https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/CoRAactivities/Documents/Official_List_of_the_EGTCs.pdf?Web=0 (accessed on March 17, 2022).

⁷ However, there is talk of setting up a new EGTC. It would contain Košice Self-Governing Region and Prešov Self-Governing Region in Slovakia and three Ukrainian regions: Transcarpathia, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk. See J. Otriová, "Radí Hegerovi: Na Ukrajine, aj u nás je chudobina. Nie sme pupok sveta," [Advising to Heger: in both, Ukraine and Slovakia, there is a poverty: We are not the top of the world] *Korzář*, February 2, 2022. Available online: <https://korzar.sme.sk/c/22833436/radi-hegerovi-na-ukrajine-aj-u-nas-je-chudobina-nie-sme-pupok-sveta.html> (accessed on March 17, 2022).



and Cross-Border Cooperation program funded by the EEA and Norway Grants⁸), depending on the programming period and policy priorities. The cooperation is based on project partnership agreements, project cooperation intentions, financial contribution agreements, cooperation and project financing agreements and other project agreements. Municipalities, cities and regions do not have to engage directly in these projects but can do so through the organizations in their founding area. Municipalities are permitted to become part of a local action group (LAG) and many are.⁹ LAGs are also involved in cross-border cooperation projects.

The legal framework, consisting of the national and international legislation on self-government and cross-border cooperation, is another key aspect. It comprises Slovakia's international obligations under multilateral and bilateral agreements, treaties, memoranda of understanding, implementation and technical protocols (e.g., agreements on cross-border cooperation with neighboring countries

⁸ For more see Slovak version of the EEA grants website, available online: <https://www.eeagrants.sk/programy/dobre-spravovanie-a-cezhranicna-spolupraca/projekty/> (accessed on January 18, 2023).

⁹ "Zoznam schválených miestnych akčných skupín pre obdobie implementácie 2014–2020," [List of approved Local Action Groups for the 2014–2020 implementation period] National Rural Development Network of the Slovak Republic. Available online: <https://www.nsrv.sk/?pl=91> (accessed on December 17, 2022).

or on trade, scientific and cultural cooperation with countries of interest). There is also the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Entities or Authorities, including the Additional Protocol and Protocol No 2, whose purpose is to encourage local and regional authorities to set up cross-border and inter-territorial (non-adjacent territorial entities or authorities) cooperation agreements. Slovakia signed a cross-border cooperation agreement with Ukraine under this convention. The European Charter of Local Self-Government, ratified by the Slovak Republic and Ukraine, also covers local government rights in the area.¹⁰

In Ukraine, local and regional authorities are regulated by the Constitution of Ukraine¹¹ and the laws on local self-government in Ukraine,¹² local state administrations,¹³

¹⁰ More detail can be found in A. Duleba, M. Cirner, "Country profile: Slovakia," in *Comparative analysis on the competencies of regional and local authorities in the field of CBC of the 5 countries*. Budapest: CES-CI, 2021, pp. 47–57. Available online: <https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/comparative-analysis-on-the-competencies-of-regional-and-local-authorities-in-the-field-of-cbc-of-the-5-countries/> (accessed on February 24, 2023).; M. Cirner, I. Dudinská, "A comparison of political and administrative competences of regional and local actors (an analysis of the national legislatures of Slovakia and Ukraine, context, aims)," in G. Székely, ed., *Cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine III: Policies and practices of regional and local actors*. Prešov: Prešov University Publishing House, 2019. pp. 19–48.

¹¹ "Конституція України, (Відомості Верховної Ради України (ВВР), № 254к/96-ВР" [Constitution of Ukraine] 254k/96/VR, 1996. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

¹² "Закон України Про місцеве самоврядування в Україні," [Law of Ukraine on local self-government in Ukraine] 280/97-VR 1997. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/280/97-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

¹³ Закон України Про місцеві державні адміністрації," [Law of Ukraine on local state administrations] 586/XIV, 1999. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/586-14#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

cross-border cooperation,¹⁴ the principles of state regional policy¹⁵ and the state border.¹⁶ Under Article 140 of the constitution and Article 5 of the law on local self-government, the local self-government includes: territorial community (village, settlement, city) council, executive bodies, mayor, district and regional councils representing the common interests of territorial communities, and bodies of self-organization of the population.

