



“Innovative Platform for the Cooperation of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion



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The Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion

The Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion – its history, mission and vision. The idea of establishing the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion is already a couple of years old. As part of establishing the network, a few cross-border, small-scale projects have been carried out. The main objective of the joint effort is to create the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion as a platform for cooperation between Polish and Slovak municipalities belonging to the Carpathian Euroregion. The purpose of the Network is to facilitate coordination of the development of urban centres in the border region.

Cities in the Carpathian Euroregion, both Polish and Slovak, have their characteristic features which have impact on their growth opportunities. Despite many years of cooperation in a very good atmosphere, it remains a fact that the Carpathian Mountains constitute a natural obstacle to contacts, so the cooperation has not yet gone beyond the contacts on the level of local authorities. Since 2001 the funds coming from the European Union, in particular from the mechanism of small- and micro-projects managed by the Carpathian Euroregion on the Polish side and the local government in Prešov on the Slovak side, has proved to be a major stimulus to the development of cooperation between partner towns.

When the EU council Regulation on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation entered into force, it was decided to use the new legal form as a basis for the creation of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion. Many careful analyzes had been carried out and thanks to them it was confirmed that there was a need to realize the project. To achieve this a consortium of cities was established. In addition, the first major network project funded from the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Republic Poland – Slovak Republic 2007 - 2013 under the name: "Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion" (August 2009 - July 2010) has been completed.

The project "Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion" arose from the need to create a formal platform for systematic and coordinated cooperation of municipalities in the Eastern Carpathians and the implementation of strategic goals and multilateral projects. The main objective of the project was to create the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion, which, after signing a separate treaty, would change its form of a consortium to that of a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation under the same name.

Several Polish and Slovak municipalities were invited to participate in the project: the town municipality of Jaroslaw – the applicant and lead partner, the town municipality of Przemysl, the town municipality of Przeworsk, the town municipality of Ustrzyki Dolne, the town of Humenne, the town of Snina, the town of Vranov n / Toplu. The project consisted of various activities, such as: conferences, project teams' work, editing, publishing, creating websites, etc. As the time passed by, coordination centers emerged within the Network. And so the centres in Jaroslaw and Humenne, created within the Network as part of the project, were responsible for coordinating cooperation in the fields of tourism (Jaroslaw) and economy (Humenne). The aim of the project was to activate all the vital functions of urban organisms and to enable a more effective promotion of cities by establishing cooperation between them, as well as provide a positive stimulus to the development of tourism, increasing investment, innovation and employment.

The continuation of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion I initiative is the project entitled "Innovative Platform of Cooperation of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion" – the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion II

(April 2011 – September 2012). The project is the next step in the creation of territorial cooperation structures under the name of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion. It is a necessary step in the transition from the first pilot project activities to an efficiently functioning structure for cross-border cooperation. The scope of the project takes fully into account the conclusions coming from the process of implementation of the previous project and introduces measures aimed at improving the functioning of the Network. Its aim is to create an innovative collaboration platform for the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion organizational structure.

The specific objectives are: to develop an information management software for the purposes of cooperation within the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion, to establish cooperation centres in the organizational structures of cities / partners, to develop the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion cooperation procedures, to give the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion partners the technical possibility for telecommuting, to organize pilot virtual sessions, and to promote the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion.

In view of the difficulties arising from the nature of local administration and the legislation that affects it, the decision has been made to invite chosen institutions not belonging to the public sector to join the project, namely: the Carpathian Euroregion Association Poland and the Carpathian Euroregion Association North Slovakia. In addition, the existing partnership has been extended to the towns of Jasło and Medzilaborce and the municipalities of Lesko and Boguchwała. Target groups of the project are the institutions involved in its implementation and the institutions that will be invited to participate in the Network.

The project will result in further integration of institutional and human resources on both sides of the border. Through the use of innovative information technology, the project will provide continuous and effective cooperation and communication between local governments and institutions belonging to the Network both on the Polish and the Slovak side, and extending the network to the next participants will create lasting cross-border cooperation structures.



Brief history of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion

The cooperation of Polish and Slovak cities of the Carpathian Euroregion (including mainly Podkarpackie Voivodeship and Self Governing Region of Prešov) was an impulse for creation of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion and for realization of project with the same name „the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion. ” The cooperation was mainly based on the implementation of projects financed under the PHARE CBC Programme and later the INTERREG IIIA Programme.

