UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

LOWER DANUBE REGION AUTHORITIES DECENTRALIZATION LOCAL INSTRUMENTS ITALY PARADIPLOMACY COUNCIL OF EUROPE

EUROPE OF REGIONS

MACRO-REGION BLACK SEA COORDINATION EUROREGION UKRAINE MOLDOVA REGIONNESS PERIPHERY PROJECTS EUSDR

- **CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION**
- **EU DANUBE STRATEGY**
- **EUROPEAN REGIONS**

UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Europe of Regions

Editors
Dr. Hanna Shelest
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed for experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in the international relations and Ukraine in particular.

Contacts:
website: http://ukraine-analytica.org/
e-mail: Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UA_Analytica

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EUROPE IS FACING BOTH INTEGRATION AND FRAGMENTATION

Interview with Andreas Kiefer,
Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional
Authorities of the Council of Europe

What is a leading tendency in Europe nowadays — Integration or Fragmentation?

Europe, both in the smaller dimension of the European Union and in the larger pan-European approach of the Council of Europe, is a continent of many levels of government and territorial structures: local, regional, national and European. In this Europe of several formal levels, there are also several, complementary, levels of identities, which we feel and live. For most people it is no question to be / to identify and feel Tyrolean and Austrian as well as European. For some, however, it is different: a number of Scots do not feel British but Scottish and European. In Catalonia and Flanders, where the Spanish or Belgian identity is being questioned, the European one is being put forward.

If we take the Council of Europe, it has doubled its size in terms of member States over the past 25 years – and the only European country, which is not a member State of the Council of Europe – Belarus – has shown willingness to strengthen its co-operation with this Organisation, and to integrate international experience into its domestic practice – in particular with regard to local self-government.

Also when new states appeared – after the separation of Czechoslovakia and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – the new countries found their place in the organization of fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Council of Europe has succeeded in creating a common European legal space of norms and standards, through its system of conventions and soft-law recommendations and its monitoring mechanisms. Through its specific platforms of political co-operation – the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – and its committees of government experts, the Council of Europe fosters dialogue between different branches and levels of governance across the continent. This is all part of a process of integration.

Integration means to voluntarily weave a net or fabric of commonly accepted norms, standards and behaviours and a network of politicians at national and regional level, in governments and parliaments and assemblies, who pursue weaving the fabric while maintaining unity in diversity. The fabric cannot sustain without the attitude and action of the people and the politicians they represent.

If we take the European Union, where the talk of fragmentation is the most evident because of Brexit and the rise of anti-EU parties, let's look at the results of the latest European elections: pro-EU parties, both on the right and on the left, have won an overwhelming majority, with a voter turnout that averaged over 51% across the

EU – highest in decades; and the United Kingdom took part in elections, while Brexit has not yet materialised.

If we speak about the regional level, it is interesting but not surprising that regional nationalists in Western Europe continue to favour a stronger European Union even as they call for greater regional autonomy within their national States. This means that although they want to be separate, they do not want to be isolated – and fragmentation is first and foremost the result of isolation and the policy of isolationism.

> *Integration means to voluntarily weave a net or fabric of commonly accepted norms, standards and behaviours and a network of politicians at national and regional level*

Legally speaking there is no room for fragmentation. The European Commission of the EU and the Courts of the EU (Luxemburg) and the European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg) are the guarantors of the treaties, of the commonly achieved integration and the legal provisions in place. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and indivisible. There is, however, a tendency towards fragmentation in some policy fields like migration, immigration and budgetary discipline.

More generally, if we look at the subnational level, there is a strong tendency towards co-operation and greater integration across national borders – be it in the form of European Groupings of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC), the so-called Euroregions, which number 72 in the EU today, or in the framework of the Council of Europe's Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation, the Madrid Convention. The sheer number of European associations that promote inter-regional co-operation, as well as inter-municipal co-operation, is also telling: the Assembly of European Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the European Conference of Regional Legislative Assemblies, the Association of European Border Regions, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions.

All this gives us hope, and supports our conviction, that the overall dynamic for greater integration remains and will prevail – but it might be in a different form and at a different depth.

Should regions be stronger or national governments should control them?

The way this question is formulated suggests, that if regions become stronger, national governments will lose "control". In the Congress, we do not believe this to be the case – and there are plenty of examples to prove this statement wrong: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and many others. While there is a need for coherence, a national constitution must provide an umbrella of principles valid for all actors. The national constitution sets the legal framework for democratic self-government and all the checks and balances, joint institutions, transparent schemes for financial equalisation, responsibilities and division of powers and legal conflict resolution schemes, in case a political solution cannot be found. These are elements that a modern system of accountable multi-level governance comprises.

The constitution shall also set out the control mechanisms of the national level, which shall not be a political control but a control of legality. And: supervision and control must be proportional. This was confirmed on 4

April 2019 by the Committee of Ministers in their Recommendation to the member states of the Council of Europe CM/Rec(2019)3 on the supervision of local authorities activities. Most of these principles also hold true for the regions.

The Recommendation takes into account current rules and practices as well as recent trends in supervision of local authorities' action and provides guidelines for member States to improve supervision of local authorities' activities in full respect of the European Charter of local Self-Government. It thus helps to provide adequate oversight while ensuring that local authorities have "the right and the ability ..., within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population".

For us in the Congress, stronger regions mean stronger States. We are convinced that regions, as much as local authorities, must be strengthened through a transfer of competences, finances and democratically controlled decision-making autonomy from the central level. This will allow for an optimal use of local resources, as regions – together with local authorities – are better placed than national authorities to identify the needs of their communities and adapt national policies – and the use of available resources – to local specifics. It is telling that in times of economic crises, decentralised economies perform better and rebound faster.

Our philosophy in general is that public responsibilities must be exercised at the level closest to citizens. This principle, known as the principle of subsidiarity, is enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government – a key Council of Europe convention ratified by all 47 Member States, and the major international reference treaty for local democracy, a first of its kind.

This includes also the delegation of powers from national ministries and agencies to the regions like placing state administration offices in the regions under the authorities of regionally elected and accountable executives and assemblies. This requires a clear and transparent legal system and procedures, an institutional set-up with clarification of the responsibility in own competences and delegated matters, and, not least, an atmosphere of mutual trust.

By adopting the Charter in 1985, national governments recognised local self-government as the foundation of any democratic regime. Indeed, the proximity of public authorities and institutions of governance to citizens means their greater accessibility, and provides a practical possibility for engaging people in decision-making processes, as well as for holding authorities accountable in a more tangible way than at the national level. This creates a necessary link between citizens and authorities and a relationship of mutual trust. It is telling that the level of public confidence in local authorities has been traditionally higher than in national politicians, and stands today – for the European Union at least – at 50%. In comparison, only 36 to 38 % of EU citizens trust their national governments and parliaments.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government stipulates that its principles apply to the same extent to regional authorities as they do to the local level. In the Congress, we see the region as a bridge between local communities and central authorities, a link between citizens and national governments. Villages and towns occupying a specific territory appeared long before a national State, and these territories – regions – represent still today an important dimension of cultural identity references. A country is indeed more than just the sum of its territories.

Can strong regions development lead to separatism sentiments?

In the Congress, we are convinced that appropriate regional autonomy for a strong region is the best antidote to separatism as it strips separatists of their key argument – that the region with a specific identity has no freedom to uphold and develop this identity.

Of course, we are also aware of the risks that specific regional identity might represent. This is why the Congress also proposed the Council of Europe Reference Framework for Regional Democracy, endorsed by national governments in 2009 as a non-binding document to complement the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Aimed at providing guidelines for creating regional entities and their relationship with national authorities, the Framework establishes as the founding principles of these relations the respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the State and loyalty to the existing national constitutional framework.

> *we are convinced that appropriate regional autonomy for a strong region is the best antidote to separatism as it strips separatists of their key argument – that the region with a specific identity has no freedom to uphold and develop this identity*

The Congress has been following closely developments with regard to regions in Europe, and its Chamber of Regions has reaffirmed time and again those principles of constitutional loyalty and territorial integrity. Regional representatives themselves have insisted on it during its debate in March 2015 following the September 2014 referendum in Scotland, United Kingdom, and again during its debate on regional identity in March 2018, in the wake of developments in Catalonia, Spain.

But at the same time, regional representatives have stressed the need for constant and effective dialogue between the State and the region, as well as the need for State action to improve territorial cohesion – better redistribution of resources and burden-sharing between the State and regions within a country. Instead of trying to impose strict control over regions, the State should be engaged in dialogue with them and provide support to regional efforts. With regard to dialogue, for instance, the Congress praised the example of the United Kingdom in its monitoring report for a successful partnership adopted in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that facilitated consultations with both local authorities and the central government – which was particularly important in the context of the referendum in Scotland.

We are convinced that when these conditions are met – constitutional loyalty, respect for territorial integrity, effective dialogue with the State and better financial equalisation – in these circumstances, greater regional autonomy does not pose a threat of secession but on the contrary, I repeat, represents an antidote to separatism.

A degree of autonomy is necessary both to ensure the principle of subsidiarity and to allow the region to maintain its specific regional identity, and such autonomy presents the best counterweight to the argument of separatists. Again, this was in particular the case in the context of the referendum in Scotland – which is why the Congress emphasised in another debate, on prospects for devolution in the United Kingdom, that the referendum results should mark the beginning of a new process leading to further devolution for Scotland and other parts of that country.

Yet allowing regional autonomy is not enough. Time and again, we see that regional problems flare up in places where the State ignores the economic conditions of the region and the region's voice is not heard by central authorities.

In March 2016, the Congress adopted recommendations based on the report "Autonomy and borders in an evolving Europe", which examined exactly the question of a required balance between the principles of State unity and sub-national autonomy, and the division of competences between the State and autonomous entities. Stressing that this balance needs continuous adaptation, the Congress called on regional as well as local authorities to develop effective and transparent dialogue with central government and to favour court proceedings to ensure compliance with the principles of regional self-government in cases of dispute. At the same time, the Congress called on member States to promote peaceful and constitutional solutions to disputes about territory and not to change the boundaries and territorial status of subnational entities without prior consultation of the population.

In the context of "multiplication" of borders in Europe since 1989, the Congress stressed that respect for the rule of law, the national sovereignty of States and good neighbourly relations had been the basic principles underpinning all European intergovernmental cooperation since 1945. These principles are a prerequisite for any changes to boundaries and autonomy statutes. The procedures applicable to the modification of territorial boundaries and statutes of autonomy in member States must be part of a stable, recognised and legally established framework. Any changes must be made in a transparent manner, with due process and by means of a sustainable political dialogue between central government, the regional authorities and all parties concerned.

More profound adaptation of the balance between State unity and sub-national autonomy may provoke changes in the distribution of competencies, or even regarding the legal/constitutional status of sub-national entities; frequently, controversy and conflict between national government and subnational entity is the inevitable consequence. When territorial re-organisation proves to be necessary, the Council of Europe, which has substantially developed its standard-setting competences in the field of human rights and the rule of law, is well-placed to promote appropriate democratic methods as a means of resolving tensions between its increasingly diverse populations.

Finally, the Congress underlined that a pluralist democracy must not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of individuals and groups but must also create appropriate conditions to allow them to express, preserve and develop those identities.

How can the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe make regions stronger?

The Congress, through its Chamber of Regions, advocates the regional cause and argues the case for stronger regions through the transfer of competences and finances to regional entities, greater autonomy in decision making and capacity to maintain a specific regional cultural identity – including through the use of regional or minority languages – as well as for dialogue and consultations between regions and the State, and a better territorial cohesion. The necessity of consultations is indeed another key principle of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as is the principle of financial equalisation. This is why it is fair to say that full implementation of the Charter provisions contributes to making regions stronger – but also to making an overall system of local and

regional self-government in a country stronger and more effective. By monitoring the Charter's implementation, publishing its reports and discussing its findings with national governments and parliaments as well as with the national and the European associations of regions, the Congress contributes to this dynamic.

But at the same time, it should be kept in mind that the Congress' Chamber of Regions in itself provides a forum for dialogue and experience-sharing between regions themselves, and a platform of co-operation in elaborating recommendations addressed to regional peers as well as to national governments. One example is our recommendations which I mentioned earlier, adopted in March 2016 and based on the report "Autonomy and borders in an evolving Europe".

Another is our country-by-country study of regionalisation in Europe, undertaken in 2015 by the Congress' Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government. With regard to Ukraine, this study pointed out back then that the institutional aspects of the regional governance reform had not been properly addressed, in particular the allocation of powers between regional state administrations and elected councils, and between councils of different levels; the budgetary process remained centralised; and key legal issues of regional reforms were not adequately entrenched either in the Ukrainian constitution, or in a set of laws necessary for the success of any reform. The study noted that in general, the fluctuations between centralisation and decentralisation in Ukrainian regional policy tended to incline towards the dominance of the centralist approach, and that Ukraine had still not completed the elaboration and implementation of a new model of regional policy, that corresponded to its European choice and the basic expectations of its society.

Based on this study, the Congress, in its Resolution 390 (2015) on "Trends in regionalisation in Council of Europe member States", noted that, since 2008, there had been a trend in some countries to recentralise powers, and encouraged Member States' policies on regionalisation that respect the principle of subsidiarity and the territorial cohesion of States. The Congress reaffirmed that regionalisation policies must keep in mind the need for territorial solidarity within the framework of national States, as well as the need for regions to have a legal status and clearly defined powers, anchored in their constitution or legislation, and to manage a substantial share of public affairs and be free to exercise their initiative in any matter that is not excluded from their powers or assigned to another authority. It also reaffirmed the need for regions to have resources that they can use freely, enabling them to effectively and efficiently exercise their powers, within the framework of national or federal solidarity and loyalty.

