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Cross-Border Ukrainian-Hungarian Cooperation in the Sphere of Tourism

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Abstract. The work deals with specificities of Ukrainian/Hungarian cross-border cooperation. To begin with, legislative and regulatory frameworks that permitted functioning of Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova within the Carpathian Euro-Region have been described, and key literature sources related to topicality and efficiency of cross-border tourism development were analyzed. Major focus was thus given to disclosure of trends in Ukrainian-Hungarian cross-border tourism, which presupposed the analysis of statistical data related to tourism flows.

The figures of the last-decade Ukrainian and Hungarian outbound and inbound tourism are presented and discussed. As was established, tourism flows from Ukraine to Hungary underwent significant changes in the last 10 years showing a 62% growth from 2006 to 2016 (from 1 790 008 to 2 893 370 people). The greatest departure intensity was observed since 2013 with average annual gain by 200-300 thousand people. Instead, the Hungary-to-Ukraine direction is specific for instability throughout the whole period of observations. It was 1–1,2 million Hungarians who annually visited Ukraine in 2006–2008. In particular, organized tourism shared 8% out of the whole flow in 2006. Beginning from 2007, this share declined to 1% and stayed unchanged through the next five years. Insignificant decrease in tourist arrivals to Ukraine was in 2009-2014. The last 3 years witness some growth of tourist flows at a rate of 200 thousand people annually on the average. Since all present-day trends observed in the market of cross-border tourism services are connected with realization of programs for cross-border cooperation, the effect of such programs (in particular, those to support implementation and development of recreation/tourism infrastructure in Zakarpattia Oblast in Ukraine and the Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in Hungary) was assessed. It was established that both regions possess considerable natural, historic-cultural and architectural potentials that are well worth the efforts to develop tourism infrastructure and realize cross-border routes. Perspective directions of cross-border tourism development were outlined to be as follows: sports/rehabilitative and adventure tourism; green rural tourism; ecotourism; treatment/health-improving tourism; enogastronomy; religious tourism; educational tourism with accentuation on monuments of history, archaeology, culture and ethnography; and event tourism.

Keywords: cross-border tourism; cross-border cooperation; Euro-Region; tourism flows; tourism destinations.

Introduction. Cross-border cooperation remains to be among the most characteristic features of international relations and an important component of Ukrainian national policy. Ukraine and Hungary consistently cultivate their links in the sphere of tourism, and the awareness of trends within such cooperation therefore requires systemic and detailed analysis.

Cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Ukraine is specific for being implemented on the territories that cover the Carpathian Euro-Region (Ukraine-Poland-Slovakia-Hungary-Romania-Moldova), and the “Tysa”, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (“Tysa” EGTC LLC).

Latest studies by world and national scientists where they analyzed the functioning of euro-regions do confirm the efficiency of such territorial formations. Stefan Puric, Romanian historian and anatomist of euro-regions, concludes that they represent territorial formations with the highest possible level of institutionalization found in the forms of interstate cooperation (Puric, 2007). Problems of cross-border cooperation are also thoroughly considered in the works by the *M.I. Dolishniy* Institute of Regional Studies at the National Academy of Sciences, Ukraine (Kravtsiv, 2016), where they analyze topical issues of cooperation within the territories of cross-border regions. Further details on implementing such projects can be found in works of Efros, Buchko, Rudenko for Bukovina (Efros, Buchko & Rudenko, 2015) and Kyfiak for the Upper Prut region (Kyfiak, 2008). Stoffelen A., Vanneste D. (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2017) structurally analyzed the role of tourism in regional development processes in European cross-border regions with different historical development paths.

The present study aimed at disclosure, on the basis of the analysis of statistical figures of tourism flows, of trends observed in Ukrainian-Hungarian cross-border tourism.

Data and methods. The present study has been developed on the basis of the study of sources of state statistical data (official studies, evaluation reports, programme documents and website, promotional materials), which provided a framework for discussing the relation between cross-border cooperation and tourism development. The focus being mainly on the cross-border tourism projects implemented in Zakarpattia Oblast in Ukraine and the

Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg in Hungary, analyzing their most significant results.

