

CROSS BORDER COOPERATION: ROMANIA - BULGARIA

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Abstract

The paper aimed to present the European territorial cooperation with an important role in removing obstacles and stimulating cross-border cooperation. More than a third of EU citizens live and work in border regions of Europe. Borders have an impact both directly and indirectly on their lives. Euro-regions consist of sub-regional cooperation which contributes to the development of economic and social cohesion of the geographical border areas including administrative units in neighbouring states and non-EU states. Cooperation in this framework is to create permanent direct links between regions and communities on either side of the border state under the powers of local authorities and in accordance with national legislation.

Key words: cross-border, cooperation, opportunity, communities

INTRODUCTION

More than a third of EU citizens live and work in border regions of Europe.

Borders have an impact both directly and indirectly on their lives.

European territorial cooperation has an important role in removing obstacles and stimulating cross-border cooperation. Although relatively few have a budget, Interreg projects have been countless concrete achievements for citizens in various areas, including border security, transportation, education, energy, health, training or job creation.

In the 2014-2020 period, over € 10 billion will be invested in the cooperation between regions, of which approximately EUR 6.6 billion will be directed to border regions.

This should ensure maximum impact and use the more effective investment.

However, a significant economic potential remains fruitless in border areas because of a lack of confidence or even the existence of negative attitudes among neighbouring countries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Promoting cross-border cooperation through Euro-regions is based on:

-increasing trust and tolerance, understanding and good neighbourly relations, especially in border regions where minorities exist;

-improve the efficiency and service delivery to citizens through the association of public and private facilities and services on both sides of the border;

-managing issues involving accountability, coordination and joint actions environmental protection, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters or man, etc;

-co-ordination of mutual interest, such as those in the field of regional planning, urban and rural development, flood protection;

-CBC setting bodies to ensure that cross-border relations are sustained and improved.

Program fosters the creation of sustainable and competitive communities by using a resource effectiveness, promoting profitable initiatives and opportunities offered by the development and horizontal cross flows in the corridor Danube / Black Sea.

The specific objectives of the programme are:
-improving the process of planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems in order to ensure better connections to the transport network TEN-T;

-increase safety on inland waterways and maritime transport;



Fig.1. Area of the Border Cooperation Programme between Romania and Bulgaria

- improving the sustainable use of natural resources and heritage;
- improving the sustainable management of ecosystems in the border area;
- improving risk management in the common border area;
- encouraging the cross-border integration in terms of employment and labor mobility;
- Cooperation increased capacity and efficiency of public institutions in the context of cross-border cooperation.

-Border Cooperation Programme between Romania and Bulgaria for the period 2014-2020 includes seven counties in eight districts in Bulgaria and Romania which are composed largely of municipalities.

The overall strategy of this program was formulated in direct response to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In the EU 2020 strategy, the EU has set ambitious targets to be achieved by 2020 in five main areas:

- employment: 75% of people aged 20-64 to be employed;
- Research and development: 3% of EU GDP to be invested in research and development;
- climate change and sustainable energy: emissions of greenhouse to be 20% (or 30% if the conditions are right) lower than in 1990; 20% of energy to come from renewable energy sources, increasing energy efficiency by 20%;
- Education: reducing early school leaving rates below 10% and at least 40% of young people aged 30-34 years to complete their third level studies;
- Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion to be at least 20 million fewer people in or at

risk of poverty and social exclusion.

-In addition, the program fosters the creation of sustainable and competitive communities by using a resource effectiveness, promoting profitable initiatives and opportunities offered by the development and horizontal cross flows in the corridor Danube / Black Sea.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The transport system of the Romania - Bulgaria Cross Border Cooperation Programme region (CBC), which entails four modes of transportation- road, water, rail and air, suffers serious challenges.

First, there is almost no connectivity at a cross-border level and its connectivity with the TEN-T corridors is very low. There is no optimized system of connections between the different modes of transportation. Thus, the accessibility of the region to businesses and people is seriously limited.

