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**Local Dimensions of a Wider European  
Neighbourhood: Crossborder Relations and  
Civil Society in the Hungarian–Ukrainian  
Border Area**

**The Case of the EUDIMENSIONS Project**

**by**

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## 1 Introduction

With the concept generally known as Wider Europe, the European Union has mapped out an ambitious vision of regional Neighbourhood that goes beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of integration. Furthermore, the EU sees this new quality of regional interaction and partnership as bringing enormous gains to all involved in terms of increased stability, security and well being.

The EUDIMENSIONS (Local Dimensions of a Wider European Neighbourhood: Developing Political Community through Practices and Discourses of Cross-Border Co-operation) research project, financed under the European Union 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, priority 7, chapter 4.2.1 (New Borders, New Visions of Neighbourhood), has sought to map and analyse crossborder cooperation and political contact-building between the European Union and neighbouring states, with a special emphasis on the development of civil society, economic interaction and the specific issue of gender in the crossborder relationship network. Cross-border cooperation in this respect has been understood as subject to changing political constellation and rhetoric, involving considerable tension between inclusion, or “Neighbourhood” (the European Union’s efforts to integrate its wider neighbourhood in various forms of political and economic partnership) and exclusion, or “Fortress Europe” (the increasing securitisation of Europe’s external borders in order to protect the community from unregulated flows of goods and people). The conflicting images of Wider Europe have had their effect on governance, but also individual citizens, whose attitudes and views have provided a more ground-level understanding of how bordering shapes interaction between communities previously closed off from each other, and now hindered in their daily interactions by rigid border crossing regimes.

EUDIMENSIONS is based on the cooperation of eight research groups involved in border studies, altogether responsible for the preparation of nine specific case study pertaining to crossborder regions along the EU’s current eastern (and in the case of Morocco–Spain, southern) external border. Coordination and the preparation of a final synthesis report has been the responsibility of the lead partner, Leibniz Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS, Berlin), represented by James W. Scott. The project has addressed the following specific objectives:

- To better understand the implications of new European geopolitical contexts for crossborder civil society interaction;
- To analyse civil society co-operation processes, the multilevel contexts within which they operate and the role of the EU in conditioning these relationships within the Neighbourhood;

- To investigate the extent to which meaningful forms of conflict prevention, problem-solving and collective action are emerging at the EU's new “outer edges”;
- To understand how social knowledge and power can be mobilised as positive resources for regional co-operation and development (e.g. in terms of good practices);
- To understand how the integrative role of the EU can be enhanced within the wider “Neighbourhood” through discourses, policies and supporting measures.

Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has been responsible for research on the Hungarian–Ukrainian border area, with a broader outlook on the geopolitical implications of Ukraine's European integration processes and political contact-building since independence. It has been necessary to consider the historical, cultural, demographic, ethnical, economic and legal aspects of crossborder relationships not just with regards to Hungarian–Ukrainian state relations, but also the specific characteristics of Transcarpathia, a special multicultural region bordered by four new EU member states. Eight topics were subject to research:

- European Union and national policies and practices allowing and regulating cooperation;
- The extent of internal integration within the border area, social participation;
- The extent of external integration, relations towards the national and European level;
- Formal institutions: decision-making and affected levels of governance;
- Informal networks: decision-making, affected levels and actors;
- The forms of local economic interaction;
- Strategies: regional plans and programmes for cooperation;

The bulk of research was based on the analysis of cooperation forms and strategies among Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), on all (local, regional, national and transnational) levels of their activity. A case study have been prepared on individual organisations and their networks; research extended to interviews, press screening, local seminars and in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders of the crossborder contact-building process (*Table 1*).

Table 1

*Research methods and objectives of the EUDIMENSIONS project*

Source	Method	Objective
Local development and social issues in the case study region	Press screening and analysis, local seminars	The technical and functional dimensions of establishing crossborder cooperation; delineating different types of crossborder cooperation
Strategic and political planning documents, government papers from different (EU, national, regional) levels	Document analysis, the organisation of conferences and other events	Uncovering the practices and stances of political actors on all three levels; the features of cooperation strategies; the applicability of European CBC in the case study regions
Political and scientific discourse on current crossborder structures and programmes	Document analysis, the organisation of conferences and other events	Uncovering the practices, stances and opinions of political actors; the applicability of European CBC in the case study regions
The views of local actors and the observations of local experts	In-depth interviews, expert conventions, local seminars, document analysis	Uncovering the practices, stances, opinions, approaches and interests of political actors; concepts, paradigms and approaches of actors in CBC
The views of selected actors of strategic importance on the national and transnational levels	In-depth interviews, expert conventions, document analysis	Uncovering the practices, stances, opinions, approaches and interests of political actors; uncovering the distinguishing features of the cooperation process; identifying the outcomes of cooperation (successes and limitations); concepts, paradigms and approaches of actors in CBC; ex post considerations for the appraisal of the added value of cooperation

*Source:* Authors' construction.

## **2 Sub/Trans-Carpathia: a special multicultural region**

### **2.1 A state-changing region**

The region belonging to Ukraine and approached from several spatial views, called Sub-Carpathia by many and Trans-Carpathia by others, has a multicultural character peculiar from many aspects; nevertheless, it is far from being unique in Central and Eastern Europe. The present political, social, economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious etc. versatility of the region were defined by long-term, historical processes, and to a considerable extent also the territorial rearrangements taking place as a consequence of the changes of powers.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the political belonging of the region, the power and territorial integration, its power and political centre (capital city) changed many times and fundamentally within a short interval. Between 1918 and 1991, the region can be defined as a specific “state-changing” area from the political geographic perspective: under less than a century, it saw the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Soviet Union (as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) and finally independent Ukraine, not to mention various short-lived state formations. This is basically the consequence of the fact that the region became a buffer zone of great powers in the course of history. In 1946–1991, the region, as part of the Soviet Union, was actually a closed area of military operations. Road and rail transport moved huge amounts of materials, but the state border was sealed in both directions, preventing the inhabitants from contacting each other. Until 1988–1989, the Hungarian-Ukrainian border had rather peculiar features and functions:

- The border was open for exchanging ideologies between both countries but the inflow of Soviet ideology was dominant in this process. The outflowing thoughts and ideas from Hungary were often received with doubt and scepticism, and often, their spread was seriously constrained.
- The border was serving as a contact zone for the “indivisible and inseparable” and “fraternal” Hungarian–Soviet connections, as well as an internal border for the Eastern Bloc alliances (COMECON, Warsaw Pact).
- The border was open for great flows of goods, *Záhony* and its cargo transfer zone often being referred to as “Europe’s biggest mainland port”.
- The border was open for Soviet Army troops and their military cargo transport.
- The border was open for Hungarian travellers on official matters and for a gradually increasing number of long-distance tourists.



- The so-called “red” (socialist) passport issued in Hungary was valid for all European socialist states, but wasn’t accepted for the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia without a separate visa supplement.
- The border was closed for local residents on both sides of the border.
- Regarding interregional relations (between Szabolcs-Szatmár County and Transcarpathia), the border was more closed than open; contact was limited to narrow, “ceremonial” and highly formalised relations.
- There were no genuine CSOs in state socialist societies; therefore, crossborder civilian relations did not exist at all.

There was one border station for road traffic and one for railroad traffic along the 137 km border line. Beregsurány was the only border station operating on casual basis, and it was reserved for military traffic.

The birth of the independent Republic of Ukraine was a fundamental turning point for the whole of Central Europe. Within the new state formation the region remained a “self-governing” administrative unit, a border region to four countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania), making the region a reception area of the new Ukraine towards the Central European and in a wider sense the European neighbourhood. At the referendum on the independence held in 1991, the majority of the inhabitants of the region voted for the sovereignty of Ukraine; in the Hungarian-speaking areas the proportion of supportive votes was even higher than the average. Regarding regional autonomy, 78% of the region’s population supported awarding autonomy to Transcarpathia, which could not take place under the complicated interior political conditions at that time (*Fedinec, 2002*). From the point of Hungary the region “opened up” in 1988–1989 after its former isolation. The Hungarians living in the region were given new possibilities to shape their cross-border relations. In everyday life there are economic, unemployment problems and hardships of living, which partly have a national and ethnic content. Despite this fact the “everyday multiculturalism” enriches the life of the region and creates new possibilities for making economic and spatial relations, especially for the development of tourism.

The main focus of our analysis is not the historical processes; instead, the present form and problems of multiculturalism are looked at, also referring, on the other hand, to sensitivities coming from history. Naturally, one dominant segment of the analysis for us is the understanding of the relationship between the Hungarian minority and the majority of the region.

## 2.2 The present situation of the region

The region is one of the westernmost areas of Ukraine gaining its sovereignty in 1991. Coming from its historical changes, both the international and internal political relations of the region has many sensitive, sometimes rather “touchy” issues. In territory (12,777 km<sup>2</sup>) it is one of the smaller administrative units, its number of population is not very significant either (1.2 million inhabitants), but its importance in the life of the country exceeds its mere size.

The “region with many state borders” has “minority bridges” to each neighbour state: there is a significant number of Slovaks, Hungarians and Romanians and a smaller number of Poles living in Sub-Carpathia; also, there is Ukrainian and Rusyn minority in the neighbour states. Towards all neighbour states there are asymmetries in the number of minorities, but the importance of the issue lies not simply in the number of inhabitants belonging to the respective ethnic minorities. The mother countries (Czechoslovakia, after 1993 Slovakia), Romania and Hungary paid special attention to the ethnic minorities living in the newly independent Ukraine. With regards to the nations concerned, the Czech, the Slovaks, the Hungarians, the Rusyns and the Romanians have always looked and still look at the region from within the Carpathian Basin (as Subcarpathia, Podkarpats’ka Rus, Kárpátalja and Podkarpats’ka, respectively), whereas the Poles, Russians and Ukrainians have seen and still see the region from the outside (Transcarpathia, Zakarpats’ka), which can be seen in the names of the region in the respective languages. Even within the Hungarian community several names of the region were used in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1993 the region was a founding member of the Carpathian Euroregion (i.e. the development of the cross-border relations started almost parallel to the gaining of sovereignty of Ukraine), which offered considerable chances for the region in the beginning; however, the operation of the Euroregion did not meet the great expectations. It currently has a rather formal and bureaucratic character, and is less of an active actor significantly promoting spatial processes. Nevertheless the concepts and strategies etc. completed have been important inasmuch as they have allowed the region to join the international spatial processes and cooperations to some extent. The region “opened up” towards the neighbour states.

The basic economic and social features of the region are defined by the Ukrainian Statistical Yearbook of 2004 and 2005: the region has a territory of 12.8 thousand km<sup>2</sup>, a population of 1,245,500 people, and a density of population of 97 persons/km<sup>2</sup>, which is above the Ukrainian average (78 persons/km<sup>2</sup>). Administratively the region is divided into 13 rayons, the number of towns and cities of different character and status is 19, and the total number of municipalities with village status is 579. The character and internal proportions of the settlement network are determined in many respects by the physical geographical endowments. The settlement network of the plains and the mountainous areas and the respec-

tive settlements themselves are rather different from each other. The ethnic composition of the settlements has also considerably affected the municipalities:

- The first city in the order of magnitude is Uzhhorod (Ungvár), the administrative centre of the region. In 2006 it had a population of 117 thousand people; it was among the smaller regional centres within the Ukraine. Within the region this city has a dominant character from several aspects. Coming from its size, administrative functions, economic roles and educational positions Ungvár, in addition to being a multiethnic city (although the majority of the population is Ukrainian and Rusyn by now), has a special multicultural character.
- According to the statistics there is only one other city in the region the population of which exceeds 50 thousand, Mukaceve [Munkács], whose population reaches almost 100 thousand. The economic positions and macro-regional transport functions of the city are strong; also, it has an outstanding historical importance for each ethnic group living in the region.
- The number of population in Berehove [Beregszász] has slightly exceeded 25 thousand. Beregszász is the intellectual, economic, education etc. centre of the Hungarian ethnic group with a homogeneous spatial dominance in the area.
- Khust [Huszt] has a population just over 27 thousand. The multiethnic and multicultural character of the town was stronger in history than it is now, but it still enriches the life of the settlement.
- Chop [Csap], with a population of only 7800, is nevertheless of special importance because of its road and rail border crossing station and reloading centre with enormous traffic. The town became a point of concentration for the Russian population in the time of the Soviet rule.