Statement of basic materials. Ukrainian-Hungarian tourism flows pass through the territories of Zakarpattia Region (Ukraine), and the Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (Hungary). The territory of both regions has an old common history of coexistence and development within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Czechoslovak Republic. It is due to their closeness and aforementioned historic factor that they have similar features in traditional architecture. It comes into particular prominence if the open-air museums are considered (wooden churches, traditional houses), or the architecture of the cities of Uzhgorod, Mukachevo, Khust, or Nyíregyháza (palaces, castles, temples, monuments of Gothic or Baroque architecture). Historic downtowns of these cities are included into state-protected cultural-historic heritage. All these factors would favor development of religious and cultural-educational tourism, while the historic past may inspire ethnic-cultural and nostalgic tourism.

Covering the total of 136,7 km, the state border between Ukraine and Hungary provides entry points for five automobile and an international railway.

Ukraine – Hungary: Outbound Tourism. Tourism flows from Ukraine to Hungary underwent significant changes in the last 10 years showing a 62% growth from 2006 to 2016 (from 1 790 008 to 2 893 370 people) (see Table 1). The greatest intensity of departures was observed since 2013 with average annual gain by 200 – 300 thousand people. On the contrary, the figures for organized tourism declined from 297 694 people in 2006 to 8 307 people in 2012. Unfortunately, there is no such statistics beginning from 2013 up to this present day. Instead, the structure of tourism flows witnessed a fast growth of the share of those who denoted private visits as primary purpose of their travels (see Table 2). The fact is explained by the contraction of demand for group trips, and the rise of individual tourism. It is offers for family tourism in small groups of 5-6 people that are popular today, as well as for small companies of friends. The trend also includes holiday trips where active rest forces out passive leisure.

Table 1. Dynamics of outbound tourist visitors from Ukraine to Hungary (2006-2016). Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Year	Total number of Ukrainians who visited Hungary	Tourists from Ukraine who visited Hungary	Difference
2006	1790008	297694	1492314
2007	1367642	231592	1136050
2008	1276180	67858	1208322
2009	1602608	17820	1584788
2010	1789308	21775	1767533
2011	1726957	28605	1698352
2012	1759986	8307	1751679
2013	1900469	-	-
2014*	2152512	-	-
2015*	2442101	-	-
2016*	2893370	-	-

*With no consideration of temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the City of Sevastopol and the zone of Anti-Terrorist Operation

Fig. 1. Dynamics of outbound tourist visitors from Ukraine to Hungary. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)**Table 2.** Tourists and visitors from Ukraine to Hungary. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Type of travel	2014 (people)	2015 (people)	2015/2014 (people)	2016 (people)	2016/2015 (people)
Business and government	44	-	-	-	-
Organized	-	-	-	-	-
Private	2152468	2442101	+289633	2893370	+451269

Fig. 2. Number of tourists and other visitors from Ukraine to Hungary. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Ukraine – Hungary: Inbound Tourism. The Hungary -Ukraine direction is specific for instability throughout the whole period of observations. It was 1–1,2 million Hungarians who annually visited Ukraine in 2006–2008 (see Table 3.), in particular, organized tourism accounted for 8% of the whole tourism flow in 2006. Beginning from 2007, this share declined to 1% and stayed unchanged through the next five years. Unfortunately, due to absence of

such figures, it is objectively impossible to consider tourist flows in the aspect of purpose of visit since 2014. Generally, the last 11 years showed no significant deviations in the number of Hungarians who were visiting Ukraine (1 269 653 people in 2016). Insignificant decline was observed in 2009–2014. The last 3 years were the evidence of flows' slight increase, by 200 thousand people annually on the average.

Table 3. Dynamics of inbound tourist visitors from Hungary to Ukraine (2006–2016). Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Year	Total number of Hungarians who visited Ukraine	Tourists from Hungary who visited Ukraine	Difference
2006	1159711	90241	1069470
2007	1251724	12514	1239210
2008	1033376	12367	1021009
2009	814790	10694	804096
2010	944777	11402	933375
2011	862051	9750	852301
2012	742445	4342	738103
2013	771038	325	770713
2014*	874184	2	874182
2015*	1070035	-	-
2016*	1269653	3	1269650

*With no consideration of temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomic Republic of Crimea, the City of Sevastopol and the zone of Anti-Terrorist Operation

Fig. 3. Dynamics of inbound tourist visitors from Hungary in Ukraine. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Private tourism takes the lead in the structure of tourist arrivals in the aspect of purpose of visit (see Table 4) sharing from 20 % in 2014 to 80 % in 2015, and 93% in 2016.

