



PARADIPLOMACY OF POLISH REGIONS

Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (Lower Silesia)

Podkarpackie Voivodeship

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Analysis of the Polish legislative and institutional framework for regional paradiplomacy

Starting in the 1990s, the international contacts of Polish local government units began increasing at the voivodeship level. Currently, all Polish voivodeships have foreign partners and participate in international projects. Regions join international networks of cooperation, sign treaties and agreements with their partners from other countries, and some even open trade and cultural missions abroad. The increase in the dynamism in the international activities of the reanimated sub-state units in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries has become an important element in the development of local democracy, decentralization processes, regional development and European integration in this part of Europe.

International and Polish framework

The international activities of local government, also called paradiplomacy,¹ have become a part of a larger process that includes the growing significance of non-governmental organizations in international relations.² This phenomenon is stimulated externally through processes such as globalization, the decentralization of international relations and European integration. The growing importance of territorial structures, the activities of international associations and organizations, and the internationalization of issues within the competence of local authorities and technological development also play a role.

The opening-up of local governments to the world, the desire to learn from the experience of partners, especially those in Western Europe, constituted a very important stage in shaping self-government in Poland and regional development. The opening of the borders, the abolition of barriers and the availability of EU funds revived international contacts, primarily in border regions thanks to joint infrastructure projects (cooperation within Euroregions). The opportunities for close cooperation,

supported by dedicated EU programs (e.g. cross-border programs, *Europe for Citizens*) mitigated the disadvantages associated with the peripheral nature of the region.

The EU provides funds and a legal instrument called the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).³ The EGTC differs from other cooperation instruments as it has a legal personality and legal capacity. The higher level of institutionalization makes it easier to create permanent structures of cooperation and eliminates the need for partners to sign project contracts each time. Although cooperation is possible between territorial units that are not border areas, so far the EGTCs involving Polish entities cover cross-border areas only.

Internally the most important determinants in Poland were the political transformation and the related local government reforms in the 1990s that led to the decentralization and development of local democracy. The first years of transformation were a time of intensive self-government learning from partners in Western Europe. Openness to the world and foreign contacts were accompanied by a growing awareness of the benefits of such activity for local development and the need to strengthen the region's position in the country and abroad. Specialized units began appearing in the Marshal's Offices of the voivodeships, with designated persons⁴ responsible for international contacts.

In the 1990s, Poland ratified the Council of Europe treaties regulating local government relations both within Poland and with territorial units in other countries. The Council of Europe conventions were particularly important. The *European Charter of Local Government*,⁵ ratified by Poland in November 1993,⁶ concerns the right of local and regional communities to associate and cooperate with their counterparts in other states.⁷

Another important document was *the European framework convention on cross-border cooperation*

international affairs, London and New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 184.

² B. Surmacz, *Ewolucja współczesnej dyplomacji. Aktorzy, struktury, funkcje*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015, pp. 537.

⁴ In the majority of regions these employees were well-prepared for this role, i.e. they spoke foreign languages, often having studied philology or international relations.

⁵ All the regulations apply to all three levels of Polish territorial units.

⁶ Dz.U. z 1994 r., nr 124, poz. 607.

⁷ Dz. U. 1994 r., Nr 124, poz. 607, Europejska Karta Samorządu Terytorialnego, art. 10.

¹ I. Duchacek, "The International Dimension of Subnational Self-Government," Publius, *The Journal of Federalism*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1984, pp. 5–31; F. Aldecoa, M. Keating (ed.), *Paradiplomacy in action. The foreign relations of subnational Governments*, London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 70; N. Cornago, "Diplomacy and paradiplomacy in the redefinition of international security: Dimensions of conflict and cooperation," *Regional and Federal Studies* no. 9/1999, 2009, pp. 40–57; N. Cornago, "On the Normalization of Sub-State Diplomacy," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 5 (1–2), 2010, pp. 11–36; A. S. Kuznetsov, *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational governments in*

between communities and territorial authorities, known as the Madrid Convention, and ratified by Poland in 1993.⁸ The Madrid Convention is more political than legal in nature. It obliges the state to facilitate and support cooperation between cross-border communities and local authorities, thus contributing to the economic and social progress of border areas. The member states of the Council of Europe, signatories to the Madrid Convention, agreed that "Each Contracting Party undertakes to facilitate and foster transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities within its jurisdiction and territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of other Contracting Parties."⁹

Although local governments cannot and do not conduct foreign policy, as this is the prerogative of central authorities, Poland's foreign policy has an impact on the initiatives of local government units. This was already visible in the pre-accession period and in the first years of EU membership. The sub-state units were preparing to use the EU funds, learning from their Western partners, but also strengthening cooperation with partners in countries that were preparing to become EU members. Access to EU funds became an important stimulator of many activities.

The foreign contacts of local governments depend to some extent on the state of intergovernmental relations. This was particularly evident in relations with Russia and Ukraine. After the Russian annexation of Crimea (in 2014), many Polish-Russian initiatives at sub-state level were canceled or postponed, for example, the Poland–Russia Forum of Regions. In turn, the war in Ukraine resulted in the suspension of cooperation with the Ukrainian regions engaged in military operations. Another example is cooperation with partners in China. Along with the growing intensification of state relations, contacts at local authority level were revived, especially before 2016. In the years 2013–2016, Poland–China regional forums were held, and Łódzkie Voivodeship opened a representative office in its partner province.¹⁰

Poland's position in the world has also had an impact on the international activity of the regions. With Poland's accession to the European Union and the strengthening of the position of the state, the interest in cooperation with Polish local governments among partners in non-EU countries increased. Polish regions were involved in European Union programs, adopted EU norms and

regulations and were able to share their experiences of systemic transformation.

Legal framework

The territory of Poland is divided into 16 regions, called voivodeships, and these are further divided into counties (districts). The lowest level of public administration is the commune (municipality). The current system was introduced in 1990s. At the voivodeship level administrative authority is shared between the governor or voivode who is appointed by the central government, the elected assembly, and the executive appointed by that assembly. The leader of the executive is the marshal (*marszałek*). Despite local government units having some freedom to undertake international activity, their room for maneuver is limited by their competences and Polish foreign policy priorities.

At the local government level Poland's international paradiplomacy legally underpinned by two types of agreements: bilateral agreements on interregional cooperation (12 agreements, mainly from the 1990s) and friendship treaties, where there are also issues related to cross-border and interregional cooperation (27 agreements).¹¹ The regulations on paradiplomacy are found in both the Constitution and local government acts. Article 172 para. 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997 states that all levels of local government have "the right to join international associations of local and regional communities and cooperate with local and regional communities of other countries."¹²

The regulations on the international activities of the voivodeship self-government are more detailed. According to the Act on Voivodeship Self-Government of 5 June 1998, the *sejmik* (local legislature) adopts the voivodeship's foreign cooperation priorities and sets out the main goals, geographical preferences of future cooperation and intentions regarding membership of international regional associations. All activities must comply with Polish domestic law, as well as Polish foreign policy and international commitments, within the competence of the province's authorities. Resolutions on the regions' international cooperation priorities, and all international initiatives, must be approved by the foreign affairs minister. Under the law local government international activities are considered a basic element of the formulation and implementation the voivodeship's

⁸ "Europejska Karta Samorządu Terytorialnego, sporządzona w Strasburgu dnia 15 października 1985 r.," Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, 1994. Available online: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19941240607/T/D19940607L.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁹ "Europejska Karta Samorządu Terytorialnego, sporządzona w Strasburgu dnia 15 października 1985 r., Art. 10," Internetowy System Aktów Prawnych, 1994. Available online: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19941240607/T/D19940607L.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

¹⁰ T. Kamiński, "What are the factors behind the successful EU-China cooperation on the subnational level? Case study of the Łódzkie region in Poland," *Asia Europe Journal* Vol. 17(2), 2019, 227–247; A. Skorupska, J. Szczudlik (ed.), *The Subnational Dimension of EU-China Relations*, Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2019, pp. 67.

¹² *Konstytucja RP z 7 kwietnia 1997 r.*, Dz.U. z 1997 r. nr 78, poz. 483.

development strategy.¹³ However, there is no stipulation on how often the resolution has to be updated. That lies within the local authorities' competences. In addition the statutory duties of local government include "organizing cooperation with the local self-government structures in other countries and with international regional associations."

In 1999–2000, after the local self-government reform in Poland, the Polish voivodeships adopted their international cooperation priorities. European countries are among the most important geographic priorities. Later, following Poland's EU accession, the list of potential or existing partnerships was expanded with the adoption of the new priorities.

The sejmik passes other local laws that have an impact on paradiplomatic activities, including the voivodeship's development strategy and the multi-annual voivodeship programs, the budget and mode of work and the voivodeship statute (adopted after consultation with the prime minister).

The sejmik also inspects the budget implementation reports, voivodeship financial reports and voivodeship multi-annual programs implementation reports, including spending on paradiplomatic activities. It adopts resolutions on whether to grant discharge to the voivodeship board for budget implementation. Moreover, the sejmik elects and dismisses the voivodeship board, considers reports on its activities and appoints and dismisses, at the request of the voivodeship marshal, the voivodeship treasurer, who is the chief accountant of the voivodeship budget.

Within the sejmik there are specialized committees, one of which is focused on foreign cooperation. The members of the sejmik come from various political parties, democratically elected by their constituencies. Their work is not a full time job. Members of the sejmik receive a sum of money, which is a kind of reimbursement of the expenses associated with the exercise of their mandate. Committee meetings are held once a month, but foreign activities are also discussed during the plenary meetings attended by all members of the sejmik.

The main paradiplomatic tasks of the voivodeship are assigned to the voivodeship board, headed by the marshal and served by the large administrative apparatus of the Marshal's Office. According to the Act on Voivodeship Self-Government, the voivodeship board "organizes cooperation with the local governments in other countries and with international associations of regions". The marshal represents the voivodeship externally.

Central government and paradiplomacy

¹³ Dz.U. 1998, nr 9, poz. 576.

¹⁴ B. Ociepka, *Dyplomacja samorządowa w polskim modelu dyplomacji publicznej*, www.researchgate.net.

Paradiplomatic activities have become an important Polish foreign policy tool. For example, the Polish experience of developing self-governance has become an "export product," especially for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. This was reinforced when president Bronisław Komorowski announced that 2015 would be "the year of local-government." Under this slogan, numerous international events and projects took place with the participation of local authorities in various countries. Support for the decentralization reforms of the Eastern Partnership countries involving central and local government authorities was mentioned in subsequent annual speeches by foreign ministers in the Sejm, Poland's national parliament. As noted by professor Beata Ociepka territorial governments became active in Poland's new public diplomacy, not just in the implementation but also in the planning of activities.¹⁴

The establishment of the Department for Territorial Government and Civic Dimension of Polish Foreign Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2012 was key to the institutional support for paradiplomacy. It served as a mechanism for supporting local government authorities interested in international activities but also as a platform for discussion. There are also Regional Centers for International Debate established in all the regional capitals. Their task is to ensure local communities are familiar with Polish foreign policy issues and to strengthen the channels of cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the local entities, especially local governments, academia and expert communities.

The Polish regions are involved in Polish Aid projects, where they support their regional partners in the four EaP countries (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), especially in the fields of good governance (regional development, strengthening public administration and local government) and democratization (construction of civil society).

