

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN WAR CONDITIONS. THE "LOWER DANUBE EUROREGION" CROSS BORDER COOPERATION AGENCY AS A SUBJECT OF CROSS BORDER COOPERATION IN ODESA REGION

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Abstract: "Lower Danube Euroregion" Cross-Border Cooperation Agency is an enterprise of the Odesa Regional Council and represents the interests of the territorial communities of villages, towns, and cities in the Odesa region. The main goal is the promotion of social-economic, scientific, technical, environmental, cultural, and other relations among the entities and members of international cooperation. The main goals and objectives are the following: to promote the development of cross-border cooperation within the framework of the "Lower Danube Euroregion"; to create favourable conditions for the development of transport, customs, border infrastructure, etc.; to develop the measures aimed at creating a positive image of the region, its investment attractiveness, promotion of the region to potential consumers and international donor, financial institutions; to solve social-economic problems in the region, the revival of investment and business activities; to assist in the development and training of entrepreneurial, humanitarian and research projects, as well as in all areas of cross-border cooperation; to involve the international investors and organisations to participate in the development of the economy of the region, the revival of investment and business activities; to develop and improve the information support of local and regional governments, executive authorities and enterprises, institutions and organisations.

Through this great event, we want to let the world know about us. We can give many countries the necessary help in writing and getting grants. Grants can provide organisations and communities with an opportunity to get extra resources for the development of tourism (different kinds of it), the economy, sociology, etc. Through this event, we can better understand the needs of different communities, organisations and countries in general. We can be the necessary link between them.

Keywords: Ukraine, "Lower Danube Euroregion", Cross-Border Cooperation, Odesa Agency, presentation, objectives.

During the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, cross-border politics between the Danube countries intensified and reached, perhaps, the largest dimensions in the history of their existence. Romania and Moldova shifted their emphasis towards energy, the military-defence complex, cross-border and customs cooperation, environmental policy, and the reconstruction of Ukraine. An important role is also assigned to the issue of cross-border cooperation in the implementation of the goals of the EU's regional policy.

The goal of cross-border cooperation is the formation of good-neighbourly relations and the deepening of the interaction of subjects and participants of cross-border cooperation, which contributes to the joint solution of local and regional development tasks, based on the following principles:¹

¹ <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1861-15#Text>; <https://ips.ligazakon.net/document/MU80K15U>;
<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/408-2021-rr#Text>.

- respect for the internal affairs of states;
- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- mutually beneficial cooperation;
- respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders;
- taking into account the powers of subjects and the rights of participants in cross-border cooperation during the conclusion of agreements on cross-border cooperation;
- agreed elimination of political, economic, legal, administrative and other obstacles to mutual cooperation.

It was for the implementation of state policy at the regional level that the "Lower Danube Euroregion" Cross-Border Cooperation Agency (hereinafter - the Organization) was created, which is the object of the right of joint ownership of territorial communities of villages, towns, cities of the region, whose interests are represented by the Odesa Regional Council within the scope of powers defined by the legislation of Ukraine.

Odesa Region is a coastal and border region of Ukraine, located in the south-western part of the country, with an area of 33.3 thousand km² which is 5.5% of the territory of Ukraine. It was formed in 1932. The administrative centre of the region is the city of Odesa, one of the largest cities of Ukraine, an important transport, industrial, scientific, cultural and resort centre with a population of 1,013,400 people.

The region includes 19 cities, 33 urban-type settlements, and 1,123 rural settlements. As part of the reform of local self-government and territorial organization of power (decentralization), 19 urban territorial communities, 25 settlement territorial communities, and 47 rural territorial communities were created in the territory of Odesa region, which are united into 7 districts. The population of the region is 2,352,000 people.

Due to the risks associated with military actions, foreign investors are not ready to consider new projects in Ukraine. In this context, Odesa was not an exception: the military aggression of the Russian Federation put a pause on the implementation of several projects in the field of transport, logistics, processing industry and renewable energy.

