

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

CIVEX-V-011

**87th plenary session
1-2 December 2010**

**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on
LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN UKRAINE AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND
THE EU**

Rapporteur: **Mr István Sértő-Radics (HU/ALDE)**
Mayor of Úszka

Reference document

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. states that the opinion on Local and Regional government in Ukraine and Development of Cooperation between the EU and Ukraine (CdR 34/2007) is still topical: all of the policy recommendations are valid. However, given the developments which have taken place over the last few years, the section on EU-Ukraine relations needs to reflect the current state of affairs;
2. notes that following the events which led to the Orange Revolution at the end of 2004, Ukraine has pursued an agenda of ambitious reforms to ensure that democracy and the market economy are rooted firmly in the country and that Ukraine is brought closer to the EU; takes note nonetheless that these reforms are still in a fragile state of development;
3. welcomes the negotiations which have been opened on the EU-Ukraine Association Agenda to prepare and facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement. Welcomes the proposal to set up an institutional platform to facilitate the consultation of senior officials at the EU and in Ukraine, as part of the ongoing negotiations on the Association Agreement, but regrets that currently no provision has been made to ensure the same level of consultation among cross-border and regional stakeholders involved in cooperation, and therefore invites the European Commission to establish a similar institutional platform committee for EU and Ukrainian local and regional authority representatives;
4. recommends that, with practical help from the European Commission, and in compliance with the Association Agenda signed by the EU and Ukraine, the Committee of the Regions could draft a framework agreement on cooperation with local and regional authorities in Ukraine and EU Member States; this agreement could provide a basis for cooperation between local and regional authorities in EU Member States and their counterparts in Ukraine;
5. welcomes all appropriate EU measures to support the development of Ukraine and the establishment of effective administrative structures and also welcomes any appropriate initiatives to support the autonomous development of political and economic cooperation in the country. Recalls in this respect the opinion on Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative (CdR 155/2007) and sees the involvement of Ukraine in the creation of the Black Sea Euro-region as a good example of cross-border cooperation;
6. welcomes the fact that the ENPI envelope for the Ukraine under the NIP included EUR 494 million in the period 2007-2010 to support the key policy objectives of the Association Agenda, and an indicative financial envelope of EUR 470.1 million to support cooperation activities in Ukraine in the period 2011-2013, based on a European Commission decision of March 2010. In addition to the bilateral allocation, Ukraine also participates in four ENPI CBC programmes, with the overall allocation of EUR 401.163 million for programmes in the

period 2007-2013. However the Committee of the Regions stresses the importance of coordinating the different initiatives and programmes and linking up existing Community programmes, projects and instruments in order to avoid duplication of activities and ensure efficiency and progress of cross-border cooperation programmes between the EU and Ukraine;

7. reiterates the importance of cross-border cooperation programmes and emphasises the bottom-up approach required to identify and develop partnerships and ensure the dissemination of results to other local government authorities in Ukraine, as stressed in the opinion A strong European Neighbourhood Policy (CdR 134/2008);
8. welcomes the ongoing dialogue on visa issues and calls on Ukraine and neighbouring Member States to consider the options for facilitating trans-border traffic (joint border controls, waiver of visa obligations for people who live in border regions). In so doing, care should be taken not to encourage illegal immigration into the EU;
9. underlines the importance of the new development of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) under the European Neighbourhood Policy and recalls the need to develop forms of closer cooperation with countries involved in the Eastern Partnership as explained in the opinion on The Role of Local and Regional Authorities within the Eastern Partnership (CdR 78/2009). Recalls the need to add a "territorial" approach to the Eastern Partnership, and therefore urges the potential partners to reach a multilateral agreement which would enable the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) to function in Ukraine as it does in the EU, and enable the Council' s of Europe Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (ECG) to function in Ukraine;
10. notes that Ukraine could be the first EaP country to conclude negotiations on the Association Agreement and that the Eastern Partnership provides an opportunity to deepen relations between the EU and Ukraine. For the implementation of the EaP Initiative at the sub-national level, the following issues need to be addressed in the work of the thematic platforms:
 - Decentralisation and administrative reforms;
 - Capacity building of local and regional authorities and their administrations;
 - Developing forms of sustainable cooperation with partner country local and regional authorities as well as their national associations of local authorities;
 - Supporting local and/or regional cross-border projects;
 - Promoting confidence-building programmes, encouraging cultural, educational and research exchanges and twinning cooperation on a broad range of justice, liberty, security and migration issues;
 - Giving a mandate to sub-national governments to engage in international/European projects and contacts;

11. awaits with interest the implementation of the next stage of the Ukrainian Administrative Reform Plan, with particular emphasis on the competences of local and regional authorities, fiscal decentralisation, and territorial reform. Understands that decentralisation in Ukraine remains patchy, and therefore supports the strengthening of administrative capacities and good governance in the country, focusing on the following issues:
 - Fully harmonising Ukrainian legislation in line with the European Charter of Local Self Government;
 - Giving more responsibilities to sub-national governments;
 - Ensuring regional administration is a semi-independent level of Government;
 - Promoting financially independent regional and local self government;
12. underlines the importance of developing democracy, good governance and stability, and cooperation between partners at local and regional level. Additional funding is required for pilot regional development programmes to address local needs for infrastructure, human capital, and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), in line with the model of EU cohesion policy;
13. highlights the fact that the Committee of the Regions has an important role to play in disseminating experience and best practice (including TAIEX and SIGMA and other bilateral projects) to the local and regional authorities in Ukraine with the aim of supporting properly funded, better managed and more accountable regional and local public administration which will operate in a spirit of transparency, inclusiveness and efficiency;
14. welcomes the fact that the finals of Euro 2012, the UEFA European Football Championship, will be hosted jointly by Poland and Ukraine, and highlights the opportunities for regional cooperation provided by the event.

Brussels,

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Local and regional government in Ukraine and the development of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU
Reference(s)	
Legal basis	TFEU 307(4)
Procedural basis	Rule 39b and 42 of the Rules of Procedure
Date of Council referral/Date of Commission letter	
Date of Bureau/President's decision	8 June 2010
Commission responsible	Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)
Rapporteur	Mr Sertö-Radics (HU/ALDE), Mayor of Uszka
Analysis	12 May 2010
Date of discussion by the Commission	12 October 2010
Date of adoption by the Commission	12 October 2010
Result of the vote in the Commission	Majority
Date of adoption by plenary session	Scheduled for 1-2 December 2010
Previous Committee opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Opinion of 11 October 2007 on "Local and regional government in Ukraine" (CdR 34/2007¹)– Opinion of 22 April 2009 on "The role of local and regional authorities within the Eastern Partnership" (CdR 78/2009²)– Opinion of 9 October 2008 on "A strong European Neighbourhood Policy" (CdR 134/2008³)– Opinion of 7 February 2008 on the "Black Sea synergy initiative" – (CdR 155/2007⁴)– Opinion of 14 April 2005 on the Communication from the Commission – European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Paper COM(2004) 373 (CdR 336/2004⁵)

¹ OJ C 305, 15.12.2007, p. 20.

² OJ C 200, 25.8.2009, p. 31.

³ OJ C 325, 19.12.2008, p. 87.

⁴ OJ C 105, 25.4.2008, p. 46.

⁵ OJ C 231, 20.9.2005, p. 58.