Does European Integration/ Membership in the EU and in the Council of Europe minimize the risk of states fragmentation?

The opportunity to be part of this dialogue between peers at European level and to contribute to policy making through joint elaboration of recommendations provides integration through participation – and let's not forget that regional representatives also become subject to peer pressure, as necessary, from their counterparts from other regions. From this viewpoint, participation in Council of Europe structures such as the Congress serves indeed to diminish the risk of State fragmentation – provided that regions, as well as national governments, follow the recommendations that they themselves helped to prepare and voted for.

By the same token, better dialogue and participation at European level leads to greater integration – because, as I said in my

reply to the first question, fragmentation is in fact the result of isolation and a policy of isolationism.

The Congress itself has recently opened the door for the participation of Morocco as partner for local democracy, and has received a similar request from Tunisia. I should repeat that the only European country which is not a member State of the Council of Europe – Belarus – has shown willingness to strengthen its co-operation with this Organisation, and to integrate international experience into its domestic practice – in particular with regard to local self-government.

This is all part of a tendency for integration. But the State, on the other hand, must not isolate itself from its constituent parts at subnational level by not hearing their concerns – because this is what causes fragmentation in the long run. If the State ignores the region, the region will seek to ignore the State.

Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. He worked as Chef de Cabinet of Land Salzburg's Vice-president and later President Hans Katschthaler (1984–1995) and was Director of the European Affairs Service of Land Salzburg regional government from 1996 to 2010. From 2000 to 2009, he represented the Austrian Länder in the EU's Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) negotiating the Treaty on a Constitution for Europe and the Lisbon Treaty at working level. He was elected Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on 17 March 2010 and re-elected in March 2015 for a term of five years. He is a member of the Scientific Committee of the Institute for Comparative Federalism of the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC), of the European Association of Researchers on Federalism.

EUROPE OF REGIONS: DO STRONGER REGIONS LEAD TO SEPARATISM SENTIMENTS?

Dmytro Poble
Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University

The primary purpose of the article is to correlate a predominant position of some regions with the intensity of separatist movements there. Two tendencies of peripheral separatism have been discovered in Europe. The role of the European continent is confirmed in representing different independent regional and interregional organisations, i.e. through the Assembly of European Regions comprising roughly 300 regional entities. A brief analysis has been made of several regions facing the most evident separatist tendencies and ethnic turbulence. Coincidence factor and prosperity syndrome as accelerant of separatist tendencies have been noted in the Western and Eastern parts of Europe, pointing out different surroundings and the same triggering motivation. And finally, some of most effective instruments to withstand separatist pressure, backed by external powers in proxy-war environments, have been suggested.

Raising of the Problem

Recent developments relating to ethnic conflicts and separatist movements around the world are similar to the effect of a seething cauldron that has not reached its boiling point yet. In this sense, Europe is no exception. New foci of instability emerged as a result of separatism sentiments and proxy-war conflicts. Europe, after two dramatic world wars, started a new regional strategy through a unified diversity concept. Thus, geopolitical changes, proxy-war conflicts, immigration crisis, etc., seem a clear attempt to open Pandora's Box. The most evident examples of the separatist developments on the European stage recall the regions of Catalonia (Spain), Scotland (the United Kingdom), Corsica (France) in Western Europe and Crimea, Donbas (Ukraine), and Transnistria (Moldova) in Eastern Europe.

Separatist tendencies usually originate in prosperous, historically self-dominant regions, which feel underestimated and somehow prejudiced against by central powers, but that need not necessarily be the case. The situation may differ from region to region. Sometimes it proves that the most vulnerable regions to separatism are the areas with ethnic minorities in a cross-border or peripheral location. The presence of ambitious political elite who haven't realised their potential and a local community that gravitates to a mighty state across the border may lead to a logical follow-up of separatist trends. However, there are some instruments to withstand separatist movements inside the nation and imperial ambitions of "good-willing" neighbours, keeping the territorial integrity of the country.

The article aims to mark out a correlative motivation for some European regions that gravitate to separatism or enhanced autonomy.

Today a great number of countries may face the problem of separatism due to the activation of self-awareness and identity by ethnic minorities, nationalism, and ambitions of local political elites, audacious interference of "good-willing" neighbour countries, etc.

K. Boyle and P. Englebert in their work "The Primacy of Politics in Separatist Dynamics"[1] described economic, cultural, political, and some other facilitating factors fostering separatism in the regions. The political elite and large segments of the local population in separatist regions feel somehow left out and underestimated by the rest of the country in terms of prosperity, physical or human capital, or natural resources endowment. Secession tendency is often argued to be promoted by ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity in the country. Ethnic diasporas may also contribute to secessionist sentiment as they tend to nurse grievances, promote elements of irredentism, exacerbate disaffection with the central authorities, intensify the feelings of ethnic purity, and provide some funding to local organisations.

In many cases, the politics of neighbouring states have a keen interest in continuing insurgencies across the border in next-door countries and gaining benefits of separatist activities there. Sometimes

> **Separatist tendencies usually originate in prosperous, historically self-dominant regions, which feel underestimated and somehow prejudiced against by central powers, but that need not necessarily be the case**

political developments and transitions make states vulnerable and can create a situation that triggers the separatist process. In their study, K. Boyle and P. Englebert, defining separatism as "the expression of aspiration for statehood" and "a deeply political statement", made a very interesting conclusion, describing the range of dependence between the state and separatism. They described the latter as "an act of state formation, which is more likely to occur the more communities are discriminated against, the more the states in which they live fail to provide any form of social compact and restrain violence, and the more they can rely on the remembrance of a once autonomous life."[2] Therefore, "separatism in the political sphere could have adverse consequences, e.g. reduction of state sovereignty, destabilization of the situation in the country, etc."[3]

Separatism may differ according to its objectives as "...secession (i.e. to secede from the existing state and to establish a new independent one), irredentism (to separate from the existing state and to join another state), and separatist movement (to strive

---

1   K. Boyle, P. Englebert, *The Primacy of Politics in Separatist Dynamics*, San Diego, CA: International Studies Association, 22 March 2006, p. 45,
[http://cega.berkeley.edu/assets/miscellaneous_files/wgape/10_Englebert.pdf access: 16 July 2019].

2   Ibid

3   N.I. Romaniuk, *Separatism as Social and Political Phenomenon of Modern Times*, Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University: The 3rd International Conference, 20 October 2014,
[https://internationalconference2014.wordpress.com/2014/10/20/сепаратизм-як-суспільно-політичне-яв access: 16 July 2019].

for more autonomy power while remaining within the existing state)."[4] *Separatism* as defined by Cambridge Dictionary means "the belief held by people of a particular race, religion, or other groups within a country that they should be independent and have their government or in some way live apart from other people: e.g. Basque separatism."[5]

The European continent, as referring to the UN official data, is represented by 44 (excluding dependencies, mini-states, etc.) independent countries. Almost all of them have in their territories ethnic minorities, which have been or may potentially be involved in separatist movements.

> **Despite the declared willingness to promote interregional coexistence and cooperation, the very regions often find themselves in a sensitive position due to the separatist tendencies and movements**

It turns out that the minorities residing within the established political contours of certain nations display an apparent tendency towards secession or autonomy. Secessionist movements seek complete independence from an existing country. Autonomist movements aim at achieving, strengthening, or maintaining political autonomy within an existing country. Separatist movements and parties are widespread through the whole of Europe: Their ambitions range "from militant secession leading into outright warfare, through repression by national/central governments, non-violent democratic independence movements, movements aimed at achieving some measure of autonomy (however defined), increasing or strengthening existing autonomy, to relative contentment with status-quo autonomy."[6]

It is worthy to note that Europe has unified (as of today) 28 nations into the European Union, established in the aftermath of the World War II. Furthermore, the EU has a quite effective network of regional organisations and unions. One of the most universal and representative regional organisations is the Assembly of European Regions (AER). It unifies regions from 35 countries and 15 interregional entities. Its stated objectives proclaim "promoting regional interest in Europe and beyond" and "fostering interregional cooperation to promote the exchange of experience and the development of regional policy."[7]

This organisation regards region as one of the key elements in the political system and establishment. Article 3.2 of the AER Statute, adopted by the AER General Assembly on 05 June 2019 in Larnaca (Cyprus), constitutes that "[t]he term 'Region' covers in principle territorial authorities between the central government and local authorities, with a

4   N.M. Maslova, P.P. Muntyan, *Separatism in the Modern World: Source, Causes and Regional Varieties*, Volodymyr Vynnychenko Central Ukrainian State Pedagogical University: The 8th International Conference, 21 March 2018, [https://www.cuspu.edu.ua/ua/stratehii-innovatsiinoho-rozvytku-pryrodnychykh-dystsyplin-dosvid-problemy-ta-perspektyvy/sektsiia-4/7675-separatyzm-u-suchasnomu-sviti-sut-prychyny-ta-rehionalni-riznovydy access: 16 July 2019].

5   *Separatism*, "Cambridge Dictionary", Cambridge University Press, 2019, [https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/separatism access: 16 July 2019].

6   A. B. Anderson, *Overview: The Diversity and Complexity of Separatist Movements in Europe*, "Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe", vol. 17, no. 3, 2018, p. 32, [https://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2018/Issue_3_2018/Anderson_intro.pd access: 16 July 2019].

7   *AER Statute*, AER General Assembly, 05 June 2019, [https://aer.eu/aer-statute/ access: 18 July 2019].

political representation power as entrusted by an elected assembly."[8]

Despite the declared willingness to promote interregional coexistence and cooperation, the very regions often find themselves in a sensitive position due to the separatist tendencies and movements. The regions leaning towards separatist sentiments are often prosperous and they consider themselves not estimated properly in the economic or political sphere. It seems that the prosperity factor is not a dogma, but it makes sense. Maria Fiedler of Germany highlighted several European regions demonstrating their attitude towards independence.[9]

Separatism: The Most Important Movements in Europe

Catalonia is one of the most obvious European regions in its tremendous tendency for secession. The region has gained unique historical experience in its confronting Madrid Central Authorities either during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco or during 1.5 million demonstrations in 2012 while demanding independence from the Spanish monarchy. The Catalonians consider themselves a self-sustaining minority with tenuous dependence on the central establishment in Madrid. Hence, a historical parallel naturally arises to the Duchy of Burgundy, whose court in Dijon outshone the French court economically and culturally during the Hundred Years' War in the 14th and 15th centuries. Current statistic data and reviews of numerous international observers indicate that "[a]s the most prosperous of Spain's 17 regions, Catalonia houses roughly 19% of Spain's economy, benefiting from tourism, exports, manufacturing, and industry."[10] This wealthy region has not only the 1000-year distinct history but also a 7.5-million-strong population with their language, parliament, flag, and anthem, and even their police force and some public controls.[11]

Nonetheless, Catalan nationalists and radical groups have long considered that Madrid allocates too much money to poorer parts of Spain at the expense of their region through tax control. From their point of view, a 2010 constitutional court decision to lessen Catalonia's sovereignty undermined the Catalan identity. In a referendum held finally on 01 October 2017, "about 90% of Catalan voters backed independence."[12] But the turnout of the voters was only 43% and Spain's Constitutional Court declared it illegal.

Unfortunately, some serious factors are affecting Catalonia's aspiration to secession. One of the obstacles on its way to separation is the national public debt of Spain, which constituted in 2016 approximately $1.18 trillion, according to the Bank of Spain and before the Catalan independence referendum

---

8   Ibid.

9   M. Fiedler, *Nicht nur Katalonien: Wer alles nach Unabhängigkeit strebt (Not Only Catalonia: Those Who Strive for Independence)*, "Der Tagesspiegel, Politik, Separatisten in Europa", 17 October 2017,
    [https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/separatisten-in-europa-nicht-nur-katalonien-wer-alles-nach-unabhaengigkeit-strebt/20366008.html access: 18 July 2019].

10   S. Bosch, *Here's How Bad Economically a Spain-Catalonia Split Could Really Be*, "CNBC European News",
    29 September 2017,
    [https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/21/heres-how-bad-economically-a-spain-catalonia-split-could-really-be.html access: 22 July 2019].

11   Catalonia Statistics 2018, *Barcelona Chamber of Commerce*, 2019,
    [https://www.cambrabcn.org/en/web/cambra-english/are-you-looking-for-economic-studies/catalonia-statistics access: 22 July 2019].

12   *Catalonia Crisis in 300 Words*, "BBC News – Europe", 11 June 2019,
    [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41584864 access: 22 July 2019].

of 2017. Catalonia accumulated in 2016 one of the largest debts among Spanish regions, i.e. $86.9 billion. Consequently, further success of Catalonia depends heavily on "whether or not they would assume a percentage of the Spanish debt and if they would be required to pay off their debt."[13] In such a case, the situation with the region's debt burden could prove to be detrimental to a new Catalan nation and would cause real damage to the development of their economic potential.

