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SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTION AT THE SYSTEM OF INFORMATION SERVICE FOR TRANSBORDER COOPERATION

This paper analyzes the factors that cause the necessity to intensify empirical sociological research of cross-border cooperation (CBC) at new Eastern EU border. Article considers the main aspects in sociological reflection of cross-border processes, there are proposed its definitions. Substantiates the notion of "information service system of cross-border cooperation", examines the functions of empirical sociological knowledge for informational provision of modern cross-border phenomena management.

Keywords: *cross-border cooperation, empirical sociological research, sociological reflection, information service.*

With the direct access to the European Union's border with Ukraine in Europe was real, objectively conditioned strategic interest in non-conflict and the evolution of its Eastern neighbor as a whole and contact its border regions in particular. The problem is that Ukraine now is to use this interest in full.

Undoubtedly, the EU enlargement to the East has created as many serious complications and uncomfortable events, first in the communication space. The introduction of strict visa regime leads to difficulties in communication of the people, particularly those with family ties as well as those who are united in national, cultural and religious identity. There are acute problems in economic activity, unemployment among disadvantaged populations of border regions.

Criminal phenomena such as illegal migration and smuggling goods have not disappeared, they acquire new ones, often more subtle forms.

This requires adequate response by management subjects on both sides of the new Eastern border of the EU. Public authorities and local self-government bodies in order to solve the encountered problems are making efforts, which bring certain positive effect.

However, it is surprising how little attention is paid to maintaining feedback with main subjects of transborder processes – inhabitants of border areas, with those who have been first of all affected by geopolitical changes and above all – to studying their opinions, moods, assessments.

Lack of “alternative” to official information brings about the sequence of interrelated problems. Management bodies often make specific decisions without full, balanced and reliable information, based on one-way bureaucratic assessments by one or another institution. As a result, these decisions prove to be not effective. In turn, non-effective decisions down the line do not solve problems, arising imperceptions, and rejection of those by population. More than that, it happens that they provoke new complications (one example is occasional conflict situations at the border between border staff and citizens).

Therefore, establishment of feedback, getting “alternative” information about border functioning is a most important condition of transborder cooperation optimization. It is possible to solve this main problem only with the help of special methods of opinion survey available in sociology.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the problems of specific sociological reflection of cross-border reality in Central - Eastern Europe and ascertain the place of sociological component in modern information system of cross-border cooperation

The concept *"sociological reflection of transborder processes"* means:

- a) analysis of the formation and development of the specific sociological knowledge about the phenomenon of "transborder" and
- b) research of techniques and methods used in empirical sociological knowledge of this social reality important phenomenon.

In what state is actually sociological reflection of cross-border processes?

First, consider the activities in this area of the European Union.

Known that the study of public attitudes in this association has been authorized state structure, called the Eurobarometer. ***Eurobarometer*** (Eng. Eurobarometr) - International Project of regular opinion polls carried out under the auspices of the European Commission [1]. One of the main partners of Eurobarometer is a group Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) - the world leader in market research "in order" [2].

Analysis of the Eurobarometer published over four decades and especially in recent years (after the EU enlargement to the East) materials show that, unfortunately, none of them are special studies border issues, especially those devoted to cross-border processes at the new Eastern border of the European Union. Only one study, conducted in 2006 dedicated to the study of the effects of EU enlargement in the form of tangent and raised some issues of borders and the functioning of the modern development of border regions.

It is quite surprising, because outside of due care was a layer of critical problems that cause persistent debate in the European Union (first of all it is - the problem of migration and security). For comparison, another agency of the European Union, which is responsible for Statistics - Eurostat - in recent years very actively and purposefully engaged in development issues of quantifying cross-border processes ("cross-border statistics"), first at the new Eastern border of the EU. [3] This problem particularly was dedicated to Pan-European Conference leaders of statistical agencies and researchers, held in Cracow in 2011. Definitely, European leaders developing cross-border statistics issues is Polish scholars and practitioners led by Professor Joseph Olensky, who has long been a head of the Polish Statistical Office.

In one way or another social research issues of border and cross-border cooperation were also conducted separate countries that not long ago joined the European Union and Ukraine are neighbors. It refers to Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Poland.

Concerning Ukraine, the problems of border and cross-border processes, of course, could not fail to interest of our sociologists. Even back in 1988 in Uzhhorod State University was established one of the first in Ukraine laboratory for sociological studies, which

actively engaged well known today Ukrainian sociologists, in particular PhD, associate professor of Uzhgorod National University O. Palin and Doctor of Social Sciences, Senior Researcher at the Institute of Sociology in NAS of Ukraine, Director of Social and Political Studies "SOCIS" O.G. Stegnij. Laboratory also was assist by Doctor of Social Sciences, Senior Researcher, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, CEO of TNS Ukraine M.M. Churylov. Laboratory has gained certain material impact on cross-border processes of interethnic and interfaith relations in the border region.

Unfortunately, very limited resources prevented conduction of complete research on border issues.

The second, more successful attempt to make such a study was done in 2007. Then the newly created Institute for transborder cooperation initiated the pilot survey "New Eastern Border of the European Union: the issue of transparency, security and cross-border cooperation (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine)". This study was performed under the direction of the candidate of sociological sciences, Professor P.V. Tokar [4].

To organize this research have been involved research centers, governmental and non-governmental organizations, local governments, foundations and NGOs – about 10 institutions in four countries - participants of the project (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine).

