



**CEI Workshop “Vital Challenges for Transfrontier Co-operation
on the new EU eastern border”**

Chernivtsi (Ukraine) –Suceava (Romania), 8-9 May 2006

CHAIRMAN’S SUMMARY

The CEI Workshop was held on 8 – 9 May 2006 in Bukovina Region (Euroregion “Upper Prut”) on the premises of the “Porubne-Siret” - the main Ukrainian-Romanian border crossing check point, in Suceava County, Romania, and in a sequence of working sessions in the National University of Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

The event was organised by the State Scientific and Technical Centre “EcoResource”, Chernivtsi Regional State Administration, Councils of the Chernivtsi Oblast and Suceava County under the aegis of CEI and the support of the Ukrainian and Romanian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, International Renaissance Fund and Municipality of Chernivtsi.

The Agenda of the Workshop is relevant to the following provisions of the CEI Plan of Action for 2004-2006:

IV.1. Cross-border Co-operation and Local Development

IV.1.1. Promoting and spreading knowledge about the advantages of interregional and cross-border co-operation and demonstrating best practices in this field

IV.1.2. Building a network of co-operation for a “horizontal” flow of experience and know-how.

The Workshop was attended by the representatives of the CEI Member States from Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine at the level of State Administrations and local Self-Governments, Municipal Authorities, Ministerial

Departments, Embassies, business and private entrepreneurs, scholars from the research, academic institutions and high schools, NGOs, international organizations - CEI Executive Secretariat, Association of the European Border Regions and Carpathian Convention and mass-media (the list of participants is enclosed).

The Agenda included the following items:

- ✓ *Core issues of modern Transfrontier Co-operation of the European Union*
- ✓ *Transport and Border Infrastructure*
- ✓ *Economic, Small and Medium Size Entrepreneurship development*
- ✓ *Sustainable Spatial Development and implementation of the Carpathian Convention*
- ✓ *Resurfacing of the common socio-cultural heritage*

The workshop was organized in plenary sessions and a parallel sectional work of thematic groups.

The plenary was opened by welcoming note of Dr. Z.Broyde on behalf of the host organization and presided by the CEI ES Deputy Director General Mr. M.Melenevsky.

The contributions made by the Head of the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration prof. M.Tkach, Vice-President of the Council of Chernivtsi Oblast Mr. T.Gutsuljak, Vice-President of the Suceava County Council S.Acatrinei, representatives of Romanian MFA Ms. I.Gligor and of the Ukrainian Ministry of Economy Mr. O.Yefremov, pro-rector of Chernivtsi National University prof. O.Ushenko, have underscored the importance of the event in the context of the plans of eventual expansion of the European Union and its relevance to the regional development. In particular, they underlined that:

- the event is the first CEI exercise of this kind organised in the territory of Ukraine and so far on the East, and hopefully will become one of its traditional activities very soon;
- the Workshop is a logical continuation built upon the main issues of transfrontier co-operation discussed at the 6th Meeting of the Parliamentary Committee “EU - Ukraine”, which took place exactly at this place in September 2003, that were also

reflected in the Resolution of the European Parliament: “Wider Europe - Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours” of 20 November 2003;

- one of the main tasks now is to restore the role of the border area, which will come to be a new EU frontier very soon, as a trade route and cultural bridge connecting East and West as well as between the South and the North of Europe;
- it brings the necessity for the CEI Member States to put their continuous efforts in order to make that EU borders do not rest too long at the existing line as well as to expedite the translation of the 26-years experience of the Madrid Convention (1980) into new European/Transfrontier Grouping of Territorial Co-operation;
- with this purpose the most important task would be to bring together the collaboration of all the international actors concerned like EU, CEI, CoE, NATO, UN, WBRD, EBRD, GEF as well as Carpathian Convention, Danube Program etc under the umbrella of EU Priorities of the Neighbourhood and Partnership.

The keynote speakers were the Secretary General of the Association of the European Border Regions Dr.J.Gabbe, the CEI-ES DDG Mr. M.Melenevsky, the Director of the “EcoResource” Centre Dr. Z.Broyde, Deputy Ambassador of Poland to Ukraine Mr. R.Kovalczuk, Program Manager of the Interim Secretariat of Carpathian Convention (UNEP) Mr. P.Sandei.

The speakers revealed an active role played by the CEI, in particular by its Working Group on Interregional and Cross-border Cooperation operating since 2001 under the Polish presidency and co-chairmanship of Hungary, as well as of AEBR and other European Institutions, analysing the experience of almost 50 years of transfrontier co-operation and development, the process of the Madrid Convention and relevant new documents for its continued operation.