Catalonia's intention to obtain complete independence from Spain may cause negative feedback from the European Union due to institutional reasons. Such a situation had arisen following the referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom held on 18 September 2014. The voters were supposed to give a "Yes" or "No" answer to the single question: "Should Scotland become an independent country?" A majority of 55.3% (2,001,926 votes), against 44.7% (1,617,989 votes), decided that Scotland would remain part of the United Kingdom.[14] It should be noted that the voter turnout rate of 84.6% was the highest in the UK since the introduction of universal suffrage. The problem is that neither Scotland nor Catalonia possesses an automatic right to the EU membership. It means that Catalonia must receive a unanimous "Yes" from the EU members, including Spain and its allies, which are difficult to predict. If the European Union declines the new nation's membership or makes things difficult, the Catalan economy will bear a heavy transition burden and may

not only lose its current trading partners but also encounter a trade boycott by the rest of the Kingdom of Spain.

Separatism is inherent not only in the economically developed and self-sufficient regions but also in the subsidized areas depending on federal subvention, e.g. Corsica, which is one of 18 administrative divisions in France (13 metropolitan regions and 5 overseas regions). Starting from 1991, the Territorial Collectivity of Corsica has obtained a special status with greater authority, possessing two bodies: the Executive Council and the Assembly of Corsica. The 2017 regional elections brought the national alliance Pè a Corsica, combining the autonomist party Femu a Corsica and separatist party Corsica Libera, to the majority of seats in the Corsican Assembly, a unicameral legislative body, by 56.5% of votes.

Unlike Catalonia in Spain or Scotland in the United Kingdom, Corsica does not think of any complete secession. It rather looks for enhanced autonomy and power, especially financial liabilities and official recognition of Corsican language. A perspective of international isolation in the case of total secession is beneficial neither for the Corsicans nor for their region because "Corsica is a region subsidized by the French Government. Most of the island's population receive their salaries financed by public funds"[15] and they greatly depend on tourism.

As for Eastern Europe, it is worthy to note Transnistria, which is a small breakaway

---

13 S. Bosch, *Here's How Bad Economically a Spain-Catalonia Split Could Really Be*, "CNBC European News", 29 September 2017,
[https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/21/heres-how-bad-economically-a-spain-catalonia-split-could-really-be.html access: 22 July 2019].

14 J.-C. Piris, *Political and Legal Aspects of Recent Regional Secessionist Trends in Some EU Member States, [in:] Secession from Member State and Withdrawal from the European Union*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 72.

15 H. Kuchalejschwili, *Will Corsica Be a New Catalonia?*, "112.ua: Elections", 12 December 2017,
[https://ua.112.ua/statji/chy-stane-korsyka-novoiu-kataloniieiu-424559.html access: 26 July 2019].

entity (unrecognised state) located between the Dniester River and Moldova's eastern border with Ukraine. "Since 1992, the Transnistria region, an economically important part of the Republic of Moldova … has suffered self-imposed isolation from the rest of the country and, for the most part, from the world at large."[16] The cause of the unsettled conflict lies in ethnic and linguistic aspects as well as the different approaches to conduct the required economic reform. In November 1990, limited fighting took place between Moldovan police, supported by military units, and Russian-backed Transnistrian forces. Russian-speaking population in Transnistria regards the Russian military presence as protection for their identity, which may be overwhelmed by the ethnic Moldovan majority. In its turn, Moldova believes that Transnistria is a "dark hole" for smuggling and illegal trafficking and insists that the location of Russian troops there violates its territorial integrity. Besides, the Moldovan authorities accuse Moscow of blocking iteratively any attempts to find a settlement.

"The Transnistrian conflict has been under the regulation for more than 25 years, but the prospects for restoring the territorial integrity of Moldova and the Transnistria reintegration are very small."[17] Maybe that is why this long-simmering "frozen conflict" in Transnistria recalls a certain parallel between the current situation along the eastern border of Moldova and the ongoing conflict related to the annexed Crimea, as well as continuous fighting in eastern Ukraine. Notwithstanding the existence of the same behind-the-scenes actor from the past Soviet Union's reality, the scope of these conflicts is different in terms of both the human losses and the violation of International Law. The Transnistrian conflict's death toll accounted for over 1,000 irreparable losses and "in Donbas hostilities, some 12,800 to 13,000 people were killed from April 2014 to the end of 2018, according to UN Monitoring Mission on Human Rights."[18]

If in the case of Crimea's annexation the Russian Federation used the threat of force to seize the peninsula, in Donbas, it appealed to its regular armed forces (both planning and the use of personnel and small units) on a par with its security groups and separatist formations to incite war there. Initially, Russia denied its troops in Crimea as belonging to the regular army, as it denies its involvement in Eastern Ukraine and huge military and material supplies to the unrecognised "Donetsk and Luhansk republics".

Declining post-Soviet economy, growing poverty, and the increasing number of pensioners boosted separatism sentiments in both the Transnistria and Donbas cases. "Almost 700,000 pensioners are not receiving their pensions because of the restrictive policies linking payment of pensions to conflict-affected people with

16 *Republic of Moldova: Economic Review of the Transnistria Region*, "Report No. 17886-MD Europe and Central Asia Region", World Bank, June 1998, p. 7,
[http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/492631468773991051/pdf/multi0page.pdf access: 26 July 2019].

17 W. Jawir, *The Disintegration-Integration Challenges in Moldova*, "Studia Politologica Ucraino-Polona" (V.M.Koretsky Institute of State and Law, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine), no. 8, 2018,
[http://journals.uran.ua/spup/article/view/163866 access: 27 July 2019].

18 *Donbas War Death Toll Rises up to Nearly 13,000 – UN*, "UNIAN Information Agency", 22 January 2019,
[https://www.unian.info/war/10416549-donbas-war-death-toll-rises-up-to-nearly-13-000-un.html access: 27 July 2019].

the requirement to register as an internally displaced person."[19]

The Crimea annexation and unleashed war in the eastern part of the country resulted in a significant loss for Ukraine's sovereignty and economy since 2013, namely:

- Loss of control over 46,200 km^2 (of the whole 603,700 km^2);
- Nearly 6 million deduction from its total population of 43,835,000;
- 20% loss of GDP (Crimea 3.6% of GDP in 2013, and Donbas 15% of GDP in 2013).[20]

> *declining post-Soviet or uncompetitive economy, growing poverty, and the increasing number of pensioners create some extra motivation for separatism, especially in Eastern Europe*

Objectively speaking, the declared prosperity of Donbas related mostly to the "good old times of the Soviet Union" with the total sell-off of mineral resources and rolled steel by the oligarchies. Oleksandr Shlapak, Ukrainian minister of finance, confirmed during a press briefing organised in May 2014 that "...the self-sustainment of Donetsk and Luhansk regions for their revenues in 2013 was 39.8% and 44.1% accordingly." He added that "the revenues of the Donetsk region in 2013 constituted UAH 16.3 billion, while its expenses raised to UAH 41 billion, indicating that the region's self-sustainment remains at 39.8% level."[21]

Conclusion

Separatist movements continue unabated throughout the world, especially in the trans-border and peripheral regions, where ethnic minorities have a certain ethnic, linguistic, or historical attraction to their vis-à-vis across the border.

Most cases of separatist tendencies are caused by ethnic and linguistic reasons, as well as the underestimation of economic prosperity and self-sustainment of some regions. Nevertheless, declining post-Soviet or uncompetitive economy, growing poverty, and the increasing number of pensioners create some extra motivation for separatism, especially in Eastern Europe.

External factors may have the effect of scaling up and scaling down the intensity of separatism. History knows a lot of examples when separatist disturbances were initiated and further used for annexing the territories of a smaller neighbour, e.g. the Anschluss of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938 or annexing of the Ukrainian Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. It often happens as a result of proxy conflicts, or hybrid wars, or even tense interstate relations, especially if the neighbour possesses unilateral superiority related to the military, economic, and human resources.

19 K. Nechayeva, T. Jenssen, *Ukraine: 5 Facts after 5 Years of Conflict*, Norwegian Refugee Council, Ukrainian War Conflict, 03 April 2019,
[https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2019/five-things-to-know-after-five-years-of-conflict-in-eastern-ukraine access: 27 July 2019].

20 *Mere Facts: Today's Ukraine without the Crimea and Donbas*, "ICTV Facts", 13 April 2017,
[https://fakty.com.ua/ru/ukraine/20170413-tilky-fakty-shho-ukrayina-vtratyla-vnaslidok-okupatsiyi-krymu-i-donbasu access: 28 July 2019].

21 *The Revenues of Donetsk and Luhansk Regions Cover Only 40% of Their Expenses,* "Economic Pravda", 12 May 2014,
[https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2014/05/12/450790/ access: 28 July 2019].

This situation requires that we look for the most effective instruments to withstand the separatist movements, which may include the involvement of international organisations and mediating countries, peace talks, economic and political sanctions, recourse to the International Court of Justice, appeal to international isolation, use of coercive force by police or even by units of armed forces or peacekeeping troops assigned by international community.

Dmytro Poble *is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of International Relations, Political Science, and Sociology at Odessa Mechnikov National University. Prior to his academic career, he has served at the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, following positions of Ukrainian Consul to Libya and to Jordan, as well as Foreign Trade Director and Deputy Director-General at the Governor's office in Odessa region. D. Poble graduated from Moscow Military Institute for Foreign Languages and has been employed for more than 15 years as an interpreter in different Arab countries.*

ITALIAN PARADIPLOMACY IN ACTION: THE ENGINE OF CONTRAST OR PURE SELF-INTEREST?

Dr Victoria Vdovychenko
Kyiv Borys Grinchenko University

The article aims to examine the cases of political impact of Italian regions in the EU in the post-Brexit period. Steps of the new "yellow-green" government, which came to power in June 2018, towards political impact on the regions balancing between right- and left-wing populist economic and social reforms are assessed. The hypothesis of the article is that despite huge differences in political, economic, and social conditions, all cases illustrate that regions of Italy will focus mostly on paradiplomatic activities rather than mutating towards protodiplomacy. Special attention will be given to the northern regions of Italy, where paradiplomacy has been developed since the beginning of the 1990s.

Theorizing Paradiplomacy: Regions In or Regions Out?

The challenges of the European Union's politics and policies illustrate that the process of the European integration, in particular in the post-Brexit period, is also shaped at the regional level. We experience the involvement of regional governments at the international level, a phenomenon known as paradiplomacy. Some regions tend to foster their paradiplomacy, thereby complicating the conditions for formulation of foreign policy for national actors. Other regions focus their efforts on protodiplomacy, a political will of greater autonomy leading sometimes to the decision to create a new independent state. The reasons lie in the dynamics at the level of state and international system, but shifts in the political and economic developments of the regions themselves are also to be taken into account.

The article will address such questions as: What are Italy's regions' aims, interests, and objectives in the EU policymaking? How much have these changed over the years? Is there continuity or discontinuity in the paradiplomacy, taking into account that the national government was frequently changing from one government to another? Is Italy's paradiplomacy towards the EU coherent from region to region, or do they tend to diverge and even contradict each other?

Over the last centuries, sovereign states were established as the main compass for the modern world. At the same time, international activities of regions are getting more and more attention. Their motives as well as resources and strategies always differ prompting sovereign states to be simply "worried" due to the intrusion in their foreign policy domain[1].

---

1 M. J. Keating, F. Aldecoa (eds.), *Paradiplomacy in Action: The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments.* Frank Cass & Co.: London 2013, p. 8.

The issue of paradiplomacy is not new in international affairs. Over the past four decades, a major transformation of the world politics took place, in particular fostering interconnectedness among various countries, regions, and other stakeholders. Brussels has already got used to numerous regional "embassies" trying to advocate their issues and making impact on the European policy communities[2].

As a result of globalization, as well as rise of trading regimes of the European Union at the end of the 20th century, paradiplomacy was enhanced by the digital endeavor at the beginning of the 21st century. These factors dismantled the logic of the classic distinction between national and international levels, embracing further ramifications for cities, provinces, and regions ready to influence the EU on various issues. The most vivid cases are from Belgium (Flemish and Walloon governments in the mid-1990s) and Spain (the case of Catalonia in 2017-2018), where regions were trying to develop their own foreign policies.

One of the difficult issues in theorizing paradiplomacy is the attempt to classify it and to involve formal and informal aspects. Traditionally, there is a three-layer structure of paradiplomacy presented by Kaiser[3] or Duchacek[4]: transborder regional paradiplomacy (or classic cross-border cooperation), transregional paradiplomacy (cooperation of regions with foreign countries), and global-level paradiplomacy (various contacts with foreign central governments, interest groups, and international organizations).

However, for the purpose of this study, we will limit our analysis to the two sets of interest represented by concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy of Italian regions in the EU structures based on the interpretation of Noe Cornago. The fate of new forms of paradiplomacy is to thrive in the most diverse contexts having notorious institutional and legal recognition. In this regard, regional and local governments demonstrate their availability to send and receive international missions[5]. Another prerequisite for the success of regional paradiplomacy is the recognition of regions in the international domain, such as in the European Union. Economic instruments always matter and the ability to be part of the European Fund for Regional Development initiatives or the Committee of the Regions is more than just prestige[6].

Paradiplomacy remains weak in managing legal consequences for the states regarding international legal responsibility. It also gives grounds for secession tendencies. Voicing these ideas is justified by the presence of the notion of "protodiplomacy", a commitment of a non-central government abroad spreading a higher degree of separatist messages on economic, social, and cultural links with foreign nations to enhance political tensions[7].