The importance of paradiplomacy is also recognized in foreign policy documents. The Polish Foreign Policy Strategy for 2017–2021 states: "The efficacy of Polish foreign policy is contingent on the quality of the diplomacy and – more broadly – the government administration. But it also has to build on the capabilities and contributions of local governments and NGOs, active not only in Poland's immediate neighborhood, but also in distant parts of the world. Poland will increasingly tap into their potential."¹⁵

In August 2019 the then ministry of entrepreneurship and technology organized the Regional and Economic Diplomacy Summit. One of the main ideas behind it was

¹⁵ "Strategia polskiej polityki zagranicznej. 2017–2021," Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych. Available online: <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/strategia> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

to show that cooperation between local governments and entities responsible for entrepreneurship in government and in the regions was essential to achieving a synergy effect and, consequently, more effective economic diplomacy.

Local governments also participate in the international projects the Polish government is involved in. In addition to the already mentioned support for the EaP countries, the Three Seas Initiative¹⁶ is another example. The first Forum of the Regions of the Three Seas Initiative took place on July 3, 2018, in Rzeszów. The Second Forum of the Three Seas Regions was due to take place in Lublin – but was postponed to October 2020¹⁷. This meeting between the regional representatives of the countries in the Three Seas Initiative is aimed at strengthening socio-economic and scientific cooperation.

For several years the Polish central government and its Chinese partners have also been encouraging the regions to join the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Paradiplomacy is an element of the cooperation in the V4 as well. There are many projects involving local governments in the V4 countries and financed by the Visegrad Fund. The objectives of the Polish Presidency of the V4 (July 2020–June 2021) include the renewal and strengthening of cooperation and the cross-border contacts suppressed by the pandemic.

Geographical directions of international cooperation by Polish regions

The scale of international involvement of local governments is highly varied and dependent on many factors, such as geographical location (whether it is a central or border region), history (e.g. existence of historical links with regions across the border) and socio-economic aspects (e.g. existence of trans-border value chains). The current boundaries of the voivodeships are the result of the reform in 1998¹⁸; however, many agreements previously signed under international relations were automatically extended. The new voivodeships continued working with the foreign partners of their predecessors, and over time some of these contacts strengthened, while others were terminated.

The geographical distribution of paradiplomatic activities reflects Poland's foreign policy priorities. At the beginning of the 21st century new relations were being

formed primarily with partners in neighboring countries and the European Union. After Poland's accession to the EU, Polish regions became more attractive to more geographically distant countries.

All the voivodeships have foreign partnerships, participate in international projects and are members of international associations. According to the data of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Polish voivodeships declared 289 foreign relations in 2016¹⁹. Of these 72% (207) are still active. An active partnership refers to activities undertaken with a foreign partner in the last two years. The remaining 28 per cent of partnerships are labeled not-active, but that does not mean that cooperation will not take place in the near future, nor that there is no contact between the partners. The voivodeships claim to have 4 to 31 partnerships and most voivodeships have about 20 partnerships²⁰.

Over half of the identified partnerships were initiated in 1999–2004. Many new relations were established just before Poland's accession to the EU. When preparing for EU accession, the regions cooperated a great deal with partners in the EU because of their need for know-how. There were also a lot of paradiplomatic links with partners in neighboring countries, stimulated by the availability of pre-accession funds for cross-border cooperation. New contacts took off again in 2008 and then in 2012. In 2008 the motivation was the new financial prospects for cross-border programs (2007–2013). In 2012 the increase in the number of new partners was partly related to greater interest in cooperation with China (a declaration on a strategic partnership between Poland and China was signed in 2011) and to the prospect of Croatia joining the EU. Croatian regions were interested in the experience of Polish regions, especially the use of EU funds. According to research from 2016, Ukrainian regions constituted the most numerous group of foreign partners of Polish voivodeships. Active partnerships with at least one region in Ukraine were reported by 14 voivodeships²¹. In total Polish voivodeships stated they had 42 partnerships with Ukrainian regions, 33 (78%) of these were partnerships in which joint action had been undertaken in the last two years. The remaining partnerships were assessed as being not-active, and most of these were with the eastern and southern parts of

¹⁶ The Three Seas Initiative was formed by 12 EU member states located between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black seas. It aims to promote cooperation, primarily for the development of infrastructure in the energy, transport and digital sectors. It targets new investments, economic growth and energy security.

¹⁷ Originally it was to take place in April, but owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, Congress was moved to October 2020.

¹⁸ "Ustawa z dnia 5 czerwca 1998 r. o samorządzie województwa," System Aktów Prawnych, 1998. Available online: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19980910576/O/D19980576.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

¹⁹ A. Skorupska, "Geograficzne kierunki międzynarodowej aktywności polskich województw," *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, No. 3, 2013, pp. 130-147.

²⁰ W. Modzelewski, *Paradyplomacja regionów. Studium województw Polski Wschodniej*, Olsztyn: Instytut Nauk Politycznych Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2016, pp. 416.

²¹ Mazowieckie and Łódzkie Voivodeships reported five partnerships, Podkarpackie and Śląski four each and Lubelskie three. At that time Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship had not active cooperation with Mykolaiv Region, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea partnered with Podlaskie Voivodeship for many years.

Ukraine. In the cases of Lugansk and Donetsk the war was the reason²².

The German lands have been a stable partner of Polish regions since the 1990s. In 2016, 14 voivodeships had at least one active partnership²³. Out of 32 partnerships, as many as 30 were active partnerships and only two voivodeships reported inactive cooperation, in both cases with Bavaria.

The statistics on active partnerships show that France and China came next in terms of cooperation with Polish regions in 2016, with 13 voivodeships reporting joint action with French departments²⁴. Turning to Chinese provinces, 13 voivodeships declared they had contacts at the beginning of 2017²⁵, only two of which were not-active – Zachodniopomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie²⁶. Polish regions also had many active contacts in the Czech Republic and Sweden – 11 each,²⁷ and 10 in Croatia²⁸ and 9 in Slovakia²⁹.

Partnerships with the Italian regions were different. Many relations had been established at the beginning of the 21st century and were not-active in 2016. Among the 23 declared partnerships, as many as 11 had no joint action. Many not-active partnerships were identified in cooperation with Russia and Spain. In cooperation with Russian regions only 4 out of the 16 declared partnerships were active. Cooperation with Russian local authorities had been suspended or significantly weakened after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. At the same time Polish local government showed an interest in maintaining and even developing cooperation with Russian partners in the Kaliningrad region, which shares a land border with Poland. The introduction of the small border traffic law in 2012 had a very positive impact on socio-economic relations, and both sides were interested in maintaining these benefits. However, in July 2016 the Polish government decided to suspend international agreements on small border traffic in connection with the NATO summit and World Youth Day, and it was not restored after that. The launch of the EU's Poland–Russia Cross-

border Cooperation Program 2014–2020 fund was an important event stimulating the revival of contacts between northern regions and Kaliningrad Oblast³⁰. The first call for grant proposals was announced in April 2018. In the case of Spain only two out of 10 declared partnerships were active in 2016. Relations with partners in the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom tended to be not-active. Although the scale of contacts with each of these countries was, and is, much smaller than they are with Italy or Spain, all are part of a similar process whereby Western European partners are losing interest in cooperation with Poland. At the beginning of the transformation in Poland, in the pre-accession period and in the first years of EU membership, many activities with Western partners were focused on developing local government, preparing the Polish regions to function in the EU and the use of European funds. Local governments in Western Europe could use special programs to support Poland. Over time the support programs ended and the “old EU” partners’ interest shifted to the new candidate countries or Eastern Partnership countries. The economic crises in Europe in 2008–2012 were another important factor forcing the regions to limit some of their activities. Among neighboring countries, quite a few of the not-active partnerships were with partners in Lithuania (3 active partnerships out of 9 in total). This may be linked to the different system of territorial division and the lack of a regional level in Lithuania following the territorial reform in Lithuania in 2010. In Belarus, Polish voivodeships had six active partitions and only one not-active one in 2016. These contacts were favored under the cross-border cooperation programs. The Polish regions also had single partners in other European countries (including Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Finland and Romania) and non-European countries (including the USA, South Korea, India, Kazakhstan) – table 1.

²² I. Ksenicz, *Od reformy do reformy. Współpraca władz lokalnych i regionalnych Polski i Ukrainy w latach 1999-2014*, Zalesie Górne: Pracownia Wydawnicza, 2018, pp. 324.

²³ Only Świętokrzyskie and Lubelskie voivodeships did not maintain a stable relationship with their Western neighbor. Voivodeships in western Poland – Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie – had the largest number of partners in Germany, at four partners each (one of Zachodniopomorskie's partnerships was not active). Half of the 32 declared relations had been established in 1999–2001. Later, on average one to two new partnerships were formed every year. In 2016 there were two new contacts – Kujawsko-Pomorskie established cooperation with Saxony-Anhalt and Dolnośląskie with Brandenburg.

²⁴ Only Podkarpackie and Świętokrzyskie had no partners in France, and Lubelskie voivodeship's only contact was not active. Most of the other regions had one active relationship in France, with only Małopolskie declaring two partnerships.

²⁵ A. Skorupska, J. Szczudlik, *The Subnational Dimension of EU-China Relations*, op. cit.

²⁶ Only three regions – Świętokrzyskie, Podlaskie and Wielkopolskie – had no partners in China. However, the latter two regions were planning to establish such partnerships in the future. Most regions

had one partner in China, except for Mazowieckie and Śląskie, which declared cooperation with two provinces. Most partnerships (three) were concluded in 2012, as a result of the aforementioned strategic partnership at intergovernmental level.

²⁷ Common themes and international programs directed at entities in the Baltic Sea region mean that voivodeships in the north of Poland have the most contacts there. Pomorskie had three partners in Sweden and Zachodniopomorskie two partnerships. A further six regions in other parts of Poland had one partner each in Sweden.

²⁸ The first partnerships with Croatian regions were signed in 2011, when Croatia was preparing for EU membership and was interested in the Polish experience. Nine Polish voivodeships cooperated with partners in Croatia in 2016, most of them had one partner (only Zachodniopomorskie had two) and all relations were active.

²⁹ Cross-border contacts dominated cooperation with local government in neighboring countries. In 2016 Dolnośląskie had four partners in the Czech Republic, while Opolskie had three. A further four voivodeships had partners in the Czech Republic. Małopolskie and Podkarpackie had two partners in Slovakia, as did five other regions (one each).

³⁰ In previous years there was the Lithuania–Poland–Russia ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013.

Table 1. Countries where Polish regions have partners – active and inactive relations

| Country | Active | Not-active | Total |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Ukraine | 33 | 9 | 42 |
| Germany | 30 | 2 | 32 |
| Italy | 8 | 11 | 19 |
| France | 14 | 3 | 17 |
| Russia | 4 | 12 | 16 |
| China* | 14 | | 14 |
| Sweden | 11 | 2 | 13 |
| Czech Rep. | 11 | | 11 |
| Croatia | 10 | | 10 |
| Spain | 2 | 8 | 10 |
| Lithuania | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Slovakia | 9 | | 9 |
| Austria | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| Hungary | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Belgium | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Belarus | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Georgia | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| Finland | 5 | | 5 |
| Romania | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Brazil | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Netherlands | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Denmark | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| India | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Kazakhstan | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| South Korea | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| United Kingdom | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Iraq | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Norway | 2 | | 2 |
| Serbia | | 2 | 2 |
| US | 2 | | 2 |
| Algeria | 1 | | 1 |
| Estonia | | 1 | 1 |
| Greece | 1 | | 1 |
| Indonesia | 1 | | 1 |
| Iran | 1 | | 1 |
| Latvia | 1 | | 1 |
| Moldova | 1 | | 1 |
| South Africa | | 1 | 1 |
| Turkey | 1 | | 1 |
| Total | 207 | 82 | 289 |

Source: A. Skorupska, *Geograficzne kierunki międzynarodowej aktywności polskich województw*, "Sprawy Międzynarodowe" nr 3, PISM 2016

*Data verified in 2017 – 15 partnerships and two not-active.