Long-term cooperation especially at the level of partner cities and mutual support of the idea of creation of the „Carpathian Euroregion” was the basis for the future European regional grouping.

The „Network of Cities“ developed from the need to create a formal platform for systemic and coordinated cooperation of municipalities in the Eastern Carpathians at the implementation of strategic objectives and multilateral resolutions.

The main objective was to create the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion, which would from the form of partnership understanding to the signature of the strategic document, ensure the importance of the position of European association for the purpose of inter-regional cooperation, for the implementation of the consortium of the cities. Founding members, besides the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland itself, with the registered office in Rzeszow, were the municipalities of Jaroslaw, Humenné, Przemyśl, Przeworsk, Ustrzyki Dolne, Snina and Vranov nad Topľou.

The selection of these cities was carried out based on practical skills and previous experience of municipalities participating in cross-border cooperation. The target group, for which the cooperation platform was created, are the Municipal Offices on Polish and Slovak side of the Carpathian Euroregion. Immediate primary participants are representatives of the management of cities and local government operatives.

Functioning of the „Network“ has a positive impact on the functioning of self-governments (municipalities) and the cooperation within the framework of the so called network enables more effective promotion of the municipalities. It directly or indirectly influences the development of tourism, growth of investments, innovations and employment.

Within the framework of the first project of the „Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“, two headquarters of the „Network“ were created in the city of Jaroslaw and Humenné. These two cities continue to be responsible for the coordination of cross-border cooperation in various fields, what is the result of the continuation of another project aimed at the development of the network and strengthening of the cooperation. At present, another project under the name of „Innovative Platform of Cooperation of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“ is being implemented, within the framework of which the final conference takes place.

At present, the members of the created „Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“ are: The City of Humenné, Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland, Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Slovakia – North, the City of Przemyśl, the City of Przeworsk, the City of Lesko, the City of Jaslo, the City of Snina, the City of Medzilaborce, the City of Ustrzyki Dolne, the City of Vranov nad Topľou, the City of Jaroslaw and the City of Boguchwala.

Both projects support the idea of creation of a strategic concept - „Carpathian Horizon 2020“. Its objective is to create, in the programming period 2014 – 2020, a special operational programme for the Carpathian Euroregion, modelled on similar existing programmes in Europe such as Operational Programme INTERREG IVA of Maas – Rhein Euroregion, Operational Programme INTERREG IVA of Oresund Euroregion, or Alpine Space Programme.

Project **„Innovative platform of cooperation of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“** is co-funded by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund and from state budget in the framework of Transboundary Cooperation Programme, the Republic of Poland – the Slovak Republic 2007 – 2013

The objective of the project is to create an innovative platform of cooperation for organizational structure of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion.

This objective, among others, is realized by creation of cooperation cells within the organizational structure of partner cities on the Polish and Slovak side and also by creation of coordination centres in associations responsible for the network monitoring and cooperation with western partners of the EU. Union of cooperation procedures and creation of software application allowing free transfer of information among the partner cities should help to create better efficiency of the network operation. Therefore, the outputs of the project are subject publications created with the help of Polish and Slovak experts and members of the research group, which was composed of representatives of the project partners. Within the project, two publications were issued – „The Institutional Audit of the Cities Included in the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“ („Inštitucionálny audit miest začlenených do Siete Miest Karpatského Euroregiónu“) and „The Cooperation Procedures of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion“ („Procedúry spolupráce Siete Miest Karpatského Euroregiónu“).

The project shall end with active functioning of the platform of cooperation of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion. The work of a project group, research group and all partners of the project are to endeavour to implement the objective of the project. They are therefore to ensure integration and intensification of cooperation among municipalities and the establishment of formal structures of cooperation of municipalities of the Polish – Slovak cross-border. Within the framework of work, the leading partner shall, in collaboration with other partners, create and equip offices with the aim of correct implementation of the project. The leading partner will then form a group of experts, the task of which will be the preparation of fundamental documents of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion, preparation of the initial conference in Rzeszow and the leading partner will also cover the purchase of equipment and preparation of SMEK-int system. The result of the work of groups will be creation of cooperation platform, through which Polish – Slovak cooperation will be developed. The aim of the cooperation will be sustainable socio-economic development of the Carpathians. At the end of the project final conference will be held, where operation of the SMEK-int system and the principles of further operation of the created network will be presented.

