

History of Development and the Present Stage of Transborder Cooperation in the Tatras Euroregion

The formulation of research problem and its importance. The Tatra and Sub-Tatra Mountains are one of the richest regions in Poland and Slovakia in cultural aspect. This mountain area has never devided, but rather integrated the multicultural communities living there. The development of relations between the borderland inhabitants was influenced by cultural and language vicinity and common historical heritage. It caused the beginning of the first transborder territorial units as early as in 1920s. They usually involved the protected areas and the tourist conventions. The process of extending the institutionalization of the transborder cooperation began in the region at the beginning of the 1990s. As a result, in 2007 the Tatras Euroregion evolved into the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

Analysis of recent research on this issue shows that transborder cooperation in this region is the subject of study of various sciences, including history, macroeconomics, sociology and political science. Most important for our work principles are reflected in studies of polish authors. To the questions of Polish-Slovakian transborder cooperation are devoted the studies of J. Roszkowicz, M. Wieckowski, T. Kisielewski. In the works of R. Krafcikowa, L. Niedzielski, Ł. Lewkowicz as well as in the researches of A. Nowak and A. A. Majorczyk the functioning of the Euroregion Tatry is investigated. Despite some scrutine of the problem in general, some aspects of transborder cooperation in Euroregion Tatry require further study. One of these aspects is the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation as a new legal form of cooperation and integration in Europe.

The aim of this article is to analyze the most important ways of transborder cooperation in the Tatras Euroregion.

The main objectives of the study are: to conduct chronologically and divide into stages the history of transborder cooperation in the region; to analyze the Polish-Slovakian transborder cooperation during the interwar period; to identify the main features of transborder cooperation in the communist period; to consider the profile of the Tatras Euroregion, as well as the new, legal European Union institution - the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

The main results of investigation. The first important stage in the Polish-Slovakian transborder relations was opened due to the political situation after the end of World War I in central Europe. At the beginning, the area of the Tatra Mountains became the main stage of rivalry between newly created Poland and Czechoslovakia. The main feature of bilateral relations of both these countries from 1918 to 1924 was the continuing of the territorial argument about the affiliation of such historical regions as Spisz and Orawa. On 12th March 1924, the League of Nations reached a verdict, which was positive for Czechoslovakia in the matter of Jaworzyna Spiska. This verdict ensured the stabilization the Tatras part of the Polish-Czechoslovakian border for many years [21, 53].

After the decision of League of Nations about Jaworzyna there were two possible ways of regulation of bilateral relations with Czechoslovakia. The first one questioned the correctness of the decision reached by the League of Nations and involved permanent conflict with Czechoslovakia. The second one assumed the normalization of mutual cooperation by creating the transborder tourist convention, and also by taking steps to create "natural parks", comprising the areas of both countries. The second idea was chosen to maintain good mutual relations and also for the good of inhabitants of the borderland [5, 14-15].

An important aspect of cooperation became the protection of natural resources of the Tatras region. For the first time, the project of protecting the whole Tatra Mountains area appeared in the document called the Cracow Protocol, issued on 6th May 1924 by the Polish and Czechoslovakian government delegations at Inter-allied Delimitation Commission. According to this document the border commissioners of both countries were obliged to present their governments with the project of convention, connected with creating the chain of national parks in the borderland. On the 6-8th September in Zakopane took place the meeting, where the government delegations of both countries, as well as some experts, introduced the negotiation materials and the convention project. The scholars from Poland and Czechoslovakia supported the idea of creating common national parks during the next scientific conference in Cracow (8-10th December 1925). They unanimously set the framework of the general organization and territory for the protected areas and also proposed acceptable solutions concerning tourism. As a model were used the national parks of the American-Canadian borderland. But the matters of property and individual interests of different groups, not benefiting from the implementation of restrictions in the current way of using the natural environment of the Tatras became the main barrier in fulfilling this ambitious. The great commitment on both sides was not enough for the idea of establishing the Polish-Slovakian nature reserve in the Tatra Mountains to come into force during the interwar period [23, 21].

Mentioned barriers didn't prevent the works on establishing the transborder national park in the Pieniny Mountains. This initiative was accomplished successfully. The project of the reservation was formed as early as in 1921-1922. After signing the Cracow Protocol and also after the already mentioned meetings in Zakopane and Cracow the activities, which had started in the past, were intensified. Finally, on 23rd May 1932, the Pieniny National Park was established in the Polish part of the borderland. The Slovakian Nature Reservation was established in the Slovakian part of the Pieniny Mountains the same year. According to this fact, in the common borderland the first transborder national park in Europe came into existence. The outbreak of the World War II suspended the process of establishing the other protected areas in the Polish-Czechoslovakian borderland [26, 75].