Sphere and forms of cooperation

Almost every partnership between the Polish voivodeships and their foreign counterparts involves some kind of exchange of experience. Many regions emphasize that developing economic cooperation is one of the key advantages of paradiplomatic activity. Local authorities initiate business contacts and support, inform, promote and legitimize local entrepreneurs, which is especially important on the Ukrainian and Asian and markets.

Local community involvement in the cooperating regions in culture and art, and in developing tourism and sport, is of great importance. All these activities involve the promotion of Polish language and culture. The regions promote and support universities located on their territory and facilitate academic cooperation as well as visits by foreign students to Poland. The regions also carry out joint projects related to infrastructure development (the cross-border programs mentioned above are of particular importance here) and environmental protection.

Although bilateral partnerships are still the most common form of cooperation, there are also new types of activities that engage regions and local partners. Regular meetings between local governments and other regional entities in the two countries play an important role. An example is the regional forums that bring together Polish regions with their foreign partners, such as the 8th Forum of Polish and Croatian Regions that took place in September 2019 in Zielona Góra³¹.

Another example is the Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum, which is regularly hosted by local assemblies and local parliaments. The voivodeships of Zachodniopomorskie, Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie participate in this forum.

Cross-border cooperation that takes the form of daily contacts still plays an important role in Polish foreign policy and regional development. Euroregional cooperation, bilateral relations and financial programs supporting the socio-economic development of the border areas cover the entire Polish border. The traditional spheres of cooperation include culture, ecology, cross-border infrastructure, science and social issues.

Programs for partners in EU countries under the 2014–2020 EU multiannual financial framework are financed by European Territorial Cooperation. Poland is involved in six cross-border programs – one each on the borders with Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Lithuania, three on the German border and two regional ones, covering the

³¹ One year before the Zagreb meeting.

southern Baltic Sea and the Baltic Sea region, as well as neighboring countries.

Programs on the EU's external borders are financed by the European Neighborhood Instrument. In Poland's case these are the Poland–Belarus–Ukraine Cross-border Cooperation Program and the Poland–Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Program.

There are also some EGTCs on the Polish borders. The first grouping involving a Polish partner is EGTC TRITIA, which was established on the Polish-Czech-Slovak border in 2013. Formalization was preceded by cooperation among local authorities. In the same year EGTC TATRY was established. That grouping was created on the basis of an existing Euroregion. Its members are local government associations on both sides of the border.

The last EGTC created on the southern Polish border (Polish-Czech border) is EGTC NOVUM. It was established with the participation of local governments and Euroregions in this area. All the groupings set up on the Polish southern border have similar goals: development of tourism, transport and environment protection.

Another EGTC was established in 2014 in northern Poland, which has a different character. The main aim of the Central European Transport Corridor EGTC, bringing together local authorities in Sweden, Poland, Hungary and Croatia, is to foster transport cooperation along the corridor.

Another form of local government international activity is representations in other countries and membership of international associations and organizations. Besides the usual goals (exchange of experience, new contacts) the main benefits of this are promotion, lobbying, positioning among cities and regions around the world and the opportunity to represent interests. Topics often discussed by international associations include environmental protection and innovation, sustainable development and smart cities. In recent years local government has become increasingly important in discussions on environmental protection.

All Polish regions have Brussels offices – some have independent offices, while others are shared by several regions. An example of the latter case is East Poland House where representatives of Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Podlaskie, Lubelskie, Świętokrzyskie and Podkarpackie cooperate. The main functions of the offices are sharing information, lobbying, promotion and networking. They also support local authorities in their contacts with EU institutions. Additionally, some voivodeships have representative offices in partner regions. Examples are the Łódzkie Voivodeship office in Chengdu, a partner region

in China, and the newly opened Dolnośląskie Office in Dresden

Trends

How international activities evolve varies depending on the region, location in relation to the state border, and contact history. However, there are several universal trends international contacts and prospects for most voivodeships.

After a steep increase in the number of foreign partners in the regions at the beginning of the 20th century, the dynamism with which Polish regions establish new foreign partnerships is weakening. There is increasingly limited scope in some directions and spheres of cooperation. Relationships are becoming more pragmatic and purposeful. Partners are more cautious about establishing new partnerships. Relationships tend to be related to specific projects or part of international networks. There is less exchange of experience related to the functioning of local government within the EU, and more emphasis on contact and exchange of experience between social or professional groups in the region. Local government representatives serve more as intermediaries and support for "targeted" partnerships in local societies. The more spheres and local units involved in the cooperation, the greater the chances of an established relationship remaining stable.

Although an effective and stable partnership is built on many spheres of cooperation and the engagement of many local partners, the economic dimension is increasingly playing a role, especially where partners are in a distant country. In the case of cooperation with partners in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa or South America, the local authorities provide additional legitimacy for business partners. The regional development agencies³² that are often the main supporters for regional companies in the internationalization process play an important role here. For border regions, cross-border cooperation is still a natural strategy in foreign activity. These regions commonly share the most issues and problems. Not just because of the geographical proximity, but there are often also cultural, and legal and financial instruments aimed at strengthening joint actions. The difficulties associated with the Covid-19 pandemic have shown how important it is to have good relations with a partner on the other side of the border and how much ongoing cooperation is needed.

On the other hand the pandemic has pointed to just how much the international cooperation of regions is dependent on central government policy and international relations at the state level. Despite the broad prerogatives of local government, some of the Polish regions'

³² There are approximately 60 regional development agencies in Poland. Most of them operate as joint stock companies, with local governments as the main shareholder.

paradiplomatic activities had to be postponed or terminated for security reasons and because of central government decisions. The border restrictions and limits on freedom of movement forced local governments to cut down on some of their international activities and look for other forms of cooperation.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, regions, like many business entities and government agencies, looked for other forms of contact, cooperation and ways of dealing with the crisis. Remote meetings (videoconferences) have become common. Local governments have also used their international contacts to search for knowledge and share experiences of various groups (administration, hospitals, universities, entrepreneurs) in the new reality. Some of the new modes or tools used during the Covid-19 pandemic will probably become established practice in regions' international cooperation, especially with partners in geographically distant countries. The difficult situation has forced the regions to look for innovations in regional management, local development and paradiplomacy. Besides bilateral relations, membership of international associations and organizations and participation in international events (e.g. EXPO exhibitions, European

Day of Regions and Cities of the European Committee of the Regions) has become more important for regions. Being a member of a network provides additional opportunities to promote the region, lobby, position the region among the regions of the world and to represent the region's interests beyond traditional goals (exchange of experiences, new contacts). In attempting to make cooperation more effective the regions try to find their specialties in cooperation and promote their "strengths" and create their own "brands" by organizing flagship initiatives for instance, sometimes together with neighboring regions in other countries³³.

Improving effectiveness requires greater synergy between government and local government activities. The ongoing exchange of information on the activities of the regions and central government remains crucial. Local government cooperation can supplement or help fulfil governmental agreements. Including local governments in the activities of central authorities where regions can present themselves helps support the promotion of the whole country.

³³ "The Carpathian brand promoted within the Carpathian Euroregion," Euroregion Karpatski, 2015. Available online: http://www.carpathianconvention.org/tl_files/carpathiancon/Downloads/03%20Meetings%20and%20Events/Working%20Groups/Sustaina

ble%20Tourism/WG%20Tourism,%20Aggtek,%20May%202015/Presentations/CARPATHIA%20Brand_DLasek.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

Analysis of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship's paradiplomatic activities

1. Legal and institutional framework at the local government level

Dolnośląskie (Lower Silesia) is a region located in the southwestern corner of Poland. The region borders directly with Germany and the Czech Republic. It is almost 20 thousand km² in size and has 2.9 million inhabitants.³⁴ It is less than 300 km from the capital – Wrocław – to the Czech capital Prague, and about 350 km to both Warsaw and Berlin. Additionally Dolnośląskie is the meeting point between the Baltic-Adriatic TEN-T transport corridor and an important transport corridor between Germany and Ukraine. This strategic location, close to Germany and Czechia and with very good links to Ukraine (including cultural and historical ones), has a major impact on Dolnośląskie's paradiplomatic activities. The Dolnośląskie Sejmik (local parliament) has adopted its Foreign Cooperation Priorities four times: in 1999, 2005, 2009 and 2016.³⁵ That means that on average the priorities remain in force for slightly longer than the length of a government's term in office. The priorities were changed in response to events such as Poland's accession to the European Union or the need to adjust the region's priorities to reflect state foreign policy. The Foreign Cooperation Priorities sets out the key geographical directions for conducting paradiplomatic activities, as well as the goals and areas of cooperation. It also contains a list of the regional partnerships and international organizations the voivodeship has joined. In the first period following the creation of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship in 1998, partnerships were established with its direct neighbors: Saxony in Germany and the Czech regions of Liberec, Hradec Kralove and Pardubice. Cooperation with geographically close regions was seen as a natural development and did not raise any questions. It was also based on natural needs and interests, such as the development of road and rail infrastructure, environmental protection, tourism, security and economic cooperation. Not all issues were within the competence of the local government, but they were important for the residents and so were included in the agenda. The next stage in cooperation development was the establishment of partnerships with Western European regions. The goal of these initiatives was to gain

knowledge about the functioning of the EU, the use of European funds to support the economy, develop innovations, protect the environment and so on. At this stage Dolnośląskie Voivodeship had established cooperation with Alsace in France, Lower Saxony in Germany, Emilia Romagna in Italy, the West Midlands in the United Kingdom and Vastmanland in Sweden. At the same time, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship was opening up to cooperation with Eastern European regions – Dnepropetrovsk and Kirovograd Oblasts in Ukraine and Leningrad Oblast in Russia. These contacts were made as part of Polish foreign policy priorities and its orientation towards eastern neighbors, out of a willingness to share the positive experiences of Polish transformation and, in a sense, because of the historical sentiments of many residents in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, many of whom had family from areas in present-day western Ukraine and Belarus.

Poland's accession to the European Union was a clear turning point. The voivodeship self-governments obtained wider access to European funds, including for cross-border cooperation. This brought greater opportunities for local government and subordinate units to participate in EU-funded international projects. Consequently, interest in bilateral cooperation with EU member state regions waned, as the region's interests were met through multilateral projects involving partners in different countries. Bilateral partnerships between EU member state regions lost importance as multilateral formats of thematic cooperation with actors in different countries proved more attractive. Cooperation within thematic networks, focused on involving multiple regions on a given issue, became more effective. The main advantage of conducting multilateral cooperation within a network is that experience can be exchanged with different partners at the same time. Under this instrument, project financing can be obtained for external sources and common positions can be developed at both the EU and national levels.

The next stage in the development of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship's paradiplomacy was the establishment of partnerships with regions in non-European countries, such as Anhui in China and Adjara in Georgia.

2. Planning

³⁴ A general description of the voivodeship is available at: http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/Rozwoj_regionalny/SRWD/projekt_strategii/Projekt_Strategii_Rozwoju_Wojewodztwa_Dolnoslaskiego_2030.pdf(accessed on July 15 2020)

³⁵ Website of the Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, available online: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/urzed/wsopolpracaz-zagranica/priorytety/> (accessed on July 15, 2020).