Table 4. Tourists and visitors from Hungary to Ukraine. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Type of travel	2014 (people)	2015 (people)	2015/2014 (people)	2016 (people)	2016/2015 (people)
Business and government	12	55	+43	133	+78
Organized	2	-	-	3	-
Private	171997	874008	+702011	1184730	+310722
Exchange: culture, sports, religion, etc.	702173	195971	-506202	84787	-111184
Immigration	-	1	-	-	-

Fig. 4. Number of tourists and other visitors from Hungary to Ukraine. Source: the data retrieved from the official website of State Statistics Service of Ukraine (SSSU)

Development of tourism and recreation is among the priorities of *2015 Regional Strategies of Development of Zakarpattia Region*, the same for 2016-2020, and other regional sectoral programs.

Agreements between Ukraine and neighboring Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Poland become definitive when the Council of Carpathian Region finally and unanimously approved the concept of the “Carpathian Tourism Route” in 2008. The program became the basis for introduction of nearly 10 projects of inter-regional and cross-border cooperation, as well as for over 10 investment projects to help develop tourism infrastructure. The cross-border route covers unique natural objects (Lake Synevyr, the Narcissi Valley, beech virgin forests, all these being entered into the list of the UNESCO World Heritage), the objects of cultural heritage (sacral monuments, medieval castles, churches), and modern recreational establishments.

The intense Ukrainian-Hungarian cross-border activity started as far back as 1993 when Ukraine joined the Carpathian Euro-Region, its first euro-region. Now it covers programs important and significant for the cross-border development in Central Europe. *Inter-Region* (Ukraine, Hungary, and Roma-

nia) is an agreement of cooperation for the development of infrastructure, economics, education, tourism, ecology, etc. *Living Tysa* represents a treaty for joint activity to prevent natural disasters and ecological catastrophes in the basin of the Tysa River. Participants: Ukraine (1 region), Romania (4 regions), Slovakia (2 regions), Hungary (5 regions). *Association of Museums and Art Galleries of the Carpathian Euro-Region* is a project to help attract public and state authorities' attention to preservation of monuments of history and culture, financial borrowing to support museums and restore monuments, and for activation of tourism exchange. Participants: Ivano-Frankivsk Region, Zakarpattia Region, Megye (Region) of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Košický kraj (Region), Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Region). *Green Carpathians* is a project and an agreement called to strengthen joint activity of the members of the Carpathian Euro-Region in the sphere of tourism and recreation. The project aims to intensify tourism movement, promote rural green tourism, create the database of thematic tourist routes, and encourage ecological awareness in tourism. Associations of border self-governing authorities cooperate, as a rule, in the sphere of culture, education, and development of infrastructure of their villages, towns and

townships. Effective bilateral agreements between administrative-territorial authorities of all levels, e.g., those made up between the cities of Uzhgorod and Nyíregyháza, are signed for cooperation in economic, cultural and scientific spheres (Sydoran, 2010).

According to the data available on the Zakarpattia Tourism Information Web Portal, the period of 1995-2003 was favorable in Zakarpattia for realization of 6 cross-border tourism projects totally amounting to 145 000 euro. This was only the first experience of implementing such projects between Hungary and Ukraine. Principal activity was taking place on the territory of Hungary, whereas Zakarpattia was an associate contractor. The partners co-worked in *Development of Tourism Program Packages*, *Tysa Water Tourism Development*, *Cross-Border Tourism Routes to Monuments of Architecture*, etc. When a number of Central-European countries gained the EU membership in 2004, the status of cooperation between Ukraine and new EU members has become essentially different and the next three years witnessed development of three new Ukrainian-Hungarian tourism projects financially supported in the amount of 320 000 euro. Later on, six tourism projects were realized within the frame of the *Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Program* in 2007-2013 with total budget of 2 million euro. Among those there was a project for *Management of Cross-Border Destinations on the Territories of Hungary and Zakarpattia*, etc. On the whole, the EU went to the expense of over 2 500 000 euro for the development of tourism in the Ukrainian-Hungarian border in the last 20 years.

Co-financed by the European Union through the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument, the *Integral Network of Biking Tourism Routes Across Ukrainian-Hungarian State Border* (HUSK-ROUA/1001/012) was realized in 2012-2013 within the frame of the *2007-2013 Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation Program*. The “Center for Ukrainian-Hungarian Regional Development”, a Zakarpattia Region Non-Government Organization was the project executor with the partnership of the State Roads Service in Zakarpattia Region, Uzhgorod (Ukraine); Directorate of the museums of the Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Nyíregyháza (Hungary); the City Council of Beregsurány (Hungary).

