

Yuliya TKACHENKO*Ph.D., Associate Professor of Management Department***Vladislav PUSTOVAR***the applicant of Management Department Cherkasy State Technological University**tkyuliya2009@yandex.ru*

Approaches to the Definition of Cross-Border Cooperation: Discussion Points

ABSTRACT

In the context of the existing relations between Russia and Ukraine issues of cross-border cooperation acquire special relevance. It displayed in the possibilities of common solutions of current challenges and using the potential of adjacent areas of neighboring countries. Subject of research are theoretical approaches to the definition of the notion of cross-border cooperation. The aim of the work is to define the basic concepts in the sphere of cross-border cooperation and to form the new approach to understanding this process. The generalized definition of the process of international, transnational, near-border, cross-border cooperation, etc., with using methods of theoretical analysis, comparison, modeling and systems analysis is given. Hypothesis about necessity of change the essential content of the concept of cross-border cooperation in terms of expanding and subsequently erasing its borders in order to form meaningful relationships and implementing mutually purposeful activity (authorities, population, business and neighboring countries) to solve the social, economic, environmental and other issues of territorial communities in neighboring countries is proposed by author. Author concluded that cross-border cooperation should be extended to the concept of "cooperation-without-frontiers" (cooperation without borders). The physical state border between the two countries can not be identified as the barrier of borders cooperation, as the total lack of understanding and unwillingness of mutual solving of the problems.

Key words: *cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation, inter-territorial cooperation, near-border cooperation, cooperation-without-frontiers.*

In terms of socio-economic and political instability in the world, including in relations between Russia and Ukraine, the questions of development of integration processes and cross-border cooperation step to the fore. Under the current circumstances, the establishment and development of scientific, business contacts, contacts in "people-to-people", etc. will provide not only the revitalization of the peripheral border areas, ensuring maximum use of their potential; improve living standards and the competitiveness of the region as a whole, but also the formation of friendly relations between nations.

Taking into consideration the entrenched traditions, prolonged stay in the USSR, the specific relations of Ukraine and Russia, as well as their regions, the automatic transfer of the experience of European countries on cross-border cooperation and the creation of Euroregions will not provide the expected result. However, considering the practical aspects of cross-border cooperation, first of all we should turn to the theoretical foundations of the research, in particular, insufficiently certain is the notion of cross-border cooperation and its meaning.

The problems of cross-border cooperation are of great interest in the scientific community, given the relative "newness" and relevant issues in this question. Despite the long (in fact, since the late 90-ies of the last century) the period of the study of the issues of cross-border cooperation, there is already enough scientific material, a significant contribution to the formation of which has been implemented: the Duke R., Marku J., Gabbe G., Abalkin L., Belokon Yu., Gritsay O., Polterovich B., Romanov S., Vardomskiy L., Zverev J., Amosha A., Belenkyi P., Burakovskiy I., Burkinskiy B., Vnukova N., Hakman C., Horblyuk R., Danilishin B., Dolishnyi M., Kish E., Maksimchuk M., Mikula N., Pisarenko S., Studennikov I., Fedan R. and others.

However, despite the increased interest and particular relevance to the problems of cross-border cooperation, most of the issues in principle, methodological and practical challenges remain unresolved. First of all, it concerns the categorical apparatus of the study, including definitions of basic concepts.

The aim of the article is the definition of basic concepts in the field of cross-border cooperation and the formation of a new approach to the understanding of this process.

Before you nominate the author's position should refer to the experience of European countries and available at the present time definitions. To denote cooperation between countries and directly on the areas near the borders, use a variety of terms: cross-border cooperation cross-border cooperation, interregional cooperation, transnational cooperation.

In Madrid Convention the transboundary cooperation is defined as "... any joint actions aimed at strengthening and deepening good-neighbourly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more contracting parties and the conclusion of this purpose all necessary agreements or arrangements" (Yevropeiska ramkova konventsia..., 1980)

In the Charter of the Assembly of European regions the term is defined as "interregional cooperation", which can be understood by any of the links established between regions belonging to different countries (Statut Asamblei' jevropejs'kyh...).

However, it was necessary to improve the categorical apparatus of the concept of inter-territorial cooperation, which was introduced in Protocol No. 2 of the framework Convention (1998). This is due to the fact that international relations can join, depending on national legislation, not only the regions of the sub-national level, but other territorial entities and governments and not necessarily adjacent territory (transboundary cooperation).

In this context, “international cooperation” means a mutually agreed activity aimed at relations between territorial communities or authorities of two or more contracting parties (Mikula, & Tolkovanov, 2013). Thus, the broad concept is inter-territorial cooperation, which defines the right of any territorial authority to cooperate with any relevant territorial authorities of other states (regions, districts, cities, etc.) (Mikula, 2009).