---

2   M. Keating, *Paradiplomacy and Regional Networking*, Working Paper, Forum of Federations: Hannover 2000, p. 3. R. Kaiser, Paradiplomacy and Multilevel Governance in Europe and North America: Subnational Governments in International Arena, "Participation", vol. 27(1), pp. 17-19.

3   R. Kaiser, *Paradiplomacy and Multilevel Governance in Europe and North America: Subnational Governments in International Arena*, "Participation", vol. 27(1), pp. 17-19.

4   I. D. Duchacek, D. Latouche, G. Stevenson, *Perforated Sovereignties and International Relations: Trans-Sovereign Contacts of Subnational Governments*, Greenwood Press: Westport (CT) 1988.

5   N. Cornago, *Paradiplomacy and Protodiplomacy*, working document prepared for G. Martel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford 2018, pp. 6-7.

6   Ibid, p. 8.

7   Ibid, p. 9.

The tendency in 2018-2019, however, is that many regional governments tend to amalgamate various forms of cooperation aiming at reaching pure economic interests with some elements of political tension and lobbying. Noe Cornago does not go beyond, into other kinds of terminology, leaving it for later research. Therefore, in general, paradiplomacy tends to remain a very versatile instrument that can lend itself to the service of quite diversified interests.

Italian Paradiplomacy: Singing Solo with Economic Shades

Italy has been demonstrating very active efforts in paradiplomacy. It is a very recent phenomenon, although already in the 1950s there were pioneering experiences of international projection by some municipalities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Italian regions began having "diplomatic interests" within European and international relations only since the 1990s. On the one hand, EU institutions offer subnational governments a high level of autonomy and favor their potential as international actors. On the other, development of transnational cooperation initiatives fostered regional paradiplomatic activities. Italy was among the leaders to use such opportunities[8]. Paradiplomacy is also prompted by security challenges. The example of the conflict in the Italian part of Tyrol regarding the German-speaking population was one of the most vivid ones. Negotiations between Austrian and Italian

border regions' representatives served as a prerequisite to cope with the international dispute[9].

However, Italian paradiplomatic actions failed to overcome the regulatory framework that does not fully recognize the novelties brought by the process of European integration, in particular the plurality of actors in foreign policy. All this has opened a debate on the interpretation of the constitutional provision regarding the exclusivity of the state in issues of foreign policy[10].

The Emilia-Romagna region, in fact, was the first among Italian paradiplomatic actors to open its presence in Brussels in 1994. In reality, this region, not being able to use its own institutional office, took advantage of having "cooperative diplomacy" and used the headquarters of the Agency for Technological Development of Emilia-Romagna, present in Brussels since 1985. The same strategy was adopted in 1995 by Tuscany, through the headquarters of its own financial company (Fidi Toscana SpA), followed by the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano in 1995, as well as Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto at the beginning of 1996[11].

In accordance to the Italian Constitution (Article 117), the exclusive right to conduct foreign policy and international relations at the state level belongs to the Italian Republic. The same holds about relations with the

8   R. Coletti, B. Cugusi, M. Picarozzi, *From Local to Glocal Networks: Lessons from the Balkans*, paper presented at CeSPI at the international conference "Globalisation, Conflict and the Experience of Localities", Rome, June, 28-29 2007.

9   N. Cornago, *Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy in Redefinition of International Security: Dimensions of Conflict and Cooperation*, "Regional and Federal Studies", vol. 9(1), 1999, pp. 40–57.

10 R. Coletti, J. L. Rhi-Sausi, *Paradiplomazia e politica estera nell'unione europea [Paradiplomacy and Foreign Policy in the European Union]*, paper preparato per il Seminario "Il Mondo si Glocalizza. L'azione internazionale dei governi subnazionali" organizzato dal CeSPI, da globus et locus e dall'IILA, e svoltosi a Roma il 25 febbraio 2010, pp. 51-52, [http://www.cespi.it/en/ricerche/paradiplomazia-e-politica-estera-nellunione-europea].

11 M. Crosato, *Uffici di rappresentanza delle Regioni italiane a Bruxelles [Representative Offices of the Italian Regions in Brussels]*, "Eurogiornalisti", 05 June 2017, [http://eurogiornalisti.eu/europa/uffici-di-rappresentanza-delle-regioni-italiane-a-bruxelles/].

European Union and the right to grant asylum and legal status to non-EU citizens. At the same time, Article 118 stipulates that Italy's regions may enter into agreements with foreign states only according to the state legislation[12].

Regional administrations of Italy as well as other EU member states are making efforts to get themselves involved in European issues in various formats: from opening European units or introducing European desk offices to full-fledged representation offices in the heart of Brussels. In various cases, regions manage to enter Brussels and stay there for as long as they can[13].

Strike for the Big Fish, or Business behind the Institutions

It is worth mentioning the reflections of Michael Tatham on how paradiplomacy works within EU institutions or how things actually take place beyond the official version provided by the European Union. He identifies six main EU institutions linked to conducting paradiplomacy: the Committee of the Regions, the Council of Ministers, the Commission, the European Parliament, regional Brussels offices, and European networks and associations[14].

The Committee of the Regions, established by the Maastricht Treaty, is a consultative body that includes several representatives of European institutions. Normally paradiplomacy here is purely based on networking. For example, in 2010 among representatives of Sardinia there were the

president of the region Ugo Cappellacci and the mayor of the town of Armungia. This institution gets criticized for not being able to provide efficient decision making, limiting its spectrum to the following cases: (a) if the European Commission would like to support a certain initiative, it can seek an ally in the Committee of the Regions; (b) if the European Commission has not yet drawn up a precise position on a certain topic, it can consult the Committee of the Regions, which in this case can contribute to shaping a proposal that reflects "regional" interests. Apart from these two conditionalities, the Committee of the Regions has a very weak institutional role[15].

> *many regional governments tend to amalgamate various forms of cooperation aiming at reaching pure economic interests with some elements of political tension and lobbying*

The Council of Ministers is considered to be the "big fish" in the EU decision making. According to the Maastricht Treaty (Article 203), member states may contribute with their representatives to the discussions within the Council. However, Tatham points out that there is a distinction between institutionally strong and institutionally weak regions. So far, only the regions that have greater institutional strength have had access to delegations in the Council, or

---

12 *Constituzione della Repubblica Italiana.*

13 M. Tatham, M. Thau, *The More the Merrier: Accounting for Regional Paradiplomats in Brussels*, "European Union Politics", vol. 15(2), p. 256.

14 M. Tatham, *Going Solo: Direct Regional Representation in the European Union*, "Regional and Federal Studies", vol. 18(5), pp. 501-503.

15 O. Perra, *Fallimento dell'Europa delle regioni: Cosa ne e' stato dell'Europa delle regioni [Failure of the Europe of the Regions: What Happened to the Europe of the Regions]*, "Gittinwide", December 2012, [http://gittinwide.blogspot.com/2010/12/fallimento-dell-europa-delle-regioni.html].

in some cases have even taken the place of the member state by casting a vote in the Council[16].

One of the key strategies for the Italian paradiplomacy is to use the opportunity of the Italian presidency in order to promote regional issues (like in 2014)[17].

In all cases, Italy has the power to decide when, how, and why to admit regional representatives in its official delegations. The principal idea is that the regions are called within the Council only as long as the position of the regions is in line with that of the central government. Before a state allows its own region to participate in the Council, its minister holds discussions with representatives of the region in order to reach a common position. In other words, the regions would not have the power to represent their interests independently within the Council if they did not agree with the positions of the state to which the region belongs.

However, Tatham argues that some regions have been more successful than others in taking advantage of the European Commission's open dialogue. Regions with more resources and greater knowledge of the functioning of European institutions do not miss the opportunity to make their positions known to the Commission. Key Italian examples would be Sicily or Puglia[18]. The Commission can also play the "devil card" by fostering conflicts of opinions between various regions and then using the situation for its own purposes while holding discussions with the member state[19].

There are numerous differences among the regions in what concerns international activity, because the political role of the regional body is closely linked to the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the region itself and also the leader of the region. For these reasons, more structured paradiplomatic activities are especially widespread in the northern Italian regions[20]. These regions have diplomatic accreditations from the state. This means that representatives of the regions can have access to memoranda and other official documents of the member states and have access to meetings of the Commission and the Council. In essence, "strong" regions have greater access and knowledge of European institutions and have greater resources to increase their presence and visibility in the European Union. The cases of Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Tuscany, and Lombardy are the most vivid examples for such paradiplomatic "coming out".

The Italian case is of particular interest due to the existence of historically underdeveloped south and quite developed north[21]. The EU presented its own instruments to deal with Italian regional disparities via structural and cohesion funds. Therefore, in the 2014-2020 period, Italy will manage around 50 operational programs within the framework of the

16 Tatham, p. 506.

17 Provisional calendar of Italy's presidency in the Council of the European Union: http://www.esteri.it/mae/semestreeuropeo/cal_pres_ita.pdf.

18 See: http://www.aiccrepuglia.eu/aiccre/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AICCREPUGLIA-NOTIZIE-DI-LUGLIO-2018-N.-2-1.pdf.

19 Tatham, pp. 505-507.

20 R. Coletti, J. L. Rhi-Sausi, pp. 54-55, [http://www.cespi.it/en/ricerche/paradiplomazia-e-politica-estera-nellunione-europea].

21 L. Cannari, G. Iuzzorolo, *Le differenze nel livello dei prezzi al consumo tra Nord e Sud [The Differences in the Level of Consumer Prices between North and South]*, "Questioni di economia e finanze", no. 49, 2009, p. 43.

European Union's cohesion policy, with a total value of around EUR 32.2 billion. Southern regions will receive EUR 22.2 billion (Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily). However, an interesting observation stands for well-developed regions of the north of Italy being a recipient of EUR 7.6 billion of the EU funds (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Liguria, Piedmont, Tuscany, Valle d'Aosta, and Veneto)[22]. Only by active paradiplomatic activities and lobbyism, it is possible to explain such a phenomenon.

Italy, with 841 lobbies, is in the fifth place after Belgium (where obviously many foreign groups are registered), Germany, Great Britain, and France[23]. Among regional representation offices, we find several volunteer initiatives or NGOs from northern Italy varying their lobbying costs from EUR 50,000 to EUR 500,000. What are they for? To maintain offices and staff, to hold conventions and opinion campaigns in various countries, as well as to promote regional interests[24].

Regiocrats from Italy are pretty much aware of such options and present a huge power of interests from various regions of EU member states as well as contribute thousands of Euros for lobbying support[25]. Data collected by the *Lobbyfacts.eu* portal indicates that the biggest contributions in terms of Italian regions in Brussels are the Liaison Office of Tuscany Region to the EU Institutions

(around EUR 500,000 in lobbying costs), region of Sardinia (around EUR 300,000), as well as Milano community (about EUR 200,000)[26].

There are different types of European associations that include regional representatives, for example the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, the Assembly of European Regions, and others. Some of these seem to be better connected and better equipped than others. Those better equipped can act effectively in contacting European commissioners or sometimes the president of the European Commission. In some cases, they even manage to obtain a formal commitment from the commissioners on some important issues.

> *in the 2014-2020 period, Italy will manage around 50 operational programs within the framework of the European Union's cohesion policy, with a total value of around EUR 32.2 billion*

Networking is an essential part of paradiplomacy Italian regiocrats conduct directly with Italian counterparts in the EU institutions. The reference obviously goes to Mario Draghi, president of the European Central Bank, and Federica Mogherini, high representative for foreign policy, as well as Antonio Tajani, the president of the

22 *La politica di coesione e l'Italia [Cohesion Policy and Italy]*, European Commission, 2014, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/it/information/publications/factsheets/2014/cohesion-policy-and-italy].

23 From the material of M. Gabanelli, L. Offredu, *Ue, 11.800 lobby per influenzare Commissione e parlamentari. I casi di corruzione*, "Corriere della Sera", 07 April 2019, [https://www.corriere.it/dataroom-milena-gabanelli/ue-lobby-commissione-parlamento-bruxelles-corruzione/547560ca-57d7-11e9-9553-f00a7f633280-va.shtml?refresh_ce-cp].

24 Data aggregated from "LobbyFacts.eu". See: https://lobbyfacts.eu/reports/lobby-costs/all/0/2/2/2/31/108.

25 M. Bauer, M. Tatham, *Support from below? Supranational Institutions, Regional Élites and Governance Preferences*, "Journal of Public Policy", vol. 34(2), 2014, p. 243.

26 Data aggregated by "Lobbyfacts.eu". See: https://lobbyfacts.eu/reports/lobby-costs/all/0/2/2/2/6/108

European Parliament. With reference to the top positions in the European Commission, Italy is the second most represented country after Germany. There are four general managers, two deputy directors general, 30 directors, and 116 heads of units. Among the latest appointments, Silvano Presa, a deputy general manager in the Directorate-General for the Budget, has a particularly delicate role[27].

Regarding senior managerial positions in the EU institutions, Italy has achieved the same enviable result in the European Parliament: three general managers, four directors, and 30 heads of units. It is also worth mentioning substantial Italian presence in the European External Action Service (two general managers and two directors), but also 13 heads of mission in various European Union delegations in the world (four of them come from the Italian MFA)[28].