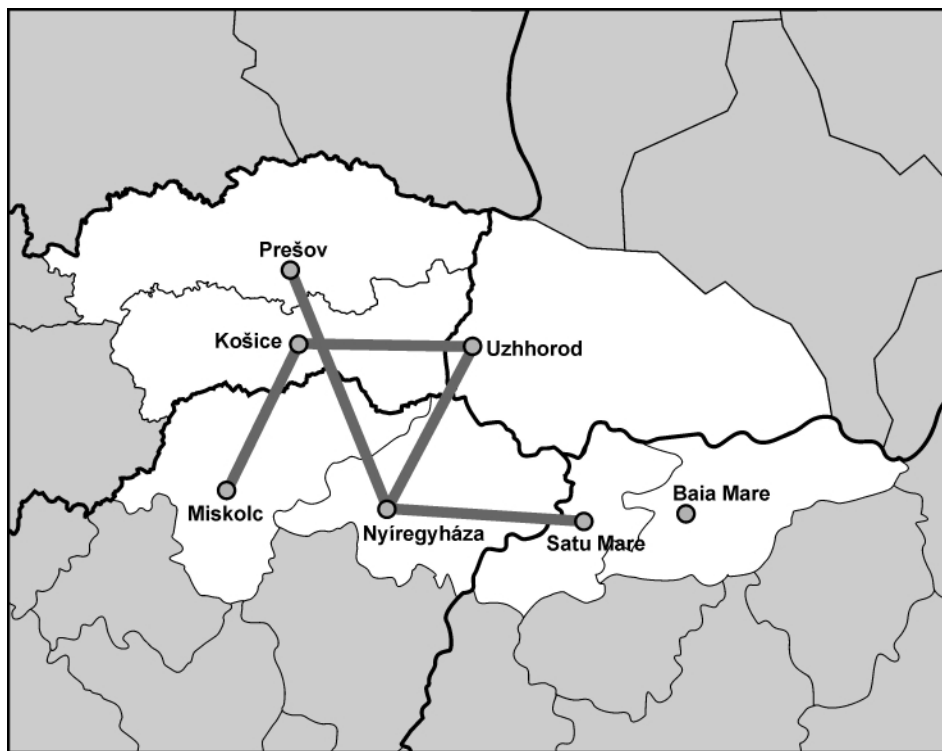
Uzhhorod, the administrative seat of the region of Transcarpathia has consciously expanded its neighbourhood relationships. It is apparent that Nyíregyháza has become the de facto centre of sister city relationships in the wider region (*Figure 1*).

In GDP per capita, Transcarpathia is also among the least developed regions in Ukraine based on its performance in 2002–2004. On the basis of comparative tables covering a longer period of time we can see that the development of the region, relative to itself, was significant in 1996–2003, the economic structure stabilised and the economic capacity of the region increased. Nevertheless, unemployment became one of the major problems of the socio-economic life of the region. When discussing unemployment we have to analyse urban and village unemployment separately. The change of the living standards and the living conditions is partly connected to the ethnic composition of the respective municipalities or areas. We can see a sort of conscious development and capital allocation

process. The region, as opposed to the previous plans, did not become a clear-cut and characteristic special economic zone, it has not enjoyed the special attention of the foreign capital so far, but the international investments have already appeared in this region too. Hungarian capital is also present now in the region, in many sectors and in businesses of different magnitude. National, regional and county-level development plans, as well as the development concepts of the Carpathian Euroregion have a relevance to the dimensions of crossborder relationships.

Figure 1

*“Sister city” connections between the administrative centres, 2008*



Source: Authors' construction.

### 2.3 Minorities in the multiethnic region

The last Soviet census held in 1989, before the gaining of the sovereignty, defined the ethnic composition of the region. According to the data of this census, the region had a total of 1,245,618 inhabitants, of whom 78.4% said they were Ukrainian (976,749 persons), 12.5% declared themselves as Hungarian (155,711 people), 4% as Russian (49,458 inhabitants), 2.4% said they were Romanian (29,458 people), and 1% called themselves Gypsy (12,131 inhabitants, a clear understatement). The census also counted 7,329 Slovaks, 3,478 Germans, 2,639 Jews, 2,521 Belarus citizens and 6,144 inhabitants of “other” ethnic origins.

The biggest question mark of the census is the number of the Rusyn population, as this ethnic group was not among the ethnic nations printed on the form of the census. When the sovereignty of the Ukraine was gained, the number of Rusyns in the region was estimated to be around 650–750 thousand inhabitants. The denial of the presence of the Rusyn ethnic group by the Ukrainian state is probably due to the fact that the region should have been given a territorial autonomy if the large number and high proportion of the Rusyn ethnic group had been verified. According to Ukrainian laws, the equality of the citizens is given and ethnic minorities may even have extra rights in their place of residence. The real problem is not the lack of formal rights but their effective keeping.

The Hungarian ethnic minority is not discriminated in the Ukrainian state; the Hungarian–Ukrainian Base Agreement had a separate chapter on the special rights of the ethnic minorities living in the two countries and the protection of their rights. Within the region, the social, economic and political environment and conditions in the broader sense for the co-existence and the relations of the Hungarians and the Rusins are actually free from problems. At the time of the systemic change the Hungarian pupils and students were able to learn in approximately 100 Hungarian language schools or Hungarian–Ukrainian bilingual institutions. At the State University of Uzhhorod [Ungvár], some 700 Hungarian students have been able to study every year after 2000, partly in the Hungarian language. In Berehove [Beregszász], a college operated by a foundation was created from Hungarian and local resources, presently called the Ferenc Rákóczi II College.

The census held in 2001 showed a slight decrease of population compared to the figures of the census made ten years earlier, and the number of the inhabitants belonging to the respective ethnic groups changed to some extent, too. The share of the Ukrainians (1,010,100 people, 80.5%) somewhat increased since the previous census. The proportion of the Hungarians – to a large extent due to the emigrations – slightly decreased (to 151,500 people), their proportion fell to 12.1%. The share of the Romanians slightly increased (to 32,100 inhabitants, 2.6%), whereas in the case of Russians there was a sharp decrease (to 31,000 persons, 2.5%). The number of Gypsy population slightly grew (to 14,000 inhabitants,

1.1%). The share of the Slovaks (0.5%) and Germans (0.3%) remained practically unchanged.

A new element of the census was the possibility for the citizens to declare themselves Rusyn, but very few people (10,100 people, i.e. 0.8% of the population of the region) actually said that they were Rusyn by ethnicity, although their number is estimated to be around 650–750 thousand.

The location of the Hungarian ethnic group is characteristic in the region; the majority lives in one block along the Hungarian–Ukrainian state border. Only a smaller share of the Hungarians live scattered in other rural settlements (*Kocsis*, 2001); on the other hand, there is a significant number of Hungarians living in the major cities and towns of the region, especially in Uzhhorod [Ungvár] and Mukaceve [Munkács]. This location makes it easier to maintain the mother tongue but makes it more difficult to acquire the national language. (During the Soviet rule it was not Ukrainian but Russian that was taught in the Hungarian-speaking settlements, so the majority of the generations growing up in the Soviet era did not learn Ukrainian.) The Hungarian ethnic group is linguistically homogeneous, but it is divided by religion and political affiliation, and there are strongly increasing economic disparities within the Hungarian community as well. This development – which can be considered natural – requires new approaches within the minority communities and offers connection points towards the majority.

### **3 The different scales of crossborder relationships**

#### **3.1 The transnational framework of cooperation**

In discussing the development and cross-border activity of civil society and organisations in Ukraine and Hungary, between the Ukrainian region Transcarpathia and Northeast-Hungary, it is important to see that in the framework of cross-border cooperation, global (UN), north-Atlantic (NATO), European (OSCE), European Union-related, transnational, international, Ukrainian, Hungarian national, Ukrainian–Hungarian bilateral, oblast-level, district level and other organisations, as well as their various subdivisions, are present. In the following section, the focus is on the defining transnational relationships that affect the region, involving the broader scope of EU–Ukraine cooperation and the more specific, but also more immediate role of Ukrainian–Hungarian contact building.

The years 1988 and 1989 brought a significant breakthrough in the Soviet and Hungarian bilateral relations. The border opened up for the locals and four new border stations were built between the two countries. Several families split up by the border for several decades were once more reunited, but the opening up of the

border also provided significant opportunities to exploit the benefits of crossborder economic contact resulting from significant price and product availability differences between the two countries. The massive flow of people; their trade and smuggling created the majority of human contacts, to be followed by institutional cooperation only later on. Hungary – still during the existence of the Soviet Union – was the first to recognise the independence of Ukraine and to open its embassy in Kiyiv. Since Ukraine won its independence, a host of new inter-governmental agreements have been made between Hungary and Ukraine. From our point of view the following should be highlighted:

- A *Good Neighbourhood and Cooperation Agreement* between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Ukraine, signed on the 6th of December, 1991. This can be considered as a base agreement of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations, and served as a starting point for organising other fields of cooperation.
- An Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Ukraine in the Field of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (November 1993). This can be considered as a base agreement on environmental and regional development cooperations between the two states. The two parties established the Joint Committee of Hungarian-Ukrainian Environmental Protection and Regional Development, which meets at least once bi-annually.
- All in all, 20 major inter-governmental agreements have been signed between Hungary and Ukraine during the contact building period. It can be said that between 1991 and 1999, a functioning agreement-based relationship system had been established between the two states.

Since Ukraine's independence, the EU has also gradually turned its attention on the new state and established the institutional system of dialog. After the declaration of independence, it immediately recognised the independent Ukrainian state, and was among the first to assume diplomatic contact. The new state committed itself to the development of democracy and the market economy, although all parties were in full knowledge of the fact that the realisation of these commitments would be long, arduous and rife with conflicts. The political elite of Ukraine was assuming it would receive wide-ranging and immediate economic assistance from the EU, while the EU primarily viewed Ukraine as a political partner, primarily in foreign and security policy.

In 1993, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a resolution, committing itself to EU membership as a future strategic goal. The country simultaneously applied to the WTO, assessing the market economy turn as having taken place. Mid-June 1994, the two parties signed the EU-Ukraine *Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA)*, which came into effect 1<sup>st</sup> May 1998, establishing economic and political

agendas of common interest for a span of 10 years. Institutional forms of political contact have come into effect: EU–Ukraine Summit, ministerial cooperation frameworks, experts’ committees and sub-committees, inter-parliamentary cooperation committee, etc. Later, seven areas were cited as of outstanding relevance: energy, trade and investments, justice and home affairs, harmonisation of Ukrainian structures towards the EU, environmental protection, transport, cross-border issues, scientific cooperation, cooperation in technology and space exploration.

From our perspective, commitment to develop crossborder cooperation bears special importance. The geopolitical situation of Ukraine is a fundamental issue for the EU as well as the entire Europe. After 2004 the western regions of Ukraine may enjoy close relations with the border regions of the EU; both parties have acknowledged their readiness to this effect. Between 1991 and 2001, the EU had granted support to a sum of € 1072 million. In the framework of action programmes, € 464 million; in the framework of others, € 608 million had been assigned to the country. During this period the EU turned to be the key facilitator, promoter, and supporter of the development of civil society sector in Ukraine. This willingness to engage in crossborder cooperation has also manifested in the Ukrainian–Hungarian dimension: after the mid 1990s, Hungary had consciously supported cooperation along its borders as a new instrument of spatial development. Energy politics and minority issues are relevant for local society, although they are strongly influenced by the agendas of central governments and the EU; on the other hand, civil organisations (both Ukrainian and Hungarian) also have an increasing stake in encouraging this process, because this way, they are able to improve their operational circumstances and efficiency.

In September 2000, the Ukrainian Parliament has accepted the country’s EU integration agenda, preordaining the adoption of *acquis communautaire*, the wholesale incorporation of human rights agreements, and the integration of the country into pan-European security agreements. In June 2002, president Kuchma announced the “European Opportunity” strategy in Parliament. The strategy set concrete goals for the 2003–2011 period regarding EU integration. It was expected that Ukraine would meet all EU membership conditions between 2007 and 2011.