Second, the road infrastructure is heavily used for transit and internal transportation, creating bottlenecks and reducing the efficiency of the freight and passenger transportation in the CBC region. The costs for the business as well as the transportation time are higher. This further poses traffic safety issues. Indeed, the number of traffic accident, including with fatalities is very high. The underutilized green transport results in higher carbon emissions in the target area. A new, flexible and with improved infrastructure and intermodal connections transport system is needed in the CBC area.

“The Ecological Initiative and Sustainable Development Group” is a partner in the project of cross border cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria, on the Priority Area 1 : A well connected region, “Investigation of opportunities for reducing the TEN-T network use within the cross-border region Romania-Bulgaria through optimization of the freight and passenger transport and the development of a joint mechanism for support of the intermodal connections”.

The total budget of the project is 1,428,765.75 euro, from which ERDF 1,214,450.87 euro, contribution from the state budget (Romania and Bulgaria) 185,739.54 euro and 28,575.32

euro beneficiary's own contribution.

The project addresses the accessibility, efficiency, ecology and safety problems of the CBC transport system, improving the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems for better connections with TEN-T network. This is done through investment in a common study, planning and adoption of strategic documents on the optimizing of the transport system through enhanced intermodal interconnections in the CBC area.

The main project objective is to significantly improve the planning, development and coordination of CBC transport systems for better connections with TEN-T network in CBC area.

The results of the Project: 1 preliminary study on intermodal nodes' current state and their capability to enhance the TEN-T network within the CBC area, 1 common strategy on TEN-T network enhancement through improving intermodal nodes' capacity.

The documents, produced in the scope of the project will be presented and handed to all the stakeholders- public authorities in charge of transport planning and policy, transport professionals, businesses, non-governmental sector; to multiply the results of the project. The key stakeholders are involved in the development of the study and strategy in the scope of the project and, thus, they "own" the Project's results and are committed to adjustment of their transport planning and strategic documents to accommodate better solutions, related to the use of the intermodal node's capacity in the CBC region. Further, they can use the produced study and strategy, and invest in intermodal infrastructure and facilities. Stakeholders, national and local authorities, can use the elaborated common study and strategy to seek financial support from public, European or other, or private sources.

The project will contribute to the overall economic and social development of the cross-border area. Uninterrupted transport connectivity and communications are prerequisites for the socio-economic development of the CBC region. Smarter, faster, more secure and green transport

infrastructure and communications are key preconditions for economic development. The project results: a common and better planning of the transport infrastructure, including strategic planning, and a joint mechanism for improvement of the use of the TEN-T infrastructure and networks through improved use of the intermodal nodes' capacity directly contributes to the development of the CBC region in the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of the project is to significantly improve the planning, development and coordination of cross-border transport systems for better connections with TEN-T network. This is done through investment in the study, planning and adoption of strategic documents on optimizing of the transport system through enhanced intermodal transport connections in the CBC area.

The project will significantly contribute to socio-economic development in the target region, enhancing the region connectivity for businesses, communities and people, and of the green and smart transport systems. The project results affect positively the economy and trade in the cross-border region and create a better environment for local businesses and foreign investment. This will lead to a rise in business productivity and to economic growth.

The result will be smart and sustainable use of all modes of transportation and the intermodal nodes. The project will contribute to capacity building and cooperation of authorities and stakeholders.

The project will lead to a significantly enhanced use of the TEN-T system and the intermodal nodes in the target region. Thus, it will contribute to the sustainable development of the region in the form of long-term increase the productivity, revenues, and European development of the CBC region.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After the successful implementation and reporting of this project, the beneficiaries will use the accumulated experience and

competences to apply for financing under the same scheme or other Programmes financed by the EU or other donors, thus aiming to build on, complement and multiply the results achieved by the implementation of the current project. The focus will be on projects, related to the transport connectivity within the CBC region as well as with the TEN-T infrastructure.

An immediate effect will be the continued cross-border cooperation and exchange of good practices between the all the involved groups e.g. public authorities, scientific communities, spatial developers and others.

REFERENCES

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