In the framework of integration into the European Union, Ukraine should use terminology that is already widespread in Europe. So, for a considerable period in Ukraine the term “near-border cooperation” was used and only in the last 10 years, the term “cross-border cooperation” began to be used (Yevropeiska ramkova konventsiiia..., 1980). Therefore, it would be necessary to define these terms.

The generalized conceptual and categorical apparatus was introduced by Hans-Martin Tschudi (Switzerland) at the IX Meeting of the Congress of local and regional authorities in Europe (Strasbourg, 4-6 July 2002) report on “Promoting cross-border cooperation: an important factor of democratic stability in Europe” (Bieliienkyi, & Mikula, 2001).

“To define all forms of cooperation, taken together, the concept of trans-European cooperation is used.”

Differences in concepts can be caused by defining cooperation in the following cases:

– cross – border cooperation – by two-, three – or multilateral co-operation between local and regional authorities (public and private entities may also be included in this context) that is carried out in geographically adjacent areas. This also applies to territories, separated by the sea;

– international cooperation – two, three – or multilateral cooperation between local and regional authorities (public and private entities may also be included in this context) that takes place between territories that do not have common borders;

– transnational cooperation – cooperation between national, regional and local authorities in the framework of programs and projects. This form of cooperation covers a large adjacent area, and includes the subjects of at least two member states of the European Union and / or countries that are not members of the European Union” (Tschudi, 2002).

Thus, transboundary cooperation is carried out only between neighbouring areas. In other words, cross-border cooperation is a specific sphere of foreign economic, political, environmental, cultural, educational and other kinds of international activities carried out at the regional level and is characterized by the need and opportunities of more active use of the potential of adjacent areas, as well as a number of features, namely the presence of a boundary and the need for its development, the general use of natural resources and, consequently, the general solution of the problems of ecological safety, the wider mutual intercourse of the population of neighbouring states, and personal relationships of people (Practical Guide to Cross-border Cooperation, 2000).

According to the current legislation of Ukraine, the concept of cross-border cooperation is defined as the total action on the formation and deepening of economic, social, scientific, ecological, cultural and other relations between territorial communities, their representative bodies, local executive authorities of Ukraine and local communities, relevant authorities of other states in the framework of their competence, defined by the national legislation (Zakon Ukrainy «Pro vnesennia..., 2004), (Zakon Ukrainy «Pro transkordonne, 2004), (Postanova Verhovnoi' Rady, 1993).

However, the provided definition does not give a clear understanding on the subjects of cross-border cooperation, focusing on the authorities and local communities, without considering the business and the population as potential bidders. In addition, the territorial boundaries of cross-border cooperation are not formed, thus they don't distinguish this concept from transnational or interregional cooperation.

Cross-border cooperation in accordance with generally accepted approach (Studennikov , 2000), means the neighbouring area cooperation of neighboring states, that means that the determining factor is the presence of a boundary between collaborating territories. In this context it is possible to use the term “inter-territorial cross-border cooperation when cooperation is between border regions or cities, but you can't talk about cross-border cooperation of states that are not neighbours.

According to the thoughts of Ukrainian scientists (Mikula, 2004), there are some differences in the interpretation of Art. 1 of the Additional Protocol to the European outline Convention, when conclusions are made about not necessary presence of boundaries for cross-border cooperation (Dodatkovy protokol do Yevropeiskoi , 1995). However, in the preamble to Protocol No. 2 to the Convention it is indicated that cross-border cooperation is implemented between authorities in neighbouring territories, and between foreign authorities that are not neighbours the interterritorial cooperation is used (Protokol № 2 do Jevropejs'koi', 1998).

There are some differences in the definitions of cross-border cooperation given by the researchers. Thus, P. Belenkyi and N. Mikula define cross-border cooperation as a specific field of implementation of international relations at the regional level, which is the necessity and possibility of their active use, common border, the need to address issues of environmental security, a broader general communication of the population of neighbouring countries and considerably higher load on the socio-economic infrastructure (Bieliienkyi, & Mikula, 2001).

Essentially the cooperation of neighboring territories is defined by both concepts. The first one is more usual for Ukraine, as it was used in conditions when the border was closed enough for a wide currency. It was impossible to create the cross-border associations (Euroregions) and to implement projects to address common problems in adjacent areas either in interstate or interregional levels (Mikula, 2003). The objects of research were the borders of the territory of each of the adjacent states, and common problems were not even considered.

The concept of “cross-border cooperation” began to be used in the 70-ies of the last century to determine the cultural and political relations between adjacent regions on both sides of the border. Also a term was used to define cross-border trade, which was developed in 1973-75, on the basis of direct agreements between the regional Union of consumer cooperation of Ukraine and cooperative organizations, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania, and beginning from 1980 – between the authorities of trade in the border areas of these countries (Kucenko, 1998).