The main document setting out the framework for Dolnośląskie Voivodeship's international activities is the Foreign Cooperation Priorities mentioned above. It forms the basis of the annual action plans developed by the Unit of International Cooperation of the Marshal's Office. It is an internal document and not subject to public consultation. The Marshal's Office may take into account the formal or informal expectations of various external entities, such as chambers of commerce, NGOs and universities. But there is no formal procedure for holding an open debate on the planning of paradiplomatic activities. An informal body was, however, created in 2014 for consultations on foreign activities with business representatives. The Economic Council for International Cooperation includes representatives from the regional chambers of commerce and the Employers' Organization of Polish Copper and the marshal of the voivodeship.³⁶ It was set up as a forum for dialogue and assessing paradiplomatic activities and their impact on economic cooperation.

The process of planning and conducting paradiplomatic activities is indirectly supported by the Institute of Territorial Development – IRT. The IRT is a unit within the Marshal's Office, focused on issues of spatial and regional development, and prepares studies and analyses that form the basis of the voivodeship decision making processes. The IRT often deals with various aspects of cross-border cooperation in the fields of environmental protection, transport, rural areas, foreign investment, tourism and so on. But it has never dealt with the analysis of foreign cooperation. It is, however, involved in the implementation of international thematic projects. The Foreign Cooperation Committee at the sejmik has an annual work agenda, consisting of a list of topics to be discussed, which is planned one year in advance. The topics discussed at the meetings are presented by a representative of the International Cooperation Unit of the Marshal's Office and invited guests, representatives of other units or subordinate entities of the Marshal's Office or external institutions, NGOs, universities, business environment organizations and so forth.³⁷

3. Management

³⁶ "We Wrocławiu powołano biznesową Radę ds. współpracy z zagranicą." [A business Council for international cooperation has been established in Wrocław] Tu Wrocław March 31, 2014. Available online: <https://www.tuwroclaw.com/wiadomosci-we-wroclawiu-powolano-biznesowa-rade-ds-wspolpracy-z-zagranica,wia5-3273-19703.html> (accessed February 21, 2021).

³⁷ "Public Information Bulletin of the Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://bip.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/dokument,iddok,2459,idmp,104,r,o> (accessed February 21, 2021).

³⁸ "Public Information Bulletin of the Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online:

The Marshal's Office is divided into departments, which are then divided into units and these are further divided into sections. Each department reports to a member of the Voivodeship Management Board. Each department contains a minimum of two units. The units may have sections but not every unit does.

The Unit of International Cooperation within the Marshal's Office is responsible for the implementation of paradiplomatic activities. The unit is part of the Marshal's Department which reports to the marshal of the voivodeship. It employs 11 people, including the unit director, and is divided in two sections: the Protocol Section, in which four people work, and the Section for Contacts with German-speaking Countries, employing three people. There are a further three employees that do not belong to either of these sections.³⁸

The Unit of International Cooperation does not deal with cross-border projects. That task is the responsibility of the Section of European Territorial Cooperation Programs within the Unit of Regional Policy, Department of Economy. This section employs five people plus the section head. In addition, there are two people delegated to work at the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg Poland–Czech Republic Program and three people at the Program's Contact Point in Walbrzych.³⁹

The Foreign Cooperation Unit deals with the substantive and organizational implementation of the voivodeship's foreign cooperation. A unit representative attends the meetings of the International Cooperation Committee at the sejmik and presents topics of cooperation with foreign countries and answers questions from sejmik members. The unit compiles annual reports on its activities, and these are adopted by the committee. In addition the International Cooperation Committee can set out its expectations of international initiatives. The committee and the unit have a standard legislative–executive relationship.⁴⁰ The Marshal's Office implements the resolutions and strategies adopted by the sejmik. However, the sejmik committees have no formal mechanisms for influencing the manner in which the sejmik's directional decisions are implemented as the legislative authority. The International Cooperation Committee, on which members of the sejmik sit, can exert political influence on the Voivodeship Management Board.

<http://bip.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/dokument,iddok,74,idmp,33,r,o> (accessed February 21, 2021).

³⁹ "Public Information Bulletin of the Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://bip.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/dokument,iddok,103,idmp,59,r,o> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴⁰ "Organizacja pracy Urzędu Marszałkowskiego Województwa Dolnośląskiego w czasie epidemii," [Organization of the work of the Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Province during the epidemic] Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://bip.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/dokument,iddok,3032,idmp,216,r,r> (accessed February 21, 2021).

Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, like every Polish region, has a representation at the EU in Brussels. Its Brussels office was established in 2001 at the initiative of the Dolnośląskie Association in the European Union, of which local governments were members. Since 2004 the office has functioned as a subordinate entity to the Marshal's Office and is fully financed from the voivodeship's budget.⁴¹ The Brussels office generally supports the needs of the local self-government, but can carry out tasks for cities or organizations in the region. This happens on a voluntary basis. The Brussels office is not obliged to pursue interests of entities other than the local government.

The Brussels office formally reports directly to the Voivodeship's Management Board. The Unit of International Cooperation is responsible for the daily supervision of the Brussels office's activities. The Brussels office employs three people, including the director. One person coordinates the region's role in the ERRIN network – European Network of Regions for Research and Innovation⁴² – and in innovation support projects. Another person is responsible for the general activities of the office. Once a year the director attends a Foreign Cooperation Committee meeting at the sejmik and reports quarterly to the Voivodeship's Management Board.

The tasks of the Brussels office are set out in the Brussels office statute by the Voivodeship's Management Board.⁴³ The main activities of the Brussels office are to monitor issues relevant to Dolnośląskie Voivodeship such as EU cohesion policy, cross-border cooperation, TEN-T network, and research and development policy. In addition the Brussels office provides information on events taking place at EU level, seeks partners for projects and opportunities for cooperation with other entities in the EU, represents the interests of the voivodeship and ensures direct contact with key institutions in the EU. It also organizes internships and meetings, as well as local authority visits to Brussels. The office is located at the West Midlands representative office in Brussels, which is a partner region in the United Kingdom. The idea behind this location was to use the British partner's network of connections, contacts and know-how in the European Union. This was especially important when the office first began operating. Now that Poland has been a member of

the European Union for many years, the importance of this cooperation has decreased. When the United Kingdom left the EU, cooperation between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and the West Midlands in Brussels practically ceased to exist. Nevertheless, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship still rents an office in the West Midlands Brussels office. The substantive cooperation between the two representations is not formalized but takes place on the basis of a gentleman's agreement.

In addition to the Brussels office, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship is taking steps to open a regional representation in Dresden, the Saxony capital in Germany. In 2012 Saxony opened a Liaison Office in Wrocław. In June 2020 representatives of the Marshal's Office received the keys to the office in Dresden.⁴⁴ The opening of the Regional Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship in Dresden is planned for autumn 2020.

Marshal of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Cezary Przybylski has been a member of the Committee of the Regions since January 2020. Dolnośląskie Voivodeship also has two deputy members on the committee: Beata Moskal-Słaniewska – the mayor of Swidnica – and Marek Trams – member of Polkowice County Council.

4. Instruments, implementation

The basic goal of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship's paradiplomacy is sustainable social development, scientific and research development, cultural and economic activities, and improving the competitiveness and quality of life in the region. Cooperation with foreign partners should contribute to achieving this goal. The geographical location of the region dictates the aims of its paradiplomatic activities. These relate primarily to cross-border cooperation, social and economic integration and creating a common functional space on the border. One of its key tasks is to support enterprises in the region seeking to enter foreign markets, for example by helping them attend economic events abroad.⁴⁵ This is partly the responsibility of Dolnośląskie Agency of Economic Cooperation, which also attracts and supports foreign (and domestic) investors in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. It is a commercial company with a 100% share of the local government of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship.⁴⁶ The voivodeship's paradiplomatic activities are also aimed at

⁴¹ "Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Regional Office in Brussels," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Regional Office in Brussels Available online: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/index.php?id=3338> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴² "European Regions Research and Innovation Network," ERRIN. Available online: <https://errin.eu/who-we-are> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴³ "Uchwała NR IX /136 /11" Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, 2011. Available online: http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/Wspolpraca_z_Zagranica/IX_136_11.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴⁴ "Niederschlesisches Verbindungsbüro in Dresden," *Wochenblatt.pl*, 10.06.2020. Available online: <http://wochenblatt.pl/niederschlesisches-verbundingsburo-in-dresden/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴⁵ "Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship website," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/urząd/wspolpraca-z-zagranica/going-global-dolnoslaska-dyplomacja-gospodarcza/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴⁶ Website of the Dolnośląskie Agency for Economic Cooperation. Available online: <https://dawg.pl/pl/page/266/O-AGENCJI> (accessed on July 15, 2020)

involving the region in the work of thematic networks, bringing together regions in different countries. As part of the network, the region implements externally financed projects and participates in the exchange of know-how, which is useful for the local authority decision-making processes.

The most common paradiplomatic instrument used by Dolnośląskie Voivodeship is the maintenance of official contacts by representatives of the executive and legislative authorities. There are also meetings and workshops at a working level. Intensive cooperation is developed within the thematic networks. Lower Silesia exerts its influence abroad through externally financed international projects. The Marshal's Office carries out about 10 projects each year using European funds (not counting structural fund projects and projects implemented by subordinate units). Dolnośląskie Voivodeship has 16 foreign partner regions⁴⁷: five in the Czech Republic, three in Germany, two in Ukraine and one each in Italy, Sweden, Russia, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and China. It is a member of 11 international associations.⁴⁸

Expenditure on paradiplomacy amounted to over PLN 1.885 million (around €429,000) of the voivodeship budget for 2019. This included expenditure on establishing the regional office in Dresden. Additionally more than PLN 747,000 (around €170,000) was spent on the Brussels office, which has a separate budget. Over PLN 1.6 million (around €364,000) has been earmarked from the 2020 budget for the implementation of Going Global–Dolnośląskie Economic Diplomacy, a project that is planned for 2020.⁴⁹ Financing for international cooperation attracts little political attention, as it represents only 0.36% of the voivodeship's overall budget, which amounted to PLN 1.180 billion (around €268 million) in 2019. The budget includes co-financing for EU funded projects implemented by the Marshal's Office. It does not include the Regional Operational Program structural funds. The Voivodeship Self-Government manages the Regional Operational Program through the Dolnośląskie Intermediate Body.⁵⁰

5. Monitoring and evaluation of results

⁴⁷ "Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship website," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/urzad/wspolpraca-z-zagranica/regiony-partnerskie/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁴⁸ Ibid: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/urzad/wspolpraca-z-zagranica/organizacje-miedzynarodowe/>

⁴⁹ Ibid: <http://bip.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/dokument,iddok,53347,idmp,215,r,r>

⁵⁰ "Dolnośląskie Intermediate Body website," Dolnośląskie Intermediate Body. Available online: <http://www.dip.dolnyslask.pl/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵¹ "Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship website," Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. Available online: <http://www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/urzad/wspolpraca-z-zagranica/raporty/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

The Unit of International Cooperation issues an annual report on its activities. The report is discussed and approved by the sejmik's Foreign Cooperation Committee. The reports are published on the website.⁵¹ They contain a summary of actions taken, as well as meetings, events, conferences, trips and visits organized, and so forth. The reports do not contain descriptions of the results of paradiplomatic activities or analysis of the processes, goals and strategies implemented. There is no public discussion of the reports. Neither is there a system or method for monitoring and evaluating paradiplomatic activities or the results. The Foreign Cooperation Committee's decision is based on members' opinions.

