

THE IMPACT OF EU ENLARGEMENT ON CROSSBORDER COOPERATION: THE CASE OF BREST AND SIEDLCE

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1. Introduction

A favorable geographical location can be a significant source of income, often determining the level of prosperity of the inhabitants of a border town or region. At the same time, it is known that when a difference of potential exists in regions on two sides of the border, there is a natural tendency for the difference to get smaller up to the point of disappearing altogether. Since 1993, this old truth has been modified to a large extent as the traditional barriers posed by state borders were abolished within the European Single Market of the 15 EU member states. With Poland's admission to the EU, expected at the end of 2002 or several years later, the external boundary of the EU will run on the Bug River. In the light of the ongoing processes of globalization and the advances of European integration, it should be assumed that current prejudices and fears of a political and ideological as well as psychological and economic nature will prove to be unwarranted.

1. State borders in WWI time

The end of the bipolar division of the world coincided with the massive introduction of new technology and means of communication that were at the root of the processes of economic globalization. Past experience showed that a state border could unite or divide nations, be conducive to an open or an isolationist attitude toward neighbors, be neutral or friendly but could also generate hostile attitudes when it becomes subordinated to unfriendly contacts between people and states, when chauvinism or separatism prevail. And the societies hit by war also know that there can be a blazing frontier.

However, in an information society, benefiting from access to various information media on a large scale, at a time of progress in telecommunications, the increasingly widespread access to the World Wide Web and virtual reality, such extreme recommendations as the requirement of pursuing the goal of autarky in economy, the maintenance of full isolation and control are perceived as being out of date. Most importantly, they are becoming less and less efficient and less practicable, never mind the doctrinaire substantiation of such approach. The modern communication technology has surprising fast become an important tool in person-to-person contacts. For example, a mobile phone provided the independence that is indispensable for doing business. Such developments have hardly been appreciated so far in analyses dealing with the role and nature of state boundaries, despite the fact that they contributed greatly to the view of the network of ties, the shaping of spatial functionalities, also in the cross-border relations and cooperation in the post-communist countries.

3. The impact of market economy on the functioning of state borders

Market economy, along with the behavior and economic instruments and mechanisms peculiar to it, generates a climate of openness radiating across borders. The consent to the appearance of a market and to unrestrained pursuit of economic activity, the awareness of the appeal of trade that generates profits, exploits exchange rate differences, the swings in supply and demand, the alternating business cycles and especially the rewarding of enterprise are other milestones from the point of view of trans-border contacts.

The existence of various civic institutions and organisations characteristic of the democratic order and a civic society is an important element influencing trans-border relations.¹ That civic society is alternatively called an open society² The diversity and wealth of institutions and initiatives may lag far behind that of societies with a long democratic tradition but they nonetheless play an important role in the shaping of relations between neighbors and partners. The emerging institutions draw inspiration from the experience of individuals, their interests and aspirations, successfully setting in train the mechanisms of institutionalisation, starting each time from the phase of spontaneous self-organization. All the time, there is the acute awareness of the shortcomings of Polish-Belarusian contacts, which may stem for example, from the incomplete institutional infrastructure of the market³

This was articulated on the Polish side by the administrative officers of the border gminas (communes) of the new Lublin voivodship: from Terespol, Sławatycze, Dorohusk, Horodło and Lubycz Królewska, who signed the Agreement of Border Gminas of the Eastern Belt on the site of the truck customs clearance terminal at Koroszczyn near Terespol on April 26, 1999. At the same, they performed a symbolic opening of the facility by cutting a green ribbon, the color of which was meant to symbolize the hope for an early opening of that terminal. The facility was built over a period of several years, a mirror image of a terminal that has operated for a number of years already in Swiecko on the Polish-German border.