In May 2003, with respect to the period following the upcoming enlargement, the European Commission articulated the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP). By May 2004, the Commission also developed the programme’s Strategic Study (Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours), touching on both the southern and eastern neighbourhood of the community. Country reports for all countries in question were prepared; in Ukraine, it was a cause for disappointment that Ukraine was only considered as an “EU Neighbour”, similar to neighbouring Moldova and Belarus. With countries capable and willing to approve EU value standards (this



includes Ukraine), the EU signed a bilateral ENP Action Plan. Since 2004, the ENP has served as a determining factor for Hungarian goals in foreign policy towards Ukraine. The Hungarian Government's actions are strongly influenced by this Joint Action Plan, but its scope of authority does not extend to all details, and Hungary has had a significantly stronger interest in keeping border relations open than the ENP's more securitisation-oriented projections, leading to a partial clash of EU and Hungarian interests over border control regimes. In the year 2003, the previously effective, simplified crossing and checking procedure had to be discontinued in small border traffic, and an obligatory visa system was introduced starting 1st November 2003. In our research, visa requirements and the circumstances of border crossing were brought up in interviews as an *evident* and crucial hurdle before cooperation on both sides of the border; Transcarpathian Hungarians were especially negative about reinstated visa regimes. The problems of crossing have also been a cornerstone issue in the local, regional and national press in both Hungary and Ukraine since 1989. The reinstatement of small border traffic from 31 December 2007 in Hungary after EU accession was met with unanimous approval on both sides of the border.

2005 brought fundamental changes in residential crossborder relations in several aspects: Hungary, partially because of financial and budgetary restrictions, partially by the urging of the EU introduced a strict customs control procedure for goods carried through the border by local residents. Hungary instituted a policy and introduced countermeasures against the massive smuggling of various goods (petrol, alcohol, cigarettes). By November 2005 'petrol-tourism' (illegal trading with petrol through the border) had practically been eliminated. As these measures had a very adverse effect on the living conditions of inhabitants on both sides of the border, local public opinion on this development is uniformly and overwhelmingly negative.

In October and November 2004, the Ukrainian presidential election invoked an internal crisis that had significant bearings on wider Europe. As a result of the Orange Revolution, Autumn 2004, the Supreme Court of Ukraine decided in favour of Viktor Yuschenko in January 2005. The president, speaking in the European Parliament, declared the strategic objective to achieve full EU member status, and placed euro-atlantic integration at the head of the agenda. The Orange Revolution was also the period of the growth and strengthening of Ukrainian civilian society. Although political parties were the main organisers, the mobilisation of civilian society exceeded all previous occasions. International civil organisations and outer financing were very important element of the processes. As another consequence, in 2005, Ukraine unilaterally waived visa requirements for the citizens of EU member states. The country did not set demands for this action, but made it evident that it would expect the relaxation of travel from the EU.

Yulia Tymoshenko, the new prime minister, encouraged accelerating the pace of the integration process and achieving associate membership at the earliest pos-

sible opportunity in her introductory speech. In the European Parliament, Polish and Hungarian representatives expressed special support for Ukraine; Polish MPs were especially ardent on encouraging the development of the EU's new Ukrainian policy. In these same days early 2005, Benito Ferrero-Waldner, foreign affairs commissioner of the EU made it known that the EU could offer no "integration perspectives" for Ukraine at this point. The EU's stance was reason for disappointment for the new government elite that has been behind the revolution. However, in October 2006, the EU and Ukraine closed a visa agreement, introducing transparency to the mode, adjudication and granting of visas. The agreement provides preferential treatment to some groups (journalists, researchers, students, etc.) compared to the standard process.

In March 2007, new talks have started in the interests of imbuing the previous Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The EU-Ukraine *New Enhanced Agreement (NEA)* talks have touched upon almost all substantial issues of common interest between the interested parties. In country reports, the EU has recognised a gradual advancement in human rights and freedom of press. In the case of national minority rights, it has been evaluated positively that in December 2006, Ukraine ratified the European Convention on Nationality agreement. Ukraine has made major strides in the interests of harmonising foreign affairs and security policy with the EU, and to take into account the legitimate concerns of the EU CFSP communiqués. The question of analysing civilian society and organisations is a central component of all reports. The EU has reported the success that after January 2007, registration fees for civilian organisations were significantly reduced, and, in case of trade unions, entirely abolished. In November 2007, the Ukrainian government passed its proposed concept for the development of civilian society.

Ukrainian-Hungarian relations had experienced an intensive period of contact-building in 2007 and 2008. On 14th January 2007, Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány paid a one day official visit to Transcarpathia, where a meeting with Hungarian minority NGOs and churches was followed by talks with Viktor Yuschenko, the President of Ukraine. The negotiations between the two statesmen were focused on the situation of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Ukraine and the current issues of the development of inter-governmental relations. In the middle of January 2007, the presidents of the two states held a meeting in Transcarpathia. The main topics of their discussion covered such issues as the general situation of Hungarian education in the region, the problems of students' applications for secondary school final exams and their admittance into higher education institutes, the environmental issues of the Tisza river and the chances for the establishing of the Záhony-Chop Special Economic Zone. These meetings were followed by the signing of the *Action Plan of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Ukraine for the year 2007*, declaring short and mid-term tasks in the area of economy, transport, the energy sector, water management, environmental protection

and the human sector (health services, visa regimes, culture, education, and ethnic minorities). In July 2007, Viktor Yuschenko paid a two-day visit to Hungary. The most important result of this visit was that the parties made an agreement on revising the possibility of opening new border crossing stations. During the official talks, demands for a common approach towards the issues of environmental protection, water and forest management were being raised.

In January 2008, visa agreements between the EU and Ukraine came into effect. The EU expects the new system to encourage easier contact-building, as well as strengthening the effectiveness of measures against illegal migration. Also in January 2008, the Ukrainian parliament ratified the “expulsion agreement”, a precondition for easing EU visa requirements. In May 2008, the EU and Ukraine agreed to create five large receiving and refugee centres with a support of € 30 million, for the temporary accommodation of illegal immigrants. Civilian society organisations, human rights bodies, and especially Amnesty International’s Ukrainian representatives have voiced protests against these agreements, claiming that this would result in the further marginalisation of defenceless refugees. On 21st December 2007, Hungary became a part of the Schengen Zone, which resulted in significant changes in the rules of border crossing in several aspects. The EU approved the restoration of small border traffic on the Hungarian-Ukrainian border. A bilateral agreement has been made between Hungary and Ukraine on this issue which defined a 50 kilometre zone on both sides of the border where the regulations of small border traffic should be applied. In Ukraine 382 settlements are located in this zone. Hungary – with all of its border sections – is also intending to join the EU’s 2007–2013 European Regional Cooperation Programme. The Hungary–Romania–Slovakia–Ukraine ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) Crossborder Cooperation Programme 2007–2013 involves Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County on the Hungarian side as an eligible area, while Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is going to take part as an adjacent area with full participation. In Ukraine, Transcarpathia and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts participate as eligible areas while Chernivtsi Oblast is involved as an adjacent area with limited participation. At the current date, the Hungarian-Ukrainian border area has an increased opportunity to build both cross-border and inwards-oriented networks; to this end, it gains the support of both the European Union and national governments on both sides of the border. According to the final version of the programme, approved on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2007, four priorities have been formulated:

- Promoting the economic and social development
- Enhancing the environment
- Increasing border efficiency
- Supporting people to people cooperation

Early 2008, new talks between Ukraine and the EU were started regarding the expiring PCA agreement. The new “Enhanced Agreement’s” contents are in continuous development. The EU is interested in Ukraine’s economic stabilisation and development. The preparations for the free trade agreement have started, and this may become a reality after Ukraine’s WTO membership. In August of 2008, a government resolution supported by both the government and the opposition, declared Ukraine’s long-term commitment to closer integration towards EU structures, but contained no provisions for NATO membership. This action is consistent with the precarious geopolitical situation which is a current defining factor of the Ukrainian situation.

### **3.2 The development of the Ukrainian NGO sector**

Before the Orange Revolution, the Ukrainian state was not especially interested in strong civil society, and development is still in very early stages. Several interviewees have mentioned that no Ukrainian funding opportunities exist, or if they do, they cannot be accessed: Ukrainian state organisations often announce tenders with an intentionally short application period to make participation impossible. More specific forms of discrimination are also apparent: according to the representative of the Hungarian Ferenc Rákóczi II (foundation-operated) College in Transcarpathia, the Hungarianness of the institution is already enough to exclude them from any Ukrainian budgetary support. On the other hand, it is also apparent that if a civil organisation assumes a function of the state, such as providing training for the unemployed, they have good opportunities to close a contract with an Ukrainian state organ and receive due compensation.

The national legal environment has a strong influence the development of civil society. Regulations concerning social organisations are considered to be highly contradictory by interviewees. In Ukraine, it is very easy to establish civil organisations, since three persons at the age of majority have the right to legally register one. Therefore, the number of CSOs is very high, but most of them are “sleeping organisations”. It poses a burden that they have to reregister themselves annually, and their survival, or actual activities, are even more complicated. Civil organisations are required to announce their areas of activity, and if they intend to change this, or become a microregional, regional or international organisation from a local one, they need to undergo a complicated administrative process. According to one legal expert, the main problem is that the majority of Ukrainian non-profit organisations don’t do any accounting, and only collect invoices and bills; since they have no balance, fiscal planning becomes impossible. Lacking the latter, the organisations are precluded from public support, which, on the other hand, denies them of the ability to undertake real activities. Moreover, civil organisations are often involved in activities which are linked to special permits, and the authorities

often do not grant these because they consider them exclusively public competencies. All in all, the boundaries between public and social activities are not yet clearly separated in Ukraine.

Although NGOs are regulated by law in Ukraine, the regulations are incompatible with European legal standards. This can be well illustrated by such examples as NGOs not being authorised by law to open a bank account in a foreign country, and difficulties in obtaining foreign currency. The lack of legal harmonisation with EU laws is erecting a barrier between Ukraine and EU member states in this area. Besides the weak legal regulation of the NGO sector – due to the long traditions of autocratic governance style and the paternalistic attitude of the state towards its citizens – the cultural receptivity of initiatives originating from the NGO sector is very low. The interviews with the representatives of Ukrainian NGOs gave us a rather mixed impression on the state's attitude towards NGO activities. On the one hand the majority of NGOs cannot expect any support from the state for funding, but on the other hand, some of them are subsidized by the state – for example through the Job Centre of Ukraine – for performing some of their public duties. The Ukrainian government – unlike the Hungarian one – has no special policy for the development of the NGO sector. Nevertheless, NGOs can't even rely on financial support on the local level either.

In 2003, the World Bank sponsored a comprehensive research and analysis to shed light on the full cross-section of Ukrainian civil society (*Civil Society in Ukraine*, 2003). The research was undertaken by professional Ukrainian organisations (Democratic Initiatives Foundation, SOCIS). The main results of the research confirmed prior expectations: considering formal institutions, the Ukrainian tertiary sector was extremely wide; in contrast, the number of genuinely active organisations was narrow. Ukrainian NGOs were organised on multiple spatial levels (national, regional and local). During the research process, the researchers found that, all in all, 80% of all NGOs were organised on the city or oblast level. From among cities, Kiev was especially prominent. The primary activity areas of surveyed organisations involved organising training programmes and activities, collecting and disseminating information, humanitarian or social assistance, lobbying for the interests of specific social groups or providing legal defence and assistance services. Cross-border activities did not feature prominently – despite the fact that the majority of oblasts neighbour national borders. Cross-border relationships were mostly concerned with ecological and environment protection activities.

### 3.3 The NGO sector in Hungary

Hungarian society is not characterised by a developed civilian culture, which can be explained not just by objective factors deriving from the economic and political milieu or the diminutive role of reciprocity, but also cultural and mental reasons. It is evident that the historical precedents, the one-party state before the current situation, eliminated even the meagre traditions of civil society, although it is also relevant that the slowly awakening civil society played a role in preparing the ground before systematic change. The development of civil society had already started before the 1990 change, in conjunction with crisis symptoms in economy, politics and society. From ecological, local patriotic and peace movements, university students and the club movement started to expand in the 1980s, especially after foundations (1987) and social organisations (1989) were regulated as legal entities. With the opportunity to freely establish social organisations, 8514 organisations had been registered by 1989, in contrast with only 6570 in 1982. In a particular way, systematic change actually hindered the extensive development of civil society, since a significant section of the new central and local political elite was recruited from the ranks of active civil participants (*Böhm, 2006*). After a temporary slowdown, a rapid expansion process became apparent from the mid 1990s. In 1995, 42,783 civil organisations were registered, increasing to 53,022 by 2003 (*Table 2–3*).