6. Best practices

Dolnośląskie Voivodeship's paradiplomacy has achieved numerous successes which have evolved into fruitful cooperation with foreign partners – the effect of years of trust building. This applies especially to its cross-border cooperation with the Czech Republic and Germany. The low-profile cooperation has started to bear fruit in the form of contacts between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and regions in Georgia and Ukraine.

Cross-border cooperation with Czech partners

Relations between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and its Czech neighbors were invigorated following the establishment of the NOVUM European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation⁵² in 2015. It was set up between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, four Czech regions – Hradec Královce, Olomouc, Pardubice and Liberec – and the Polish and Czech parts of the Nysa and Glacensis Euroregions. It was created as a means of organizing Polish-Czech cooperation and to stimulate new development. The work of the EGTC NOVUM is part of the "Strategy for integrated cooperation of the Czech-Polish border region,"⁵³ which was developed as part of a project financed by the Interreg Poland–Czech Republic program.⁵⁴

EGTC is a form of cross-border cooperation where entities in different countries join to form a single legal entity. It is a higher level of integration than the

⁵² "European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation NOVUM," European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. Available online: <https://www.euwt-novum.eu/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

"European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation NOVUM," European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. Available online: <https://www.euwt-novum.eu/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵³ "Glacensis Euroregion website," Glacensis Euroregion. Available online: <https://m.euro-glacensis.cz/strategie-integrovane-spoluprace-cesko-polskeho-prihranici.html?lang=2> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵⁴ The project leader was Hradec Králove Region Self-government, and the partners were the Czech regional self-governments – Liberec, Olomouc, Pardubice – and Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Self-Government, along with the Euroregions of Nysa and Glacensis. The project was implemented in 2012–2013.

Euroregions where local government associations in one country cooperate with a similar association in another country. EGTC NOVUM was the second to be established in Poland, after EGTC TRITIA, which operates on the Polish-Czech-Slovak border. It is registered in Poland and is subject to Polish law and its budget comes from membership fees. The most important tasks of the EGTCs include the implementation of joint externally co-financed projects (as part of e.g. the Polish-Czech cross-border cooperation program for 2014-2020) and the coordination of cooperation between Dolnośląskie Voivodeship and the Czech border regions. The most important outcomes of the EGTCs are multilateral projects targeting academic and teaching communities and paramedics. EGTC NOVUM has significantly contributed to the building of the Wrocław–Prague rail link.

Cross-border cooperation with German partners

The greatest achievement of the last 20 years in partner relations with Germany is the establishment of a transnational Polish-German cooperation group in 2006 under the name "Odra Partnership."⁵⁵ It is an informal cooperation network of four western Polish voivodeships – Dolnośląskie, Lubuskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie – and four East German federal states – Free State of Saxony, Brandenburg, Berlin and Mecklenburg Vorpommern. The main cities in the regions are also included in the network: three in western Poland – Poznań, Szczecin and Wrocław – and the two voivodeship capitals in Lubuskie: Gorzów Wielkopolski and Zielona Góra. The Odra Partnership is aimed at strengthening political, economic and infrastructural links between the regions on both sides of the border. Its main goal is cooperation on the economy, tourism, transport and infrastructure as well as science and research. The overarching goal is to strengthen the economic effectiveness of the regions along the Polish-German border.

The Odra Partnership is unique in having cooperation authorities at various levels of local government on both sides of the border. The aim is to initiate cooperation and functional connections, and to represent common interests to the national governments and the European Union. The Odra Partnership closely cooperates with the Spatial Management Committee of the Polish-German Intergovernmental Commission for Regional and Border Cooperation. Strategic decisions regarding the network's operation are determined by prime ministers, marshals,

voivodes⁵⁶ and city mayors as part of political summits, which take place alternately in Poland and Germany. The Odra Partnership has no institutional form and its activities are financed by the members. Its everyday activities are performed by the regional coordinators who meet at least twice a year as part of the Coordination Group. Decisions within the coordinating group are taken by consensus. The most important outcomes of cooperation so far include strategic and functional documents, such as a map of the "Development of the supra-regional transport infrastructure in the area of the Odra Partnership" and a map of UNESCO-class facilities in the Odra Partnership area, the creation of which was initiated and coordinated by the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship.

Dolnośląskie Voivodeship has built close relations with Saxony in particular, which have proved successful during the COVID-19 pandemic. At one time, laboratories in Saxony were performing 200 COVID-19 tests a day free of charge for patients in Dolnośląskie Voivodeship. In appreciation and gratitude, the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Sejmik gave an award to Prime Minister of Saxony Michael Kretschmer.⁵⁷ The Saxony Regional Representation in Wrocław has operated since 2012. Dolnośląskie Voivodeship is preparing to open its representative office in Dresden in autumn 2020. As an example of good practice, Chairman of the Sejmik's International Cooperation Committee Marek Obrebalski mentioned the cooperation between the Saxony Chamber of Commerce and Karkonosze Regional Development Agency – a company in which Dolnośląskie Voivodeship Self-Government has a majority stake. The cooperation involves the exchange of information about the labor market, training for employees, cooperation with vocational schools, internships for young employees and so forth.⁵⁸

Cooperation with Ukrainian partners

To benefit long-term partnership relations with Dnepropetrovsk Oblast in Ukraine, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship became the initiator and leading partner of an undertaking that led to the opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Dnipro (formerly Dnipropetrovsk) on May 18, 2015. In the initial stages of the agency's existence, Dolnośląskie Voivodeship was supported in Ukraine by its partner, Région Alsace in France.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ "Czym jest Partnerstwo-Odra," [What is the Oder Partnership] Odra Partnership. Available online: <http://www.partnerstwo-odra.eu/czym-jest-partnerstwo-odra> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵⁶ The voivodes are appointed by the prime minister and head the cabinet of the voivodeship.

⁵⁷ "Koronawirus. Dolny Śląsk. Premier Saksonii odznaczony przez Sejmik. To podziękowanie za pomoc," [Coronavirus. Lower Silesia. Prime Minister of Saxony is decorated by the Sejmik. A thank you for your help] *WP Wrocław*, 01.05.2020. Available online: <https://wroclaw.wp.pl/koronawirus-dolny-slask-premier-saksonii->

[odznaczony-przez-sejmik-to-podziekowanie-za-pomoc-6505735890991233a](https://www.karkonosze.pl/aktualnosci/) (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵⁸ "Karkonosze Regional Development Agency website," Karkonosze Regional Development Agency. Available online: <http://karr.pl/aktualnosci/> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁵⁹ "European Association for Local Democracy website," European Association for Local Democracy. Available online: https://www.lda-europe.eu/newSite/lda_dett.php?id=14 (accessed February 21, 2021).

The involvement of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship in the ALDA network and the creation of a Local Democracy Agency office in Dnipro meets several goals:

- sustainable cooperation with the Ukrainian partner;
- the possibility of obtaining external funds for common activities;
- transfer of Polish transformation experience to Ukrainian partners;
- involvement of Western European partners in activities benefitting Eastern Partnership countries.

The goal behind the founding of the Local Democracy Agency was to support regional development in Ukraine and create opportunities to support Dnipropetrovsk

Oblast's efforts to develop civic activity and build long-term ties between local administration entities, NGOs and civil society. The agency's activities also involve the transfer of knowledge and experience from Central and Western European countries to Ukraine.

The coordinator of the entire undertaking is ALDA, the European Association for Local Democracy, in Strasbourg, which promotes democracy and civic activity at the local level, including through 15 Local Democracy Agencies, most of which operate in the Western Balkans, the southern Caucasus and northern Africa.

The Local Democracy Agency in Dnipro is an association registered in Ukraine. Funds for financing the association's activities come from membership fees and project-implementation funds and grants.

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Analysis of Podkarpackie Voivodeship's paradiplomatic activities

Podkarpackie Voivodeship's foreign activities take place within an important geographical and economic context. Located in the southeastern corner of Poland, Podkarpackie shares a border with Ukraine and Slovakia. The region, which suffered from under-investment for many years, has been rapidly developing since Poland's accession to the EU. Nevertheless, there are still numerous infrastructural projects awaiting completion before Podkarpackie is fully linked up to neighboring regions in Poland and on the other side of the state border. Therefore there is still a strong belief in the region that Podkarpackie has to catch up with the rest of the EU economically and needs proper conditions to do so. The neighboring regions in Slovakia and Ukraine are also peripheral ones. Despite having high tourist appeal, as Podkarpackie does, because of their beautiful landscapes and vibrant local identity and culture, they remain poorer than the country average. In Podkarpackie this shared geographical and economic condition, together with their common cultural heritage, led to the idea of Carpathian cooperation, which has been promoted in Central European states as well as the EU. It is currently the priority in Podkarpackie's paradiplomatic activities.

1. Legal and institutional framework at the local government level

The origins of Podkarpackie's paradiplomatic activities go back to the era before the region was formally established in the late 1990s as the result of the territorial state administration reform. After the fall of the communist state regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the local authorities developed numerous contacts with their transborder counterparts in the early 1990s. For several years these were mostly bilateral relations, which later led to the founding of the Carpathian Euroregion in 1993. Like many successful initiatives, it has several origins. Firstly, there

were the activities of local leaders, scholars and diplomats in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine, who met at conferences in Poland and Hungary in the early 1990s to discuss the potential and prospects of transregional cooperation.⁶⁰ Crucial support also came from the USA, especially the Institute for East–West Studies (IEWS), which organized its 10th Anniversary Conference in the Slovak town of Bardejov.⁶¹ Held in June 1991 it was attended by the US vice president and the heads of states of the Visegrad countries. This was an excellent opportunity to express political endorsement for transborder cooperation between the regions. US and Western European experts perceived the wider region where the Polish, Ukrainian, Hungarian and the then Czechoslovak borders meet as a potentially turbulent spot, given the ethnic tensions in the past. Transborder cooperation was seen as a useful means of dissipating potential tensions.⁶²

The basic idea of the institutional model for the Carpathian Euroregion was worked out by IEWS experts according to the Regio Basiliensis model between Switzerland, France and Germany.⁶³ The founding documents were signed in Debrecen on February 14, 1993, during a ceremony attended by the foreign ministers of Poland, Hungary and Ukraine, and Secretary-General of the Council of Europe Catherine Lalumière. It became the first macro-region in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1994 the Carpathian Foundation was established in Slovakia with the aim of animating civil society at the local level and providing financial and technical assistance to NGOs in the Carpathian area. Since 1995 the Euroregion budget has mostly been financed through membership fees, although initial support came from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Institute for East–West Studies as well.⁶⁴ In 1997 Romania joined the Carpathian Euroregion and in 1999 the Euroregion received a grant from the Small Projects Fund under the PHARE Cross Border Cooperation Program.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ T. Borys, T. Panasewicz, *Panorama Euroregionów*, Jelenia Góra: Polygrafia AD-REM 1998, pp. 472. Available online: https://sbc.org.pl/Content/210036/058_panorama_euroregionow_wydruk_drugie_zmodyfikowane_1998-0000-00-0001.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶¹ "The Carpathian Euroregion project – Short Study," CESCI, June 2015. Available online: https://cesci-net.eu/tiny_mce/uploaded/CER_study.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶² "Carpathian Euroregion – By Vazil Hudak," Ideascale. Available online: <https://ewi30.ideascale.com/a/dtd/Carpathian-Euroregion-by-Vazil-Hudak/119262-12904> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶³ H. Tanaka, "Carpathian Euroregion and Cross-Border Governance," *The Journal of Comparative Economic Studies*, Vol. 2, 2006, pp. 59–80. Available online: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ec05/5f697dac7de5a7b0ab0109a81f>

b77a4b6816.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021); M.M. Balmaceda, *On the Edge: Ukrainian-Central European-Russian Security Triangle*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000, pp. 268. Available online: <https://books.google.be/books?id=ZvyjpHuFK5MC> (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶⁴ T. Sporek, "Współpraca gospodarcza Polska-Wschód w perspektywie integracji z Unią Europejską," [Economic cooperation between Poland and the East in the perspective of integration with the European Union] in: *Diagnoza i perspektywy procesów inwestycyjnych w krajach Europy Środkowej*, Katowice: Akademia Ekonomiczna w Katowicach. Available online: https://www.ce.uw.edu.pl/pliki/pw/3-2003_Sporek.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶⁵ T. Toczyński, *Euroregiony w nowym podziale terytorialnym Polski*, Wrocław: Urząd Statystyczny we Wrocławiu - Wydział Poligrafii, 1999, pp. 365. Available online:

The Euroregion's role diminished in the next decade, as a set of new rules was imposed and considerable money provided under the EU instruments for cross-border cooperation. The EU provides money for cross-border cooperation with Ukraine as well. Nevertheless, Podkarpackie takes part in the Poland–Belarus–Ukraine Program, while the rest of the Euroregion comes under the Hungary–Slovakia–Romania–Ukraine Program. This division complicates any work involving all the Carpathian Euroregion member regions, which is why the idea of having an EU macroregional strategy for the Carpathian region emerged.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the Euroregion remains the established platform for exchanging views.