Counterstrike of Paradiplomats in Brussels

The quality of political debate on paradiplomatic issues in Italy is far from being bountiful or satisfactory. It rather tends to be more and more politicized as well as pragmatized in terms of influence in the EU structures. Actually, 19 regions and two autonomous Italian provinces were reported to be present in Brussels as of 2017. However, since the end of 2017, the Basilicata office has been closed, and since the end of March,

the Calabria office has also been dismantled. The problems of representation are purely economic: high-rent premises, external job offers, etc. Some regions, probably due to the revealing journalistic scandals of 2011 and 2012, remain very cautious in providing information to anyone[29]. Regions did not have state support to run representative offices in Brussels or failed to conduct effectively the "big fish" talks.

At the same time, some of the regions do not see advantages of constant presence in Brussels and try to continue their negotiations in cooperation with business or other regions and municipalities[30]. However, it does not mean that the level of regional development increases afterwards. Research stipulates that even northern regions of Italy decline in the quality of regional governance (Valle d'Aosta, Abruzzo, Piemonte)[31]. It is a huge issue in the dialogue between Italy and EU institutions in terms of EU regional policy funding.

However, some other outcomes are becoming evident as well. It happens when economic voices are combined with political ones for the new government coalition representatives. To avoid criticism by EU institutions of Italy as not being innovative in engaging municipalities or citizens, the Five Star Movement promoted a new position for the "yellow-green" cabinet – a minister for direct democracy. Riccardo Fracarro, an environmental activist at a

27 *Le istituzioni europee sono piene di funzionari italiani. E allora perché contiamo poco?*, "Linchiesta", 21 July 2017, [https://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2017/07/21/le-istituzioni-europee-sono-piene-di-funzionari-italiani-e-allora-perc/34979/].

28 Ibid.

29 S. Campolo, *Eccelenze e silenzi: Come si muovo le regioni italiani a Bruxelles*, "Glistatigenerali.com," 05 January 2018, [https://www.glistatigenerali.com/istituzioni-ue/eccellenzi-silenzi-cosa-fanno-le-regioni-italiane-a-bruxelles/].

30 G. Urru, *Institutionalizing Paradiplomacy among EU Regions and Local Authorities: Contributions for a Practicable Legal Proposal*, UCAM, 2018, p. 91, [http://www.aiccrepuglia.eu/aiccre/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/THESIS-EU-ST-HR-Giovanni-Urru-Giovanni-Urru-1.pdf].

31 N. Charron, V. Lapuente, *Quality of Government in the EU Regions: Spacial and Temporal Matters*, QOG: The Quality of Government Institute, Working Paper, No. 2, 2018, p. 23.

local level in northern Italy, became the first minister and was appointed in June 2018. Since that time, he presented his vision in the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy in Rome (September 2018)[32]. It is probable that he will try to balance citizens' initiatives and more of the regions will become paradiplomatic in their activities. However, this is still early to judge.

While regional offices formally represent public authorities and their opinions, in many cases they voice private interests of companies, NGOs, civil society organizations, or other business institutions. The cases of Liguria, Piemonte, or Lombardy as well as others prove that.

In fact, political liaising on behalf of Lega becomes a reality for Confindustria, Italian network of companies. It proves to be linked to Lega of Salvini at the EU level as well. MEP Ciocca supports multiple agenda meetings with Assolombarda or FarmIndustria, being linked politically to the new ministry of internal affairs[33].

A notorious example is the political activity of the NGO "Altroconsumo", which presented numerous letters in 2018 to Italian MEPs, asking them for some amendments to a proposal for a directive on distance selling. It was also hoped that extensive guarantees against operational defects would be extended to digital goods, and so they were[34].

> **66** *While regional offices formally represent public authorities and their opinions, in many cases they voice private interests of companies, NGOs, civil society organizations, or other business institutions*

However, the issues of protodiplomacy also came into attention with the new "yellow-green" coalition. While European and world media were focused on the budgetary spending of Italy and inability to implement pension reform and introduce a new minimum wage rate, and Italians focused on their smartphones and TVs in order to see who will win Sanremo song contest, just few noticed that there was another factor that the new "yellow-green" coalition was passionate about. It is called "differentiated autonomy for three Northern regions: Veneto, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna", and it is a game that Lega wanted to be finalized by 15 February 2019[35]. The idea was supported by Vice Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, who has prioritized secession messages as a legacy of his party since the 1990s.

---

32 N. Gardels, *Renovating Democracy from the Bottom up*, "Washington Post", 05 October 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/10/05/direct-democracy-2/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ddc66b3f3e44].

33 *Authoritarian Right: Italy*, Corporate Europe Working Paper, 05 May 2019, p. 15, [https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/Europe%27s%20twofaced%20authoritarian%20right%20FINAL_1.pdf].

34 Altroconsumo has always influenced the EU directives against the use of antibiotics in intensive farming. Slow Food has made its voice heard in the GMO guidelines. Altronsumo claims to be 98.08% financed by membership fees and subscriptions. Slow Food, minimum costs of EUR 800,000 for 2017, receives EU grants for EUR 730,285, and the contribution of members is EUR 816,331. From the material of M. Gabanelli, L. Offredu, *Ue, 11.800 lobby per influenzare Commissione e parlamentari. I casi di corruzione*, "Corriere della Sera", 07 April 2019, [https://www.corriere.it/dataroom-milena-gabanelli/ue-lobby-commissione-parlamento-bruxelles-corruzione/547560ca-57d7-11e9-9553-f00a7f633280-va.shtml?refresh_ce-cp].

35 V. Petrini, *Autonomia si', ma solo per i ricchi [Autonomy Yes, But Only for the Rich]*, "Il Fatto Quotidiano", 07 February 2019, [https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/02/07/autonomia-si-ma-solo-per-i-ricchi/4954614/?fbclid=IwAR0S9L1HHw5rW0ARpNLyQXdhdPmK1Dt3RJ6dqpR6yD-fJmfSWa-Lh4dFbg0].

Conclusion: Pure Interests to Be Continued...

Paradiplomacy continues to be a flexible tool for regions and municipalities demonstrating the rights to conclude formal contracts and make impact on the EU decision making. Moreover, by bringing up the voices of regions and municipalities, it is convenient for the EU institutions as well to follow their own agenda in the negotiations with central governments evidencing that regional issues matter equally.

> **Paradiplomacy continues to be a flexible tool for regions and municipalities demonstrating the rights to conclude formal contracts and make impact on the EU decision making**

There is an impressive record of regional activities that Italy presents in the EU institutions. It is also becoming trendy and convenient for the Italian political leaders to follow some of the paradiplomatic issues while trying to adopt multiple identities suitable for further impact in the negotiations and influence in the regional and municipal elections. The benefits will be obviously fruitful. It also increases the level of reliance and support in various activities in the EU decision making. Regiocrats are also able to operate in various arenas linking up proper networking with power and resources. However, it still does not mean that the priority of the regional development will be of utmost importance. In such a situation, regions can be used in order to forward messages from national political leaders. It happens when the ruling government is trying to use these opportunities to gain more political benefits in the EU and at the national level.

Regions can still benefit from their paradiplomatic activities and "use the momentum" to become intermediaries for a wide range of actors willing to represent themselves within regional territories. "Molta carne al fuoco" ("Much meat on fire") would say Italians about this idea, meaning that there will be many more opportunities to benefit as well as many challenges ahead.

Victoria Vdovychenko, PhD, is an Associate Professor at Kyiv Borys Grinchenko University (Ukraine). Dr. Vdovychenko also serves as an Associate Expert at the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" and as a Team Lead at the Professional Government Association of Ukraine.

FROM "EUROPE OF THE REGIONS" TO "THE REGIONS OF EUROPE": DOES FRAGMENTATION IN THE BLACK SEA REGION MAKE THE EU SAFER?

Dr Sergii Glebov
Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University

European integration faces internal resistance at least for the past decade. Accompanied by a tremendous external pressure – from illegal flow of migrants to direct and indirect destructive "arrows" from the side of Russia (especially after 2013), the European political space found itself directly threatened by fragmentation. Analysing the case of the Black Sea region vis-a-vis the EU, the author argues that any disintegration in Europe at the regional level is threatening its security. Thus, the EU and its neighbours, in line with Europeanisation, have to preserve and continue to use all the mechanisms of inter-regional cooperation to keep them as protective security measures, not letting anyone to turn post-bipolar regionalisation into an instrument of division and conflict.

European integration with its inspiring spirit and promising ideas (even if idealistic to some extent) appeared to be a business card of the post-bipolar globalisation in Europe. As a pan-European process at the junction of geo-economics and geopolitics on the basis of the so-called "European values", it has passed different stages of manifestation and targeted various agendas simultaneously since the beginning of the 1990s. Beyond the initial enlargement of the European Union after Maastricht, the leaders of the EU on the way to a "New Europe" also tended to consider almost all non-EU European states, and not only the EU's particular neighbours but entire European sub-regions, e.g. around the Black Sea, as part of the on-going process of Europeanisation (which seems already forgotten by some).

The Black Sea region has been going through hard times since 2014, being if not a "Russian lake" yet (basically due to the enlarged NATO presence) but definitely the first post-bipolar region where the "Water curtain" between the democratic world and Putin's Russia has been remodelled to substitute the "Iron curtain" in just a quarter of a century after the latter was removed globally.

The Black Sea region started to reveal itself with the establishment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It appeared to be the first strong initiative in the region to unite countries that share regional interest and aim to turn the Black Sea into a zone of peace, stability, and prosperity. The *BSEC Declaration* with the *Bosporus Statement* of the same date, both adopted at the first Black Sea summit on 24 June 1992, have started regional cooperation for 11 countries which decided to consider themselves as the Black Sea states not only from the narrow geographical but also from

the functional point of view in the era of globalism. As Charalambos Tsardanidis, Director of the Institute of International Economic Relations from Athens, said, "For developing countries, like most of the BSEC states, participation in sub-regional and regional cooperation schemes alongside more developed and experienced states is a step towards integration into the broader global system. From this point of view sharing experience and mutual support from member countries in intraregional structures adds complementary elements to their development and helps them adjust to the competitive milieu of globalisation."[1]

New Europe or Europe of Regions

At the same time, the intention to construct the "New Europe" has never been the end in itself (as well as the post-bipolar regionalisation as a process), but meant to involve European countries in a democratic, secure, and cooperative process of Europeanisation strengthened by institutionalisation of their formal ties. It was the getaway from the "Old Europe". BSEC, the Baltic Council, the Visegrad Group, the Barents Sea Council, the Danube Basin Group, the Central European Initiative, the Euro-Mediterranean Initiative were established almost simultaneously and represented centres of transnational cooperation on sub-continental level in Central, Eastern, South-eastern Europe.

All of them were "genetically" supplementing the new structural concept of the sustainable European system of security and cooperation since the mid-1990s. This conception is also known under the title of "Europe of the Regions". It was elaborated in the middle of the 1990s by such analytical

locomotives of European regionalism as the Foundation for International Understanding (Copenhagen, Denmark) and the European Center for Ethnic, Regional, and Sociological Studies (University of Maribor, Slovenia). This conception proposed a way for a fundamental transformation of international relations in Europe: Each region (locality) would be present in or accessible to the whole of Europe (the world), and Europe (the world) with all its diversity would be present in each region (locality).

The "Europe of the Regions" concept has been seen as practical means for reanimation of Charles de Gaulle's well-known thesis of "Europe from Atlantic to the Urals", developed later by Eve la Coste's school of regional geopolitics, by the "New Right" with Alain de Benoist, who proposed the thesis of "United Europe of a Hundred Flags." All these concepts could be seen as integral parts of Europeanisation. All mentioned sub-regional structures were widely open for Europeanisation and represented one of the most fruitful fields for globalist tendencies and innovations. In this regard, "regionalism can be used also as a stepping-stone towards more global or multilateral relations. In deepening integration, and in proceeding with reform, new vested interests can be created through regional liberalisation. Reforms can be secured and if backlashes are feared, regional arrangements can be created to ensure that there are no reversals."[2]

In one of the main OSCE documents of the 1990s – in the *Helsinki Summit Declaration* of 1992, "The Challenges of Change," in which the concept of European development before the third millennium is articulated – one can read:

---

1   C. Tsardanidis, *The BSEC: From New Regionalism to Inter-regionalism?* "Agora Without Frontiers", 2005, vol. 10 (4), p. 366.

2   Ibid.

"These and the other forms of regional and sub-regional cooperation which continue to develop, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Visegrad Triangle, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative, multiply the links uniting CSCE participating States… The participating States welcome the various regional cooperation activities among the CSCE participating States as well as transfrontier cooperation and consider them an effective form of promoting CSCE principles and objectives as well as implementing and developing CSCE commitments."[3]

In this regard, post-bipolar regionalism in Europe maintained a wide panorama of features. It acted as both a process and a philosophical category. It was accepted by the states as an important cooperative instrument to solve common problems. On the one hand, this vision could be represented as a foreign policy philosophy of the states of one region. On the other, regionalism supplies countries of the region with concrete, practical directions of cooperation. As Michael Keating states,

the *"region-building bears a strong resemblance to nation-building, with its mobilisation of symbolic values and its selective use of history. The key difference is that in this case we are not talking of the construction of a state or the mobilisation of state powers and resources. Rather, it is a question of building a system of social*

regulation and collective action below the level of the nation-state, and lacking sovereign powers. This is being done in a context of globalisation and European integration, which place regions in direct contact with the global market and, to some degree, with European institutions."[4]

> ❝ **regionalism supplies countries of the region with concrete, practical directions of cooperation**

Underlining the importance of sub-regional structures in Europe with or without the involvement of particular EU members, one should take into account that the Black Sea region has been strategically addressed by the EU fairly recently – just since 2007, when the first two Black Sea littoral states became members of the EU. Formally, the EU's first "turn" vis-a-vis the Black Sea region was institutionalised with the adoption of the Black Sea Synergy initiative,[5] launched by the European Commission on 11 April 2007 under the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a materialisation of the EU's "consciousness" of its new presence on the shores of the Black Sea and the EU's "dual sense of responsibility and reliance".[6]

For the EU, this new stage of regionalism meant that being itself the geopolitical

3   *The Challenges of Change: Helsinki Summit Declaration*, CSCE, 09-10 July 1992,
    [https://www.osce.org/mc/39530?download=true access: 04 August 2019].