The results of this study provide rich information about the current state of cross-border cooperation between these countries, comparative analysis of the level of development, evaluation of consular and border services. However, unfortunately, this study also was limited both by time and financial resources.

Certain aspects of the modern cross-border cooperation are reflected in other Ukrainian sociologists study conducted at central and regional levels, not only in the Western but also on the Eastern border of Ukraine.

Significant opportunities for large-scale and comprehensive work on sociological reflection of modern cross-border processes

open the project "Borders through the eyes of people", performed by the Institute for transborder cooperation and its partners within the frameworks of EU ENPI CBC Programme in Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine.

Overall objective:

Form sociological service of transborder cooperation of neighboring regions of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine

Specific objectives:

1. Set up International Center of Sociologic Analysis of Transborder Cooperation (ICSA), as a special mechanism of joint monitoring of transborder processes which secures reliable feedback between transborder cooperation management bodies and its direct participants – population of neighboring regions of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.

2. Build capacity of transborder cooperation actors in the sphere of sociologic analysis and efficient use of its results, in particular:

- develop special methodology and tools for the sociologic research of transborder cooperation
- develop training package “Sociology of transborder relations” for its introducing in higher educational institutions of border regions of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine.

3. Conduct initial international sociologic survey of transborder cooperation of neighboring regions of Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine and submit it to decision makers

Project implementation period: 06.2012 - 05.2014.

Applicant: Institute for transborder cooperation, Uzhgorod, Ukraine

Partners:

- KIUT Association for Regional Development, Zahony, Hungary,
- Transcarpathian State University, Uzhgorod, Ukraine.

*Concrete sociological reflection of transborder processes and practical use of the information obtained is part of **the system of information service** for transborder processes (e.g., transborder cooperation).*

System of Information Service (SIS) for transborder processes is the system that provides the perform of the obtaining function, the input or the collection, storage, retrieval, processing, transfer and practical use of information on genealogy, current and forecasted progress of modern transborder processes (including CBC).

System of information service has its own *architecture*, which can be viewed through the prism of different criteria. In terms of composition the SIS *is a set of elements (blocks)*:

a) informational, b) technical, b) software and organizational support, and d) staff.

Development of the System on information service for transborder cooperation should be done by mutual efforts of CBC subjects from different countries.

***The Institute for transborder cooperation and its partners** provide contribution to the development of SIS.*

Laid methodological and methodical basis for fruitful *information and analytical work*:

- The system for indexation and monitoring of transborder processes, including transborder cooperation has been developed;
- The methodic on practical use has been developed;
- The pilot implementation of this system has been launched via conducting the index monitoring of transborder cooperation at neighboring regions of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine.

It is encouraging that the developed product immediately had find practical use in other segments of the new Eastern border of the European Union.

One of the first attempts at practical implementation of methodology for indexation of CBC was done within the frameworks of the project "Index of CBC - informing interested in parties." This

project was implemented in 2010-2011 under the auspices for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway. [8] Another experience of the methodology for indexation of CBC application was gained as a result of the Polish-Russian project, entitled "Let's consider the borders", implemented in 2011-2012 [9].

In November 2012, at the third European Forum on Cross-Border Cooperation in Chisinau (ITC, as it is known was a co-organizer) were presented the results of another project "Cross-border cooperation at the new Eastern border – learning from the Finnish and Norwegian experience", implemented under the methodology of comparative analysis in order of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland [10]. Institute for transborder cooperation performed a comparative analysis of the borderland between Ukraine and the European Union.

Very important area of information and analytic block in service of transborder cooperation is a *cross-border statistics*. The issues of *"Modern transborder processes and its statistical layout"* are in active development. This work is carried out within *the project "Better knowledge - better cooperation"* under financial support of Visegrad Fund.

Information block on genealogy of the object has two directions:

1) Development of the "Essays on the modern history of cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian region" by the international team of authors which will be presented at web-site of the project "Connecting history" (Visegrad Fund).

2) Establishment of the International Museum of Modern History of cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian region - both on-line version and exposition.

Launched the implementation mechanism for application of theoretical developments - International Institute for transborder analysis and management. Development Strategy of the Institute and its Statute have been approved.

Its organizational structure is under construction. Due to financial resources of the project the issues of logistics and software have been resolved.

Prepared the Informational resource (IR), without which transborder business communication of subjects is impossible.

Prepared the project on development of "The Dictionary of transborder cooperation" in 8 languages (English, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech, Polish, Romanian, Moldovan) and "Glossary of transborder cooperation" in 8 languages.

Strong interregional expert community (more than 40 highly qualified specialists from among scientists, government officials and representatives of local self-government, NGO activists from different countries) was formed.

Thus, there is a reason to state that the information service system for cross-border cooperation is gradually formed.

To summarize, we can obviously make the following main conclusions.

1. The unit of specific sociological information should be an integral part of the system of information service for transborder cooperation because without establishing a reliable and systematic "feedback" between managing subjects and population, the effective cooperation of the neighbouring regions is being impossible.

2. In this system specific sociological component should perform two main functions:

- a) *function of generation of an adequate, comprehensive and complete information* about the needs and interests of people which they represent in their assessments of the processes occurring at the border and around it;
- b) *function on management adjustment*, which mean fullest consideration of these assessments in the preparation and adoption of appropriate management, above all, political decisions.

3. While, specific sociological provision is an "Achilles heel" of the system on information service of transborder cooperation. I am confident that our mutual work on the project "Border through the eyes of people" would provide concrete sociological knowledge, as it should be an important element of the theory and practice of modern transborder processes in Europe.

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