Considering the EGTC as would be the new legal instrument in the neighbourhood and partnership policy in the context of the European cross-border and interregional co-operation, it was emphasised that the EGTC is an important instrument for

territorial co-operation (cross-border, interregional and transnational), particularly at regional/local level. It appears that national States do not need an EU regulation on EGTC as they are authorised to conclude treaties by themselves. Thus, for instance, it affects the Carpathian Convention and the possible co-operation of mountainous areas in Europe as a whole. According to the enclosed definition Euroregions are intended for cross-border co-operation. The EU defines it as „co-operation of directly neighbouring regions along a border“.

In case that the EGTC is approved, it would apply directly to all EU Member States and not to the third countries, since the EU can pass a regulation effective in its territory only. However, third countries might join or apply this legal instrument in the neighbourhood and partnership policy by means of concluding a treaty with the EU or adapt their own laws.

The Madrid Outline Convention of the Council of Europe and its additional protocols offer appropriate framework. First of all, this framework is to be filled by bilateral/trilateral application agreements, and building upon those Euroregions and similar structures would be able to elaborate their special agreements and statutes with their further submission for approval.

Under the general framework of the new EU Neighbourhood Programs and the Carpathian Convention, the bilateral and multilateral Euroregions and other transfrontier structures existing in the region along and outside of the new EU eastern border, in course of their further development should meticulously combine the existing European experience and legal framework with their own approaches, models and concrete solutions. For models one can take the Law of Ukraine “On Transfrontier Co-operation”, the pilot status of the Euroregion “Upper Prut” as an example of “the experimental elaboration of transfrontier co-operation mechanisms as the elements of the European integration process and development of the regional policy” as well as the model of EcoEuroRegion for Sustainable Spatial Development in the border rivers basins of Carpathian-Danube area.

The Section of “**Transport and Border Infrastructure**” opened its panel to the following key speakers: Mr.V.Bondarenko, the representative of the Ukrainian Ministry of Transport & Communications, General M.Salagor, Chief of the Vadul-Siret Custom, Mr.O.Ene, Romanian Consul in Chernovtsi, Mr. M. Lenkov, Ukrainian Consul in Suceava and Dr. Z.Broyde Director of Centre “EcoResource”. Their statements concentrated on the study of current situation and potentials for development of transit corridors across and along the new EU eastern borders for free flow of trade, energy, cargo and passenger transportation, security challenges and other relevant issues important both for the EU Member and their Neighbouring Non-Member States operating in this area. In this regard, in particular, the importance of the Conclusions of the EU High Level Group of L.de Palacio of 30 November 2005 was stressed.

The conclusions exposed the need of joint investments into border infrastructure on the part of the both boundary countries as well as on the part of the EU Programs and Funds in order to amend the existing imbalance between this infrastructure and growing traffic passing through the border at “Porubne-Siret” and the “Vadul-Siret — Vicsani” railroad, modernising its equipment and staffing with skilled manpower. They also revealed problems in the sphere of visa regime and border control, solution of which need crucial legal, organisational and financial innovations, though some progress has been achieved.

In this regard the participants positively noted the importance of the Joint Protocol signed at “Porubne - Siret” on 28.01.2004 by the representatives of Chernivtsi, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts of Ukraine and Suceava County of Romania (acceded later by Volyn Oblast as well), aimed at concentration of common efforts for win-win realisation of their potential, stressing on the development in the associated sectors (i.e. tourism and recreational activity).

The issues of reorganisation of the border infrastructure and efficient realisation of the existing EU border transit potential in the framework of the new Trans-European transport axes prompted active discussion partaken by the Secretary General of the AEBR Dr.J.Gabbe, Romanian Ambassador in Ukraine Mr. T.Hristea, Deputy

Ambassador of Poland in Ukraine Mr. R.Kovalczuk, Program Manager of Interreg, Director of the Hungarian Public Non-profit Company for Regional Development and Town Planning (VATI) Mr.A.Baranyi, Albanian representative Ms.T.Kaso and representatives from Local Authorities. Based on the recent experience of the new EU Member States; the speakers focused on the most efficient, low-expensive and reliable way of infrastructure modernisation, removing non-physical obstacles that impede the process of European integration. They suggested concluding a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as conducting feasibility studies for a step-by-step realisation of regional connections scheme aligned to the TEN priorities that were fixed, in particular, in the CEI Ministerial Declaration “Toward Sustainable Transport in the CEI-Countries” of 25.06.1997.

The Section of **“Economic, Small and Medium Size Entrepreneurship development”** was substantially contributed by representatives from the Ukrainian Ministry of Economy Mr. O.Yefremov, Chief of the Main Economy Department of Chernivtsi Regional State Administration Mr. M.Maljarchuk, Moldavian State University of Belts prof. A. Balinschi (International Association “SmallEuroBusiness”), the Head of the Chernivtsi Regional State Foundation for Business Support Mr.M.Buzynskyy, Chief of Division of the Chernivtsi Regional State Administration Dr.P.Bryzhak and the President of the Regional Chamber of Commerce Mr. V.Ljakhovich.