At the same time as the Carpathian Euroregion was being established, other institutions designed to absorb foreign funds on the regional level were set up in Podkarpackie, including Rzeszów Regional Development Agency (RARR), which was launched in 1993 (now supervised by the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship). The RARR was among the first to handle PHARE funds in the region and thanks to its experience remains an important institution today.

The Polish territorial state administration reform of 1999 led to the creation of Podkarpackie Voivodeship, along with 15 others. With their additional powers and funds, these new local authorities became even more ambitious in their pursuit of paradiplomacy, especially as Poland's EU accession was on the horizon.⁶⁷ Since then the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship has played the leading role in paradiplomacy, which has resulted in numerous cooperation agreements and letters of intention signed with regions abroad. The late 1990s was an era in which Central European regions, including Podkarpackie, became more attractive to foreign investors, leading to growing interest among Western European local authorities eager to cooperate with Podkarpackie.

In 1999 Podkarpackie Voivodeship came up with the idea of opening a representative office in Brussels. In an

interview with the local press, Bogdan Rzońca, at that time the marshal of the voivodeship, explained that a representative office would allow them to get direct access to information about the EU's plans concerning Poland, rather than having to wait for the information to come from central government, which was sometimes delayed. His idea was that a single representative office could serve several Polish regions.⁶⁸ In the end Podkarpackie opened its Brussels office in 2006 and then in 2009 East Poland House was set up in Brussels to represent a wider region comprising five voivodeships in eastern Poland under one roof.

The EU enlargement in 2004 was the next major step in paradiplomacy. Podkarpackie gained two MEPs (since 2014 three) and wider access to the EU funds, among other things. However, the most significant changes came in 2007 when the Regional Operational Program for Podkarpackie was set up. It was a milestone in relations between the self-governing region and the EC. During the negotiations Podkarpackie succeeded in getting some amendments accepted and safeguarded additional funds for the regional airport.⁶⁹ At that time it ranked among the top Polish regions in terms of the per capita allocation of EU funds.⁷⁰ These achievements were possible for several reasons: (1) Podkarpackie had (and still has) a group of experts who had accumulated experience since the early 1990s through their work with institutions like Rzeszów Regional Development Agency (RARR) and knew how to prepare projects in compliance with the EU rules; (2) regardless of their political affiliations decision makers in Podkarpackie lobbied for several projects, like the regional airport, at both the national and EU levels, and lent continuity and credibility to their efforts; (3) for many years Podkarpackie had succeeded in promoting its experts and politicians at national government level, especially in relation to national development and EU funds, and were able to share their knowledge of EU policies with Podkarpackie using these informal links.

http://www.sbc.org.pl/Content/169205/118_euroregiony_w_nowym_podziale_terytoryalnym-0000-00-0001.pdf (accessed February 21, 2021).

⁶⁶ The idea was developed by the Polish government and supported in the Carpathian Declaration (2017) by the Hungarian, Slovak and Ukrainian governments. It presents the Carpathian region as a region with high development potential, hindered by low transport accessibility, low productivity and facing emigration. In order to exploit its potential and tackle the challenges, the governments proposed that a new EU macroregional strategy should be developed for the Carpathian region, which would help to strengthen the region's competitiveness and attractiveness and create competitive advantages that would improve the quality of life and living standards of the inhabitants of the Carpathian region. The idea is described in the Carpathian Strategy:

https://www.gov.pl/documents/33377/436740/Carpathian_Strategy_September_2018.pdf

⁶⁷ In March 1998 the accession process was formally launched by a meeting of the foreign ministers of the fifteen EU member states, the ten Central and Eastern European applicant states and Cyprus.

⁶⁸ "Podkarpacki Przegląd Samorządowy," [Podkarpackie Self-Government Review] Samorząd Województwa Podkarpackiego, 1999. Available online:

http://www.archiwum.podkarpackie.pl/wrota_kopia/kopia/res/um/sa_morzad/dok/pps/pps_001_1999_07_net.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁶⁹ "Podkarpacki Przegląd Samorządowy," [Podkarpackie Self-Government Review] Samorząd Województwa Podkarpackiego, 2007. Available online:

http://www.archiwum.podkarpackie.pl/wrota_kopia/kopia/res/um/sa_morzad/dok/pps/pps_07_listopad.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷⁰ "10 lat województwa podkarpackiego w UE – ocena wykorzystania funduszy europejskich w rozwoju regionu," [10 years of Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the EU – evaluation of the use of European funds in the development of the region] Marshal's Office of Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, http://rpo2007-2013.podkarpackie.pl/pliki/file/Ewaluacja/Badania%20ewaluacyjne/2014_badanie_i/141015_rap_konc_16092014_rozw.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2021).

In 2007 Poland, together with its Central European neighbours, signed the Schengen treaty which had a crucial effect on people-to-people contacts on the border with Slovakia and Ukraine. Along with the launch of a large new EU programme supporting cross-border cooperation between Poland and Slovakia,⁷¹ this has enabled the further intensification of cooperation between Podkarpackie and the neighboring Prešov Region in Slovakia. At the same time Poland's participation in the Schengen system posed challenges for relations with Ukrainian partners. However, Podkarpackie invested a lot of political and financial capital (from the EU and Polish state budget) in developing transborder contacts between people and institutions on both sides of the border. Projects implemented using these funds include transfer of knowledge and capacity building, investment in cultural heritage and improvements to transport and environmental infrastructure. Successful projects make it easier to establish long-lasting relations between neighboring regions and have a spillover effect, making it easier to start new initiatives.

Podkarpackie Voivodeship's foreign activities are conducted within a legal framework adopted by the local government and set out in two types of document. The substance and aims of cooperation are laid out in the Regional Development Strategy and the Foreign Cooperation Priorities of the Voivodeship. While the foreign cooperation competences (among many others) of the various self-governing institutions are set out in the Articles of the Voivodeship and Organizational Chart of the Marshal's Office. According to these documents, the Voivodeship Management Board, which is the executive body of the region, is supported in its foreign activities by the Marshal's Office. The role of the local parliament – the sejmik – is to assess and approve the Regional Strategy, Priorities of Foreign Cooperation and all foreign initiatives the Marshal's Office wishes to pursue.⁷²

⁷¹ "Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Slovak Republic 2007-2013," Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Slovak Republic 2007-2013. Available online: <http://pl2007-2013.plsk.eu/index/?id=07563a3fe3bbe7e3ba84431ad9d055af> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷² "Statut Województwa Podkarpackiego," [The statute of Podkarpackie Voivodeship] Sejmik Województwa Podkarpackiego, 1999. Available online: <http://www.sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/pl/wrota-podkarpackie/dokumenty/307-statut-wojewodztwa-podkarpackiego> (accessed on February 21, 2021); "Regulamin organizacyjny," [Organizational rules] Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship in Rzeszów, 2013. Available online: <https://bip.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/regulaminy-i-organizacja/regulamin-organizacyjny> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷³ The first strategy was adopted for the years 2000–2006 and updated in 2004. The next strategy was for 2007–2020 and updated in 2010 and 2013. The 2020–2030 strategy is in the public consultation phase.

⁷⁴ "Strategia Rozwoju Województwa – Podkarpackie 2020," [Voivodeship Development Strategy - Podkarpackie – 2020] Samorząd Województwa Podkarpackiego, 2013. Available online:

2. Planning

Since 2000 Podkarpackie region has regularly adopted and updated its Regional Development Strategies, which are coordinated with the corresponding EU Multiannual Financial Frameworks.⁷³ In the current strategy there is no separate section devoted to international cooperation, nevertheless it repeatedly stresses the need to develop foreign relations in business, education, culture and tourism.⁷⁴ The most recent strategy – Podkarpackie 2030 – is in the public consultation phase and has a separate part on transregional and international cooperation.⁷⁵

Work on the Regional Development Strategy was coordinated by the Regional Development Department of the Marshal's Office with contributions from all units of the Marshal's Office. It was then approved by the Voivodeship Management Board, which has the last word on the content. The draft Regional Development Strategy was sent to the Ministry of Investment and Development for its opinion.⁷⁶ The sejmik is currently making its decision, and is likely to reach it by the end of 2020.

Foreign cooperation is addressed directly in the Foreign Cooperation Priorities, which is compatible with the Regional Development Strategy. In Podkarpackie the priorities are drafted by the Unit of International Cooperation – part of the Chancellery of the Voivodeship Management Board. It then has to be approved by the Management Board and then the sejmik. The foreign ministry has the final word after checking that the priorities are consistent with the government's foreign policy.⁷⁷ The existing Foreign Cooperation Priorities, adopted in 2010, is now out-of-date and a new version is being drafted by the Marshal's Office. According to the current priorities Podkarpackie region is particularly interested in developing relations with the Slovak and Ukrainian bordering regions as well as with the EU institutions (through the Podkarpackie representative office in

<https://umwp.podkarpackie.pl/attachments/article/2634/STRATEGIA-ROZWOJU-WOJEWODZTWA-PODKARPACKIE-2020.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷⁵ According to the strategy the region is to intensify engagement in international projects. It is to continue cooperation with Ukraine and Slovakia as well as with institutions like the Carpathian Convention, Carpathian Euroregion and the Three Seas Initiative. Podkarpackie also plans to push for an EU Macroregional Strategy for the Carpathian Region. Available online: <https://www.podkarpackie.pl/attachments/article/7215/projekt%20Strategii%20rozwoju%20wojew%20C3%B3dzstwa%20-%20Podkarpackie%202030.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷⁶ "Raport z konsultacji społecznych projektu Strategii rozwoju województwa – Podkarpackie 2030," [Report on public consultations of the draft Strategy for the development of the voivodeship – Podkarpackie 2030] Województwo Podkarpackiego, 2019. Available online: <https://www.podkarpackie.pl/attachments/article/7332/Raport%20z%20konsultacji%20spo%20C5%82ecznych%20projektu%20Strategii%20rozwoju%20wojew%20C3%B3dzstwa%20-%20Podkar> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁷⁷ <http://www.gospodarka.wrotapodkarpackie.pl/index.php/wspolpracazagraniczna/priorytety-wspolpracy>

Brussels). Podkarpackie also expresses willingness to work with other regions across the EU in order to better invest the EU funds. Outside the EU area Podkarpackie region is interested in developing relations with Eastern European as well as Central and Eastern Asian states. According to the plans of the Marshal's Office, the new priorities will emphasize cooperation within the Carpathian region. This is in line with the EU level activities pursued by Marshal Władysław Ortyl, where he is lobbying for a new EU macroregional strategy for the Carpathian region. When the draft priorities reach the sejmik, there should be an opportunity for a more detailed discussion on the region's foreign activities.