Table 2

*Non-profit organisations in Hungary by legal form 1995–2006  
(% and number)*

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2003	2006
Foundation	35.5	36.1	37.5	38.6	38.7	39.3	37.3	35.7
Public foundation	1.1	1.6	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.8
Society	53.3	53.3	52.3	48.0	48.0	47.6	49.8	51.6
Public corporation	0.6	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8
Trade union	4.8	4.4	3.5	3.2	3.0	2.7	2.2	1.8
Employers' associations	4.2	2.3	2.7	5.8	5.3	4.9	4.6	4.1
Public non-profit company	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.6	1.9	2.3	2.8
Non-profit institution	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Association	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.2
Total	42783	45316	47365	47384	48171	47144	53022	58242

*Source:* Nonprofit szervezetek Magyarországon. KSH, Budapest. 2000, 2003, 2008.  
(<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/pdf/nonprof06.pdf>)

Table 3

*The breakdown of non-profit organisations in Hungary by sphere of activity  
1982–2006 (%)*

	1982	1993	1995	2000	2003	2006
Culture	1.4 <sup>a)</sup>	10.2	10.1	10.5	10.8	11.2
Religion	–	1.5	2.3	2.7	2.7	2.5
Sport	45.9	21.8	16.6	13.7	13.2	12.3
Recreation and hobby	26.3	12.7	16.5	15.4	15.9	16.9
Education	1.8 <sup>b)</sup>	9.6	10.8	14.6	14.3	13.9
Research	–	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.0
Health	0.2 <sup>c)</sup>	3.7	4.1	4.5	4.6	4.7
Social support	–	8.0	7.4	8.8	8.6	8.8
Civil defence, fire fighting	22.5	3.6	2.7	1.9	1.6	1.5
Environmental		2.1	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4
Settlement development		3.1	3.5	5.1	5.7	6.2
Economic development		1.8	1.3	1.9	1.9	2.2
Legal aid/protection		1.5	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4
Public safety		2.2	2.5	3.0	3.2	3.4
Charity and non-profit alliances		1.1	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.3
International relations		1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Professional and economic representation		12.1	12.7	8.7	7.8	7.0
Politics		0.9	1.1	0.7	0.9	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>a)</sup>With religion; <sup>b)</sup>With research; <sup>c)</sup>With social support.

Source: Kuti, 1998; Nonprofit szervezetek Magyarországon. KSH, Budapest, 2000, 2003, 2008.

The development, legal forms and activities of civil organisations tended to strongly mirror changes in legal regulations and the financing system. In this respect, three broad groups of civil organisations can be delineated:

- In 1997, legislation regulated the state’s relationship with the third sector, which was by then already notable (Act 1997/CLVI on public non-profit organisations). The act’s most important component was the creation of the *public non-profit* category, drawing a legal distinction that enables a differentiated treatment of non-profit organisations. The act, following the internationally recognised definition of non-profitability, sets limitations on political involvement: “*a civil organisation may not take part in directly political activities, its organisation has to be independent of political parties, and may not provide them material support*”. The category encompasses public foundations and public non-profit corporations, which are typically closely linked to the public sector, assume its responsibilities, or at least fi-

nance their activities primarily from national or municipal sources. Considering that both governmental and municipal public service providers have been suffering from a shortage of funding and capacities, this public non-profit form was also appropriate for the involvement of certain private funds, donations and voluntary work for the benefit of public services.

- The second group is made up of organisations operating on the principle of *self- (or mutual) benefit*. The majority of non-profit organisations registered in Hungary *de facto* belong to this category. Self-benefit organisations, which provide their benefits collectively for their members, are less altruistic, but socially beneficial. In essence, this type can be seen as making up the real civil sector, undertaking self-organised and supportive activities, and mostly distant from politics and public power (societies and foundations).
- Organisations making up the third group of *politics-related* entities are also self-benefit organisations, but should be functionally differentiated, as self-benefit organisations are typically active in the area of sports and recreation. This sector is characterised by the strong influence of political parties, and activities which are closely associated with exercising power on the central, but more often local level.

If we analyse the proportions of the previous segments of civil society, it becomes clear that significant restructuring has taken place due to the changes of financing, legal regulations and the processes of the political environment. The genuinely civilian sector is shrinking in comparison with the public non-profit segment generated by public power and public finance. In the direct political participation of civil actors, retrenchment is taking place. The polarisation of the party system, and the “partyfication” of the local government sector leads to the marginalisation of civil representation, and limits their purposes and existential basis.

In the relations of the civil sector and the state, two or three periods can be delineated:

- *The first period at the beginning of the 1990s* was a “romantic ancient state”, described by the lack of regulations, spontaneity, but a strong willingness for cooperation.
- *The second period* saw the refinement of the rules for cooperation, the emergence of institutional forms, and a desire for planned and conscious activities. There was formal consolidation, public support for the civil sector was regulated on a wide legal basis with the creation of the National Civil Base Programme, and the central and local governments both developed civil strategies.



- *It is possible that we can identify the current period as a third one* – a stage where civil society is characterised by increasing uncertainty and drifting apart, coinciding with a renewal of protest/issue-oriented approaches; conflicts and control attempts versus cooperation between the public and civil sector. It can only be hoped that this stage will be resolved by gaining independence from public power, where the role of public funds will decrease in contrast with the activity and support of private actors.

Concerning the above described situation, we consider applicable the argument of the noted sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf, who proposed that systematic change in politics may take place under six months, in the economy in six years, but for the development of civil society following the appropriate ethical norms and patterns, six decades would be needed.

As for the international and European Union-related activity of civil organisations, it is hard to construct an exact picture. If our starting point is how many civil societies have the word “European” in their title, we find 316 organisations among those registered; however, the European dimension of their actual activities may not be verified, and is uncertain whether it is substantial. It is visible that similar organisations increased in numbers around the time of EU accession, and, even if not all of them have an international relationship network or activity profile, “European” at least describes their value system. Of course, evaluation may not ignore organisations that do not use “European” in their titles. It is a relatively new phenomenon that a number of social organisations are specialising in Central and Eastern Europe (among the 316 “European” organisations, 24 also use this appellation), recognising that cooperation with the neighbourhood is easier to organise on the basis of the shared past, common problems and geographical proximity. However, only 4 legally registered organisations specify Ukrainian-Hungarian contact-building as their focus.

Naturally, the range of civil organisations involved in border area or crossborder cooperation is not at all limited by names; there are also several civil organisations whose activity is not primarily contact building, but in whose case international contacts are only a means in framework of exercising their primary profile. These organisations have to be distinguished from those which are specifically active in cultivating border relationships (during our research, we have registered multiple similar organisations, such as the EuroKapocs-EuroClip Foundation, jointly established by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and the self government of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County). It is specifically these civil organisations where the strongest motivating force is the utilisation of support from the Hungarian government and European Union funds, while genuine “civilian courage” is the lowest, as they are either *ab ovo* invested with public authority, or are at least tightly affiliated with it.

In the national register, we can find four organisations specifically created for the fostering and development of Hungarian–Ukrainian relations:

- Hungarian–Ukrainian Society, founded in 1991, seat Budapest,
- Hungarian–Ukrainian International Society for Development of Economy, founded in 1994, seat Budapest,
- Hungarian–Ukrainian Rafting-Trekking Friendship Club, founded in 1998, seat Nyíregyháza,
- Hungarian–Ukrainian Foundation for the Development of Commerce, founded in 2005, seat Kecskemét.

### 3.4 Civil/NGO activity on the transnational level

Before the Orange Revolution, but partly in preparation for the European Neighbourhood Policy, “*YES – Yalta European Strategy (International Network for Ukraine in the EU)*” was created, involving nationally and internationally recognised personalities. The organisation has, since its foundation, kept the broadening of EU–Ukraine relationships, encouraging Ukraine’s EU-accession, and the development of crossborder cooperation in the forefront of its interests. The organisation’s work has been aided by active and senior politicians known on the global stage. On annual conferences, the question of Ukraine’s EU membership, as well as encouraging crossborder contact-building has been continuously on the agenda. The organisation has prepared a programmatic document, “Ukraine in the EU, Agenda 2020”. As an international network, YES might be the most influential entity in Ukraine formally operating as a civil organisation on both the national and international level.

The foundation of the *Carpathian Euroregion* in 1993 was of outstanding importance with respect to crossborder relations and civil organisations. In effect, Transcarpathia was the Euroregion’s “core”, opening to all neighbour countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania). CSOs did not play a central role in the formative processes, but they occupied strong positions in sectoral programmes.

*Carpathian Foundation* was created in 1994 as a civil organisation, especially through the support of various American institutions and foundations. CF first organised programmes on the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion, announcing tenders and initiating its own projects. CF’s activities became very diverse under the span of a few years: environmental and cross-border development, the training of marginalised groups (Roma) and others became prominent in its areas of interest.

In Hungary, preparing for EU membership, the *Nyíregyháza Initiative* was formulated from 2001, and created October 2003. On an international conference, organised by the the state administration of Transcarpathia and Szabolcs-Szatmár-

Bereg County, EU, NATO, EBRD and OECD representatives were present. The main aim of the political initiative was to be a regional supplement to the EU's then embryonic eastern, and neighbourhood policy. In the intentions of the founding members, they sought to help Ukrainian democratisation processes by the preferential development of the civilian sector. They established a training and support policy which allowed the leaders of several Ukrainian CSOs to get acquainted with the defining characteristics of European civil society, as well as crossborder contact building opportunities.

If we examine the whole of civil organisations in detail, we can draw the conclusion that among their activities, the development of crossborder cooperation and regional development in border areas features only rarely. However, we can mention a number of CSOs who focus on these areas. *NEEKA* is a remarkable example of a multinationally established (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania) civil initiative, focusing on environmental protection, healthcare, refugee support (in partnership with UNHCR) in the area of the Carpathian Euroregion, and has been highly active since 2002. The issue of refugees, in general, has become more and more important on the civil organisation's agenda. *La Strada Ukraine*, an NGO whose central mission is the prevention of the trafficking of Ukrainian women, operates a regional office in Uzhhorod. Transcarpathia was the "western gateway" of human trafficking in Ukraine, which makes the presence of the NGO self-explanatory.

In August of 2008, microregions of four neighbouring states (Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania) at the three rivers (Ung, Tisza, Túr) formed a new development region, with the aims of common development across the state borders. The leaders and civil organisations of 216 settlements, with 400 thousand inhabitants, would like to apply for EU projects.

### **3.5 CSOs existing in the locality**

Non-party and non-state civil organisations in Transcarpathia appeared in conjunction with the appearance, and later spread of Gorbachev's policies. Ethnic Hungarians were among the first to establish new-style democratic CSOs. *Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség (KMKSZ)* originally intended to act in the area of culture, but from its beginnings (February 1989), it diversified into representation, and political intentions. In 1991, the *Transcarpathian Hungarian Scouts Alliance* was reformed, becoming a youth movement unlike the previously known. The alliance consciously tried to build crossborder relationships.

Not just Hungarians, but also the Ukrainian majority and other minorities (Rusyn, Slovak, Romanian, Gypsy) started to build genuine civil organisations. According to the twists and turns of the internal political situation, civil organisations were first characterised by cooperation, then competition, then rivalry. The

majority of conflicts emerged between various Ukrainian nationalist organisations, and Rusyn or Hungarian civil organisations.

The re-emergence of crossborder relations on the Ukrainian–Hungarian border after transition has been undergoing parallel with regional institution-building, including the growth of civil society organisations (CSOs). If we are to evaluate the effects the activities of state organs have on CSOs, we must draw a line of distinction between Hungary and Ukraine. In Hungary, a range of governmental organisations, especially ministries and their funds, encourage crossborder cooperation. Their supportive activities are primarily effective in the area of Hungarian–Hungarian contacts. Unfortunately, it is also possible to register a downside to this support in the form of “civil business”, where organisations are formed with the sole objective of acquiring these funds, and have no perceptible social activity. Hungarian budgetary funds are also available for civil actors interested in economic and regional development, with a real effect on Ukrainian–Hungarian cooperation – even if the primary motivation is support for the Hungarian minority, and not specifically the development of neighbourhood relations.

In Ukraine, a string of civil organisations has been established under the aegis of Hungarian minority policy, and endowed with public funding by various Hungarian ministries, governmental foundations and funds. Some CSOs active in this segment are involved in economic development as their primary profile, but they mostly focus on encouraging civil society in Transcarpathia through cultural and youth associations, information transfer, representation and the protection of minority rights. They mention meetings, forums, civil fairs and occasionally training for tender writing as the outcome of their activities, but it is notable that they usually could not list projects or EU tenders with a concrete result. These organisations usually do not have a connection to Union organs, and their activities can be considered negligible from the perspective of neighbourhood policy, being artificial constructs, created in service of the state’s minority policy.