The goal of our organization is the development of socio-economic, scientific-technical, ecological, cultural and other ties between subjects and participants of cross-border cooperation. Also, the goal of the organization is to promote the socio-economic and ecological development of the Danube region, to solve the environmental problems of the Danube and its basin, adjacent territories and water bodies, to achieve a safe state of the environment, to strengthen cross-border cooperation within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube region, to ensure environmental rights for citizens, to support in this way the development of Ukraine, the implementation of state policy in the field of local self-government regarding the promotion of socio-economic and ecological development of the Danube region.

The main tasks of the Organization are:

- promoting the development of cross-border cooperation within the framework of the "Lower Danube" Euroregion;
- creation of favourable conditions for the development of transport, customs, border infrastructure, etc.;
- development of a set of measures aimed at creating a positive image of the region, its investment attractiveness, and promotion of the region to potential consumers - international donors and financial organizations;
- solving socio-economic problems of the region, revitalizing investment and entrepreneurial activity;
- promotion of effective implementation of regional policy, cross-border cooperation in the fields of education, science and innovation; promotion of tourism; environmental protection and emergencies; transport, communications and energy; monitoring and improvement of water, soil and air quality; providing the population with high-quality drinking water and wastewater treatment; reduction of anthropogenic impact on the environment; environmental risk management; reproduction of biodiversity, landscapes; health care and social protection; cultural activities and interethnic relations, etc.;

- promoting the improvement of mobility and intermodality of water, air, road and railway routes in the Danube region;
- promoting the development of sustainable energy, energy efficiency and energy saving;
- promoting the development of culture, tourism, science, research and innovation, sports and youth, and people-to-people contacts;
- promotion of socio-economic development of regions, increase of competitiveness of enterprises, development of small and medium-sized businesses;
- promoting the activation of institutional potential and cooperation, increasing public awareness, protecting and prevention of emergency situations;
- promoting the organization of non-profit educational events of congresses, conferences, thematic improvements, lectures, seminars, round tables, press conferences, forums, meetings, public hearings, symposia, congresses, socio-cultural and other public events aimed at meeting the needs and interests of the Organization's members with the participation of domestic and international experts;
- promoting the attraction of investment and credit resources, as well as international technical assistance for regional development, creating conditions for institutional and infrastructural development of the region.

The subject of activity and functions of the organization are the following:

- assistance to authorities, non-governmental organizations and legal entities in the development and implementation of targeted programs aimed at the development of the Odesa region as a whole and separately in the Danube region;
- coordination of activities of the "Lower Danube Euroregion";
- establishment and development of comprehensive contacts with Ukrainian and foreign organizations to establish and carry out the exchange of scientific information and experience, as well as information in the field of modern technologies in the field of regional development;
- attraction of international investors and organizations to participate in the development of the region's economy, revitalization of investment and entrepreneurial activity;
- participation and implementation of projects of all-Ukrainian, interregional, international and regional importance, development programs of the Odesa region, international technical assistance, and grant programs aimed at the development of the Odesa region.
- participation in the development and implementation of international, national, regional, local and own programs on ecology, environmental protection, regional and macro-regional development; participation in international events, including issues related to the EU Strategy for the Danube region;
- cooperation with various public and other institutions, organizations and enterprises, as well as with international organizations on issues of ecology, environmental protection, energy efficiency, energy saving, and natural resources, in other areas of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and strategic documents and instruments of the European Union, international organizations and representative offices of other states, directed to the development of Ukrainian regions;
- participation of members of the Organization in international events, and seminars on issues corresponding to the Organization's statutory activities;
- organization of publishing activities for the implementation of statutory goals, as well as promotion of publication and distribution of printed, audio and video products on issues related to the goals of the Organization;
- preparation and provision of assistance in the development and preparation of projects, including those of an entrepreneurial, humanitarian, scientific and research nature and in all areas of cross-border cooperation;
- attraction of international investors and organizations to participate in the development of the region's economy, revitalization of investment and entrepreneurial activity;
- interaction of local authorities and local self-government bodies with various Organizations, public and political parties, trade unions, and business structures of all forms of ownership on issues related to the implementation of the Organization's goals and objectives;
- provision of methodological, and organizational services of an entrepreneurial, humanitarian, scientific research nature on issues of cross-border cooperation and regional development by

organizing lectures, seminars, holding consultations, issuing methodological materials and reference manuals;

- promoting the development and improvement of information provision of local and regional self-government bodies, state executive bodies, as well as enterprises, institutions, and organizations;
- creation of conditions for enterprises and organizations to attract foreign investments.

