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THE IDENTIFICATION OF THEMATIC AREAS OF MULTILATERAL
PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN AEBR AND KHARKOV REGION
IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONS HISTORY AND EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION

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Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) is an independent non-governmental organization that was established in 1971 with the aim of representation and institutional engagement across Europe to promote the benefits of cross-border cooperation and the specific development needs of border regions, offering policy support and practical solutions. AEBR is a membership-based organization with more than 100 member border regions, both within and outside the EU [1]. AEBR is an active participant of creation of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, the purpose of which is to help local and regional authorities of Ukraine to restore houses, schools, infrastructure and services destroyed by Russia after its invasion on February 24, 2022 [2].

The important direction of AEBR development is the organization of cooperation with Ukrainian border regions as a sphere of cross-border cooperation development and European integration of Ukraine, in accordance with Chapter 27 «Cross-border and regional cooperation» of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU [3]. The development of cooperation with Kharkiv region, as a part of the Slobozhanshchyna Euroregion, began in 2004, namely on October 18, 2004. The partnership relations of the Association of European Border Regions with Kharkiv region were established then. In the historical letter of reply from the General Secretary of the AEBR, Jens Gabe to Yevgeny Kushnaryov, at that time the governor of Kharkiv region, the fact that the Slobozhanshchyna Euroregion received the status of an observer in the AEBR was recorded.

Another important milestone in the history of relations is the establishment of the Information Center of the Association of European Border Regions at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (AEBR Information Center) on November 12, 2013. Its functions were defined as the project identification and formulation.

AEBR Information Center, together with the AEBR Executive Committee, constantly developed multilateral relations with Ukrainian border regions in various thematic areas based on the principles of multilateral partnership development, which is the thematic area of AEBR development until 2030 [4], in the direction of territorial development with the participation of communities, development of civil society, creation of space for multi-level cooperation between Ukrainian border regions and Euroregions.

Within the framework of events on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of AEBR Information Center creation, a systematization of the thematic areas of multilateral cooperation between AEBR and Kharkiv region was made, which, in our opinion, will allow us to form further priorities in joint work for further development of multilateral partnership between AEBR and Kharkiv region.

Therefore, the purpose of the research is to determine the thematic areas of multilateral partnership between AEBR and the Kharkiv region, its impact on the

development of multi-level partnership between AEBR and Ukraine, taking into account the 20-year history of relations, the 10th anniversary of the AEBR Info Center establishment in Kharkiv, its activity as one of the coordinators of territorial and cross-border cooperation development in Ukraine [5] within the framework of the European integration course of Ukraine regarding the acquisition of EU membership.

An important stage in defining thematic areas were the actions related to the organization of the Assembly of Ukrainian Border Regions and Euroregions in Ukraine, which were associated with the visit of the Secretary General of the AEBR Martin Guillermo Ramirez to Kyiv in January 2020 and his negotiations with representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development of Ukraine and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Among other issues, in the publication [6], namely the following thematic areas: at the bilateral interstate level of cooperation, consideration of the issue – what support is needed for Ukrainian border regions to strengthen their development potential; the need to synchronize and harmonize the development priorities of Ukrainian border regions with the development priorities of EU Euroregions; development of civic diplomacy were identified. The presentation on the Strategic Review and Outline Proposal of the Civic Diplomacy for Territorial and Crossborder Cooperation was made by Caitriona Mullan, AEBR expert on spatial development and strategic change, in Dresden, in 2019, within the AEBR General Assembly [5].

Professor N. Gavkalova, Doctor of Economics, at the annual events of AEBR in Trysil, Norway, on October 25, 2024, made a presentation [7] in which she outlined the important thematic directions related to the cooperation with AEBR Executive Committee, Secretary General Martín Guillermo Ramírez and AEBR Task Force on External Borders, Head Johannes Moisisio, namely in such fields as: development of youth Euroregional policy: organization of cooperation between AEBR and Kharkiv region, the conclusion of agreements on inter-municipal international partnership between local and regional authorities; development of scientific cooperation; current areas of activity of AEBR Information Center

regarding the creation of functional models for the development of territorial cooperation, namely the restoration and development of territorial cooperation of the Slobozhanskiy microregion with the participation of local authorities of Ukraine in the context of the latest legislation of Ukraine in the field of regional development and international territorial cooperation, as well as functional spheres of tourism development in Kharkiv region, presented by Valentina Holodok, Director of the Regional Municipal Institution «Kharkiv Organizational and Methodological Tourism Center» of Kharkiv Regional Council.

Thus, the conducted analysis of the history of relations between the AEBR and Kharkiv region allowed us to identify the most important thematic areas of cooperation that arose due to the implementation of multilateralism principle, cover various areas of development of interstate management of territorial and cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, and contribute to the establishment of international partnerships at the local level in the context of European integration of Ukraine and long-term partnership of the AEBR Information Center, AEBR Executive Committee and AEBR Task Force on External Borders.

Prospects for further research include the identification and project formulation of thematic functional areas for the development of multilateral partnership between the AEBR and Kharkiv region in the context of AEBR Information Center work, AEBR Executive Committee and AEBR Task Force on External Borders, creation of the laboratory for the development of territories, communities and regions, supported by the Executive Committee of the AEBR and S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, formation of priorities for the development of multi-level partnerships and the implementation of standards and tools for good governance [8], strengthening cooperation between scientists, researchers and practitioners, and creation of databases in the area of development of territorial and cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU [9].

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