The cooperation strategies of civil organisations established on the local and regional levels are dependent on their profiles on both sides of the border. It is easy to set apart “*facilitating*” organisations which try to encourage the activities of the civilian and economic sector by their actions, and see the generation of cross-border contacts as their primary objective. The strategies of these organisations were and are motivated by trying to exploit the time and knowledge advantage of Hungary over Ukraine in the field of European Union integration. They were for the most part established to gain tendered funds, facilitate the participation of others on tenders, and to spread the culture and knowledge of tendering. The actual activities of these organisations focus on training, conference organisation, the dissemination of funding opportunities; often extend to writing tenders, and more rarely their management as well. Their work should not be underrated, since they play a role in trying to prepare economic entities along the border for market conditions, and to this end, are a vital source of knowledge on EU stan-

dards, procedures, laws, taxation, environmental standards and regulations on establishing joint ventures. In occasional cases, the dissemination of know-how is supplemented by the organisation of fairs and exhibits, which create working cooperative relations across the border. As one of the interviewees remarked, “*economic relationships aren’t emotionally or nationally motivated*” – and also, they manifest themselves in the narrowly defined scope of economic exchange, with only an indirect connection with the concerns of neighbourhood policy.

This group of civil organisations is not entirely homogeneous, since it is possible to delineate a sub-group who are directly involved in *economic development or job creation*. A smaller segment is made up of *NGOs redistributing public funds*, or, in a specific category, using them in support of the Hungarian minority beyond the border. In this respect, the focus is primarily Hungarian–Hungarian contact building, although these CSOs only make up a small portion of all civil organisations.

In the other group, we can include *thematically organised CSOs* which get involved in crossborder cooperation to extend their activities to a wider dimension. Environmental, cultural, womens’ and Roma organisations can all be included under this umbrella. They cover important issues, but have a weaker influence than those involved in economic and regional development. These civilians strive to develop cooperation with one or more partner organisations across the border that cover similar areas of interest. There have even been some examples where they sought to encourage the establishment of a corresponding Ukrainian organisation to facilitate future contact building, as their activities become more effective if a certain problem (e.g. environmental protection, waste management, knowledge dissemination) can transcend the dividing function of the border. Joint tender applications play a special role here, since common activities may not be realised without a source of funding.

Naturally, in Ukrainian–Hungarian crossborder relationships, we can find effective *CSOs established by foreign donor organisations*. Their network building and cooperation strategies are heavily influenced by the mother organisations, and they tend to be experienced in the area of EU tenders. The trainings and educational opportunities of these organisations are often used by thematic civilian organisations; the latter, in fact, are often one of their target audiences, and an indirect way to strengthen Ukrainian civil society.

The development of civil organisations in Transcarpathia and the increase in their numbers can be followed continuously. *Stefan Bathory Foundation and Citizens’ Initiatives Centre* have been tracking the growth and changing activities of all Transcarpathian civil organisations; by 1995, they numbered 200, and by 2000, 280 actually operative CSOs were in evidence. The lists published in 2006, which are both considered comprehensive, list 1239 on the social NGOs, and 428 charity organisations, listing name, address, leader and sphere of activities. The *Transcarpathian Community of Hungarian Intellectuals*, registered September

1993, has published a different database specifically focused on Hungarian organisations and institutions in Ukraine on an annual basis. It is apparent that civil organisations have appeared in ever widening areas of social processes, and in many ways, became specialised and highly differentiated. We must also remark that Hungarian civil organisations were more active than the organisations of other minorities. This has in all probability been influenced by the intent to acquire Hungarian funds. It can also be seen by looking at the leadership of these organisations, that a relatively restricted circle of persons appears in Hungarian CSOs; one person, or one family might be involved, interested in multiple civil organisations.

The majority of CSOs studied during the research period have political connections. On the Ukrainian side of the border, this can be unequivocally stated about organisations under the influence of Hungarian minority policy, in light that the majority of their funds are coming from Hungarian budgeted support. These organisations are divided along party lines, affiliated with either government or opposition forces. As we have mentioned, these actors build their contacts in the Hungarian–Hungarian relationship. Hungarian CSOs typically associate with the two blocs defining Hungarian political life, and are ideologically divided along these lines. Moreover, the two leading representative organisations, KMKSZ and UMDSZ, play the same role indirectly, “collecting” organisations under their aegis.

Several civil organisations operating in the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area have local governments as their members. In other cases, in addition to local government-related founders, we can see the county administration and investor groups (e.g. Agency for the Promotion of Investments). Therefore, these organisations can be best considered as non-profit interest groups who try to draw advantages from civil status (especially in the area of gaining tender funding); however, they are closer to the public sector than top-down civil initiatives. In Ukraine, we have been able to map multiple civilian umbrella organisations which group a range of CSOs with different profiles. These often politically involved organisations are active in the “soft” areas of the civil sector, such as the 29-strong Forum of Hungarian Organisations in Transcarpathia, encompassing the areas of social support, education and youth organisations.

From our interviewees, there were almost none who could mention a connection towards local governments, unless they were established by the same; there were, however, cases where a civil organisation realised a project originally initiated by and for the benefit of the local government. In Ukraine, local governments have no decision autonomy or resources of their own, which poses significant barriers before their involvement.

In 2001, Hungarian self governments in Transcarpathia created the *Self Government Alliance of Border Settlements*, whose main aim is the development of wide relations towards neighbour countries (not limited to Hungary). Hungarian

self governments along the state border have interests in the wide-ranging development border relationships.

In Transcarpathia, one of the most consciously organised civil organisation is *Advance Transcarpathian Consulting and Development Centre*, created with international assistance, which has gradually broadened its activities. The programmes of Advance are organised on a territorial instead of an ethnical basis, and it is known for involving other Ukrainian, Hungarian, Roma, etc. CSOs in its programmes. Since 2003, Advance has organised the most conferences about the neighbourhood programme and the preparations it makes necessary. It can be safely said that the organisation has become a regional information centre for CSOs working in the region. In its cooperation initiatives, a network of 20 organisations is commonly involved.

*KIÚT Regional Development Association*, a large umbrella organisation has made groundbreaking work in the area of preparing for the development of the Záhony–Chop transportation system, crossborder logistical relations and macroregional transport networks. The association, with regards to Transcarpathia, has also built a wide-ranging, non-ethnical system of relationships. Support for CSOs and their networks, training and conferences have been continually organised to disseminate and popularise the EU's neighbourhood initiatives. With the involvement of a Slovakian and a Ukrainian partner, "KIÚT" has helped set up a common organisation to study the issues of the triune border.

In Spring 2008, the *Civilian Knowledge Repository* was opened, helped to a great extent by the Inspi-Ráció Association of Nyíregyháza. The library has one of the most extensive collections of material related to civil society and organisations; its accommodations were provided by the Roman Catholic parish.

In 2006, *Nyírmada–Beregszász– Ukrainian–Hungarian Helping Hand Public Non-profit Foundation* was registered to do social support on the territory of Transcarpathia, and especially Berehove [Beregszász].

In Autumn 2008, VÁTI Public Non-profit Company, with the support of EGT and the *Norwegian Financing Mechanism*, announced the tender for "The development of crossborder cooperation in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border area" (HU0013/NA2005-1/PA-9), which once more improved the tender positions of CSOs in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and Transcarpathia. The tender set down four priorities: sustainable economic development, human resource development, education, cultural and innovation cooperation, environmental protection cooperation and local infrastructure development support.

The General Assembly of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, the City of Nyíregyháza and the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Hungary supported the creation of *EuroClip-EuroKapocs Public Non-Profit Company*. The main mission of the public non-profit company is the development of Ukrainian–Hungarian relations, especially in the interregional and crossborder dimensions. In short time, the company became an important centre for crossborder programmes, contact-

building and training civil organisations in Ukraine. Their tendering and support activities primarily served the strengthening of CSOs.

In the scope of international development policy, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry also created the *Ukrainian–Hungarian Cultural, Educational and Information Centre* in 2008, with activities in multiple districts of Transcarpathia. A separate treaty has established cooperation with the Ukrainian–Hungarian Cultural Cooperation Association of Rahiv (Rahó) District.

At present it cannot be said that the civilian sphere has prepared any strategies of their own on cross-border cooperation. Today their profiles are rather more dependent on their parent organisation's profile, and for what activities they can win funding. It is obvious that both EU and national allocations are relaying cooperation-related priorities. On the regional and local level, projects targeted at economic development, education and the development of the human sector are in the majority, but tourism and environmental protection also appear frequently. There are several foundations and associations on both sides of the border, acting as financial distributors for the promotion of the civilian sphere or of the economy (EuroClip, TES-Fund, KIÚT Regional Development Association, Carpathians Foundation, Advance Transcarpathian Consulting and Development Centre, etc.).

The majority of NGOs involved in crossborder activities are well aware of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy. With some exceptions they have already participated in it and received some grants through these programmes. It was ascertained during interviews that Hungarian and Ukrainian higher education institutes, although they have extensive foreign relations, have not yet applied for EU resources. This can mostly be explained by the fact that the organisational units involved in international cooperation have no independent decision-making competencies or they are unable to raise money for the own part of the project; moreover, they sometimes lack the requisite expertise and management capacity for crossborder cooperation projects. Finally, the classification of the above-mentioned institutes into the category of civil organisations seems to be a problematic case, particularly in Ukraine where the dominance of the state prevails.

Civil organisations tend to consider the EU enlargement a positive development, resulting in increased interest from the Ukrainian side towards EU-related knowledge. It is undeniable that the most important motivation is in the funding opportunities that became available. However, they also placed an emphasis on knowledge and experience transfer, the dissemination of an "European outlook" and management culture. However, the internationalisation of organisations is hindered by the hurdles of crossing the border, as well as the very poor public transport opportunities. All in all, CSOs thought it positive that they got closer to the EU, and hoped that it would make them adopt a different way of thinking. On the other side, it was brought up as a critique that the neighbourhood policy ultimately serves the EU's self-interests: by encouraging the advancement of quality of life along the external borders and the democratisation of societies, it seeks to



guarantee its own security, without respect to other concerns (however, it has also been remarked by interviewees that funds allocated to developing the local economy did more for the security of the border area than the much higher prioritised projects for strengthening controls).

Some CSOs, especially professionalised bodies, have been involved in EU-funded projects (mostly TACIS, INTERREG and PHARE). These opportunities are valued not just for funding, but also for encouraging “good practice”, disseminating management knowledge and contributing to democratic procedures (particularly in Transcarpathia). The perceived rationality of EU projects was evaluated in contrast with the irrationality, corruption and inefficiency of the local public sector; thus, the EU is sometimes seen as a democratic ideal – not necessarily in its current operations, but the sort of principles and practices it *should* encourage.

### **3.6 Differentiated attitudes towards crossborder cooperation among interviewed CSOs**

Based on our research, it is apparent that civil organisations interviewed in the border area do not usually have relations with the European Union or its organs. 26.8% of surveyed organisations report that they have such a relationship. This includes actors such as the Ukrainian National University and the College of Nyiregyháza, which can only be considered “civilian” by the most generous understanding of the term – on the other hand, they enjoy active and dynamic Ukrainian–Hungarian contacts. Participation in projects benefiting from EU funding show a more positive picture, since 37.1% of surveyed organisations reported such. However, it is typical that those CSOs which have completed EU-financed projects have been involved in multiple ones, usually in the framework of Phare, Interreg, TACIS and CBC programmes. It can be generally stated that those organisations which have dared to establish themselves on the EU level have been successful at gaining funding for their activities.

Views on the role of the EU are not uniform among civil organisations that are engaged in crossborder activities, and this is often based on knowledge or the lack thereof about the EU’s neighbourhood policy. 56% of interviewees have responded to the effect of knowing the NNP well, 33% have heard of it, and a mere 11% confessed to unfamiliarity. In this light, we can evaluate how civil actors have evaluated the NNP’s effects on crossborder cooperation: 33% stated that it would/could be very helpful, but 44% were more sceptical by stating that it “could have some positive effect”. Those interviewees who had no knowledge of the NNP gave no opinion. Comments accompanying the responses included remarks such as “*it could be beneficial to cooperation if tender opportunities were continuous [plannable], and there was appropriate finance*”. On the Ukrainian

side, responses were more nuanced: *“We understand the gist of border area cooperation, that it aims to raise the quality of life on the other side of the border and stabilise the situation. On the other side, it makes border crossing much harder...”*

Organisations mostly looked at the EU as a source of tenders, an organ from which it is possible to gain funding for the development of civil relations. Several CSO representatives had a positive opinion on the EU’s perspectives. It was a common statement that the intensive contacts developed between people should be maintained even under a stricter border regime, because these play an important role in supply, and prevent a negative social explosion. Therefore, the opportunities of the border economy are still ripe for exploitation. Concerning the issues of the environment, it was proposed that they can only be treated effectively in the framework of international cooperation, and that an EU approach is not just beneficial for the member state, but also Ukraine. According to a Hungarian regional development organisation, *“this sort of support is a crucial motivation for our crossborder activities”*. However, the same representative mentioned that the NNP was significantly less effectively communicated than either Phare or Interreg. And concerning Ukraine, there have been some pessimistic remarks, both because of bureaucracy and problems in governance and a culture of cooperation.