The SMEK-int programme is the main communication system between the partners of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion. The implementation of a management system is necessary for effective coordination of contacts within the Town Network. The system also creates an environment for designing and implementation of effective solutions as well as more efficient management of projects and workflow.

The implementation of such a solution will allow for a faster and more efficient communication, will support cooperation and will enable its users to share their experience. The system will have a positive impact on the development of cooperation and will improve the communication between participants and their capability of carrying out joint and individual projects.

Solutions provided by the SMEKint system can boast of a number of features significantly facilitating the management of documents and information within the organization / institution.

The most important ones include: electronic workflow modules, automated information flow, the ability to determine the path of the information and documents flow between employees, support for project management, scheduling of tasks and meetings, support for information gathering and sharing.

The most basic advantage of using the SMEKint system is being able to keep track of issues related to storage and workflow of documents in the organization / institution. Thanks to this the employee takes control of the entire process and can automate it, which allows for significant time savings. Thanks to the programme it is also possible to fully control the process and assess employees' effectiveness. The most important advantage is the significant reduction in the time required for finding the desired documents.

Benefits for the users of the system include, among others:

- fast access to all the documents, that are kept in one place;
- effective control of the information flow;
- significant acceleration of all business processes;
- the feature allowing for an easy and automated assignment of tasks for given departments and employees;
- increase in employees' productivity thanks to making the information retrieval easier;
- reducing to zero the possibility of losing any documents;
- shortening workflow time.

One of the activities under the project entitled "Innovative Platform of Cooperation of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion" was the establishment of the Research Team, consisting of 16 members: 12 representatives of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion partners and 4 experts specialising in PR, BPM, PRINCE2 ® and IT.

The main work of the Research Team had been planned for the Phase I and II of the project. During each stage that lasted 6 months there were six meetings that took place in Humenne. The task of the team members was to actively participate in the work connected with the studies, analyzes and studies that were being conducted at that time in cooperation with the invited experts and project staff.

Further Research Team contact is being maintained via the e-mail SMEK-int and tele-SMEKint functions.

The main tasks of the Research Team include, among others:

1. Discussing issues related to the architecture of SMEK-int,
 2. Developing guidelines for research on institutional competences,
 3. Determining what should be the content of informational and promotional materials,
 4. Participating in the preparation of projects identified in the course of the Research Team's work,
 5. Substantial contribution of members of the Research Team to the preparation of the Final Report, which includes reports of the Team members' meetings, as well as the results of the work in the form of four studies, which are the basis for developing procedures for cooperation and key principles of the strategy for developing the coordination system within the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion, with particular emphasis on electronic communication channels .
- These studies are:

- 1) "Sieć Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego założenia strategii public relations" (The Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion – the PR strategy), under the direction of Mr. Dariusz Tworzydło, PhD – PR expert;
- 2) "Dostosowanie metodyki PRINCE2® dla Sieci Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego" (Adjusting the PRINCE2 ® methodology for the needs of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion) under the direction of Mr. Adam Chmielewski – PRINCE2 ® expert;
- 3) "Efektywne wykorzystanie systemu BPM przez partnerów projektu oraz uproszczenie zasad współpracy i komunikacji Sieci Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego" (Effective use of the BPM system by the project partners and simplification of the rules of cooperation and communication in the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion) under the direction of Vladimir Uram, M.Sc. – BPM expert;
- 4) "Podręcznik efektywnego wykorzystania systemu SMEK-int przez partnerów projektu oraz uproszczenia zasad współpracy i komunikacji Sieci Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego" (Guide to the efficient use of the SMEK-int system by the project partners and to the simplification of the cooperation and communication inside the the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion), under the direction of Karel Langer, M.Sc. – IT expert.

As part of their work, the Group has also prepared "Procedury współpracy Sieci Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego" (The Procedures of Cooperation of the Carpathian Euroregion Cities Network) by Adam Chmielewski, taking into account the unique features of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion.

The three main levels of the organization's functioning has been distinguished: the strategic one, the planning one and the operational (project) one. The purpose of the strategic planning procedure is to create and maintain a relevant strategy for the whole Town Network, while the task of the procedure of monitoring the implementation of the strategy is to keep the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion members focused on the implementation of the objectives as well as obtaining more information that will be used a basis for optimization activities.