4   M. Keating, *Rethinking the Region: Culture, Institutions and Economic Development in Catalonia and Galicia*,
    "Territorial Politics in the Age of Globalization", ECPR Workshop: Regionalism Revisited, Mannheim, March 1999,
    [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5589/9d61b0980511254127123ed20f34f81bd635.pdf access: 03 August 2019].

5   *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM (2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007,
    [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf access: 02 August 2019].

6   B. Ferrero-Waldner, *Black Sea Synergy: The EU's Approach to the Black Sea Region*, Black Sea Synergy Ministerial Meeting, Kiev, 14 February 2008,
    [http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/08/77&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en access: 05 August 2019].

space, it came into touch with another geopolitical space, interacting and partly integrating it. Thus, the essence of the EU's Black Sea "regionness" (in Björn Hettne's meaning),[7] which was elaborated from just a regional policy into the entire Black Sea strategy, combined features of both internal integration and regional governance outside the EU at the same time. By the way and what later appeared quite symptomatic, in the beginning of October 2004 the former Austrian foreign minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner (anticipating one of the top positions in the European Commission at that time) stated that the EU must be interested at least to keep Ukraine on its side not to appear in the Russian sphere of influence, because Russia was going back in terms of democracy.[8] From the height of the year 2019, we may judge that all the events within the next 15 years, between 2004 and 2019, only confirmed that such a vision was accurate and applicable to the rest of the Black Sea region.

The EU Policy in the Black Sea Region

The EU's relationship to the Black Sea region was rather controversial from the very beginning. The key methodological puzzle for the EU policymakers was as follows: yes, indeed, the EU became part of the Black Sea region, while the Black Sea region did not become part of the EU. That meant that the EU's both Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Security and Defence Policy faced certain limitations in dealing with regional agendas to correspond to the EU's priorities fully. Having no direct jurisdiction over a major part of the region, excluding, of course, the territory of Romania and Bulgaria, the EU would have to face the alternative, even

contradictive regional approaches other Black Sea littoral states could have and pursue. It looked like to be "just part of the Black Sea region" was not quite enough to defend political, security, and economic interests and there were no guarantees they would not be threatened in the future due to the lack of power in outside regional governance mechanisms.

One should bear in mind that the EU, as a unique entity with certain features of confederation, had to be stuck in between national and international discourses on the European regionalism. Internal regionalisation inside the EU member states differs from the external one outside the EU, where the EU members cooperate with non-EU members at the level of Euroregions as well. In both cases, we acknowledge an inevitable appearance of multinational Euroregions in a cross-border cooperation framework. The principal difference is that the border regions of two or more EU member states at the top level are being regulated by *acquis communautaire*, while Euroregions, with the EU and non-EU members, are subjects to traditional intergovernmental agreements and/or respective multilateral agreements at the level of local authorities within their competences and under domestic and international regulations.

The effectiveness of the European regionalisation between the EU and the non-EU counterparts appears to be even less when it touches upon interregional cooperation with entire sub-regions. In the case of the Black Sea sub-region of Europe, one can find a multinational mixture of 12 BSEC members, which differ in size, economic capacity, and overall regional

---

7   B. Hettne, *Theorising the Rise of Regionness*, "New Political Economy," 2000, vol. 5, pp. 457-472.

8   Op. cit. S. Glebov, *The EU Policies Toward the Ukraine, [in:] B. Balamir-Coskun, B. Demirtas-Coskun (eds.), Neighborhood Challenge: The European Union and Its Neighbors*, Universal Publishers: Boca Raton, Florida 2009, p. 343.

and even global influence. The EU, with the assistance of a variety of conceptual approaches to the modern European regionalism basically connected to "conceptualization of the 'new regionalism' and accounts of the changing territorial structure of the state"[9], more or less has adopted internal European regionalism and its understanding. As Iain Deas and Alex Lord from the University of Manchester, making "attempts to interpret the resealing of governance and the reterritorialisation of the state" in the EU, pointed out, the current discussion on European regionalism is influenced "by the growth of interest in European spatial planning over the course of the 1990s" and is elaborated upon by "the array of new regional configurations which now extends across the territory of the European Union", in the context of which it is essential to understand "the degree to which readings of new regionalist rhetoric have informed both the creation and substance of a number of recently conceived regional entities".[10]

But the external regionalism in Europe is out of the EU's monopoly on understanding of its own "new regionalism" within the EU: Once the EU tries to join regional agendas outside its jurisdiction, it loses the monopoly on "new international regionalism" because of meeting new actors. It means that at the first stage of the EU's geographical penetration into the Black Sea region (where, let us recall, the EU is part of the region, but the region is not part of the EU), the EU must be interested in using as many mechanisms of regional governance that are in the EU's disposal at the moment as possible.

From that perspective, it was important for the EU policymakers to resolve the second part of the geopolitical puzzle in the region: to balance the relationship in order to have the Black Sea region as part of the EU to secure peace, stability, and economic cooperation for Europe. Recalling the already mentioned thesis on the controversial nature of the combination of the Black Sea region and the EU, the mission of the Black Sea Synergy at that time could be presented as a complementary instrument to the already existing bilateral policies towards the countries in the region. Its added value was that it was trying to "wrap up" the region into one system to construct a new single partner for the EU, a structured European sub-region with the Black Sea and shared values at the centre.

> **the mission of the Black Sea Synergy at that time could be presented as a complementary instrument to the already existing bilateral policies towards the countries in the region. Its added value was that it was trying to "wrap up" the region into one system to construct a new single partner for the EU**

On the one hand, it was not "the Commission's intention to propose an independent Black Sea strategy, since the broad EU policy towards the region is already set out in the pre-accession strategy with Turkey, the ENP and the

---

9 I. Deas, A. Lord, *From a New Regionalism to an Unusual Regionalism?* The Emergence of Non-standard Regional Spaces and Lessons for the Territorial Reorganisation of the State, "Urban Studies", 2006, vol. 43(10), p. 1847.

10 Ibid.

Strategic Partnership with Russia."[11] On the other, having Bulgaria and Romania inside the EU, the European Commission had to present an effective instrument to identify the western part of the Black Sea region as part of the EU. Elements of the European integration and, at the same time, outside regional governance could be seen in the proposed Synergy as a starting point for the EU and may be illustrated by another original extract from the document:

"What is needed is an initiative complementary to these policies that would focus political attention at the regional level and invigorate on-going cooperation processes. The primary task of Black Sea Synergy would therefore be the development of cooperation within the Black Sea region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union. This fully transparent and inclusive initiative is based on the common interests of the EU and the Black Sea region and takes into account the results of consultations with all Black Sea states".[12]

Common interests were the key to the Black Sea region for the EU. As Benita Ferrero-Waldner highlighted back in 2007, the EU had an intention to go deeper inside the most acute regional agendas: "The time is ripe to focus political attention at the regional level and invigorate on-going co-operation processes, opening an additional space for cooperation with Russia, Turkey and our eastern ENP partners. I am also hopeful that Black Sea Synergy will contribute to creating a better climate for the solution of the 'frozen conflicts' in the region."[13]

Especially in connection with the last concern in the sphere of regional security, one simply had no chance to underestimate a number of regional problems, threats, challenges all the neighbouring EU sub-regions include. Thus, speaking about Europeanisation and the Black Sea region after 2007 up to now, we are still not setting off two objects to confront each other. The Black Sea sub-system, to our mind, must be judged as a part of the wider European system of international relations, whether Russia wants it or not.

Moreover, the importance of the problems in the Black Sea region after 2014 forces us to speak about European insecurity, which finds deep roots in history and threatens stability of the whole Trans-Atlantic space. In this regard, it is only natural that the Black Sea region is an area of concern to the EU, the USA, and NATO as a strategically important component of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

Thus, alongside the heated debates over the future of security parameters in the Trans-Atlantic and directly in Europe in the 1990s, with the internal discussion on the essence of the EU's deepening and widening strategies in the 2000s, after the failure of the EU's initial constitutional process in 2007, and especially after the annexation of the Ukrainian Crimea by the Russian Federation and the Brexit saga, chances for European stability in the frame of the Europeanisation maxima from the side of the Black Sea became even more blurry than they were before.

11 *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM (2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007, [http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf access: 02 August 2019].

12 Ibid.

13 *Black Sea Synergy – Bringing the Region Closer to the EU*, European Commission Press Release Database, IP/07/486, Brussels, 11 April 2007, [http://www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/486&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en access: 06 August 2019].

Integration vs Regionalisation

Insofar as the Black Sea system has been inevitably falling apart especially after 2013, there are fewer chances left for the Europeanisation to succeed and keep the regionalisation in Europe on the integrative track on the basis of democratic values and shared security mechanisms with all actors involved. Not only has the Kremlin wanted to destroy European unity and to turn European regionalism into European separatism. There are destructive forces in Europe that tend to consider regional autonomy inside the EU and in some particular member states not as panacea against separatism but as a step toward fragmentation and further secession. As Frans Schrijver pointed out, "Promises that regional autonomy will bring an end to regionalism and separatism are matched by warnings or hopes that it will only push the country onto a slippery slope leading to fragmentation of the state and will be threat to national unity."[14]

That is not by chance, there was a huge fear and heated debate on the constitutional status of Crimea with its internal autonomy inside unitary Ukraine in the mid-1990s, which was treated by anti-federalists as a first step to secessionism (even if this fact had less influence on the annexation of Crimea by Russia two decades later). Nevertheless, that is why even today all the calls to grant and fix in the Ukrainian Constitution the autonomous status of Donbas region within integral Ukraine inside and outside Ukraine are dangerous to the Ukrainian statehood and undermine Ukrainian territorial integrity potentially due to the Russian on-going aggressive involvement.

There is a clear clash between globalism with its mechanisms of integration and regionalisation on the one hand, and fragmentation on the other. In the current international environment, regionalism may be also used by the apologists of fragmentation as a tool of anti-globalism and disintegration. Of course, globalisation can be perceived as an identical concept of denationalisation and desovereignisation. This approach well explains the relationship between globalisation and sub-national regionalisation: Both processes deprive the state of a part of its traditional sovereignty, and borders perform strictly separative, protectionist functions.[15]

Moreover, it provoked the appearance of the notion that regionalism bears a threat to state centralisation and national unity. The internal complexity of the regional mechanism of "harmonious combination" of national and international in a state was noted by Nikolai Mezhevich:

"An appearance of territorial subjects and regions at the international level caused the emergence of a form of international regionalism. Interstate regionalism is viewed from various points of view. As a rule, it is regarded as an element of modernization and progress. At the same time, regionalism is often recognized as a threat to the state, which carries the danger of fragmentation and separatism. In fact, regionalism differs in character,

---

14 F. Schrijver, *Regionalism after Regionalisation: Regional Identities, Political Space and Political Mobilisation in Galicia, Brittany and Wales*, Conference paper, 08 April 2009, [http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.518.131&rep=rep1&type=pdf access: 06 August 2019].

15 А. Макарычев, *Пространственные характеристики трансграничной безопасности: концептуальные контексты [Spatial Characteristics of Cross-border Security: Conceptual Contexts]*, «Безопасность и международное сотрудничество в поясе новых границ России», под ред. Л.Б. Вардомский, С.В. Голунов, 2002, [http://www.obraforum.ru/book/chapter1.htm access: 06 August 2019].

as well as in strength, and it is impossible to create a single model (or theory) that explains all options."[16]

If we do recognise the existence of a conflict between sub-national regionalism and the unity of the state, then Schrijver's abovementioned assumption that regional autonomy leads to the death of regionalism and separatism coincides with warnings that it puts the country on a "slippery slope", which leads to fragmentation and poses a threat to state unity, should be taken into deep consideration.

> **formally being part of geographical Europe, some of the regions, both at the national and international levels, are ready to use their centrifugal forces to fragment the previously integrated spaces**

Thus, we should be very cautious when speculation on regionalism may be weaponised by those eager to use it as a tool for not unity but separatism, disintegration, and fragmentation. At the domestic level, and coming back to the case of Ukraine, this thesis at least in theory seems to be relevant for this country, when strengthening of the regional autonomy of eastern or western Ukraine could be viewed through the prism of federalisation. At the same time, as we could judge now, it was external involvement, not decentralisation aimed at strengthening local communities with self-government authorities in the unitary state, which led to a split of the country.

Conclusion

Following this, the case of the Black Sea region as an integral part of Europe brings us to the fundamental trends and at the same time unresolved dilemmas (rhetorical questions so far) both in theory and in practice. They should be resolved as soon as possible for the sake of peace and de-escalation of the military tensions in the region.