The speakers have considered possible mechanisms of collaboration and concrete “mirror” projects on the cross border co-operation, maintaining on the main obstacles and actions to be taken in this regard by the involved partners under the support of the EU Programs and CEI. One of the NGO representatives made critical remarks on the poor situation of the existing infrastructure on the Ukrainian of the border area and the lack of transparency of some state structures operating in the sphere of tourism.

The second day of the Workshop that was held on the premises of the National University of Chernivtsi was continued by the Section “*Sustainable Spatial Development and implementation of the Carpathian Convention*”.

The session was opened by the intervention of Mr. P.C.Sandei (Program Manager of the ISCC-UNEP), who deliberated on the substance of the Carpathian Convention as a continuity bridging from the Alpine Convention to the European Mountain Convention. He also informed on the activities of the Convention’s current Interim Secretariat in Vienna, which is organized in the framework of the UNEP and future Permanent Secretariat, which will be placed in the territory of a Convention Member State. Mr. Sandei also made a presentation of the Study conducted by the ISCC on the Scope of application of the Convention.

Dr. O.Kiryukhin, who is the Deputy Director of the State Scientific and Research Institute for Environmental Problems in Kharkiv, Ukraine, and Chief of the Executive Secretariat of the Council of the Heads of 13 border Regions of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, deliberated on the value added of the Sustainable Spatial Development by translating its principles into transfrontier co-operation within the context of Ukrainian-Russian Euroregion “Slobozhanshchina”.

Prof. B.Boenchan, the State Institute of Selection from the Belts State University, explored on the use of the “Organic food” in rural areas of the border regions and biodynamic approach in the main agricultural and associated economic sectors as a basis for the Sustainable Development.

Prof. L.Vlasic, Director, State Institute for Medico-Environmental Problems, Chernivtsi Medical University, informed on the activity of the State Environmental Monitoring Support System and its finding useful for the regional development and transfrontier co-operation concerning the aspects of human health.

Dr. Z.Broyde delivered a general information on the aims, objectives and project activities of the EcoEuroRegion as a new model for Sustainable Spatial Development in the border rivers basins of the Carpathian-Danube system, that received a positive

evaluation at the Bucharest Summit entitled “Environment and Sustainable Development in Carpathian-Danube Region” of 29-30 April 2001.

The further discussion that followed the possible link between the above mentioned activities and EU Neighbourhood Programs, other international facilities for transfrontier co-operation was participated by the representative of the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment Ms. N.Fyshko, the Heads of the Regional State Environmental Departments in Chernivtsi Oblast Mr. V.Sivak and in Suceava County Mr. I.Cocrish, as well as the Romanian Ambassador in Ukraine Mr. T.L.Hristea.

The participants of the parallel Section “*Resurfacing of the common socio-cultural heritage*” listened to the reports delivered by Prof. V.Fisanov, National University of Chenivtsi, and Dr. S.Hacman, Politology Centre of Bukovina, on the topic starting from the period between the First and Second Wars and ending by its implementation in the pilot Euroregion “Upper Prut”, the EU Neighbourhood Programs. Contribution on encouraging civil society engagement into the transfrontier co-operation was also made by Ms. I.Solonenco, Director, the European Program of International Renaissance Fund.

They have considered crucial changes that occurred in the multicultural field of the former Bukovina Land during the XX century like “wash-out” of the Polish, Jewish and German stratum, the proposals on the establishment of the Carpathian Cultural Forum, a closer involvement of NGO sector in the structures of Euroregions and Neighbourhood Programs.

At the conclusion of the Workshop the organisers, representatives from the CEI ES and International Renaissance Fund gave a joint press-conference attended by the Workshop participants, representatives of mass media, Regional NGOs etc. that was conducted in the Chernivtsi Press-Club on the premises of the City Hall of G.Drozdovski.

Concluding remarks.

During the work of the Workshop its participants have expressed the following main opinions as regards the follow up action:

- to reiterate the efforts on the proposal made by the CEI CBC Working Group in 2002 as regards elaboration of the Declaration on Transfrontier Co-operation to be adopted by the CEI SEF;
- to make a bridge between the ENPI main objectives and tools and the Network of Euroregions in the area of the EU new eastern border;
- to establish win-win links between the EU Cohesion Instruments and EGTC/TGTC approaches and the Transfrontier Activities in the area of the EU new eastern border;
- to find the mechanisms for a closer multilevel collaboration between Carpathian Convention, EU Neighbourhood Programs and other European and International Structures, which have common interests in the area of the EU new eastern border.

The results of the Workshop and contributions of its participants will find their reflection in the brochure to be published soon by the organizers as a part of this project.