The Regional Development Strategy undergoes extensive consultation, which enables public discussion of the strategic aims and directions of foreign activities. However, there is no public consultation during the drafting of the Foreign Cooperation Priorities. There is a unit in the Regional Development Department of the Marshal's Office called the Regional Territorial Observatory (ROT) which acts as a research center. It monitors and assesses the social, economic and spatial aspects of the voivodeship and monitors progress on the implementation of the Regional Development Strategy. ROT does not deal directly with Podkarpackie's foreign cooperation, but it produces some comparative studies and analyzes international trade and the situation in the border region of the voivodeship, among other things. Therefore, its work can prove very useful in defining the region's interests in relation to the neighboring parts in Ukraine and Slovakia and deciding which development needs should be communicated to the EU institutions. This type of fact-based research translated into policy processes may prove very useful in lobbying at the EU level. From time to time, the Marshal's Office seeks support from external experts in order to expand its foreign knowledge. In this case consultations are held with the foreign ministry and Polish diplomats, and with academia, business and NGOs, depending on the needs of the Marshal's Office.

The low level of public engagement in the process of planning foreign activities is partly down to the moderate interest of the local media in foreign affairs. Regional journalists do cover the tangible outcomes of activities such as the launch of the transborder railway connection between Poland and Slovakia or progress on the international Via Carpathia expressway. However, selective coverage of developments cannot substitute for the proper assessment of the current state of foreign cooperation in Podkarpackie. Neither has there been a plenary debate in the sejmik for several years on the aims and directions of foreign cooperation. Regular discussions

about the current foreign activities of the Voivodeship Management Board and the Marshal's Office take place in the sejmik's Committee of Foreign Cooperation, Tourism and Promotion, and the Carpathian Committee.

In order to better prepare its employees for different tasks linked to foreign activities, the Marshal's Office organizes training (e.g. on diplomatic protocol, savoir-vivre) and subsidizes foreign language courses. Employees at the Marshal's Office also take part in meetings organized by the foreign ministry, concerning the self-governance dimension of Polish foreign policy, as well as public and cultural diplomacy. At East Poland House in Brussels, which is where Podkarpackie representatives are based, employees regularly organize public meetings on current EU policies with a variety of experts, usually Polish diplomats and Polish nationals from the EU institutions. These meetings have an important educational dimension.

3. Management

The foreign activities of the Marshal's Office are managed by several different units, and political cooperation, economic cooperation and the EU funds are treated separately. Political cooperation is organized by the Unit of Foreign Cooperation – part of the Chancellery of the Voivodeship Management Board. This unit of eight people (including the head and two representatives at the Brussels office) supports the Voivodeship Management Board in its paradiplomatic activities, especially Marshal Władysław Ortyl, who has been very active abroad. Since 2016 Mr Ortyl has been a member of the EU Committee of the Regions and chair of the Carpathians Interregional Group⁷⁸ – a group within the secretariat of the Podkarpackie representative office in Brussels. Since February 2020 Mr Ortyl has been the leader of the ECR group in the Committee of Regions. Mr Ortyl uses these posts mostly to promote the idea of the EU Macroregional Strategy for the Carpathian Region, which is also a priority for the Marshal's Office employees in Brussels and Rzeszów.⁷⁹

The team at the Unit of Foreign Cooperation is divided up geographically accordingly to the language competences of the employees. Out of the six people based in Rzeszów, half have at least three months experience of working at the Brussels office, which gives them a good understanding of EU dynamics and the decision-making process. A separate unit within the Marshal's Office is responsible for foreign economic relations – the Economic Cooperation Unit within the Department of Promotion, Tourism and Economic Cooperation. There are also several units responsible for EU funds, including the Poland–Slovakia and Poland–Belarus–Ukraine INTERREG programs.

⁷⁸ Members come from Czechia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary.

⁷⁹ "Władysław Ortyl," European Committee of the Regions. Available online:

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/members/Pages/memberprofile.aspx?MemberId=2032249> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

The instruments used to achieve the various goals of paradiplomatic activities are usually chosen by specific departments, but all actions and initiatives have to be approved by the Voivodeship Management Board. Foreign activities can be initiated from below or from the top, especially where Carpathian issues are concerned as these are Mr Ortyl's main priority. Sometimes the initiative comes from outside, when a foreign partner has a clear vision of the preferred form of cooperation. For example with Saarland in Germany, Podkarpackie's partner region for a decade, the main area of cooperation is education. Since 2009 almost 20 cooperation agreements have been signed between schools in the two regions and every year a conference is organized for teachers in the two countries.⁸⁰

The Representative Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship in Brussels is part of East Poland House – an initiative by five voivodeships in Eastern Poland.⁸¹ This cooperation helps to cut expenses and share knowledge between representatives from different regions. This arrangement makes it easier for Poland's eastern regions to promote their shared interests at the EU level and to use the Polish network in Brussels. The main task of the Podkarpackie representatives in Brussels is to support Marshal Władysław Ortyl in his activities at the EU level. Hence it is not the office, but the marshal who performs the lobbying activities. Additionally the office monitors the EU agenda and regularly reports to Rzeszów about issues of crucial importance for the voivodeship. The voivodeship is still learning how to make maximum use of the potential offered by its presence in Brussels. Initially one of the main activities of East Poland House was to promote the region through meetings and exhibitions and gradually this has been complemented by networking activities, which are important to maintaining fruitful relations with Poles working in the so called "EU bubble." On the other hand, East Poland House could improve its communication with foreigners – currently there is no English version of its website, and the East Poland House Facebook page is mostly in Polish.⁸²

The sejmik has two committees covering the voivodeship's paradiplomatic activities. One committee is responsible for foreign cooperation, tourism and promotion and the other is devoted exclusively to Carpathian issues. There is no separate unit in the sejmik to support the work of local legislators as far as the substance of foreign cooperation is

concerned, even though sejmik representatives meet with their foreign counterparts. The sejmik representatives have to rely on support from the Marshal's Office, concerning both the substance and organizational issues. Every month there are discussions concerning the foreign activities of the Voivodeship Management Board, which are organized in the sejmik by the Committee for Foreign Cooperation, Tourism and Promotion. Additionally, foreign initiatives prepared by the Marshal's Office are sent to the sejmik, which usually deals with them twice. First, it votes on a resolution stating that the region is willing to cooperate and to sign an agreement drafted by the Marshal's Office and the foreign partner. Before the vote there is plenty of opportunity to discuss the aims the voivodeship wants to achieve. Then the draft agreement is sent to the foreign ministry, which may ask for changes if the draft is not compatible with state policy. When everything has been consulted, with both the Polish government and the foreign partner, and finalized, the sejmik votes on whether to approve the agreement. The opportunity to discuss foreign initiatives is not always taken up, even where important agreements such as on cooperation with a Chinese region are concerned. Podkarpackie started entering into agreements with Chinese counterparts in 2011 and these accelerated after the Chinese company LiuGong Machinery acquired Dressta factory located in Stalowa Wola in 2012 – it is the main employer in this part of Podkarpackie. The Chinese company's HQ is in Guangxi region and that was one of the reasons why this region became Podkarpackie's partner in 2015.⁸³ The other reason was that the state was enhancing Polish-Chinese relations at that time. The partnership agreement was adopted in the sejmik without discussion and was voted through by acclamation.⁸⁴ Nor was there any public discussion on cooperation with China, as has been the case with many Czech regions and municipalities, for example, where questions about the profits versus respect of human rights and rights of minorities have often been raised.⁸⁵

4. Instruments, implementation

The main foreign activity of Podkarpackie Voivodeship is performed by Marshal Władysław Ortyl and the rest of the Voivodeship Management Board lobbies the EU institutions in an effort to increase Podkarpackie's financial and non-financial gains from EU membership. Marshal

⁸⁰ "Report on the state of Podkarpackie Voivodeship for 2019," Województwo Podkarpackiego, 2020. Available online: <http://www.sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/attachments/article/3323/RAPORT%20O%20STANIE%20WOJEW%20C3%93DZTWA%20PODKARPACKIEGO%20ZA%202019%20R.%20-%20Ostateczna%20wersja.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁸¹ These are Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie.

⁸² There is, however, an English version of the website promoting Polish Run – an event co-organized by East Poland House and the Embassy of Poland in Belgium.

⁸³ First of all, a letter of intention was signed between the two regions in 2012.

⁸⁴ "Protokół Nr IX/15 sesji Sejmiku Województwa Podkarpackiego z dnia 25 maja 2015 r.," [Protocol No. IX / 15 of the session of the Sejmik of Podkarpackie Voivodeship of May 25, 2015] Województwo Podkarpackiego, 2015. Available online: http://www.sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/old/images/ARO/2015_zakladka_sesje/protokoly/protok%C3%B3C5%82_IX_sesji_SWP.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁸⁵ Every March, in the Czech Republic (and many other places around the world), the various self-governing authorities fly the Tibetan flag on hundreds of buildings in homage to the victims of the 1959 uprising. Available online: <https://ct24.ceskatelevize.cz/domaci/2415421-vlajky-pro-tibet-opet-vlaji-nad-ceskem-pripominaji-agresi-cinskeho-rezimu> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

Ortyl is confident that the best way of increasing the region's development potential is the proposed EU Macroregional Strategy for the Carpathian Region. He is therefore trying to convince important players in Central Europe and the EU to support the project. Apart from the high-level contacts with the self-governance authorities, employees are active at the lower levels in working relations with foreign counterparts. The EU member states seeking to participate in this type of cooperation have to submit a formal application for the creation of the new EU macroregional strategy to the Council. Therefore Podkarpackie is striving to form a wide coalition of Carpathian regions⁸⁶ that will put pressure on the respective Central European governments. Transborder activities, which are high on the list of Podkarpackie's priorities, partly come under the main goal of promoting the Carpathian cooperation.

Another important area of Podkarpackie's foreign activities is the promotion of the region as both a tourist and investment destination. This involves various undertakings by the Marshal's Office both abroad (e.g. participation in trade fairs, exhibitions) and at home, especially through the numerous international cultural, business and political events organized in Podkarpackie. Marshal Władysław Ortyl belongs to the same political party as the Polish prime minister, the president and Podkarpackie Voivodeship, who share Mr Ortyl's interest in Carpathian cooperation. Consequently the region benefits from high level events like the Three Seas Initiative Forum of Regions organized by the Polish president in 2018, featuring high level Polish and foreign politicians and numerous guests from abroad.

Podkarpackie also contributes to important debates concerning Poland-Ukraine relations. Since 2017 the annual Europe-Ukraine Forum has been organized in Rzeszów (or nearby Jesionka) by the private Foundation Institute for Eastern Studies with the assistance of Podkarpackie Voivodeship. This prestigious two-day event brings together more than 800 participants including many decision-makers and business representatives from Poland, Ukraine and other, mostly neighboring, countries. It is a good opportunity for Podkarpackie to promote its foreign

activities alongside the national political dynamics and opinions of experts.