One more important question of transborder cooperation in the region was the establishing of the Polish-Czechoslovakian tourist convention. It was also mentioned in the Cracow Protocol, written in 192. Its aim was to intensify easily and freely tourists movement in the common borderland. This convention was finally signed on 30th May 1925 in Prague and came into force a year later, on 14th June 1926. On the basis of convention the special tourist route was outlined. Its most important part ran through the area of the Tatra Mountains and comprised the most interesting tourist areas of the borderland.

According to the convention the license to cross the border within this tourist route could be obtained by the members of the tourist organizations, specified in the agreement, as well as by school trips. Tourists could cross the border, not only at the border crossings, but also at the checkpoints, which were indicated on the military maps. The special railway bargains were provided and transborder bus and telephonic connections were introduced after the agreement came into force. The tourist organizations from both sides of the border began to give each other special bargains for tourist shelters. Both sides also obliged themselves to organize cyclic conferences in order to unify the executive regulations in the convention and ensure the abiding of its rules [20,137]. This convention was the first international agreement of this type in Europe. It introduced new solutions, provided to make the development of tourism easier in the area, where until recently, the border conflict existed. The innovative solutions, applied in the treaty, became the model for other European countries, e.g. Austria and Italy. Unfortunately the beginning of the war in 1939 terminated the Convention [13, 79-90].

The delimitation and demarcation of The Polish-Czechoslovakian border was conducted during the first years after the end of the World War II. The contentious border issues were initially regulated by the treaty of friendship and cooperation, signed on 10th March 1947. However, the final assignation of the common state border took place no sooner than after signing the agreement on 13th June 1958. The Slovakian part of the border returned to the point marked out by the League of Nations in 1920-1924 [9, 124].

The cooperation in the interwar period was so intense and advanced, that it was quick and effective to recreate transborder protected areas in the regions. The thoughts of reestablishing the idea of the protection of nature in the common borderland came relatively fast. The initiative, taken to provide the full protection of the Tatra Mountains, was proposed by the Minister of Forestry in 1947. His first step was the formation of the organizational unit of state forests, called Tatra Mountains National Park. The Tatras National Park was formed one year later, according to the decision of the Slovakian National Board. Due the regulation of the Ministerial Council in the Polish part of the borderland, the following three national parks were established in 1954: Tatra Mountains, Pieniny Mountains and Babia Gora. Close cooperation in the field of nature protection and resolving important transborder problems is observed since the mid-1950s. This cooperation took place on both, administrative and scientific levels in both national parks [14, 12-15]. In 1967, the Slovakian part of the Pieniny Mountains was once again taken under protection, and in 1979, in the Slovakian part of the Babia Gora Mountains, the Upper Orava Landscape Park was created [26, 76-77].

After the renewal of the transborder cooperation, connected with the protection of nature, began the process of reestablishing the tourist convention from the interwar period. On 6th September 1955, Poland and Czechoslovakia signed the new agreement dealing with transborder tourist movement. In the beginning, the appointed border zone was limited to the High Tatras and the Bielskie Tatras. It was considerably smaller than the previous one, functioning before the war. Between 1961 and 1962, the area covered by the convention was partly extended with the Western Tatras as a result of additional agreements. The establishing of convention areas was continued also in the Low Beskids and the Karkonosze Mountains [7, 3].

According to the convention, it was possible to cross the border on the basis of individual or collective tourist pass given by the civic guard (the police at present). This pass could be obtained by every 16 aged citizens. The document permitted to cross the state border at two out of three convention areas, twice a year. Within the framework of the convention, each tourist was obliged to possess the certain amount of foreign currency to go abroad. The collective trips to tourist areas were allowed to be organized for schools, tourist and political organizations or research departments [1,7-9]. First and foremost, it was the development of tourism that caused the necessity to appoint the convention borders. The moderated regulations of controlling the transborder movement, was also of great importance to the borderland inhabitants. Many families, separated by the war, could renew their contacts in Orawa and Spisz regions [26, 192].