The advancing institutionalisation of trans-border cooperation, which has been rationalised by the market all the time, has been accompanied by its spontaneous adjustment to the scale and direction of the ties and gravitation, be it local, regional or international. This is a peculiar process of opening up the economies of border regions to the influence of the world system thanks to the restitution of processes interrupted in the communist period. The characteristic feature of the period of transformation is the fact that under the influence of political factors, the directions of gravitation and ties mentioned above assume the right institutional shape. For example, in the Trans-European and trans-continental corridor region, of which both Brest and Siedlce constitute one segment,⁴ local contacts are certainly weakly institutionalised but the degree of that institutionalisation is higher at the regional level, using the number of institutions involved in it as a yardstick. For example, there is no youth exchange at any level of education, from kindergarten to university, and there is no close cooperation between cultural institutions or local government bodies of the lowest level.

Meanwhile institutionalisation at the state level, which is basically embraced by bilateral inter-government agreements and conforms to standards envisaged by international conventions, remains too general to be able to operate efficiently at the local government level. For example, Poland should make it easier for Belarusian and CIS subjects to cross the border on a local basis. Self-government activists on the Polish side have been advocating the allocation of part of the revenue from import duties to the development of border-region gminas. The signatories of the aforementioned agreement also want to open pedestrian border crossings across the Bug. In their opinion, the introduction of such changes would trigger the development of local enterprise and lead to the growth of export of Polish food and clothing to the East. Self-government leaders are interested in setting up a pressure group, a lobby that could effectively articulate their interests in Warsaw.

From the point of view of the effects of Belarusian-Polish efforts, a lot can still be done in the field of trans-border contacts. There appears to be insufficient institutionalisation of local contacts, if we ignore the occasional periods of prosperity in local trade. The limited intensity of local contacts across the border is a consequence of the weakness in the operation of institutions peculiar to a civic society. This weakness may reflect a legacy of the past, especially so as some elements of the old regulations remain in force in the late 1990s, despite the different conditions in which these countries now live, even though they are no longer useful. However, the fact that they are still in force is conducive to fraud in the border region⁵ and in contacts across the border. This can mar goodneighbourly relations⁶ and have an adverse effect on the future development chances acceptable to the international community⁷. The emphasis in cooperation should be on contacts between business institutions and local government bodies on both sides of the frontier.

4. The consequences of institutional weakness for trans-border cooperation

It may well be that the emergence of a clear institutional gap is facilitated by the fact that there are not enough organisations operating between the "market" and the "state," which in a democratic social order would be equipped with the right to participate in decision-making and in management⁸. The decision-making processes and the appraisal of matters related to trans-border contacts that are important from the point of view of the interests of local communities also offer a chance of development of trans-border cooperation. It has long been known that civic organisations can create a good soil for various situational factors that emerge in border areas⁹. Thanks to the transition to a different system, it is mainly business people, who were the first to start setting up the indispensable business organisations, that are interested in creating the institutional order of trans-border cooperation.

The growth of bilateral economic turnover as a rule elicited only limited institutional reflection in the intensity of local and regional trans-border cooperation. The effects of the shortcomings mentioned above can best be seen in the existence of negative artefacts for trans-border contacts because they grow on the fertile soil of old stereotypes, prejudices and phobias. Characteristically, the state border exists especially stubbornly in

the old shape in human consciousness, in the ideas, ideologies and myths inherited from the old system. This is helped by the fact that many people feel that they got lost and "don't cope" in the transition environment, becoming marginalised in the process. It is due to the weakness of the structures of a civic society, for example, that there is no public discourse and scientific achievements in this respect are not satisfactory either. The confusion surrounding the systems of values and the nascent norms gives way to an apotheosis of entrepreneurship¹⁰ This is when old myths are revived, when people willingly reach for the simple black-and-white juxtaposition, clear negations and options and to unquestionable obvious observations, which nonetheless can ultimately generate a genuine threat to Polish-Belarusian good-neighbourly relations and partnership indispensable in trans-border cooperation. The unjustified fears regarding Poland's future accession to the European Union that have appeared in Belarus already and that are not duly appreciated by the Polish side are a good case in point.