The numerous international agreements signed with other regions are formal evidence of Podkarpackie's foreign activities. Currently Podkarpackie has 12 cooperation agreements in force, most of which are with regions in neighboring countries (7 agreements) and in Croatia (1) and Romania (2). There are also agreements with regions in China and India. Podkarpackie has a letter of intent with two other regions (in Hungary and Ukraine). And there is a multilateral cooperation agreement between Podkarpackie and a coalition of regions in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia that is lobbying for completion of the Via Carpathia expressway. The agreement was signed in 2015 and three other Polish voivodeships signed it the following year.⁸⁷

Determining Podkarpackie's expenditure on paradiplomatic activities is no easy task; nevertheless, there are some figures available that give a rough idea of the amount involved. In 2015–2019 the Unit of Foreign Cooperation generated 1.66 mln PLN in costs (with the state budget covering 1.04 mln PLN of that⁸⁸). This was spent on international events at home and abroad, hosting foreign guests and diplomats and on international projects and translations. It does not include the cost of foreign trips, the work of the Brussels Office or international projects by other units of the Marshal's Office.

Podkarpackie was allocated an additional tranche from the Polish state budget under the foreign ministry's Polish Development Aid program (1.22 mln PLN in 2015–2019 spent on four consecutive projects with Ukraine⁸⁹). Other external funding for Podkarpackie's foreign activities comes from the EU budget through the INTERREG funds. In 2014–2020 Podkarpackie participated in nine projects financed from INTERREG Poland-Slovakia programme, three projects under the INTERREG Poland-Belarus-Ukraine program and two financed by the INTERREG Europe program. Most of these EU funds were invested in trans-border road connections and in projects developing the tourism potential of cross-border areas, including preservation of the local environment and cultural heritage.

⁸⁶ According to the Polish proposal, the geographic area of the Carpathian Strategy should include, in Poland – Podkarpackie, Lubelskie, Śląskie, Świętokrzyskie, Małopolskie; in Slovakia – Západné Slovensko, Východné Slovensko, Bratislavský kraj, Stredné Slovensko; in Czechia – Moravskoslezsko, Střední Morava, Severovýchod, Jihovýchod; in Hungary – Közép-Magyarország, Közép-Dunántúl, Észak-Alföld, Dél-Alföld, Észak-Magyarország, Nyugat-Dunántúl; in Romania – Sud-Muntenia, Vest, Centru, Bucuresti-Ilfov, Sud-Est, Nord-Vest, Nord-Est, Sud-Vest Oltenia; in Ukraine – Lviv Region, Zakarpattia Region, Ivano-Frankiv'sk Region, Chernivtsi Region; in Serbia – Belgrade, Vojvodina, South and East Serbia and Moldova. Available online: https://www.gov.pl/documents/33377/436740/Carpathian_Strategy_September_2018.pdf (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁸⁷ A list of the agreements is available at: <https://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/86-wspopraca-midzynarodowa/teksty-stae2/346-regiony-partnerskie> (accessed on

February 21, 2021). The data given in the link were updated by the Podkarpackie authorities during an interview.

⁸⁸ Polish Development Assistance funds obtained via a call for proposals open to local government authorities, NGOs, churches, social cooperatives, non-profit sport clubs, chambers of commerce, universities, research institutes and the Polish Academy of Science. In 2020 the budget for this purpose was PLN 13.8 million (about €3 million). Available online: <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/c3445723-4dfd-488b-a81f-4548ae834804> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁸⁹ Sprzęt dla ukraińskich ratowników górskich: "Polska pomoc rozwojowa", [Equipment for Ukrainian mountain rescuers: "Polish development aid"] *Gospodarkapodkarpacka*. Available online: <http://gospodarkapodkarpacka.pl/news/view/35270/sprzet-dla-ukraińskich-ratownikow-gorskich-polska-pomoc-rozwojowa> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

The economic dimension of Podkarpackie's foreign activities involves the promotion of the region's pro-business attitude and economic potential and support for regional companies' efforts abroad. This support includes assistance for finding business partners or promotional activities. For example, the Marshal's Office may organize and partially cover the cost of regional companies participating in international trade fairs or trade missions, so long as the companies are presented as a group of Podkarpackie businesses. There is a specialized unit within the Regional Development Department of the Marshal's Office called the Podkarpackie Service Center for Investors and Exporters (COIE), which organizes seminars, trade missions and meetings for exporters, importers and foreign investors active in Podkarpackie, and provides them with data concerning regional companies. There are several ways in which Podkarpackie businesses can engage in the Marshal's Office paradiplomatic activities; however, companies cannot buy these services on a commercial basis – the Marshal's Office decides whether it is in the interests of the voivodeship to support the company.

5. Monitoring and evaluation of results

According to the Act on the Voivodeship Self-Government, one of the sejmik's roles is to monitor the actions of the Voivodeship Management Board and the Marshal's Office, including paradiplomacy. There are two ways it can exert this power. Firstly, the Management Board has to submit its annual State of the Voivodeship Report to the sejmik, which is a detailed description of its undertakings from the previous year⁹⁰. The 2019 report contained 319 pages including 10 pages or so on foreign cooperation⁹¹. The report is approved under a discharge procedure⁹². Secondly, four times a year, the Committee of Foreign Cooperation, Tourism and Promotion discusses the quarterly reports of foreign visits made by the Voivodeship Management Board and the Marshal's Office as well as hosted foreign delegations. A plan of foreign trips by the Management Board and Marshal's Office employees for the next quarter is also submitted to the committee. These reports and plans are then sent as "information" for the plenary debate in the sejmik.⁹³

It is harder for the general public to follow and monitor Podkarpackie's foreign activities. Some information is available on the Podkarpackie website –

www.podkarpackie.pl – but it is scattered across the website and hard to browse. The sejmik publishes the resolutions it adopts online, but these are published in pdf format, making it harder to search for information, especially since the search engine is very basic and has no search filter. The Marshal's Office has promised to change the website and in the future information about foreign activities will be displayed in one place, providing easy access to all important information on the European, Carpathian, economic and trans-border dimensions of its paradiplomatic activities.

6. Best practices

Podkarpackie's efforts to promote the idea of the EU's next macroregional strategy for the Carpathian region have borne fruit: however, nothing has been decided at EU level yet and a lot of work remains, and not just for the Podkarpackie authorities. Marshal Władysław Ortyl's main success has been the adoption of the opinion he initiated through the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) at its plenary session in December 2019⁹⁴. The CoR officially called for a fifth macroregional strategy, which would mean additional funding for all the Carpathian regions, both EU ones and non-EU ones such as in Ukraine, Serbia and Moldova. Mr Ortyl also initiated the establishment of the Carpathian interregional group in the CoR, which brings together regional politicians actively promoting the idea of the Carpathian Strategy. This step came after a lengthy coordinated effort by Podkarpackie, Polish MEPs (especially Tomasz Poręba elected by Podkarpackie), the Polish cabinet and MPs, who have been lobbying for this idea within the EU and at meetings with their Central European counterparts. However, the main task is to convince the Central European governments who would be participating in the Carpathian Strategy, as many of them remain skeptical of its added value, especially as they were previously involved in the Danube Strategy (a corollary to Podkarpackie). Regardless of the final outcome the efforts over the Carpathian Strategy have already led to discussions on Carpathian issues at the EU level and strengthened cooperation and trust among the Carpathian regions⁹⁵.

Good neighborly relations with Ukrainian partners are of crucial importance for Podkarpackie, as many local businesses profit directly or indirectly from the transborder

⁹⁰ Act on the Voivodeship Self-Government, art. 34a

⁹¹ "Raport o stanie województwa podkarpackiego za 2019r.," [Report on the state of Podkarpackie Voivodeship for 2019] Województwo Podkarpackiego, 2020. Available online: <http://www.sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/attachments/article/3323/RAPORT%20O%20STANIE%20WOJEW%20C3%93DZTWA%20PODKARPACKIEGO%20ZA%202019%20R.%20-%20Ostateczna%20wersja.pdf> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁹² Act on the Voivodeship Self-Government, art. 34a

⁹³ For example, in August 2020, the committee approved the reports for the fourth quarter of 2019. Available online: [http://sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/prace-sejmiku/posiedzenia-komisji/3268-posiedzenie-komisji-wspolpracy-z-zagranica-turystyki-](http://sejmik.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/prace-sejmiku/posiedzenia-komisji/3268-posiedzenie-komisji-wspolpracy-z-zagranica-turystyki-i-promocji-sejmiku-województwa-podkarpackiego-40)

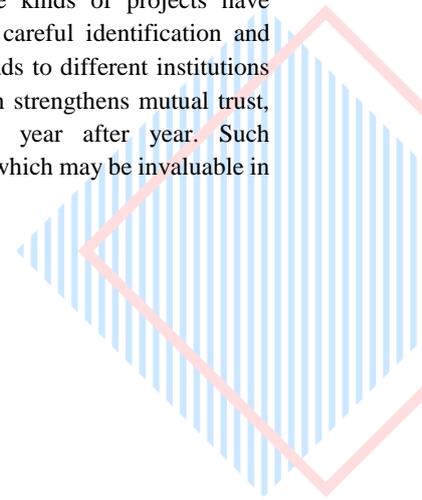
www.podkarpackie.pl – but it is scattered across the website and hard to browse. The sejmik publishes the resolutions it adopts online, but these are published in pdf format, making it harder to search for information, especially since the search engine is very basic and has no search filter. The Marshal's Office has promised to change the website and in the future information about foreign activities will be displayed in one place, providing easy access to all important information on the European, Carpathian, economic and trans-border dimensions of its paradiplomatic activities.

⁹⁴ "Local and regional elected representatives call for a fifth macro-regional strategy," European Committee of the Regions, 2019. Available online: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Local-and-regional-elected-representatives-call-for-fifth-macro-regional-strategy.aspx> (accessed on February 21, 2021).

⁹⁵ The Carpathian agenda is a good opportunity for Podkarpackie to develop close relations with partners in Romania: for example with Suceava County. Mr Ortyl visited Romania in 2019 and he and his counterpart discussed, among other topics, economic cooperation and infrastructural projects in the Carpathian area that will link up Romanian and Polish regions (via Ukraine).

flow of goods and services. Although state-level political relations with Ukraine have experienced some ups and downs, regional cooperation is more stable and Podkarpackie has been able to continuously invest in trust with its eastern neighbours. The most important series of projects implemented by Podkarpackie over the four years beginning in 2015 concerns the transfer of mountain rescue procedure knowledge to rescue teams in two Ukrainian regions. The projects, financed largely by the foreign ministry's Polish Development Aid⁹⁶, were carefully prepared as mountain rescue services are regarded as very important on both sides of the border. Expert bodies from Poland and Ukraine, such as the State Fire Service and Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, engaged in the

bilateral cooperation. The tangible results are evident in joint rescue operations by Polish and Ukrainian teams on both sides of the border. The established contacts and working methods practiced together have improved and effectivised cooperation. These kinds of projects have indirect benefits as well – the careful identification and selection of mutual interests leads to different institutions working together, which in turn strengthens mutual trust, especially when it continues year after year. Such investment builds up resilience which may be invaluable in times of crisis.



⁹⁶ No new projects were selected by the foreign ministry in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Available online: <https://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/rozwoj-regionalny/107->

[aktualnosci/7390-video-o-pomocy-rozwojowej-dla-ukrainy-podczas-forum-europa-ukraina](https://www.podkarpackie.pl/index.php/aktualnosci/7390-video-o-pomocy-rozwojowej-dla-ukrainy-podczas-forum-europa-ukraina) (accessed on February 21, 2021).