

BORDER REGIME AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION: CASE-STUDY IN CROSS-BORDER REGIONS OF RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND BELARUS.

By

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Abstract

Research was carried out in borderland regions and local municipalities of Bryansk oblast of Russia and the adjacent regions of Chernigov oblast of Ukraine and Gomel oblast of Belarus. These regions are economically depressive enough, and the territory part is polluted as a result of the catastrophe on the Chernobyl atomic power station that leads to economic activities restriction. The Euroregion “Dnieper”, created in 2003, can become an instrument of cross-border cooperation development.

The analysis of present situation in cross-border cooperation in Bryansk, Chernigov and Gomel oblasts has shown, that the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarus cooperation mainly is limited by regional level and has rather not cross-border, but inter-regional character. Municipal regions and local municipalities as subjects of cross-border cooperation have no sufficient legal powers, the majority of contacts is based not on legally issued agreements, but on personal contacts with administrations of the adjacent regions of Ukraine and of Belarus and is limited by spheres of culture, education and sports.

The state border “connecting functions” degree analysis has shown, that the border with Belarus is open, on the main highways there are “points of notices reception” where the state control of the international motor transport streams is being carried out. The “barrier functions” degree of the Russian-Ukrainian state border constantly increases.

On the Russian-Ukrainian state border in Bryansk oblast there are 1 railway and 3 automobile multilateral check-points where citizens of any countries can cross border, where there are all 6 kinds of the state control, they are the most equipped. Also there are 3 bilateral automobile check-points for citizens only of Russia and Ukraine, two of which works under the simplified scheme (only border control without customs) for local population. Such check-points are the most convenient for local residents. Agreements between Russia and Ukraine envisage 9 such check-points in Bryansk oblast, but are opened only 2, the others are not equipped, therefore are closed.

Through multilateral check-points on the Russian-Ukrainian border transit transport streams prevail, the profit on their functioning is completely directed in the federal budget, but they create

additional labour market for local population. The increase in quantity and improvement of work of bilateral check-points, including those that are working under the simplified scheme can become real stimulus of development of cross-border regions. It would promote development of cross-border trade, small enterprises development, would regulate employment problems. Development of cross-border cooperation is restrained by imperfection of existing legal base, including absence of laws on cross-border cooperation and the status of cross-border regions.

Key Words: border regime, cross-border cooperation, border check-points, social-economic development, Bryansk oblast.

Research was carried out in borderland regions and local municipalities of Bryansk oblast of Russia and the adjacent regions of Chernigov oblast of Ukraine and Gomel oblast of Belarus. This territory possesses essential preconditions of cross-border co-operation development among which it is possible to choose historically developed close social and the cultural contacts, a favourable geographical position and presence of through transport main lines, there is enough diversified industry and agriculture structure, considerable recreational resources. At the same time there are many problems of development. The territory part is polluted as a result of the catastrophe on the Chernobyl atomic power station that leads to economic activities restriction. Considerable natural depopulation and out-migration flows (mainly at productive ages) are observed for many years. In this area borderland regions of all three countries are economically depressive enough. The similar economic branch structure of the majority of borderland regions of three countries is also as restriction for economic interaction expansion. It does not give an essential possibility for creation of mutually complementary structures (both branch and spatial).

Cooperation across borders is a means of cohesion and regional policy of the European Union. The importance of cooperation systems across EU internal and external borders increased after the eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007. The goal of the EU is to improve cooperation between communities across borders throughout Europe. The institutionalization of cross-border cooperation systems is evidently becoming necessary for the sake of more effective representation of interests, common measures and the more effective arrangements of support programs. Euroregions are the most effective forms of cross-border cooperation for areas that are geographically, historically, ecologically, ethnically and economically separated. They make it possible to reunite regions earlier belonging together, create areas of natural attraction, integrate border regions in a peripheral situation, and strengthen development and cooperation contacts. Euroregions allow solving operatively border problems at local level, to create flexible economic structures with attraction of external investments for building and infrastructure expansion, to adjust border trade, tourism, to expand cooperation in cultural, social, ecological and other spheres. Till now the experience of EU