The post-war convention involved the area of the Tatra and Sub-Tatra Mountains of approximately 4700 km². The biggest tourist attractions (e.g. lakes and caves) were included to the Tatras convention. The convention was extended to the Demianowska Valley, located in the Low Tatras especially for the Polish side [24, 6-7]. The postwar agreements were in force until 1981. It was due to the declaration of the martial law in Poland. Its abolishment, however, did not result in returning to the convention. The Polish-Czechoslovakian political and social isolation considerably limited the transborder contacts during the entire 1980s [12,111].

In the 1990s, due to the social and political changes, the process of transborder cooperation comprised the borderlands of Central and Eastern Europe. In contemporary Europe, the euroregions are the most institutionalized and the most popular forms of transborder connections. Poland and Slovakia were actively involved in the development of cooperation between euroregions in their borderlands from the very beginning of the transformation process. It resulted in the creation of 16 euroregions in Poland and 13 in Slovakia. At present, there are 3 euroregions existing in the common borderland. One of them is the Tatras Euroregion.

For the first time the idea of friendly relations and cooperation in the Tatras region appeared at the self-government conference in Zakopane in 1991. The topic of formalizing the mutual transborder relations, during the next years was consulted between the self-government and state authorities. The issue of establishing the new euroregion was also interesting for the local media. The declaration between local authorities was signed on 31st October 1993,

when Slovakia was already an independent country. It dealt with establishing the Tatras Region [17, 7]. However, this decision was held back by the Slovakian Government. Some fears arose also on the Polish side [6, 1]. Despite all the problems, the Founding Congress was organized in the town of Nowy Targ on 26th August 1944 [19, 8]. The Euroregion Tatra Cross-border Cooperation Association was formed on the 26th of August 1994 with the signing of the Contract among Local Self-Governments of Poland and Slovakia for the Establishment of the Euroregion Tatra Cross-border Cooperation Association by representatives of local self-governments of the Polish-Slovak borderlands. The Euroregion Tatra is situated in the areas of Podhale, Spisz, Orava and Liptov, areas which have for many centuries shared similar languages and traditions, and also share the unusual geographic and natural riches of the area [3]. Due to the contract Euroregion Tatra's aim was to create appropriate conditions for the further development of culture, science, tourism, the economy and environmental protection [10, 8]. On 22nd October 1999, at the Special Congress celebrating the fifth anniversary of Euroregion's existence, the new common agreement was signed. This document contained positive evaluation of Euroregion's experiences and output. The new name (The Euroregion Tatra Cross-border Cooperation Association) was accepted, too [27, 4-5].

The structures of the Tatras Euroregion are functioning well. The Euroregion Tatra Cross-border Cooperation Association is formed by the Euroregion Tatra with its headquarters in Nowy Targ and the Tatra Region Association with its headquarters in Kežmarok. The two organizations share common leadership, and the organs of the Association are the Congress, the Council, the Board of Control, the Directors of the offices in Nowy Targ and Kežmarok and the standing committees. The highest authority of Euroregion Tatra is Congress consisting of 70 deputies – 35 for each side. The Congress is convened at least once a year. It undertakes decisions agreed upon by both parties in the presence of one half of deputies on each side [28].

Executive power of Euroregion belongs to the Council which consists of 14 members – 7 of each side. The Council is called upon by the Congress for the period of 2 years and it elects its Chairman - nominated for 2 years- Polish and Slovak alternately. The Council performs its tasks through 2 secretaries, on Polish and Slovak side respectively. The secretaries run their offices in Nowy Targ and Kežmarok. Each party keeps its office separately.

Advisory bodies of the Council targeted at the solving real problems are the following Commissions: economy, environmental Protection, culture, information, tourism, sport and youth.

The controlling organ of Euroregion is Auditorial Commission authorised to supervise all sectors of Euroregion. Auditorial Commission consists of 6 members – 3 for each side. National unions of Poland and Slovakia accumulate funds needed for its operation on separate accounts. They come mainly from registration and membership fees, voluntary payments from towns and communes, grants, donations and other sources [3].

During the 18 years of its activity, it gave birth to a number of well-trained, experienced and professional staff members [18, 76].

Until now it is visible that the Tatras Euroregion is focused on the socio-cultural cooperation. A lot of interesting events were organized at its initiative, e.g. The Slovakian Culture Days, The Polish Culture Days and the Highlanders Festival, called the Euroregion without borders [15, 18].

