

Cooperation between EU cities and regions with their Ukrainian partners



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The development of territorial cooperation between European and Ukrainian local and regional authorities (LRAs) is an important step toward Ukraine's membership in the EU. In 2022, Ukrainian cities had more than 1,000 twinning agreements with foreign partners, while authorities at the regional and district levels had signed nearly 350 such partnerships. The importance of cooperation with European LRAs, which accounts for more than 70% of such agreements, especially in the context of the Russian invasion, is constantly growing.

EU-UA territorial cooperation at glance

The current geopolitical situation can be considered as a chance to strengthen cooperation between EU and Ukraine.

Key lessons from this study include:

- **The involvement of Ukrainian LRAs in the activities of European organisations comprised of cities and regions is relatively low.** To a greater extent, Ukrainian cities and regions have participated in Euroregional cooperation. Its importance is evidenced, among other things, by the creation of the first European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) on the external border of the European Union.



The study

presents the benefits of and barriers to the collaboration between European and Ukrainian cities and regions and shows the role of the EU in supporting such territorial cooperation. It suggests solutions that can promote cooperation and strengthen the capacities of Ukrainian self-governments and development of civil society in Ukraine.

- **The cooperation of Ukrainian cities and regions with European partners is best developed in neighbourly relations,** which is influenced, among other things, by cultural proximity. Therefore, twinning agreements were signed mainly with cities and regions located in Central and Eastern European Countries, esp. in Poland.

- **The territorial cooperation of**

Ukrainian cities and regions was very strongly differentiated regionally. Significantly more twinning agreements were concluded by LRAs located in the western and central parts of Ukraine, while, cities and regions located in the eastern part of

- **European funds are important for the development of cooperation between European and Ukrainian cities and regions, although so far primarily in border areas.** About EUR 370 million were allocated for the Cross-Border Cooperation programmes that covered Ukraine in the 2014-2020 programming period, which allowed the implementation of about 270 projects with Ukrainian partners worth 240 million EUR. In contrast, the possibility was limited for Ukrainian partners to participate in transnational cooperation programmes, as only four regions of Ukraine were covered by the Danube Transnational Programme.
- **The benefits of territorial cooperation between cities and regions in EU-Ukraine relations include both intangible effects, such as building institutional capacity, knowledge sharing, and**



community building and trust, along with tangible effects related to infrastructure development and improved service provision to residents. At the same time, this cooperation faces a number of barriers – apart from the current one related to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine – including those related to the legal-administrative, institutional, and socio-cultural spheres.

- **The existence of partnerships between cities and regions has facilitated the provision of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression,** and the development of this cooperation can provide a basis for supporting Ukraine's post-war reconstruction, as well as for strengthening the administrative capacities of Ukrainian LRAs and supporting civil society in Ukraine.

Policy Recommendations

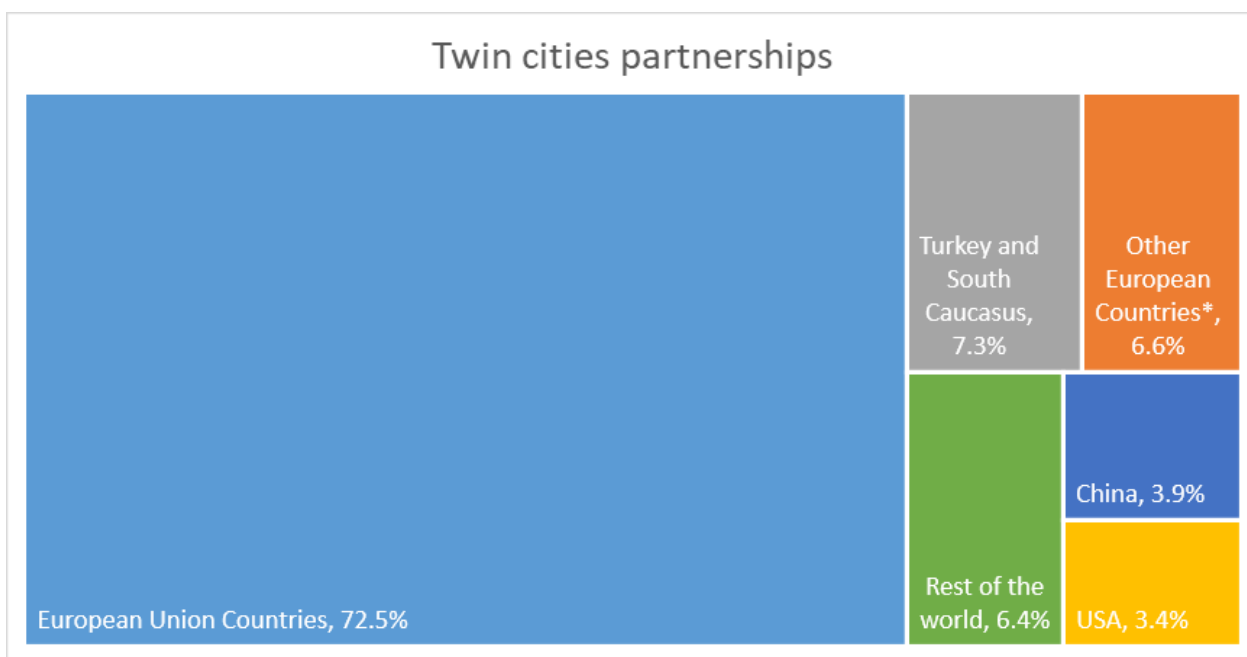
The following policy recommendations can be proposed at the strategic level:

- support existing and new twinning agreements between cities and regions of EU countries and Ukraine
- the development of territorial cooperation with Ukrainian local governments operating in the

eastern part should be pursued, also with the involvement of LRAs from more EU countries than hitherto

- strengthen Ukraine's transnational cooperation and enable Ukrainian stakeholders to participate in European interregional cooperation programmes
- the coordination of ongoing territorial cooperation should be supported, including the search for synergies between trans-border and horizontal EU programmes
- continue efforts to break down the various barriers to territorial cooperation, especially those of an administrative and legal nature (e.g. twinning and TAIEX), institutional (e.g. transparency and the rule of law), as well as socio-cultural (e.g. youth exchanges, foreign language skills)
- adequately address the role of local governments and territorial cooperation in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction programmes.

Geographical orientation of cooperation between Ukrainian cities and foreign partners, 2022



Source: own elaboration.

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