5. Some aspects of Poland's future EU membership: the trans-border cooperation context

Poland's future membership of the European Union, perceived in the context of trans-border cooperation,¹¹ should be examined from several selected angles. The problem is narrowed down to trans-border cooperation, which is vitally important for areas that used to be treated as peripheral ones in the economic practice of the last half-century¹² Although the 1990s have contributed to the ennoblement of the border region, emphasising its trans-border nature, the neglected infrastructure and the evident delays in civilisational development call for a radical reorientation and for launching remedial action. Future membership means that the EU standards will have to be observed also with regard to the Polish-Belarusian border.¹³ The Union itself, incidentally, is increasingly often referred to as the "Europe of regions" or "Europe without borders."¹⁴ This is a consequence of the changes taking place in the continent's geopolitics. For Poland's eastern regions, this translates into new development challenges.¹⁵ In order to live up to these challenges, the voivodships of eastern Poland were the first to set up their own regional office in Brussels in 1999. In this context, trans-border cooperation proves to be strongly tied to inter-regional and international cooperation, which generates the specific problems of border areas.

The appearance of the external boundary of the European Union on the Bug, similarly as its previous appearance on the Oder,¹⁶ can therefore become an important factor stimulating the development of border areas. EU membership is understood as the need to present oneself in a dignified manner, as an equal, in the family of European regions, and this compels the regions to intensify investment processes based on Western patterns, so as to close the civilisation gap. It is assumed that this is a program whose accomplishments will have a positive impact on the diffusion of technological and organisational innovation in trans-border contacts, setting in train multiplier effects in the economic activity of regions. The experience of the affluent Western countries indicates that border regions happen to be the biggest beneficiaries of the planned changes. There are expectations of the emergence of new needs, new regional aspirations and new

institutions, a consequence of which will be new specialization, new professions once new firms are established there, etc. Then there will be a realistic chance of making a better use of the dormant development potential of the inter-border and trans-border Siedlce-Brest region, where the lack of capital for the execution of investment projects is painfully felt on both sides and where partnership and neighbourly relations could be more fruitful than they are now¹⁷

It is already possible to give examples of foreign firms from the top multinational league, which develop their activity on various continents, in many countries, regardless of the socio-economic system or political preferences, whose presence is easily spotted in the landscape of the streets on both sides of the border, in Brest as well as in Siedlce. This could be an argument confirming that we are also within the orbit of the advancing globalization processes. It should be noted that these processes are taking place regardless of a given country's membership of one union or another—or aspirations for such membership. The processes of uniformisation and unification are taking place parallel to diversification processes. Societies are adapting to behavior patterns, styles, fashions that are being imposed on them, and before long they accept them as socially desirable norms.

Incidentally, the wealth societies have seen the emergence of the movement of the Greens, which is a form of protest and of promotion of balanced growth. It seems to me that the inhabitants of the southern part of the Polish Podlasie region and of Belarus's western Polesye will not get a chance to come across such movement in the trans-border region for at least some time. On the other hand, it is debatable if the asymmetry in the levels of affluence in bilateral relations will be perceived from the angle of tolerance and increasingly similar lifestyles. Nonetheless the trans-border and trans-culture problems or, in other words, of inter-cultural communication remain open at the time of European integration. Similarly, it is worth discussing the model of European multi-cultural approach in border regions.

It should be noted that Poland's future accession to the EU is going to be a difficult and complex process¹⁸ In the spring of 1999, Poland was formally significantly behind schedule in relation to the negotiations timetable, compared to other candidates for membership. The review of conformity of Polish laws with EU legislation has revealed a plethora of/technical problems; for example, the EU authorities are skeptical about the effectiveness of Poland's services in collecting import duties and taxes along the future external boundaries of the EU. On the other hand, Poland undertook to apply EU external tariffs in its trade policy. In the light of bilateral agreements and of obligations ensuing from membership of WTO, Brussels will have to pay compensation¹⁹ because import duties in Poland are higher than in the EU, e.g. with regard to electronics.