Some Ukrainian civil organisations are very strongly embedded into neighbourhood policy, and are known to disseminate information about it. For example, although Advance Foundation has organised conference after conference on the NNP, which have covered the question of civil relations, financial perspectives and project opportunities, the networked cooperation of social organisations and support opportunities for marginalised groups, one of the foundation’s experts said that *“in the execution of the neighbourhood policy, the opportunities of CSOs can naturally only be secondary to those of state and governmental organisations”*. In a centralised state, the role of civilians on the local and regional level are not yet as significant and spectacular as in Kiyiv. One of the main reasons is that organisations that could become active in cooperation do not have operative independence, or aren’t able to provide the resources required for tender participation. This statement is also applicable to local governments.

Nonetheless, thanks to the work done by civil organisations, neighbourhood policy and the opportunities it offers have found their way into the minds of civilians and state organs alike. Multiple civil actors have emphasised that civilians can have an effect on government organs, since they often come up with initiatives that result in a relaxation of regulations. Civilians active in the area of culture were more sceptical, and reported no perception of the Union’s effects in the sphere of arts and arts-centred cooperation. They would find it important to open some tender opportunities in this area, as, again, *“culture is the strongest binding link between people”*.

In scope of the research, interviewees provided their evaluation on the role of civil organisations in various segments of public life. The surveyed civil representatives saw the role of civilians most prominently in local economic development, local social development, and environmental issues, and gave surprisingly positive comments. In social development, 73% of actors evaluated them as very good or good, and only 20% as neutral; only one respondent gave a negative evaluation. Although the presence of civil organisations in environmental protection is still somewhat nascent, 69% of the surveyed considered their performance good or very good. Finally, in local economic development, the responses were somewhat more balanced: 56% gave evaluations of good or at least neutral, while 44% as bad or very bad (here, not all responses were clear enough to properly tabulate; others did not feel qualified to provide an answer).

## **4 Economic cooperation and civil society**

### **4.1 Inter-state relations and economic development**

In the framework of the new regional development policies starting in Hungary after the mid 1990s, cross-border relationships had been calculated as a new possibility of spatial development. Energy politics and minority issues are relevant for local society and crossborder relationships, but they are primarily set by the decisions of central governments. Civil organisations (both Ukrainian and Hungarian) have a stake in encouraging Ukraine's EU-integration, because this way, they are able to improve their operational circumstances and their efficiency.

Hungary's EU accession was preceded by great hopes and expectations on both sides of the border. EU integration did not hinder the development of Hungarian-Ukrainian economic relations, as the volume of foreign trade between Hungary and Ukraine increased by 20 to 25% annually. By 2004, the value of goods traffic between the two countries increased to, and subsequently superseded 2 billion USD per annum. By 2004, Hungarian firms had invested 70 million USD into Ukraine in the pharmaceutical, financial, service sectors and construction industry.

Until 1988-1989, the Hungarian-Ukrainian border had rather peculiar features and functions; while personal traffic was restricted, the border was open for great flows of goods, energy and raw materials, Záhony and its cargo transfer zone often being referred to as "Europe's biggest mainland port". The opening of the border in 1989-1990, and the establishment of independent Ukraine, resulted in a development of economic relations between the respective states. Hungary's approaching EU membership accelerated economic processes in the Hungarian-Ukrainian relations. In April 2001, *the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and In-*

dustry founded its *Ukrainian Section* with 133 members. It became the driving engine of developing bilateral economic ties between Hungary and Ukraine. The section is national, but 80% of members are from Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County or the Northern Great Plains Region. In February 2003, the *Hungarian–Ukrainian Regional Development Office* was opened with the sponsorship of TACIS.

In January 1999, an *Act on the Establishment of a Special Economic Zone in Transcarpathia* was passed. The Act granted economic preferences for 15 years for businesses investing over 250 thousand USD in the zone. After the year 2004, the legitimacy of the whole economic zone was questioned, but at that time the value of per capita foreign investments had been 195 USD in Transcarpathia, compared to the average sum of 176 USD per head in Ukraine as a whole. In May 2005, the Parliament of Ukraine suspended the tax benefits granted to the Economic Zone. In the year 2003, the County Council of Transcarpathia and the Regional Development Council of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County together prepared a *Joint Development Concept for the Hungarian–Ukrainian Border Region*. The Concept overviewed the most important aspects of the two countries' affected areas in conformity with the EU's professional standards, and formulated possible development alternatives. In October 2003, the Hungarian Government established *Záhony Enterprise Zone* which was formed with the purpose of initiating economic relations between Hungary's eastern parts and Ukraine. From regional development aspects, the Zone was declared as an investment project of primary importance, but its development progress was very slow.

Following its entry into the EU, Hungary joined the international development cooperation activities targeted at providing support for transitional and developing countries. Hungary's efforts for support were mainly focused on Ukraine within the programme of *Nyíregyházi Kezdeményezés* (Nyíregyháza Initiative). Between 2004 and 2006 the EU's Neighbourhood Programme at the joint border zone of Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine was focused on crossborder socio-economic cooperation and on cooperation programmes in the fields of environmental protection and transport.

On 6th March 2007, the prime ministers of Ukraine and Hungary signed the *Action Plan of the Republic of Hungary and the Government of Ukraine for the year 2007*. The Action Plan declared short and medium-term tasks in the area of economy, transport, the energy sector, water management, environmental protection and the human sector (health services, visa regimes, culture, education, and ethnic minorities). The agreement dedicated a special chapter to the directives of developing cooperation agreements. In the field of economy, it involved:

- cooperation and information exchange between state property management organisations;

- the intensification of cooperation between ITDH and INVESTUKRAINE, facilitating businessmen contacts;
- establishing direct regional cooperation with some governorships in Ukraine, including the modernisation of neighbouring border regions with the involvement of EU funds;
- the introduction of the commercial development services of the Hungarian EXIMBANK and MEHIB to Ukrainian businessmen, providing governmental support to joint projects;
- making an agreement on small border traffic between the two countries, a better utilisation of economic relations between the two sides of the border, providing access to EU grants designated for such purposes within the EU's Neighbour Policy Programme;
- sharing experience gained during Hungary's EU accession period and EU membership.

In the field of transport the following tasks were formulated:

- the joint development of the Záhony cargo terminal by Hungarian, Russian and Ukrainian partners, the establishment of an international logistic centre;
- for the development of Ukrainian-Hungarian border regions, the improvement of the facilities of passenger and freight transport between Hungary and Ukraine by building road infrastructure, border crossing stations, railway lines and a new bridge in Záhony.

In the energy sector and water management, the tasks were the following:

- increasing the security of energy transport; a wide scale cooperation in the field of the energy sector;
- increasing the capacity of gas pipelines coming from Ukraine to Hungary;
- working out proposals for building hydroelectrical stations with a performance of less than 20 MW on the Upper Tisza taking into account the aspects of water management, flood prevention and environmental protection;
- the revision and updating of the Inter-governmental Agreement on Environmental Protection and Regional Development of 1993;
- the intensification of cooperation in the fields of water management and waste management in the territory of the Upper Tisza;
- the revision of the operational issues of the waterworks facilities in the territory of Upper Tisza with special regards to the relevant directives of the EU;
- the intensification of cooperation in the field of environmental industry.

In July 2007 the Hungarian government made a decision on *258 high priority projects, including the development of Záhony into an economic centre* to again serve as the eastern gateway of Europe. The Hungarian government thinks of

Záhony not only in the framework of Hungarian–Ukrainian relations; rather, it is implementing its development projects in a wider European and Central and Eastern European scale context.

During the period of Ukrainian transformation, Hungarian–Ukrainian relationships were not free of problems; especially because of the special features of privatisation in Ukraine. We cannot say that Hungarian entrepreneurs had been discriminated in any way, but rather that the events of Ukrainian domestic politics and economic policy had had negative impacts on Hungarian businesses as well. As an example, we can mention the establishment of the Special Economic Zone in Transcarpathia and the subsequent termination of its economic preferences.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia over gas prices and transit delivery, which had broken out January 2006, was a serious threat for Hungary’s energy supply as well. This was a moment of truth for Hungarian society and the political elite, who only now started to see how serious the consequences of the political, economical and infrastructural heritage of the Soviet era may be. This situation depends not only on what is going on in Russia, but on the domestic situation within Ukraine, the transit country, as well.

Gas and energy relationships are questions which indirectly surfaced in all interviews made with economy-oriented civilian organisations. It was a continuous question in the local seminar organised in Záhony, and talks made with representatives in regional administration. Environmental protection organisations and local press articles emphasised the environmental dangers of current economic contact and planned investments. The same questions were raised on Hungarian online discussion forums regarding existing and proposed energy production and distribution initiatives.

On 10–11 July 2007 Viktor Yuschenko, the President of Ukraine paid a two-day visit to Hungary. During the official talks, demands for a common approach towards the issues of environmental protection, water and forest management were being raised. Regarding economic and crossborder cooperation, the Ukrainian party raised a proposal for offering a territory on the Ukrainian side near the border for *gas storage* purposes with a capacity of 1 billion m<sup>3</sup> of natural gas to increase the security of Hungary’s gas supply.

#### **4.2 Economic cooperation on the local/regional level**

Crossborder relations between Ukraine and Hungary have experienced a rebirth since transformation. We can see that the inhabitants of the border area, especially on the Ukrainian side, experience the process of European integration as an ambiguous development, just like Europe’s messages are themselves contradictory. There is a tension between the wish to encourage a Wider Europe where borders can be transcended, and the concept of a highly securitised “Fortress Europe”

attempting to exert strong control on its frontiers. Visa requirements and the circumstances of border crossing have been a constant source of problems.

Economic flows are less restricted by security concerns than personal traffic. The emergence of CSOs involved in crossborder economic cooperation has grown strongly, especially since the years before Hungary's EU accession. A complex network of relations has emerged with the assistance of EU, national and regional funding; however, this development is not without problems (see CSA NGO report). Transnational investment projects are drawn into the border region to exploit its special position: proximity to western markets with low labour costs and transport advantages. CSOs on both sides of the border were actively encouraging more new investments, which ranged from energetics (hydro-power plants on the Tisza river, gas storage, etc.) through automotive industry (Eurocar, a VW supplier; or Kalos, an Ivano-Frankivsk-based car parts manufacturer) to electronics (JD Electronics, Flextronics) and tourism (winter and health-tourism on multiple sites). CSOs play a vital role in business promotion, serving as mediators between potential investors and other regional/national actors. CSOs have lobbied national governments, encouraging new large investment projects in the proximity of the border.

The border region has become the planned site for multiple large-scale investment projects; however, most of these are yet to be realised. In 2006, Ferrexpo, a firm seated in Poltava and privatised in 1995, announced its plans to invest € 300 million into a *steel rolling plant with a manufacturing capacity of 2.5 million tons per annum* (this volume is higher than Hungary's current total annual manufacturing capacity) with an approximate 1000 jobs created in the general area. On the turn of 2007–2008 the plant was still in a preparatory phase. In June 2007, the Ukrainian proprietors of FMFESZ Ltd. announced a plan for a *new gas power plant* with a value of € 1.5 billion with a capacity of 2400 MW and a primary manpower need of 2500–3000 to be built in cooperation with RostUkrEnergo Co. on the Hungarian side of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border. The plans to build *gas fuelled power stations and gas storage facilities* on the Hungarian side have already been discussed on inter-governmental levels (President Viktor Yushenko stressed it separately in July 2007). On a brownfield site, a combined cycle power station with a value of € 130 million and a power capacity of 230 MW is planned to be built, in conjunction with a gas storage facility with a capacity of 1 billion m<sup>3</sup> on the Ukrainian side of the border. A new 22.5 km gas pipeline should connect the power station with Ukraine for its energy supply. Hungarian (System Consulting) and Austrian (Meinl International Power) investors have been named in relationship with the project. The studies on the power station's impacts on other investments and on the environment have been prepared, but the realisation has not yet begun. In all of the aforementioned cases, nationally operating environmentalist pressure groups have lobbied against the new projects, while the local political elite is in full support of industrialisation, cross-border contact-

building, and sees environmentalist visions as a threat, not a promise (“sustainability” vs. “sustaining backwardness”). We can mention this conflict not just as a general affair, but *a clash between central and regional interests* and respective value systems: in many ways, environmentalism represents an “anti-development ideology” in backwards areas.