Firstly, do such ideological concepts of a more speculative idea of the "United States of Europe" and a less elusive "Europe of the Regions", which were directed at the integration of many into one, give in to the opposite process? Insofar as the direction from many to one (to simplify Charles de Gaulle's vision of Europe "from Lisbon to Vladivostok") met its limits even inside the EU, one should notice a wave that is going to ruin even the idea of the United Europe at a theoretical level. Fragmentation on the basis of national interests, foreign policy preferences of domestic political elites, populism, economic rationalism, flirting with local marginal and nationalistic groupings, especially during election campaigns at all levels, egoism on the energy market, tolerance in response to violation of international law and even to military aggression – all this threatens the objectives of the process of integration on both the collective and cooperative levels; it leads to the failure of the mechanism of "new regionalism" which gave the post-Cold War world a chance to overcome all the shortcomings of the super-power dominance.

Thus, secondly, formally being part of geographical Europe, some of the regions, both at the national and international

---

16 Н. Межевич, *Основные направления региональной политики Российской Федерации [The Main Directions of the Regional Policy of the Russian Federation]*, Ч.1. Теория регионального развития: Учебное пособие. Современный регионализм: теоретическое содержание. С.-Петерб. гос. ун-т телекоммуникаций, 2005 [https://pureportal.spbu.ru/en/publications access: 06 August 2019].

levels, are ready to use their centrifugal forces to fragment the previously integrated spaces (united inside the country – by history and national governments or on the international arena – as a product of regional intergovernmental bodies). In any case, the ongoing fragmentation in the Black Sea region does not make the EU safer either. That means that the EU and those who do share European aspirations should get together and use European regionalisation as an instrument of not division of the European democratic space but of its unity.

Dr. Sergii Glebov is an Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of International Relations, Political Science, and Sociology at Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University, where he has been teaching a course on the Black Sea security. In 2000-2001, he was a visiting scholar at the Centre for European Studies, University of Exeter (UK) and in 2013 at Columbia University, Harriman Institute (New York City, USA). Glebov spent the academic year of 2018-2019 at the University of California, San Diego (USA) as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar with the School of Global Policy and Strategy. He published more than 60 scientific works on foreign and security policy of Ukraine, international relations in the Black Sea-Caspian region, European and Euro-Atlantic security, foreign policy of Russia, NATO-Ukraine, and EU-Ukraine relations.

MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE EU

Rostyslav Tomenchuk
Ukrainian Institute for International Politics

The article is dedicated to the issue of the EU macro-regional strategies, first of all the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), in a contrast to the classical transborder cooperation. The author pays special attention to the Ukrainian participation in the EUSDR, challenges and opportunities it presents for regional development, involvement in the EU projects, and better implementation of the Association Agreement. The author argues that macro-regional strategies are a broader and more flexible tool for cooperation, involving national coordination across countries, maximum involvement of central and regional authorities, and policy-making for regional development.

Macro-Regional Strategies in the EU: How It Can Work for Different Countries and Why It Is Not Cross-border Cooperation

The EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) are not such an old tool; still, those strategies are undergoing a continuous process of revision and improvement. A common policy initiative to address different issues between different countries in one region has always been in demand and varied depending on the countries' interest and willingness to cooperate. An important detail in the history of the MRS establishment was the fact that it is not about the number of joint projects but a harmonious development and cooperation of the EU member states in different regions. In our view, the singularity of the instrument is the invention of the EU common policy for the EU member states in one geographical region in order to reduce imbalance between countries and to enhance the participation in the formation of macro-regional policy, to strengthen cooperation between the countries, to involve the local level, and to effectively implement the common policy of the European Union.

The first official EU macro-regional strategy was the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which was adopted in 2009.[1] This event was preceded by several years of communication between different countries in the region to formulate a common agenda and goals that the participants intended to achieve. The EU Strategy for the Danube Region was launched in 2010[2], comprising 14 countries with different economic, social, and demographic indicators. The EU Strategy for

---

1   *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, European Union*, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/baltic-sea/ access 10 August 2019].

2   *EU Strategy for the Danube Region, European Union*, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/danube/ access 10 August 2019].

the Adriatic and Ionian Region (2014)[3] and the latest EU Alpine Strategy (2015)[4] were later launched.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region

The Danube Strategy is a unique example for both Ukraine and the EU, which is based on the best experience of the Baltic Sea Strategy. It was an attempt to enlarge the format and to add non-EU countries and EU candidates. As a result, in 2010, the EUSDR included 14 countries (Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria – EU member states; Croatia and Montenegro – EU candidate countries; Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, and Moldova – non-EU members). Obviously, it was not easy to count on fast results of a common policy, but in the end, the EUSDR was supposed to be a pilot initiative and could be the best tool for integration and cooperation between different countries in the region.

In such situation, the work could be significantly complicated, in terms of both management and measuring the obtained results, as the difference between the economic and social development of the participants was more than obvious. Prior to that, countries that joined the EUSDR were more interested in bilateral relations with their neighbours and were not always interested in what was happening in the region as a whole. The EUSDR format also opened up opportunities for the Western Balkans to cooperate with the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova)

and the EU member states, in particular in the Black Sea region (Romania, Bulgaria).

The EUSDR has identified four pillars of cooperation. In total, 12 thematic priority areas (PA) were formed, each coordinated by two EUSDR member states[5]. In addition, an institute of National Coordinators (NCs) was set up, which ensured the presence of a representative in the government of each participating country who coordinated the country's participation in the EUSDR implementation and jointly made decisions with the counterparts from other countries.

> **The Danube Strategy is a unique example for both Ukraine and the EU, which is based on the best experience of the Baltic Sea Strategy. It was an attempt to enlarge the format and to add non-EU countries and EU candidates.**

In this context, it is up to each country to determine at the government level which ministry will be responsible for national coordination and how to organise internal communication among different ministries. In the organisational component, macro-regional strategy has one unique feature: Each of the 12 EUSDR Steering Groups consists of representatives of the profile ministries of the 14 countries, which are constantly in contact and meet 3-4 times a year for the implementation of jointly defined targets and actions. In our view, this

---

3 *The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, European Union*, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/adriatic-ionian/ access 10 August 2019].

4 *The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, European Union*, n.d., [https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/alpine/ access 10 August 2019].

5 *EU Strategy for the Danube Region, European Union*, n.d., [https://www.danube-region.eu/ access 10 August 2019].

is one of the important points of the MRS, which enables joint policy implementation in the region at the operational level of ministries from the EU countries, the EU candidates, and non-EU states. In this way, the countries go beyond the usual policies, where the national interests are at the centre and when all other initiatives are repelled by the fact that they do not coincide with the national policy.

Customary cooperation in the form of bilateral relations and cross-border cooperation between neighbours has grown into a more global cooperation, increasing opportunities for harmonious development in the Danube River region with the 14 participating countries. For non-EU countries, this opportunity is perhaps the only one for a comprehensive involvement of central executive bodies working together with the EU countries in a joint implementation of a regional development policy.

Participation of Ukraine in the EUSDR

Unfortunately, in the early years, Ukraine's participation in the EUSDR was passive, and there was no political understanding of how this instrument could work effectively (at that time, Ukraine had not signed the Association Agreement with the EU yet and the visa-free regime was not introduced).

Despite the establishment of the Coordination Centre for the Implementation of Ukraine's participation in the EUSDR at the national level, composed of profile deputy ministers under the leadership of a profile deputy prime minister, the task of the centre was to select and approve projects to be funded by the EU in Ukraine. This approach proved to be erroneous, since the EUSDR did not provide automatic support for the projects selected by the Coordination Centre. In addition, such a structure was unparalleled in any other country of the EUSDR, and this did not contribute to synergy and a common understanding of the region's development.

Instead, structural components of the EUSDR were distributed as coordinators of thematic PAs among the countries participating in the strategy without Ukraine and several other countries. A similar situation also applies to projects under the Danube Transnational Program (DTP)[6], where non-EU members could only participate as associate members without their own budgets, and, only in the case of ratification of the DTP agreement, they could count on a partnership role in the projects.

Since 2015, when NGOs became involved in promoting reform in Ukraine and joint initiatives were formed between governmental institutions and the expert community, a reboot in the internal governance and communication system for the Ukrainian participation in the EUSDR has begun. The institute of the National Coordinator was restored; communication with the network of the EUSDR NCs was established.

Attracting other profile central executive bodies to participate in the EUSDR priority areas was the most difficult task. This was due to the fact that the participation and fulfilment of the EUSDR tasks were not stipulated in the government's priority action plan, neither in the action plan for the implementation of the Association Agreement, nor in the plans of the relevant ministries. If there is a need to take into account the implementation of a policy, the availability of tasks in the internal documents of the ministries is obligatory for practical work at the level of governmental structures.

---

6 *Danube Transnational Program*, European Union, n.d., [http://www.interreg-danube.eu/ access 10 August 2019].

Since 2017, there has been an increase in the participation of profile ministries in the work of the EUSDR PAs, in particular the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Energy and Coal, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, and others. Ukraine has resumed its participation in several Steering Groups of the EUSDR and has begun to analyse the implementation of the EUSDR policy in Ukraine. That year, the issue of the importance of Ukraine's coordination of one of the priority areas and the readiness of Ukraine for its EUSDR presidency were raised.

The implementation of all initiatives in the macro-regional strategy for Ukraine is an important reputational and reform component for the country itself. There are two options: to be a member just nominally or to use all available opportunities for cooperation. Often, in non-EU countries where the institutional component is weak, such opportunities are perceived as an additional burden. It is important for Ukraine and other non-EU members to be aware of new opportunities as a window that speeds up European integration processes and builds a decent foreign policy. Issues such as chairing the EUSDR or coordinating working groups are, of course, an additional burden, but also additional opportunities for greater integration into the common space and improved perception of the non-EU countries.

At a first glance, it may seem that the added value of accumulating resources to participate in the initiative, which includes only Odessa, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Transcarpathian regions, may have a small impact, but most policies are still formed at the governmental level. The implementation of the EUSDR in Ukraine can have many additional positive integrational instruments. Most policies in the EUSDR require implementation of the same EU directives as the implementation of the AA,

resulting in an effective use of the existing EU programmes and instruments provided to Ukraine in the Eastern Partnership format and, in general, of the European integration processes. For example, if we talk about cooperation between universities, academics, students, and the preparation of joint projects in the EUSDR without the use of the Horizon 2020 projects, the reform of higher education as a whole, and the fulfilment of Ukraine's obligations under the Association Agreement, the tasks of the EUSDR will not be effective.

The identification of innovative priorities for the regions (Smart Specialization) could also be an example. When looking for partners and jointly prepared projects, our regions do not have clearly defined innovative priorities, which undermines

> **The implementation of all initiatives in the macro-regional strategy for Ukraine is an important reputational and reform component for the country itself**

their ability to achieve clear results. The EUSDR tasks do not spell out that Ukraine must develop Smart Specialization, but there are tools that will not work without Smart Specialization. Smart Specialization itself is part of the implementation of the Association Agreement.

A similar situation is in the field of culture and tourism, where priority is given to the formation and construction of cultural routes within the EUSDR. Ukraine is working to join the Council of Europe's cultural routes, which will in the future enable it to participate in the development of the EUSDR cultural routes.

Another unique feature of the EUSDR for Ukraine is the ability to put into practice

the benefits that are enshrined in the AA. In practice, it is an opportunity to use the same tools, management system, and programmes that work for the EU members. For example, the ESPON programme[7] (a system for monitoring and evaluating the development of territories with different indicators from GDP to technical assistance indicators and projects) used to work for the EU member states. Last year, it was decided to use the ESPON project opportunities for the EU macro-regional strategies. Thus, the tool, which was previously closed for Ukraine, will analyse four Ukrainian regions. In order not to have white spots on the map of Ukraine, we will need to establish internal coordination between several central authorities and the State Statistics Service, as well as to clarify information with the regions. Regional development monitoring, including socio-economic and various projects' impact, needs to be introduced in Ukraine, and it does not depend on participation in the EUSDR. Launching the EU methodology of ESPON in four regions of Ukraine could serve as a pilot for further implementation in other regions.

Internal Coordination of Ukraine's Participation in the EUSDR

The issue of internal communication and organisation of work is a challenge in every country. According to the EUSDR NCs, all participants in the macro-regional strategy have gone through horizontal mid-level procedures, and this can only be difficult for the first year or two. As Ukraine is only on the initial path to joining the EUSDR practice, it will take some time to clarify the specifics of management, communication, correspondence, and joint decision-making.

Horizontal communication at the central and regional levels is a challenge for Ukraine.

As for the central level, it should start with a responsible structure at the Ministry for Regional Development, Construction, Housing, and Communal Services of Ukraine, which has a task to coordinate the work of all stakeholders in Ukraine and to ensure active presence of Ukraine in all EUSDR processes. In practice, this component is not always implemented quickly. The reason for this is the lack of management capacity and the structure of intergovernmental communication.

The Government Office for European and Euro Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, while implementing the Association Agreement, also faced such a problem. The capacity of the Governmental Office was much stronger as a unit of the Cabinet of Ministers and in cases where the implementation of the AA was determined as the government's priority with a responsible vice prime minister. It is a big challenge to organise systemic work due to the fact that the EUSDR is not as popular as the Association Agreement and only few regions in Ukraine are directly involved, as well as to coordinate this work by a vice prime minister whose mandate did not include European integration – the VPM responsible for Economy and Development is in charge.