Euroregions is not very easy for applying to the Post-Soviet territory, as: 1) in the CIS countries the regional policy is not formulated even at level of the separate countries while in EU Euroregions are instruments of the uniform regional policy coordinated with a regional policy at national level; 2) in the EU countries Euroregions receive considerable and long-term financing (7-14 years) and though in some projects the financing part arrives also to partners in the CIS countries, dimensions of this financing are not very considerable; 3) Euroregions in EU develop in the conditions of constant integration, and in the CIS countries there is a disintegration till now; 4) Euroregions of the EU countries were created in territories with greater population density, economic activities and transport infrastructure. Nevertheless, the Euroregions created along the external borders of the European Union and border regions of the CIS countries, have considerable potential for development of cross-border territories.

The institutional registration of the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarus cross-border region is connected with creation in 1997 of Council of Heads of border regions. Its purpose is development of mutually beneficial economic, scientific and technical and cultural cooperation of border regions and other concerned regions of our countries. In 2002 Ministers of Environmental Protection of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine signed the important document, concerning cooperation in a sphere of ecological improvement of the Dnieper river basin. Creation in 2003 of the Euroregion "Dnieper" that included three "junction" oblasts of our states – Chernigov (Ukraine), Bryansk (Russia) and Gomel (Belarus) became a following stage in developing of the Russian-Ukrainian -Belarus cross-border cooperation. In 2003 the Euroregion «Slobozhanshchina» which included Kharkov (Ukraine) and Belgorod (Russia) oblasts was created. In 2006 the Euroregion “Yaroslavna” was created, included Kursk (Russia) and Sumy (Ukraine) oblasts. In 2008 – the Euroregion "Donbass" (Rostov (Russia) and Lugansk (Ukraine) oblasts) was created. The feature of these Euroregions is that they are created in "internal" cross-border regions of the Post-Soviet countries and have no exit on their external border with the European Union countries. It is necessary to notice, that till now the creation of such Euroregions could not become an essential stimulus of development of these territories.

The analysis of present situation in cross-border cooperation in Bryansk, Chernigov and Gomel oblasts has shown, that the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarus cooperation mainly is limited by regional level and has rather not cross-border, but inter-regional character. Economic cooperation of Bryansk oblast with the adjacent regions of Belarus is being developed successfully during recent years in many respects due to the initiative activity of Administration of the oblast, and development of cooperation with the neighbors in Ukraine in the period of President Yushchenko’s government was deterred by the political reasons. Economic cooperation is limited by contacts at the level of regions and separate enterprises. Municipal regions and local municipalities as subjects of cross-border cooperation have no sufficient legal powers, the majority of contacts is based not on

legally issued agreements, and on personal contacts with administrations of the adjacent regions of Ukraine and of Belarus and is limited by spheres of culture, education and sports.

The special large-scale analysis of the state border “connecting-functions” degree has been carried out. It has shown, that the border with Belarus is opened, on the main highways there are “points of notices reception” where the state control of the international motor transport streams is being carried out. The “barrier-functions” degree of the Russian-Ukrainian state border constantly increases, as possibilities of its convenient crossing are being continually reduced.

According to existing laws of the Russian Federation, check-points on the state border are classified on the several categories, concerning a regime of their work, a kind of international communications and on the categories of people who can cross the border.

There are 4 multilateral check-points on the border of Bryansk oblast with Ukraine (1 railway and 3 automobile ones) where not only inhabitants of Russia and Ukraine, but also citizens of other countries can cross the border- At such check-points all 6 kinds of the state control are present (border (including migratory), customs, transport, sanitary-quarantine, veterinary, quarantine - phytosanitary), they are the most equipped. Also there are 3 bilateral automobile check-points in which only citizens of Russia and Ukraine can cross the border, two of which work under the simplified scheme (only border control without customs for local population). Such check-points are the most convenient for local residents. Agreements between Russia and Ukraine envisage 9 such check-points in Bryansk oblast, but are opened only 2, the others are not equipped, therefore are closed.