The aforesaid “Center for Ukrainian-Hungarian Regional Development” was founded as far back as 2004, and the betterment of tourism activity within a European context is among its first-order tasks. The Center has also realized the implementation of the regional tourism information center in

Zakarpattia Region due to the grant earmarked for that purpose in 2007.

The Zakarpattia Region Council gives a special eye to cooperation with Hungarian regions. It was in 2016 that yet another 2017 Program of Cooperation between the Zakarpattia Region and the Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg was signed; the same with the Megye of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén to co-work in 2016-2017; the Agreement for Cooperation of Territorial Self-Governing Bodies in the Basin of the Tysa River was signed by the chairs of regional councils of Ukraine, Hungary, Romania and Serbia; and a new cooperation program with the Megye of Bács-Kiskun was given a start. Cooperation with the above-stated regions of Hungary allows the realization of projects within the *2014-2020 Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Program* with the EU's grant in the amount of nearly EUR80 million.

All these projects aim at solving social, ecological and infrastructural problems encountered in border regions of both countries and are directed towards preservation of historic and cultural heritage, environmental protection (in particular, development and implementation of the “Tysa”, an Automated Informational-Measuring System (MS), creation of the “Tysa Valley”, a cross-border wildlife reserve), development of transport and communication thoroughfares, opening of new border checkpoints, learning of hard domestic waste disposal.

The cross-border cooperation in the region is also specific for availability, on all institutional levels, of organizations that regularly realize projects or take initiatives related to problems of development of joint work within the frame of Ukrainian-Hungarian cross-border region. In confirmation of the fact, the following important cross-border different-level network associations should be outlined: “Carpathian Euro-Region”, an Inter-Regional Association founded in 1993 (unites border regions of 5 countries); Ukrainian part of the Civil Society Forum of the Danube Strategy (founded in 2014); Association of Ukrainian/Hungarian Borderline Municipalities; “The Circle of Carpathian Communities”, a cross-border network of non-government organizations and associations of local self-governing; Association of Carpathian Region Universities; Rotary International (North-Eastern Carpathians).

Conclusions. The cross-border tourism in both regions features encouraging development perspectives with priorities to be accentuated upon as follows:

1. Sports-rehabilitative and adventure tourism (walking, alpine, water, biking, skiing and alpine skiing tourism). Particularly attractive is the mountainous area of the Transcarpathian region

which makes it possible to realize most of the above-mentioned types of tourism. Cycling and mountain rivers alloys (including Tysa) may be transboundary.

2. Rural green tourism. It has resources for development on both sides of the border. The more favorable territories for it are the mountainous and foothill landscape as well as the regions of the balneological resorts of both Ukrainian and Hungarian.

3. Eco-tourism (predominantly on the territories of nature reserve fund). There are 454 objects of the nature reserve fund in the Transcarpathian region, in particular the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve, the national natural parks Synevir, Uzhansky and Zacharovanny Kray. The administrations of these institutions create and implement planned ecotourism routes. There is no national park or natural reserve in Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg of Hungary, that is why it may be an important and interesting possibility to take part in ecotourism programmes that are being implemented in Ukraine for the citizens of Hungarian borderland.

4. Treatment-health-improving tourism. It has the prospects on both sides of the border. But Ukrainians often prefer to recover in Hungary where the best service and lower prices are offered.

5. Enogastronomy. It is perspective on the whole territory of the research which makes it possible to implement cross-border enogastronomic tours with tasting of the wine, cheese and other traditional dishes for the region.

6. Religious tourism. It has its distinctive features both in Ukraine and in Hungary but common traits in the architecture of religious buildings can be traced.

7. Cognitive tourism with accentuation upon the monuments of history, archaeology, culture, architecture, and ethnography. The common historical past is the basis for the development of cognitive tourism, and historical and cultural objects are the basis of tourist routes.

8. Event tourism. It has a number of preconditions on the both sides of the border: a common historical and ethnographic heritage, in particular, traditions, ethnogastronomy, traditional art. There are about 50 festivals annually in the Transcarpathian region. This affects the quantity and quality of tourist services in the region.

The Zakarpattia Region of Ukraine and the Megye of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg of Hungary possess considerable natural, historic-cultural and architectural potentials that are well worth efforts to develop there tourism infrastructure and realize cross-border routes, and should therefore be qualified as tourism-perspective regions.

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