Since 1996 the development of the regional dimension of cooperation between the EU and Ukraine has started within the framework of the TACIS programme; however, the pace of development was very slow on the territory of Transcarpathia. It is relevant that, while Ukrainian public administration follows a straight top-down hierarchy (retaining several traditions from the Soviet model of “democratic centralism”), civilian organisations are partially embedded into this order, but there are some which consciously and intentionally operate in a different way. Some CSOs, especially professionalised bodies, have been involved in EU-funded projects (mostly TACIS, INTERREG and PHARE). These opportunities are valued not just for funding, but also for encouraging good practice, disseminating management knowledge and contributing to democratic procedures on both sides of the border.

In the development of economic cooperation on the local/regional level, we can speak of three major factors influencing crossborder activities:

- The transformation of the local business sector on both sides of the border, as well as development cooperation involving state and CSO participants.
- The re-evaluation of the great flows which previously dominated crossborder contact; the investment/location priorities of national and transnational capital and the manifestation of global and local strategies in peripheral areas.
- The conflicting priorities of EU enlargement and the New Neighbourhood Policy (NNP) and their influence in crossborder relations.

These developments took place in peripherally situated regions, although with relatively economically mobile populations. It remains a major obstacle that knowledge/capital accumulated in the border area isn’t used endogenously, even when more and more new, regionally based investments are in need of skilled workers. This is compounded by the declining, but still present existence of small-scale smuggling as a personal survival mechanism, as well as “amoral networks” (crossborder criminal activity). CSOs active in economic development now place increasing stress on the importance of labour market reintegration and developing/managing human capital.

Economic cooperation on the Ukrainian–Hungarian border can be understood on multiple scales, involving different degrees of CSO involvement. Small-scale crossborder activity mostly occurs between private citizens or small and medium entrepreneurs, whose relations are fluid and rarely institutionalised. This sphere is targeted by CSOs involved in business promotion and/or regional devel-



opment (e.g. *TES-Fund* [Uzhhorod], *Uzhhorod-XXIst Century*, *Hungarian–Ukrainian Regional Development Office*), mostly in the form of knowledge transfer, trainings, administrative support and incubation. On the scale of regional development, we can find business promotion entities (e.g. *Agency for the Promotion of Investments* [Uzhhorod], *Nyíregyházi Business Incubator*, *Kiút Regional Development Association*), whose main objective is encouraging business entities to invest in the border regions. The largest scale is the border area itself, particularly the Záhony–Chop logistical contact zone in the context of great (transcontinental) flows, where the regional level is just a *location* for activities beyond its immediate influence. However, locally operating CSOs (e.g. *Záhony and Environment Development Ltd.*, *Kiút Regional Development Association*) play a role in the management and business development of the logistical zone, and they also supply central organs/governments with information, development concepts and articulated interests. The intensity of crossborder contact showed strong differences between the three levels; it was rather difficult for small-scale entities to develop effective links across the hard Ukrainian–Hungarian border, although the facilitating role of civil organisations such as *Advance Foundation*, *EuroClip–Eurokapocs Non-Profit Company*, or *The National Association of Craftsmen (IPOSZ)* has been of help.

In Transcarpathia, a broad configuration of civil organisations has surfaced in crossborder cooperation, and the role of a few key players in facilitating the growth of civil society, and fostering economic development is apparent. *Agency for the Promotion of Investments*, a quango, has become influential in supporting a wide range of local/regional development projects. Its activities in business promotion and capital attraction are to the benefit of the local administration. One of the most consciously organised civil organisation is *Advance Transcarpathian Consulting and Development Centre*, created with international assistance, which has gradually broadened its activities to become a regional information centre for CSOs working in the region. In its initiatives, a network of 20 organisations is commonly involved. *Carpathian Foundation* was created in 1994 as a civil organisation, especially through the support of various American institutions and foundations. CF first organised programmes on the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion, announcing tenders and initiating its own projects. CF's activities became very diverse under the span of a few years: environmental and cross-border development, the training of marginalised groups (Roma) and others became prominent in its areas of interest. The *Hungarian–Ukrainian Regional Development Office* has become involved in the training of Ukrainian regional development experts and providing help for economic stakeholders in Ukraine. The Office has gained recognition in the management of cross-border relations, development projects and tender applications. The Office has published the *Transcarpathia–Ukraine Investors' Manual* in 2008.

In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, the county's General Assembly, the City of Nyíregyháza and the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Hungary supported the creation of *EuroClip-EuroKapos Public Non-Profit Company*. The main mission of the public non-profit company is the development of Ukrainian–Hungarian relations, especially in the interregional and crossborder dimensions. In short time, the company became an important centre for crossborder programmes, contact-building and training civil organisations in Ukraine. Their tendering and support activities primarily served the strengthening of CSOs. Economic stakeholders in the border area have also strongly favoured further cooperation. In 2001, the *Hungarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce* established its *Hungarian–Ukrainian section*; the Chamber of Industry and Commerce of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and its partner organisation in Transcarpathia have been a central influence. Between the professional apparatus of the two chambers, there is daily communication and exchange of information; together, they have proposed numerous projects. Since 2003, the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County section of the *National Association of Craftsmen (IPOSZ)* has been a strong proponent and facilitator of bottom-up economic integration. The association, which represents 14 smaller crafts associations, has been conscious in building multilateral crossborder relations to increase the competitiveness of local industry, open up new markets and set up cooperation opportunities for small businessmen in the wider area.

In the spatial context, economic crossborder relations seem more emphasised on the Transcarpathian side than the Szabolcs one, where a wider network of economic links existed in other directions. At the same time, like in other areas of cooperation, Transcarpathian actors saw cooperation more multilaterally, towards not just one country, but four borders, and sometimes in a broader spatial scope. Among Hungarians, there is a tendency for bilateral thinking and reducing the question of cooperation to Hungarian–Hungarian relations (although this is less characteristic of economy than other dimensions). Development cooperation has extended to the *Záhony–Chop border zone*. CSOs have expressed a keen interest in the zone's development in the press, during interviews, and on our local workshops. It was an unanimous aim to maintain the relevance of this logistic zone in trans-Eurasian traffic (particularly from the Far East to the European Southwest, the “New Silk Road”), but there is also a drive to endow it with new functions in the service of regional economic development. It was perceived by many (most notably Hungarians) that Hungary had not devoted sufficient attention to a receptive Ukrainian and Russian side; that the ENP was disingenuous in prioritising security over contacts, and that rival agendas in Slovakia were attempting to re-route traffic to go through their own territory.

CSOs operating in the area of the economy don't have strong links towards the local population, or to other, non-economic CSOs. Indeed, what brings them together most often is none other but common party affiliation. While the CSO

sphere, is dominated by entities that see themselves, their mission and the entire border question through cultural (ethnic, religious, historical, etc.) perspectives, economic CSOs form a disparate and sometimes insular group. This also means, however, that their crossborder activities transcend ethnicity, as, while cultural groups have very little to say to one another, there are common economic interests on both sides of the border.

Crossborder practices are strongly influenced by the EU's conflicting attitudes towards its eastern external border. Enlargement, the ENP and the extension of the Schengen regime present a mash of incongruent goals, divided between closer cooperation and higher security. Several interviewees expressed *concern that Transcarpathia would become even more isolated* after these changes (*"a God-forgotten land which is not genuinely Ukraine, but nor is it Hungary, Romania, Slovakia or Poland"*, as one Ukrainian respondent put it). However, there was also a common belief that EU enlargement was a beneficial thing, and that it would "bring Ukraine closer to Europe". There was a clear desire for closer crossborder cooperation among CSOs, and that they presented concrete plans to this effect. The most important thing which would make this happen was not seen to be EU facilitation – the necessary instrumental links and institutional relations are mostly already in place; what is needed is measures to enable easier contact across the border – that is, faster, cheaper and perhaps less humiliating border crossing opportunities. Special policies aimed at the inhabitants of neighbouring regions (e.g. the revival and expansion of small border traffic, a practice which had existed between the Soviet Union/Ukraine and Hungary from 1986 until EU accession resulted in its discontinuation) are probably the optimal solution; the encouragement of CSO cooperation through targeted (and well monitored) funding being an important supplement to it.

## **5 Gender issues and social welfare in crossborder civil cooperation**

### **5.1 Gender as a special welfare problem of Ukrainian transformation**

Ukraine is seeing a steady decline in population (51 million inhabitants at independence, but only 46 million by 2008 estimates), which some researchers are billing a demographic catastrophe. The mid- and long-term demographic perspectives of Ukraine are considered extremely negative by both external and internal forecasts. The only area of debate is which of the alarming figures should be expected for the future. The entire system of socio-economic processes is impacted by the fact that, according to estimates made by *Dolja* (Fate), a Ukrainian womens' CSO, approximately 30 million legal and illegal abortions had been

performed in Ukraine between 1992 and 2007. This situation poses far-reaching and strongly negative consequences for families, social cohesion, public health and the moral welfare of women.

A Human Rights Watch report (*Women's Work: Discrimination Against Women in the Ukrainian Labor Force* 2003) identified harsh economic conditions, inadequate medical services, the high rate of abortions, infant and mother mortality, the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases, widespread domestic violence, women trafficking and labour market discrimination as the most relevant factors responsible for the current situation of women in Ukraine. According to the report, the employment rate among women in 2000 was only 52 percent, "far below the rate of 61 percent among men" (p. 10). As reported in the Hungarian-speaking press of Transcarpathia December 2008, a new report on social welfare has been released, estimating that approximately 70% of Ukraine's population is living under the socially accepted subsistence level. The report draws special attention to the fact that the tragic economic situation places an especially heavy burden on women who must work ever harder to keep their families together.

Despite the previously outlined negative perspective, we must remark that the lot of Ukrainian women is not hopeless on the level of talented individuals, as both domestic and international politics are open to women. Yulia Tymoshenko (Hromada Party, Batkivshchyna party, Bloc Tymoshenko) is the best known example, but women have filled leading positions in major (Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, Agrarian Party, Progressive Socialist Party, Our Ukraine) and especially smaller parties. The *Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership* ([www.guide2womenleaders.com/](http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/)) lists 13 smaller parties chaired by women, among them the Ukrainian Party of Women's Initiatives (1997), the Party of Solidarity of Women of Ukraine (1999), National Women's Party (1998) and Women for the Future (2001 – in 2002, the party won 2.1% of the popular vote with no seats; in 2006, the party was part of the Opposition Bloc "Ne Tak").

Against the background of transformation background, the formation of CSOs oriented on gender issues has become an important concern. The Soviet system, which had a formally classified system of non-governmental organisations, supported formal women's organisations with a high membership. Some of this legacy survived transformation, and formal membership in various organisations can still be observed. Scientific analyses on the Ukrainian feminist movements (e.g. by Sergey Zheberkin) in the 1990s placed emphasis on the point that feminist movements were hit by all the possible problems and conflicts of transformation, resulting in identity-seeking. The question of the relation between nationalism and feminism has been raised especially strongly; the dilemma of nation-building is one of many faced by Ukrainian women's organisations. Another defining issue is reaching the wildly different strata of a highly unequal society facing a diversity of challenges.

Active CSOs involved in gender issues in Ukraine were formed mostly as a result of international support and joined the activities of international organizations in the 1990s. Gender issues CSOs are representing women's interests mostly on national levels but some regional-level feminist CSOs also exist. In 1995, 11 officially registered women's civil organisations were known in Ukraine; by 1997, the number had increased to 85. In the 1990s, women's CSOs with the highest active membership included "Soyuz Ukraynok", "Spilka Zhinok" and "Zhinocha Hromada"; some of the organisations are associated with political parties, and operate as their specialised affiliates. Others with specific aims also exist, e.g. the "Commission of Soldiers' Mothers" is concerned with the problems of young conscripts. In June 2000, Susanna Stanik, the Ukrainian minister of justice, in her UN Assembly lecture "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century", remarked that in her country, 29 women's civil organisations operated on the national, and more than 200 on the regional level, with the full support of the state.