Poland's membership of the EU will lead to some restrictions on Polish-Belarusian contacts. It should be emphasized that the decisions on trans-border trade and movement of people is not made in Warsaw but in Brussels, with Poland's participation. Such a policy also opens new opportunities by bringing Belarus closer to Brussels and other West European capitals. The significant changes in the movement of people across the

border are a consequence of the implementation of the Schengen Information System, in which all the visas issued are recorded. While the Schengen system limits access of outsiders to EU countries, it also significantly widens the freedom of movement inside the EU for those who have Schengen-class visas. In order to avoid the kind of problems that occurred on the Polish-Belarusian border at the beginning of 1998 it is necessary to expand the telecommunications infrastructure between Polish consular offices, the Warsaw headquarters and the Schengen system authority. Thanks to this system, the Polish consulate in Brest, for example, will provide services to all EU citizens who are in Western Belarus and need some assistance. It must be forcefully emphasized that the Polish position boils down in practice to the observance of the principle that borders must be controlled not closed down.

At the same time, in the changed environment there appear more and more institutions that strengthen self-government, the self-organisation of the society, or that manage the funds transferred by the EU under the structural funds scheme. In this context, using the inspiration flowing from the Oder region, it is worth considering the usefulness of, for example, a joint Polish-Belarusian university, environmental monitoring stations, stations measuring the water level in the Bug or the monitoring of sociological developments in the Polish-Belarusian borderland, an economic cooperation society similar to the Polish-German society in Gorzów, the establishment of the Polish Cultural Institute or the European Institute, that would be co-managed and co-financed by Poland and other European countries and would convey knowledge about Poland and other EU countries and about the EU itself. We should be calling for a reform of the Tacis system and some programs of structural funds, so as to be able to use them for building joint projects on the Polish-Belarusian border.

Given the current Polish efforts to secure accession to the EU, there is a need to remember about the geopolitical significance of the Republic of Belarus in European politics. An example to follow is that of the Russian Federation,²⁰ which found a place in the prestigious G8 group, contributing its knowledge and experience and helping solve conflicts on the international arena.

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ZARZĄDZANIE BEZPIECZEŃSTWEM PRACY W DUŻYCH PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWACH

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Współczesna i nowoczesna wiedza z zakresu bezpieczeństwa pracy kojarzy nam się z pojęciem „zarządzania bezpieczeństwem pracy” utożsamianym również z „zarządzaniem ryzykiem” czyli unikaniem strat zarówno technicznych jak i ludzi, którzy w procesach pracy narażeni są na utratę zdrowia i życia.

Wynika to m.in. ze znanej maksymy Petera Druckera, którą można sprowadzić do słów:

Najważniejszym zadaniem w biznesie jest przeżyć. Podstawowym celem ekonomicznym jest unikanie strat a nie maksymalizacja zysku.

Bezpieczeństwo pracy w nowoczesnych przedsiębiorstwach to problem najważniejszej wagi [1]. Ranga tego problemu wynika z zagrożeń wypadkowych i z zagrożeń zdrowia, kosztów ich leczenia, świadczeń powypadkowych, kosztów zaburzeń procesów produkcyjnych nie mówiąc już o trudnych do oszacowania kosztach społecznych.

Zachodni eksperci uważają, że ogólne koszty samych tylko wypadków przy pracy wynoszą przeciętnie 1 – 4% dochodu narodowego [2]. Wielu autorów [3] uważa, że w/w koszty w samej tylko Polsce osiągają wielkość 5% jej dochodu narodowego.

Niestety problematykę bezpieczeństwa pracy w wielu przedsiębiorstwach, w tym również i w polskich przedsiębiorstwach, traktuje się dość często jako drugorzędną. W przypadku polskich kopalń węgla kamiennego znalazła się ona dopiero na 10 miejscu w skali 12 podstawowych priorytetów tych przedsiębiorstw [4]. A co można powiedzieć o małych przedsiębiorstwach, których w 1994 roku tylko w Polsce było ok. 88% ogółu wszystkich zakładów pracy?

Znaczący wypada, że nie jest to tylko nasz polski problem, choć u nas można już dostrzec znamiona poprawy (Kodeks pracy, program rządowy SPR1, projekty norm dotyczące systemu zarządzania bezpieczeństwem i ryzyka zawodowego, pierwsze Systemy Zarządzania Bezpieczeństwem Pracy w dużych przedsiębiorstwach).