However, in the development of international relations, strengthening of integration, the term “cross-border cooperation” (“trans” VAC “re” – move, move, etc) is used now more often. This category corresponds more closely to the essence of what is happening in the border areas, but, nevertheless, does not exhaust it.

In our opinion, both provided concepts are confined within territorial boundaries; a priori they constrict the content of this

multidimensional and comprehensive process. In this regard, without changing the conventional categories, we offer you to look at the process of cross-border cooperation broader as “erasing” frame borders (Fig. 1).

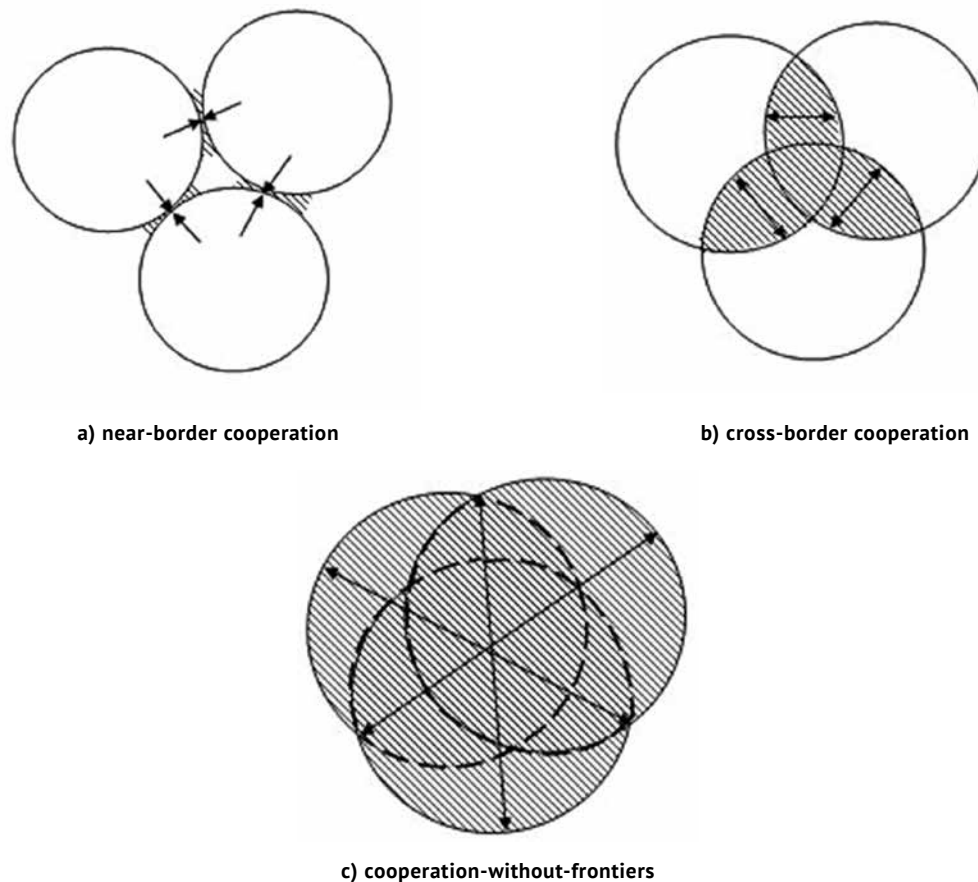


Fig. 1. The Semantic Content of the Notion of Territorial Cooperation.

Not introducing changes in the existing terminology, it's believed that the meaning of the notion of cross-border cooperation should match the figure c) cooperation without borders, which provides a focused coherent activity (government, public, business neighboring countries) to address social, economic, environmental and other problems of the territorial communities of the neighbouring countries. Under this cooperation, the relationship field is expanded to cover not only the territory, but more remote territories, and such ones that have common problems and their possible common solutions. The peculiarity of this understanding of cross-border cooperation is to expand the opportunities of solving problems through mutual aid from neighbouring countries. Cooperation should cover a greater number of activities of coordinated actions which will ensure the emergence and strengthening of the synergistic effect of interaction that, in turn, which will contribute to improving competitiveness of both adjacent territories and neighbouring countries as a whole.

Thus, it can be noted that cross-border cooperation should be extended to the concept of “cooperation-without-frontiers” (cooperation without borders). In this understanding, one should not equate the physical state border between countries with border cooperation as a barrier, obstacle, and lack of general problem solving.

It is clear that the proposed hierarchy of concepts, like most others in different fields of knowledge, to a certain extent, is conditional. However, such an understanding will provide a significant opportunity to expand the areas of common interest and possible solutions of common problems.

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