In 2015, Ukraine began implementing its decentralization reforms. Under the law on the voluntary association of territorial communities, adjacent villages, settlements, and cities may form a territorial community. According to the official data from the Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories, 982 united territorial communities have been created.¹⁷ In a city territorial community the administrative center of the united territorial community is a city, if it is a settlement, then a territorial settlement community is formed, and if it is a village, a village territorial community is formed (Article 3).¹⁸

In Ukraine, Article 1 of the law on cross-border cooperation of June 24, 2004, stipulates that cross-border cooperation

¹⁴ "Закон України Про транскордонне співробітництво," [Law of Ukraine on cross-border cooperation] 1861-IV, 2004. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1861-15#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

¹⁵ "Закон України Про засади державної регіональної політики," [Law of Ukraine on principles of state regional policy] 156-VIII, 1991. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/156-19#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

¹⁶ "Закон України Про державний кордон України," [Law of Ukraine on the state border] 1777-XII, 1991. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1777-12#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

¹⁷ Data from the Ministry for the Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine.

¹⁸ "Закон України Про добровільне об'єднання територіальних громад," [Law of Ukraine on the voluntary Association of Territorial Communities] 157-VIII, 2015 Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/157-19#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

can be performed by territorial communities, their representative bodies and associations (local self-government bodies) and local executive bodies.¹⁹ Article 7 of the law on cross-border cooperation sets out the competencies of local government and local executive bodies in cross-border cooperation, including signing cross-border cooperation agreements and overseeing implementation; compliance with Ukraine's obligations under international cross-border cooperation agreements; helping create and implement joint initiatives, activities, projects, programs and strategies; setting up cross-border cooperation bodies; decisions on joining relevant international associations and other associations; making proposals pertaining to the organization of cross-border trade and the creation of cross-border associations; as well as other cross-border cooperation powers stemming from Ukrainian legislation and international agreements.

The law was amended to confer competence to local government (villages, settlements, city councils) and regional government (district and regional councils) for drafting and approving agreements and deciding to join or withdraw from Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (the local self-government law was amended in September 2018).²⁰ Furthermore, the cross-border cooperation law stipulates the legal basis of cross-border cooperation: international treaties ratified by parliament, including the European Framework Outline on cross-border cooperation between

¹⁹ "Закон України Про транскордонне співробітництво," [Law of Ukraine on cross-border cooperation] 1861-IV, 2004. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1861-15#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²⁰ "Закон України Про внесення змін до деяких законів України щодо транскордонного співробітництва," [Law of Ukraine on amendments to certain laws of Ukraine on cross-border cooperation] 2515-VIII, 2018. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2515-19#n119> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

territorial communities or authorities,²¹ and the first,²² second,²³ and third²⁴ protocols.

The administrative-territorial reforms of 2015 in Ukraine unified territorial communities and districts. That raised the possibility of the newly created territorial communities centering into partnership and cooperation agreements. Proposed amendments to the cross-border cooperation law were submitted to parliament in 2021 in order to create favorable conditions for partnerships and cross-border cooperation. At the same time, it is important to include territorial communities in the list of entities authorized to engage in cross-border cooperation, regulate their competencies to establish international associations, including Euroregional Cooperation Groupings, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation and Euroregions.



²¹ "European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities," Council of Europe, May 21, 1980. Available online: <https://rm.coe.int/1680078b0c> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²² "Additional Protocol to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities," Council of Europe, November 11, 1995. Available online: <https://rm.coe.int/168007cdae> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²³ "Protocol No. 2 of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning interterritorial co-operation," Council of Europe, May 5, 1998. Available online: <https://rm.coe.int/168007f2cb> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²⁴ "Protocol No. 3 of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs)," Council of Europe, November 16. 11. 2009. Available online: <https://rm.coe.int/1680084827> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

Although there is no single law on cross-border cooperation in the Slovak Republic, the existing legal frameworks in both Slovakia and Ukraine provide sufficient, diverse formal opportunities for cooperation between regional and local actors on both sides of the border.