In 2006 and 2007 the Euroregion carried out a project entitled "A Meeting of the Seven Cultures of the Polish-Slovak Borderlands: From Ladislav Mednyánszky to Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz". The project was cofounded by the European Regional Development Fund as part of the INTERREG IIIA Poland-Slovakia program [28]. In 2009 and 2010 the Euroregion Tatra carried out second edition of this project, which is cofounded by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund in frame of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Republic of Poland – Slovak Republic 2007-2013 [25]. The aforementioned patrons of the project are two outstanding artists of the Polish-Slovak borderlands, Ladislav Mednyánszky, a Slovak painter of the turn of the century associated with the chateau in Stražky and Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz, a contemporary composer and artist born in Nowy Targ. Although they come from different eras and reflect different life experiences and artistic styles, one can find in their work a similar inspiration born in the multicultural setting of the borderlands and in the interweaving of themes and motifs drawn from the various cultures of the region [16, 129-130].

One of the most important achievements of the Euroregion is the opening of the Centre of Polish-Slovakian Cooperation in Nowy Targ in 2004. It is a cultural, informational and promotional centre for the entire Euroregion. It is used to organize numerous meetings, conferences, concerts and exhibitions [19, 93-97]. In order to improve the cooperation between the transborder inhabitants, the works need to be continued on both sides of the border, as a result, in 2007 a twin centre was created in Kezmarok [10, 7-10].

The Tatras Euroregion also conducts a great variety of economic and infrastructural initiatives. The most spectacular event is the Polish-Slovakian Economic Forum, being organized since 1999. It hosts entrepreneurs, the representatives of chambers of industry, commerce and tourism as well as politicians and diplomats from both countries. There have been eight such conferences held so far. Owing to the EU funds, several significant, infrastructural investments were implemented in the Euroregion, e.g. the Visegrad Bridge and the Zakopane-Chochołow route, at the border of the country. The trucks' traffic was eliminated in the Lysa Polana-Jaworzyna border crossing [16, 126-131].

Since the earliest stages of its activities, the Euroregion has outpaced the local and national changes which have been taking place in both countries. Today Poland and Slovakia are members of the European Union and belong to the Schengen Pact, which opens new possibilities for cross-border cooperation. The experience gained in 17 years of work has encouraged both sides to increase the efficiency and focus of

their work. A distant, yet realistic, goal for the Euroregion aimed at increasing the quality of cross-border cooperation in the transformation of Euroregion Tatry into a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, or the creation of a separate organization for this purpose. EGTCs were established in 2006 by the European Parliament and the Council with the political support of the Committee of the Regions. They enable **regional and local authorities** from different member states to cooperate more effectively, for example by allowing them to directly apply for and manage European funds [4]. The 15th Congress of the Euroregion, which took place on the 14th of April 2009 in Muszyna, passed an act towards this goal. The creation of the first such organization on the borders of Poland is not only an organizational and legal challenge requiring close cooperation based on unity, a non-rigid international border, and institutionalization of structures with a single budget, single currency, and clear legal principles of functioning, but also a challenge of prejudices and mentalities [2, 203].

On 14-15th of September 2011, an international conference *From the Tatra Euroregion to a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation* have been organized by the Tatra Euroregion Association and by the Town of Nowy Targ. The Conference was of consultative nature and it became a forum for the exchange of views on the results to date of the activities of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, the problems encountered, as well as the prospects for the development of the EGTC as an effective European legal tool enabling territorial authorities to effect cross-border, inter-regional and transnational cooperation upon new principles. The experience and the good practices developed in the EGTC were extremely important in the context of the Conference's objectives and the Tatra Euroregion's work on the establishment of a European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation on the Polish-Slovak borderland [4].

On 28 August 2012 in the Centre for Polish-Slovak Cooperation in Nowy Targ an extraordinary meeting of the Congress of Euroregion Tatry Association was held. The Congress unanimously adopted the resolution on the accession of the Euroregion Tatry Association to a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Ltd. The resolution and its accompanying drafts of the Convention and the Statutes give rise to undertake further steps in the process of the establishing the EGTC Tatry, that is to obtain the approval of the competent national authorities for the registration of the Grouping [28]. By the establishment of the Grouping, Polish-Slovak cross-border cooperation will be elevated to a higher formal, legal, substantive and institutional level, thus helping to overcome the barriers encountered by joint Polish-Slovak initiatives and solving the problems of the border community. The latest achievements of the cooperation were represented at the 2nd meeting of The Euroregion Silesia on 27th March 2013 in Racibórz. The session was also attended by the representatives of Euroregion Tatry: Mr Bogusław Waksmundzki, Chair of the Council and Mr Antoni Nowak, Director. At the meeting they outlined the progress made in establishing a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Tatry, which entered its closing stage [28]. It is going to be the first EGTC established at Polish border by euroregion.