At the level of programs, the Team suggested creating strategic program management procedure based on centralized, coordinated management, management of multiple projects and operational activities aimed at achieving strategic objectives and benefits.

The other, equally important study, created in collaboration with the members of the Research Group, was the "Audyty instytucjonalny miast należących do Sieci Miast Euroregionu Karpackiego" (Institutional audit of the cities belonging to the the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion) by Paweł Kościelecki, PhD).

The conducted audit had two main objectives: the first was to provide a general overview of the institutional capacity of offices, the second was to develop proposals for changes in the structure of the offices as well as the project teams in the surveyed units.

The purpose of this study was to identify those structures in the system, which should be responsible for starting the cooperation with the representatives of other cities via the SMEK platform, while working on various initiatives in their own offices.

The results of the work of Research Team and of all partners of the Town Network of the Carpathian Euroregion will contribute to achieving the objective of the project, which is to integrate and intensify cooperation between the local governments and creation of formal cooperation structures in the cities of the Polish-Slovak border. The purpose of the Network is to create an innovative platform of cooperation, which will have a positive impact on the sustainable socio-economic development of the Carpathian Euroregion.

Governing committee of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion

The Governing Committee of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion is a decision making and influential subject for the initiative called the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion. The goal of the Committee is evaluation of activities of the members and a structure of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion, determination of directions of activities focused upon social and economic development of the member cities of the Network, and also coordination and introduction of joint statements of the members within the contact with the external institutions. The Committee adopts decisions about all questions that are fundamental for the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion. Within the framework of the strategic concept called "Karpatský horizont 2020" (The Carpathian Horizon 2020), and through its activities and through involvement of its members, the Committee promotes and provides support for the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion directed towards creation of joint social and economic area in the Carpathian region.

Among members of the Committee belong representatives – top delegates of the cities participating in the initiative, and representatives of the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Poland and the Association of the Carpathian Euroregion Slovakia-North. It is possible, during the progress of the activities of the Committee, to supplement its composition on the proposal of the associations or its members.

Among other functions of the Governing Committee belong also:

- Coordination of directions of development of the initiative the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Overall constructive supervision of the preparation process for strategies for the Carpathian cities
- Determination of the priority development areas for the initiative the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion and other regions of the Carpathian Mountains
- Cooperation with the institutions, which can contribute to the development of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Annotation of the proposals of activities, and evaluation of the resolutions within the process of creation and development of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Involvement in the activities for earning the financial resources in favour of the development of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Performance of information and promotion activities in favour of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion
- Annotation of the working plans of the Network of Cities of the Carpathian Euroregion



Initiative called "Karpatský horizont 2020" (the Carpathian Horizon 2020)

The objective of the strategic concept the Carpathian Horizon 2020 is creation of a special operational programme for the Carpathian Euroregion in the planning period 2014 – 2020 that will imitate the programmes implemented by the euroregions in the Europe (Operational Programme INTERREG IVA of the Euroregion Maas – Rhein, Operational Programme INTERREG IVA of the Euroregion Oresund). The programme could become through its pilot character a model and a source of financing of the activities performed within the wide Carpathian strategy. This initiative, which is being prepared, will be beneficial to all regions that belong to the Carpathian Euroregion – the largest and the oldest territorial structure of cooperation in the Central-Eastern Europe, including also western mountainous areas of Ukraine.

It is therefore necessary to unify efforts of the states located on the Carpathian Mountains territory, the European Union itself and its structures, and the individual regional authorities with aim to elaborate a joint strategy for the Carpathian region, which will use the strengths of this region in order to eliminate its weaknesses. Such strategy, according to the model of the strategies for the Baltic Sea and Danube strategies, must be based mainly on the synergy between already existing initiatives and activities implemented in this region, and, by that, it must constitute an added value without creation of new structures, governing units or institutions.

A mechanism directed towards financing of the joint activities important for balanced development of the Carpathian region, could be created on the basis of contemporary macro-regional development strategies of the EU, as well as by the initiatives such as the European programme Alpine Space. Number of already existing good practices and initiatives in the Carpathian region shows that it is possible to reach required specific effects within relatively short period. A cooperation of this kind will contribute primarily to strengthening of ties between the EU member states and Ukraine, and it could contribute to faster integration of this state into the European structures.

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