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Asociación de Regiones Fronterizas Europeas (ARFE)
Association des régions frontalières européennes (ARFE)
Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
Comunità di lavoro delle regioni europee di confine (AGEG)
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To the kind attention of
Mrs. Irina Gerashenko, MP
First Deputy of the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada
Kiev, Ukraine

Berlin, 6th June 2016

An appeal of Mr. Martin Guillermo-Ramirez General Secretary of AEBR to the participants of the Parliamentary Hearing on "Transfrontier Cooperation as driving force for European Integration in Ukraine"

Dear the First Deputy of the Speaker, Mrs. Irina Gerashenko!
Dear Participants!

Let us welcome you and this initiative on behalf of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the oldest pan-European organization, at the Parliamentary Hearings on the Development of Cross-Border Cooperation in Ukraine.

AEBR exists since 1971 and during that time has implemented a number of initiatives and models of cross-border cooperation in all corners of Europe. Therefore, we are very pleased and honoured receiving the invitation to take part in the Hearing. Unfortunately, the celebration of our Executive Committee meeting in Cottbus (Germany) does not make it possible for me to stay today with you, but I would like to share the following words with you, dear colleagues.

In our opinion, the effectiveness of reforms in Ukraine depends very much on a targeted regional policy, the result of which should be decentralization and competitiveness of all regions, without exception. Border regions play a special role in Ukraine; and their development may have additional benefits for the whole country in terms of integration and globalization. From our point of view, what can be obtained in border regions, it can also be successfully implemented in the inner regions.

We consider border as a source of opportunities and added value for border areas and everyday life of local communities. Therefore, over the last 20 years we have supported the initiative of Ukraine at the regional level to form a continuous network of Euro-regions along the perimeter of its state border.

We are also promoting their development to the successful integration with the European Union through our experience and also some practical steps. We follow the dynamism of the Euroregion Dniester, the commitment of the Odessa Region, the involvement of Ivano-Frankivsk and Zakarpattia in the strengthening of the Carpathian Euroregion, the support of Kharkiv institutions to the AEBR InfoCentre, and many other Ukrainian organizations and institutions which add every day their efforts to achieve the European ideal.

Nowadays it is very important to create a positive image of Ukraine as a country in the EU and in the West; a country on the path of democratic reforms and the establishment of a competitive market economy. It is critical to make this process irreversible and, in a short notice, to implement the resource potential included in the current European programming period 2014-2020 regarding human capital, geographical location, and transit functions.

We support many interesting initiatives of our Ukrainian partners. For example, we believe the initiative of the publishing house "European Platinum Standard" "Formation of information space of the European integration of Ukraine» to be in the right time. The concept of this project which will focus on border regions has been prepared jointly with the AEBR Task Force on EU External Borders. We hope that this project will be supported at the level of the central authorities of Ukraine.

But, above all, we are interested in the intensification of cross-border cooperation in Ukraine and we will do our best to promote it.

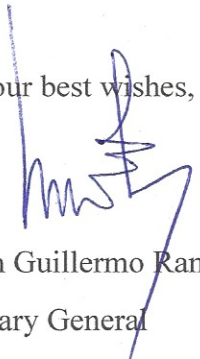
Dear friends!

Numerous challenges that some European countries have faced alone cannot be solved without cooperating together. The latest events in the EU related to the affluence of refugees, terrorist attacks and deterioration of economic situation have proved this situation: there is a need to common action, joint approaches to shared challenges, and this very much evident in border areas.

Ensuring normal functioning of national boundaries, in the front of these challenges, with the appropriate combination of security and cooperation, and maximizing the benefits of cross-border interactions and collaboration, should lead us to the overall success of Ukraine's European integration.

We wish all participants a very successful work!

With our best wishes,


Martín Guillermo Ramírez
Secretary General

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On 17th and 18th June 1971, ten European border regions set up a Standing Conference of European Border Regions at the Anholt Castle (EUREGIO, Westphalia)