Regarding the regional level, the situation is also not simple. Only Ukraine from all the 14 countries has a limited number of regions directly involved in the Strategy. Given this geographical feature, central authorities should ensure additional, special communication with Odessa, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Transcarpathian regions in order to implement the Danube Strategy. Ministry-level tasking in Ukraine to achieve the strategic objectives will require policy development and monitoring of indicators only in specific regions, leaving other regions of Ukraine to be of lower

---

7   *ESPON*, European Union, n.d.,
    [https://www.espon.eu/ access 10 August 2019].

concern. Other countries do not have such a feature, and in practice, this may be characterised by less dialogue with the regional level. Therefore, to some extent, the Ukrainian feature may be an additional advantage for better establishing internal mechanisms of coordination of joint actions.

On the other hand, the implementation of the EUSDR's targets at the government level in Ukraine is not only a task but also an ambitious pilot project, as the qualitative results, methodology, best practices can be disseminated in the future to other Ukrainian regions. If normative documents, instructions, or digitalization in the field of navigation, environmental risks control, or security are developed at the national level through the EUSDR tools, they may also be applied in other regions. This will be an opportunity to install communication between the national and regional state authorities and local self-governments. Establishment of vertical communication in different regions will allow achieving greater results in other initiatives in the future and will increase stakeholders' involvement in the regions in the process of forming the national regional development policy and implementation of the Association Agreement.

It will be appropriate to take into account the objectives of the EUSDR Action Plan in the strategies for regional development for the next 2021-2027 period, which should be approved by the end of 2019. Some of the objectives or operational goals of the EUSDR may have limitations at the national level, but in this case, they will include steps that need to be taken in the regions for their implementation. Introducing the EUSDR targets in regional strategies will open up the possibility of synchronizing the priority tasks of regions, increasing added-value chains, and combining own financial resources with national and external ones. This approach will help the regions to track their goals and indicators, evaluate their performance,

and map out their own needs and potential achievements. At the same time, Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes, COSME, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, the Danube Transnational Program will also work effectively as they will be enhanced by internal resources and national funds.

> *Only Ukraine from all the 14 countries has a limited number of regions directly involved in the Strategy. Given this geographical feature, central authorities should ensure additional, special communication with Odessa, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Transcarpathian regions in order to implement the Danube Strategy*

In general, we face similar challenges in internal communication as other EUSDR countries. EUSDR meetings usually do not gather all participants from all countries, which obviously obstructs the task performance by all partner states. In particular, it is often the situation with non-EU and EU candidate countries. This is due to the lack of sustainable work of various governmental institutions and horizontal communication.

As for Ukraine, the solution to this issue will be facilitated by:

• designation by the National Coordinator of a responsible body for the implementation of the Association Agreement or a responsible structure within the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine that have experience in AA implementation and can ensure coordination of the actions of the various central executive authorities;

• identification of responsible specialists in the regions (State Regional

Administrations and Regional Development Agencies) who will coordinate work on specific priority areas at the regional level and ensure constant communication with all interested stakeholders in the regions;

- integrating the implementation of the objectives of the EUSDR Action Plan into the Government's Priority Action Plan and the annual work plans of the ministries;

- inclusion of the EUSDR Action Plan targets into the Action Plan on the implementation of the Association Agreement;

> **" *macro-regional strategies are a broader and more flexible tool for cooperation, involving national coordination across countries, maximum involvement of central and regional authorities, and policy-making for regional development***

- organising quarterly meetings under the guidance of the NC, with the participation of representatives of the central executive bodies, regions, expert community to discuss the dynamics of the EUSDR Action Plan implementation;

- improvement of the revised EUSDR Action Plan in Ukraine.

Cross-border Cooperation and Macro-Regional Strategies (MRS)

Often, MRSs are compared with the EU cross-border cooperation programmes. This opinion is often found both in the expert community of Ukraine and among the representatives of authorities at different levels. We have analysed the features of both tools and cannot confirm such identification. In practice, there are more differences than similar features.

To some extent, macro-regional strategies are a broader and more flexible tool for cooperation, involving national coordination across countries, maximum involvement of central and regional authorities, and policy-making for regional development. Cross-border projects are, to a large extent, a programmatic financial instrument to reduce imbalances in the development of border territories, to improve mobility, and to build infrastructure. Cross-border cooperation programmes are one of the possible and important sources of financial support for projects that can be implemented within macro-regional cooperation.

The similarity in the perception of these two concepts is also maintained among other countries of the EUSDR, where many initiatives use MRSs to support the implementation of their cross-border projects, and such a process does not help to support macro-regional cooperation. It can only work if a certain idea is developed for the implementation of a task in the MRS, but it cannot replace it. Accredited MRS projects bring together the best practices from different countries, not only at the border area, but also to promote cooperation in a wider region.

The Danube River has a large range of countries that are affected by the basin, but in practice countries are not always interested in the situation in other countries that do not border them. Finding common goals and realising common goals can have a greater effect than several financially viable projects across borders in several countries.

Rostyslav Tomenchuk *is the Head of the Board at Ukrainian Institute for International Politics. He also serves as a Coordinator of the Political Group at the EU–Ukraine Civil Society Platform. In 2017-2018, Tomenchuk was an Advisor to the Minister of Regional Development of Ukraine on interregional cooperation and macro-regional strategies.*

HOW CAN CHALLENGES BE TRANSFORMED INTO OPPORTUNITIES — LOWER DANUBE EUROREGION CASE

Florentina-Natalia Budescu
Association of Cross-border Cooperation
"Lower Danube Euroregion"

In this article, the author analysed an algorithm of successful cooperation: 20-10 – the 20th Lower Danube Euroregion anniversary and 10th ACTEDJ anniversary. Twenty-one years passed since the Euroregion set up, which included eight members – public administrations from Braila, Galati, and Tulcea (Romania), Cahul and Cantemir (Moldova), Odessa and Reni (Ukraine), with a total geographical area of 53,460 km^2; it benefited a community of four million inhabitants and implemented a project portfolio of over 500 million Euros in development funds. These projects have been dealing with issues of connectivity (rehabilitation of roads, airport infrastructure, etc.), tourism, health, cultural and economic development, and one common executive management structure was set up in 2009: the Association of Cross-border Cooperation "Lower Danube Euroregion" (ACTEDJ) with its headquarters in Galati, Romania.

Integration or Fragmentation?

Following the next natural step of strengthening the existing cooperation in what was called a "challenging area", the Lower Danube Euroregion (EDJ) saga started on 03 July 1997 in Izmail, when the leadership of Romania, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine gathered to sign the *Declaration Concerning the Trilateral Collaboration*, based on the *Treaty Regarding the Relations of Good Neighbourhood and Collaboration between Romania and Ukraine and the Declaration Regarding the Promotion of the Cross-border Cooperation among the Local and Regional Authorities from Romania, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine*. On 14 August 1998, the *Agreement of the Euroregion Creation* was signed in Galati by seven public administrations. From the Romanian side there were Galati, Braila, and Tulcea Counties, from Republic of Moldova – Cahul and Vulcanesti Districts, and from Ukraine – Odessa Region and Reni District. The Lower Danube Euroregion was set up. The work started, focusing on identifying common challenges and designing common solutions, building knowledge, and setting up a European road, as a sustainable solution for the future. A joint task force was established, gathering experts from all three states, with expertise in different fields and experience in interaction.

Cooperation started, common projects for development were implemented, but still, especially after 01 January 2007, when Romania became an EU member, and there has been a palpable need for something

more, a structure that would act as a catalyser of growth in the region, using the existent capabilities built since 1998.

EU membership provides broad opportunities. European funding, European shield, and also the European "status quo" are key elements. Is it possible to keep sustainable growth using just these opportunities? Among the members of the Lower Danube Euroregion, there was still a compulsory need in terms of understanding, legislation structure, ownership and responsibility assumed when using the European funding. At the end of the day, a constant effort was needed for building a "mind set" and a certain "way of doing business".

> **The Lower Danube Euroregion, although a mix of opportunities, is a proof that neighbourhood can be transformed into an effective tool for reaching sustainable growth**

EDJ aims at building sustainability, putting in the same "boiling pot" all that makes us different and all that makes us similar, the result being a specific "dish" that can be served and will serve everyone at the same time and also everyone individually. Therefore, EDJ represents a proof of how specificity can be integrated and not lost in a wider, common development strategy in a neighbourhood area.

What Is the Added Value of Euroregions?

The Lower Danube Euroregion, although a mix of opportunities, is a proof that neighbourhood can be transformed into an effective tool for reaching sustainable growth. After 21 years of cooperation, EDJ development is still a natural process that made it possible to establish the Association

of Cross-border Cooperation "Lower Danube Euroregion" (ACTEDJ), a nongovernmental organisation, with headquarters in Galati (Romania). Its members are those who founded EDJ in 1998.

Why set up ACTEDJ? A simple answer is that it was the right time to have a "common" management structure of EDJ, which would be able to not only consolidate the stakeholders in the region but also acknowledge itself as one of the stakeholders. One of the added values of the Euroregion will be creating a perfect setup for sustainable partnership to reach the next level, to empower stakeholders in accessing specific tools (funding, partnerships, etc.) that would build reliable bridges.

Another advantage was a "contamination" effect: development was a catchy "disease" and sustainable development was even more so. We are able to learn from the best practice, but we are certainly also able to learn from "bad practice". Hence, the possibility of sharing knowledge, building partnerships is certainly an added value. "We are as strong as our neighbours", although often found in public discourse, is not just a saying; it is the simple truth. Partnerships are often guided by just a need, but in the case of EDJ partnerships, although the need is the precondition, strategic development is also present, just because vicinity is a factor. Therefore, *strategic* and *sustainable* are the words that represent the precondition for EDJ partnership.

Should Regions Be Stronger or Should National Governments Control Them?

The EDJ case does not match any of these answers. Its structure is self-governed, and goals include the following:

- sustainable development of its members,
- integrated development cross-border cooperation,

- promotion of the private and public investments and provision of access to resources,
- continuous improvement of the transport and communication infrastructure,
- development, modernisation, and improvement of public services,
- development of cross-border tourism and the third sector,
- efficient and integrated administration of the existent potential of EDJ,
- development of strategies, programmes, and studies, including the thematic ones, with cross-border impact,
- favouring of the social, educational, and cultural integration actions for the inhabitants from the cross-border area, etc.

Management of EDJ is assumed by ACTEDJ. Romanian national law governs the NGO functionality. ACTEDJ was set up because EDJ was not able to entirely capitalise the opportunities provided by the European funding that appeared since 2007. There also was a need to have clear and specific liability rules that would be enforced in the case of attracting European funding. The goal of ACTEDJ is to support sustainable development of the public administration units that form the association, through widening the cooperation between its members and the development of advantageous relations within the context of the common interest domains.

EDJ and ACTEDJ are actors in the Back Sea region, which is often characterised as one of the most "volatile" but at the same time one of the most promising in terms of opportunities for growth. A new strategy for the Black Sea Region is currently being developed, shaping the context in which EDJ and ACTEDJ will grow. The question of how EDJ can become stronger, in our case, has an easy answer: ACTEDJ as designated executive management will have to become

stronger by using all the opportunities to create a "professional business card" that will combine the right words: professionalism, accountability, responsibility, community, green, etc.

> **EDJ projects started with cultural identification, followed up by environmental concerns and then economic development, as a natural line for sustainable growth**

A community of over four million inhabitants, governed by three sets of national legislation and rules, following the European and other actors' rules for funding, is compelled to find its own identity and act as one. Therefore, the term "control" is perceived mostly as structural self-control by establishing and enforcing a commonly agreed set of rules that will guarantee further development.

What Do Stronger Regions Mean?

The stronger EDJ becomes, the stronger its established values are. The feeling of belonging will also become stronger, creating common actions as a response to common challenges, enhancing common opportunities, and raising the sentiment of solidarity. Providing common solutions for sensitive issues, such as the rule of law, good governance, participation, human rights, environment, connectivity, safety, health, education, etc., will enable all stakeholders to be active and also to learn how to "actively hear" the other side, be it a representative of public or private sector.

Learning not only by doing but also by seeing and feeling has a great potential. EDJ projects started with cultural identification, followed up by environmental concerns and then economic development, as a natural line for sustainable growth. ACTEDJ projects were built on this foundation,

bringing together public and private sector, focused on the same goal: sustainable growth. ACTEDJ acted as a beehive of sustainable initiatives, therefore building trust between actors that are usually apart (especially public and private sector, both profit and non-profit).

Although ACTEDJ members are represented by public administration units from Romania, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, one-third each, the decisions are made by consensus; therefore, EU membership is not a decisive factor for this cooperation. At the same time, the fact that some members are originated from the EU member states gives a "wild card" for accessing different opportunities. ACTEDJ members will have access to both EU and non-EU funding opportunities, both being integrated parts of the strategic development plan, with EU funding being complementary to the national development opportunities and other actors' development offers.

Florentina-Natalia Budescu is the Director of the Association for Cross-border Cooperation "Lower Danube Euroregion" since 2009. With experience of over 16 years in developing and implementing international-, EU-, and national-funded development projects, holding different positions of leadership in the national- and international-based NGOs (President of Federation of Romanian NGOs for Development [http://www.fondromania.org/en] and Vice-president of UPIR [http://www.danube-ports.ro/]), Mrs. Budescu holds a Master's degree in Environmental Management and Monitoring and university degrees in both Public Administration and Law from the University "Dunarea de Jos" Galati.