Through multilateral check-points on the border with Ukraine mainly transit transport streams pass. The only railway check-point is located on the road Moscow-Kiev (on the average a day 15 passenger trains and a lot of goods trains pass through it). All passing trains are the main-lines ones, there are not any local trains. Local suburban trains through the border are cancelled in 2003. If somebody wants to cross the border by train, he has to buy a ticket for a transit train (for example, Moscow-Kiev or Moscow-Chisinau) which costs 500-700 rbl. (about 12-17 €) only between two next border stations in Russia and Ukraine. For local residents it is too expensive. There are two other railways, crossing the border of Bryansk oblast with Ukraine, but are not any communications through the border. Through multilateral automobile check-points there are no local passenger routes as well, except for several transit bus routes. To cross the border on the car it is necessary to buy the international insurance which compensates itself only at regular trips. For large multilateral check-points problems of their activity financing and distribution of incomes of their functioning are insufficiently solved. Formally they are completely in the competence of federal authorities. So, for example, financing of roads construction and repair completely should to occur at the expense of the federal budget. However this financing is insufficient, problems of garbage disposal along roads, operating repair, a roadside infrastructure etc are not solved. «Patching the holes» and the

broken roads fall to regional and local budgets lot, while all incomes of check-points functioning (taxes, customs fees, etc) completely go to federal level. Picking out even of an insignificant share from these incomes would allow solving local problems substantially. Now the contradiction between interests of economics of the border regions and directly their inhabitants is observed. Creation of new positions of employment at check-points and in the border infrastructure (as a rule, with a wage level considerably above, than on the average in these regions) draws off the most qualified personnel from the economy of these regions (doctors work in the sanitary and veterinary control, teachers and economists – in insurance service, etc.). On the one hand – level of incomes of the population on the average raises, but simultaneously with another – workplaces in hospitals, schools, in management sphere, in industry become bare. The problem of fair distribution of taxes between local, regional and federal level also is connected with it. There is also a problem of underfinancing of local budgets

The bilateral check-points working under the simplified scheme (places of the border crossing) are the most convenient for local residents. If you want to cross the border in such point, you don't have to fill migratory cards and customs documents, but only to show the passport with the local registration, but thus the stay on the adjacent side is limited on time till 3 days. It is the simplest way for local population to get «to the other side» – to visit relatives, to visit a cemetery, to sell or buy something in the market. It is necessary to consider, that on the Russian-Ukrainian border there are many towns and villages, which before the disintegration of Soviet Union and the occurrence the state border here, were actually united, and now they have turned out in the different states. Inhabitants of the border regions of Russia and Ukraine after a formal appearance of the border could cross it "as neighbours" almost free for a number of years because the border check-points was placed only on the main transport lines. The legal acts about regulation of the Russian-Ukrainian border crossing were being developed gradually so the possibility of direct crossing of the border in any place convenient for it changed gradually as well. The process of demarcation and infrastructural arrangement of the border occurs gradually. Several years ago in many places local residents could cross the border practically free on local roads, and now there are barriers everywhere. Out of 9 envisaged in agreements between Russia and Ukraine local check-points in the territory of Bryansk oblast are opened now only 2 ones and the others are closed, because they are not equipped. Till now the sufficient legal base on opening and functioning of similar check-points is not developed – who is responsible for these simplified check-points, who can open and close them, who and for whose account should equip and maintain them, who, how and when can pass through them. These check-points are the closest to inhabitants of the border regions and the farthest from interests of the federal authorities (formally they are responsible for the all border). The contradiction of interests on federal and regional (local) levels is observed. For the federal authorities it is easier to close such check points, than to solve problems of their arrangement,

though for development of economy of regions and convenience of local residents their presence is vital.

The increase in quantity and improvement of work of bilateral check-points, including those that are working under the simplified scheme can become a real stimulus of development of cross-border regions. It would promote development of cross-border trade, small enterprises development, would regulate employment problems and migratory streams. Development of cross-border cooperation is restrained by imperfection of existing legal base, including the absence of laws on cross-border cooperation and the status of cross-border regions.