Since the full-scale Russian invasion, we have shifted the vector of our activities as much as possible in the direction of helping the citizens of Ukraine. Our team is constantly studying various specialized resources where announcements about current grant competitions are posted. We offer the most interesting proposals for the development of projects to improve business, solve social issues, and strengthen civil society. We are considering grant proposals aimed at the sustainable development and international attractiveness of the Odesa region, with the support of vulnerable population groups and internally displaced persons.

As part of the strengthening of **state policy**, it is recommended to:

- Expand the range of activities of subjects and participants of cross-border cooperation aimed at solving specific joint tasks and satisfying the interests of territorial communities;
- To implement a set of activities of subjects and participants of cross-border cooperation of Ukraine aimed at the development of cross-border cooperation;
- To improve state support for the development of cross-border cooperation, namely to take decisions and actions of an organizational, legal and financial nature of the state authorities of Ukraine, aimed at the implementation of projects (programs) of cross-border cooperation;
- To make changes to the state program for the development of cross-border cooperation, introducing a set of measures of the state authorities of Ukraine aimed at the development of cross-border cooperation, which is carried out using funds from the State Budget of Ukraine.

Cross-border cooperation within the framework of the "Lower Danube Euroregion" is seen in the implementation of several measures both through partnership between territorial communities and through participation in cross-border cooperation projects that were interrupted by the war, or the implementation of new programs for 2021-2027 began. This is participation in the programs "Black Sea Basin", "Romania-Ukraine", "LIFE" and other programs of the European Union.

In the **short term**, the following goals must be implemented:

- provision of needs to support Ukrainians located in AER (the Assembly of European Regions) member regions (in each country separately, upon request);
- provision of opportunities for students to study in educational institutions or internships in medical institutions/organizations (in each country separately, upon request);
- humanitarian aid: construction of apartments for the compact living of displaced persons, water purification systems, solar power plants, thermal boilers, office equipment for teaching school students, rehabilitation and medical equipment;
- short-term training of rehabilitators and psychologists with obtaining certificates to ensure payment of such services within the limits of Ukrainian legislation in the field of health care;
- training on writing grant projects and fundraising;
- establishing communication with representatives of the European Commission regarding the participation of the Odesa region in international donor aid programs;
- with the support of the Cross border cooperation agency "Lower Danube Euroregion", communities of the Odesa region have experience and are ready to participate in grant competitions from all European international donor organizations;
- participation in joint events, training, experience exchange programs, and development of program documents and strategies within the framework of priorities selected for cooperation.

In the **long term**:

- solving several issues and problems in the field of environmental protection, especially those that arose as a result of military aggression (drainage of rivers, reduction of marine diversity - referral to restoration and conservation);

- support for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine (agricultural enterprises, especially the processing industry). Experience with the cluster approach to the creation of sales markets for Ukrainian industry;
- attraction of international investors to participate in joint projects related to the restoration of socio-economic development with foreign enterprises and organizations with the support of authorities;
- construction of waste processing enterprises;
- modernization of treatment facilities;
- formation of a single cultural space to present the multinational culture of the Odesa region;
- creation of favourable conditions for the modernization of transport, customs, and border infrastructure;
- support the agro-industrial complex of the region. Development and implementation of the land reclamation system using innovative technologies.

REFERENCES

European framework convention on cross-border cooperation between territorial communities or authorities.

On the approval of the State program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2021-2027.