Ukrainian–Slovak cross-border cooperation is also conducted under the bilateral international agreement on good neighborliness, friendly relations and collaboration of June 29, 1993.²⁵ The agreement was ratified in Ukraine on February 24, 1994, and entered into force on June 16. Article 8 concerns the fostering of permanent and direct contacts between central public authorities and local governments and their representatives. A separate international agreement on border issues regulates various aspects of cross-border cooperation relating to security on the Ukrainian–Slovak border.²⁶ There is also the local border traffic agreement of May 30, 2008 (amended on April 16, 2019) which has helped deepen cooperation between border areas.²⁷ Ukraine has approved various

²⁵ “Zmluva medzi Slovenskou republikou a Ukrajinou o dobrom susedstve, priateľských vzťahoch a spolupráci / Договір про добросусідство, дружні відносини і співробітництво між Україною та Словацькою Республікою,” [Agreement on Good Neighborliness, Friendly Relations and Cooperation between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic] June 29, 1993. Available online: <https://slovakia.mfa.gov.ua/sk/spolupraca/zmluvna-baza> & https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/703_150#Text (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²⁶ “Zmluva medzi Slovenskou republikou a Ukrajinou o režime na slovensko-ukrajinských štátnych hraniciach, spolupráci a vzájomnej pomoci v hraničných otázkach,” [Agreement between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic on the Ukrainian–Slovak State Border Regime, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance on Border Issues] October 14, 1993. Available online: <https://slovakia.mfa.gov.ua/sk/spolupraca/zmluvna-baza> & https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/703_001#Text (accessed on February 24, 2023).

²⁷ “Zmluva medzi Slovenskou republikou a Ukrajinou o malom pohraničnom styku,” [Agreement between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic on local border traffic] May 30, 2008. Available online: <https://slovakia.mfa.gov.ua/sk/spolupraca/zmluvna-baza> & https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/703_076#Text (accessed on February 24, 2023).

State Programs for the Development of Cross-border Cooperation. Those of particular relevance to cross-border projects with Slovakia are the programs for 2007–2010,²⁸ 2011–2015²⁹ and 2016–2020.³⁰ The most recent one is the State Program for the Development of Cross-Border Cooperation for 2021–2027, aimed at deepening and developing cross-border cooperation. Effective implementation cannot be achieved without full cooperation with Slovak partners.³¹



²⁸ “Постанова Про затвердження Державної програми розвитку транскордонного співробітництва на 2007-2010 роки,” [Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on approval of the state program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2007–2010,” No. 1819, December 2006. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1819-2006-%D0%BF#Text> (accessed on December 12, 2021).

²⁹ “Постанова Про затвердження Державної програми розвитку транскордонного співробітництва на 2011-2015 роки,” [Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on approval of the state program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2011–2015] No. 1088, December 1, 2010. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1088-2010-%D0%BF#n14> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

³⁰ “Постанова Про затвердження Державної програми розвитку транскордонного співробітництва на 2016-2020 роки,” [Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on approval of the state program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2016–2020] No. 554, August 23, 2016. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/554-2016-%D0%BF#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

³¹ “Постанова Про затвердження Державної програми розвитку транскордонного співробітництва на 2021-2027 роки,” [Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on approval of the state program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2021–2027] No. 408, April 14, 2021. Available online: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/408-2021-%D0%BF#Text> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

Cooperation agreements are usually aimed at multiple areas of cooperation, including regional economic development, transport infrastructure, safe and efficient use of natural resources, implementation of flood control measures, tourism, and preservation of cultural and historical heritage. For example, the preamble to the Agreement on Cross-Border Cooperation between the Territorial Local Authorities in the River Tisza Basin states that the aim of the cooperation is to create a framework for joint activities not covered by other national, regional, and local development programs. Such activities can take the form of joint projects involving the use of existing EU financial sources. Article 6 states that relations between government agencies, businesses and NGOs need strengthening, notably to support cooperation among Prytysyan settlements to ensure genuine cooperation in the region on a daily basis.³²

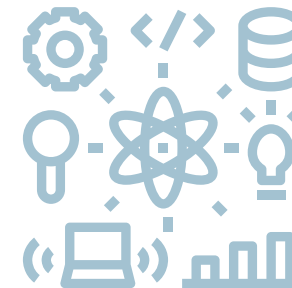
Cooperation began intensifying after Slovakia's EU accession but was still limited. The Slovak-Ukrainian border and the focus on EU member states among Slovak local and regional actors remained a problem. EU cooperation was more beneficial, given the joint projects and absence of the many bureaucratic and other obstacles that hampered engagement with Ukrainian partners (border, corruption, the incompatible and problematic legal and economic environment, etc.). Nevertheless, the institutional cooperation

³² "Agreement on cooperation between the General Assembly of Bacs-Kiskun (Hungary), the General Assembly of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (Hungary), the General Assembly of Csongrád (Hungary), the General Assembly of Gaidu-Bigar (Hungary), the General Assembly of Heves (Hungary), the General Assembly of Jas-Nagykun-Szolnok Region (Hungary), the General Assembly of Košice Self-Government Region (Slovakia), Transcarpathian Regional Council (Ukraine), Maramures County Council (Romania), the General Assembly of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, Satu Mare County Council (Romania), Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (Serbia)," May 12, 2016 (in Ukrainian). Available online: <https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/view/ZA160245?an=87> (accessed on February 24, 2023).

between regional and local actors in Slovakia and Ukraine is muted and often seems to be a mere formality. Despite the cooperation agreements, many municipalities are not involved in joint projects or cross-border activities. We can therefore state that in 2022, despite there being almost no legislative or other obstacles, the potential for cooperation remains largely unexploited.