Conclusions. A number of interesting transborder initiatives was introduced in the region of the Tatra Mountains after 1918. The cooperation developed successfully in the field of natural protection. During the postwar period common protected areas were established. A great influence for the development of transborder tourism had the functioning of the tourist conventions, as they made contacts among the borderland inhabitants easier. It should be pointed here, that the conventions eliminated the obstacles in crossing the borders, far before the Schengen treaty came into existence. The common national parks and tourist conventions became the first examples of transborder, territorial units in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The experience gained during their functioning, became the cornerstone for the Tatra Euroregion, established in the 1990s. Euroregion Tatry created appropriate conditions for the further development of culture, science, tourism, the economy and environmental protection. It is the most institutionalized trans-border organization in the area. It has been, actively and professionally, maintaining the Polish-Slovakian transborder cooperation for over 18 years now. Nowadays, the euroregion is in the process of transformation into the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. Euroregions seem to have a special role to play in the process of establishment of EGTCs –being natural and model partners for cross-border cooperation. Because of this, building on the dozen or so years of experience and well established Polish-Slovak cooperation, the Tatra Euroregion is engaging in intensive activities to change the legal status of the existing Tatra Euroregion Cross-Border Association by its transformation into a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. The different stages of the setting of the structures of this legal entity are being carried out under the networking project *From the Tatra Euroregion to a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation* whose partners are the Slovak Tatra Association (Združenie Region "Tatry"), the Town of Nowy Targ and the Town of Kežmarok. This project has been co-financed from the Republic of Poland – Slovak Republic Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme 2007-2013. At present, the establishing of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Tatry has entered its closing stage.

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Kotsan N. N. History of Development and the Present Stage of Transborder Cooperation in the Tatras Euroregion

The main stages of development of transborder cooperation in the region of Tatra Mountains are considered. The most important ways of the Polish-Slovakian transborder cooperation are analyzed. The history of transborder cooperation in the region is conducted chronologically and divided into stages. The Polish-Slovakian transborder cooperation during the interwar period is analyzed. The main features of transborder cooperation in the communist period are identified. The profile of the Tatras Euroregion and of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, in which the Euroregion is going to transform are revealed.

Key words: Tatras Euroregion, transborder cooperation, Polish-Slovakian cooperation, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

Котсан Н.Н. Історія розвитку і сучасний стан транскордонного співробітництва в Єврореєніні Татри

Розглянуто основні етапи розвитку транскордонного співробітництва в районі гір Татри. Проаналізовано найбільш важливі напрямки польсько-словацького транскордонного співробітництва. Історію транскордонного співробітництва в регіоні досліджено в хронологічному порядку і розділено на етапи. Проаналізовано розвиток польсько-словацького транскордонного співробітництва у міжвоєнний період. Висвітлено основні особливості транскордонного співробітництва в комуністичний період. Визначено профіль єврореєніні Татри та європейського угруповання територіального співробітництва, як майбутнього напрямку трансформації єврореєніні.

Ключові слова: Єврореєніні Татри, транскордонне співробітництво, польсько-словацьке співробітництво, Європейське угруповання з територіального співробітництва.

Котсан Н.Н. История развития и современное состояние трансграничного сотрудничества в еврорегионе Татры

Рассмотрены основные этапы развития трансграничного сотрудничества в районе гор Татры. Проанализировано наиболее важные направления польско-словацкого трансграничного сотрудничества. История трансграничного сотрудничества в регионе исследована в хронологическом порядке и разделена на этапы. Проанализировано развитие польско-словацкого трансграничного сотрудничества в межвоенный период. Отображены основные особенности трансграничного сотрудничества в коммунистический период. Определено профиль еврорегиона Татры и европейской группы территориального сотрудничества, как будущего направления трансформации еврорегиона.

Ключевые слова: Еврорегион Татры, трансграничное сотрудничество, польско-словацкое сотрудничество, Европейская группа территориального сотрудничества.

Надійшла до редколегії