The state administration and self-government bodies are not very active in cross-border cooperation. In case of Slovakia this may partly be because decentralization is incomplete and many municipalities have very small populations, low budgets and lack capacity. However, in cities or self-governing regions, it may be the result of a lack of strategic planning and not perceiving this kind of cooperation to be beneficial, and therefore not investing more energy into searching for opportunities and embarking on project implementation.

Our own academic experience shows that relationships are being renewed with academic institutions in Ukraine, partly through grant schemes, some of which are EU ones. Such projects have greatly helped to revitalize formal cooperation and launch new cooperation. However, the sustainability of the cooperation is a stumbling block, given the reliance on joint projects. Much of the collaboration is intensive but is limited to project duration. After the financial and other benefits have been exhausted, the cooperation often does not continue.





Cooperation agreement-based partnerships would motivate and provide vision and the commitment to seek additional cooperation opportunities, not just for preparing new projects (which is desirable), but also in institutional cooperation, in which own resources, time and capacity, as all partnerships require attention so they do not “fade,” particularly when times are harder. A partnership is also symbolic and a commitment that should not be down to the individual – activists, politicians, entrepreneurs – but part of the corporate/organizational culture and should continue when the politician, NGO director or head of company leaves.

Stability, in all senses of the word but especially political stability, is important as well. Ukraine has suffered in this way on several occasions, and not only through its own fault. After Euromaidan, Ukraine began to open its doors to Europe and the EU reciprocated through the visa-free regime and EU–Ukraine Association Agreement. Thousands of Ukrainians work or study in Eastern Slovakia, which will continue to foster mutual partnerships. The war and the situation in Eastern Ukraine in 2022 also raise questions about Ukraine’s stability. But they should be an additional reason for local and regional actors in Slovakia to help their counterparts and seek opportunities to help Ukraine as a whole, as stability in Ukraine is conducive to stability in Slovakia. There is no denying the historical, cultural, linguistic, religious, geographical, economic, and other ties between the countries.

Ukrainians are more proactive in finding partners, but Slovakia engages less. The Carpathian Euroregion is hampered by the passivity shown by many municipalities, as well as failures by big players, in formal cooperation agreements, the absence of a European Territorial Cooperation Association, which must be based in the EU, although Ukrainian partners may be members. The legislation is no longer the main obstacle to cooperation. Partnerships and agreements shall be meaningful, not just a pen pushing exercise. The focus should be on strategic and long-term bilateral planning.

The private and non-profit sectors appear to have overtaken the public administration (self-government). Often their cooperation is informal cooperation but more deeply rooted than the formal cooperation between local governments. There is untapped potential on both sides of the border that must be utilized. The legislative environment is favorable, but the institutional forms of cooperation need more work. There is no real need for new legislation, greater more responsible use should be made of the existing legislation, which can be amended and adapted when needed.

About SFPA

Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), founded in August 1993, is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization whose activities are devoted to active contribution to the integration of the Slovak Republic to the community of democratic states and their political and security structures. It is the oldest foreign policy think-tank in Slovakia. Through its programs of meetings, seminars, workshops and publications, the SFPA spreads objective information about international relations from primary sources. Its research center (RC) was established in 1995. In accordance with its status, the RC SFPA provides:

- independent expert analyses on crucial issues of international relations and foreign policy;
- publishes periodical and non-periodical expert publications serving to increase awareness in the field of international relations and foreign policy and to serve as a source of qualified information for both, the expert and general public;
- organizes expert events and participates in international scientific cooperation in the field of international relations and security;
- contributes to the fostering of the expert discourse on international relations and foreign policy;
- creates a favorable environment for the growth of the new generation of the Slovak experts in the field of international relations; and
- stimulates the interest of wider Slovak public in the global events as well as a deeper understanding of the significance of foreign policy and its link to the domestic policy.

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