In its country reports, the EU has recognised a gradual advancement in human rights and freedom of press, also emphasising that at the end of 2005, the government accepted a public programme for ensuring women's equal rights and opportunities. The act's practical implementation is expected to be a long process. Declaring support for equal rights does not mean that women are on an equal basis with men in all areas, but it establishes the possibility of enforcing this principle in all areas.

If Ukraine and gender issues are raised in conjunction, many people in Western Europe associate them with women trafficking (as well as mail-order brides). As the news or case studies published in Ukrainian or Hungarian language Ukrainian press suggests, 'trafficking in female slaves' has become an extensive business, and the 'market price' of a young Ukrainian woman may be worth between € 800–3000. This kind of business became so extensive that it may even raise state security issues. The number of sex slaves kidnapped from the country is estimated to be around 30–40 thousand according to the Ukrainian National Security Agency. *La Strada Ukraine*, an NGO whose central mission is the prevention of the trafficking of Ukrainian women (including a crisis hotline and victim support), operates a regional office in Uzhhorod. Transcarpathia was the "western gateway" of human trafficking in Ukraine, which makes the presence and crossborder activity of the NGO self-explanatory.

*Winrock International*, a USA-based NGO, "in conjunction with seven regional Ukrainian NGOs, has undertaken a pilot program to address two key factors that contribute to the susceptibility of Ukrainian women to trafficking: lack of economic opportunity and violence. Local women's centers offer job skills training, hotlines, crisis prevention, and referral services to women. A few organizations dedicated to sociological, political, and economic research and analysis of problems facing women also exist. Many of these groups conduct advocacy with

*local and national governments, and international institutions.*” (*Women’s Work* 2003, p. 11) Winrock International also adopted the Women’s Economic Empowerment Project from 1999 to 2002 with a two-year extension; measures were focused on entrepreneurial training, business loans, business diversification assistance and community action facilitation; the actions involved more than 4400 participants, resulted in the establishment of 155 new or diversified businesses and created 136 new jobs (<http://ukraine.winrock.org/>).

*Counterpart Creative Center*, founded in 1993 on the basis of US capital and support and gaining official registration in 1996, has become – among other activities – a nationally relevant actor in support for women’s issues. CCC has established a network of regional offices; CCC-Lviv and CCC-Uzhhorod (with offices in Perechin) were considered the most successful. CCC played an instrumental role in helping women to become entrepreneurs, and in the administration of a TACIS micro-project facility in Ukraine to support NGOs.

Since the establishment of contacts between the European Union and Ukraine, there has been a conscious attempt on the EU’s part to convey its values to its future neighbour. This transmission has a special significance regarding gender issues, with especially strong monitoring in discriminative practices. *Women’s Work: Discrimination Against Women in Ukrainian Labor* (2003) presents the socio-economic background of Ukrainian gender issues, compares international standards and Ukrainian law, devotes chapters to discrimination in various employment sectors and its typical manifestations (e.g. gender discrimination related to marital and family status, age and appearance), points out the deficiencies of government response, and makes recommendations to the Ukrainian government, the EU, various transnational bodies (ILO, Council of Europe) and civil organisations. The report remarks that while “*government officials routinely deny that discrimination against women in the labor force is a problem in Ukraine, ... Human Rights Watch found the Ukrainian government to be complicit in both public and private sector discrimination*” (p. 3).

## **5.2 The development of gender issues in Hungarian civil society**

Hungarian society is not characterised by a developed civilian culture, which can be explained not just by objective factors deriving from the economic and political milieu or the diminutive role of reciprocity, but also cultural and mental reasons. It is evident that the historical precedents, the one-party state before the current situation, eliminated even the meagre traditions of civil society, although it is also relevant that the slowly awakening civil society played a role in preparing the ground before systematic change. Women’s organisations were not strongly established under socialism, although civilians had raised concerns over

gender issues. After transformation, the development of civil society has also created CSOs in this field.

In Hungary the formal equal treatment of women is declared by the Constitution in all areas of public life, but in the majority of cases, the disadvantaged situation and discrimination of women can continuously be recognised. In the Hungarian Parliament and political discourse there was a debate on the issues of a 50 percent female quota in 2007 and its rejection by the parliamentary majority. Opinions were not divided along party lines, but rather within individual parties. The rejection of the quota raised the issue of organising a purely feminist party under the name of „Magyar Nők Pártja” (Hungarian Women’s Party), although the reality of society, politics and the election system renders the possibility of its election success nil.

By the view and evaluation of the NŐTárs Public Foundation, a CSO concerned with gender issues and involved in crossborder cooperation, Hungary and its society is “one of the most conservative” regarding gender issues in the EU. The female civilian sphere and women’s opportunities of exercising their own interests are very weak in all areas of public life. Gender mainstreaming, a part of the EU’s development policy is either absent from or very weakly represented in the government’s policies, and it is even missing from the projects of – non-feminist – CSOs as well. Ukraine is “even more conservative” than Hungary with regards to gender issues. Discrimination against women is considered almost natural, and although some feminist CSOs exist there, they have almost no opportunities to exercise their agendas.

The *NŐTárs Public Foundation* was established 2004, and since its establishment, it has been dealing with womens’ problems in Hungary not only in a general sense, but also in the context of development processes. The Corporation undertakes research on crossborder cooperation. In 2007 the Foundation won a Presidency Fund tender and regards the establishment of a gender-based NGDO (Non-Governmental Development Organisation) network as its primary task. The most important objectives are as follows:

- Raising the awareness on the EU’s Development Policy, the EU’s Development Plan and on the Millenary Objectives in Hungary in the decision-making sector (Parliament, Government), in the media, and in the NGO sector as well.
- The intensification of existing networks, joining them and establishing new contacts in Hungary and in the EU.

The Foundation has clearly formulated its cooperation plans on the level of programmes and projects towards feminist organisations interested in these issues and operating in TACIS areas, especially in Ukraine and particularly the Hungarian populated areas of Transcarpathia. The Foundation is facing some difficulties

in this respect, since as of yet they have not found any sufficiently sized and competent feminist CSOs in Ukraine or in Transcarpathia.

### **5.3 Gender-oriented civil issues in the border area**

Inter-state relations across the Ukrainian–Hungarian border – due in part to the conditioned reflexes of the previous socialist period – can be considered a dominant framework from the standpoint of both administrative organs and individual citizens. These relations are especially important in the case of physical planning, crossborder infrastructure and border waters. The problem of gender is usually only represented in the form of generalities; in this area, stronger steps should be taken, with a special emphasis on joint activity across the border. Gender issues are impacted by sectoral relations (e.g. police/justice cooperation) as well as specific measures. The Hungarian Police, which is currently responsible for policing the external EU borders after the integration of the Hungarian Border Guard, has played an important role in preventing illegal migration and in trying to eliminate women trafficking.

In Transcarpathia, the problems of gender generally conform to the overall Ukrainian situation. According to a report in *Kárpáti Igaz Szó*, a national research programme analysing gender relations among multiple ethnical groups (Ukrainian, Hungarian, Jewish, etc.) found that Ukrainian women complained the hardest about the lack of gender equality (*Kárpáti Igaz Szó*, 16 November 2004). In another report, published in *Kárpátalja*, it was mentioned that “three out of ten women” suffer from home violence (*Kárpátalja*, 26 November 2005).

On the territory of Transcarpathia, multiple feminist CSOs have regional affiliates or member organisations. Feminist CSOs are generally not organised on an ethnical basis but rather on professional or lobbying grounds. Our research on the Hungarian–Ukrainian border showed as almost self-evident that even the most self-conscious CSOs had only few females in their staff, the number of females in leading positions being very low, just like their opportunities to realise their interests. In interviews, almost all respondents knew about the existence of CSOs dealing with gender issues, but most could not precisely identify any.

Organisations concerned with the problems of gender operate belong in the category of thematic CSOs along with environmental, cultural, Roma organisations and CSOs working for the benefit of disadvantaged groups. These CSOs get involved in crossborder cooperation to extend their activities to a wider dimension, although they are typically only have local or regional presence, with weak (if any) crossborder links. The motivation for developing crossborder contact strongly includes joint tender applications; there have been some examples where thematic CSOs sought to encourage the establishment of a corresponding Ukrainian organisation to facilitate future contact building. Organisations operat-



ing in the social sector or concerned with marginalised groups are usually parts of international networks, and try to develop networks of civil organisations with a similar profile in Ukraine. These organisations typically do not restrict their activities to the local level, but instead operate in the entire region. Their projects are either charitable and social, in support of the poor or disabled; or concerned with social advice, training and education where they sometimes gain the financial support of the Ukrainian Labour Office. Some of these CSOs even have their own tenders in support of social initiatives.

A key player in this area, *Advance Foundation* is a transnational CSO which has been involved in the concrete realisation of European Union objectives on the entire territory of Transcarpathia, with a presence in almost all EU-funded projects. The foundation's work is conducted in the scope of a network spanning 20 civil organisations. Networking also means that an increasing number of CSOs are establishing working contacts in the direction of the European Union.

An interview conducted with the representative of a women's CSO based in the gypsy camp near Beregszász (Berehove) has revealed the ground-level effectiveness and positive consequences of these programmes, including their impact on self-image and civilian initiative.

## **6 Europe, the border and civil participation in the mirror of the local press**

### **6.1 The coverage of border issues in selected periodicals**

The re-emergence of crossborder relations on the Ukrainian–Hungarian border after transition has been undergoing parallel with regional institution-building, including the growth of civil society organisations. An important phenomenon of the process has been the changing role of the local press, whose articulation of interests, images, fears and aspirations provides a valuable glimpse into their formation and change. Issues of smaller scope can find their way into local newspapers and other periodicals, and it can also be assumed that they present a more “ground-level” perspective on large-scale dilemmas, such as initiatives like the European Neighbourhood Policy, EU enlargement, border securitisation and development initiatives.

The journals discussed here are primarily written for the Transcarpathian and Ukrainian Hungarian audience, in the Hungarian language (for the purposes of this paper, the online editions were used). The choice is not accidental. It is a distinguishing feature of the research area that Hungarian–Hungarian relations are the strongest in crossborder contact-building due to the presence of the Hungarian

minority in Transcarpathia. This specialty could be observed in the thematic analysis of the journals, but also their value systems and political language. However, the journals are also suitable for the mapping of wider Ukrainian stances on the topics of European integration, crossborder relations and the development of civil society.

In the preceding four years, the question of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border understandably invoked more interest here than in the national press. Ukraine is a massive country with a very fragmented border, where the Hungarian section is not significant in length. If we narrow our scope to Transcarpathia, its importance alters – the border position of the Transcarpathian administrative unit (oblast) is a crucial regional *differentia specifica*, and the Hungarian border fulfils an evident function for the autochthonic Hungarian minority, including the possibility of cultural contact with the mother country. It is therefore predictable that the border was constantly on the journals’ agenda as a geographic space, and also as a system of symbols that binds and separates “east and west”, two cultures that meet at this point. The “political westernisation” of Hungary is a dimension of particular interest, not just thanks to EU accession, but also the previous systematic change which involved breaking away from the Soviet empire, and was coincidental with a higher level of economic development. In public imagination, these factors are at the forefront. Typical examples are the following: At a conference in Uzhhorod, the increasingly important “bridging” role and geopolitical significance of the region has been mentioned. It was stressed that here, *“the possibilities are excellent for direct contact building, and the public is the fastest to react to the litmus test of the diffusion of European processes”* (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 26. February 2005). The mayor of Debrecen, Hungary, remarks, *“Debrecen should fulfil the role of the yeast in the process that, through the creation of a cultural region, will break the “end of the world” settlements of Ukraine, Romania and Hungary” from the boundaries of their peripheral existence”* (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 30. July 2005).

In our analysis, we attempted to discover how crossborder relations were seen in the local press of both sides of the border. We worked from a sample of 523 articles published between 2000 and 2006, selected for their relevance to crossborder relations. The articles come from two daily and four daily papers; it is notable that while the sample only includes one periodical from the Hungarian side, its circulation of approximately 60.000 copies exceeds all others together in Transcarpathia. In the sample, a full 90% of the articles come from three periodicals, Kárpáti Igaz Szó, Kárpátalja and Kelet-Magyarország, of which the first accounts for 51% alone. It is notable that Kelet-Magyarország (published in Hungary) and the weekly of the Transcarpathian state administration, Beregi Hírlap, have demonstrated a relatively lower level of interest in border issues than smaller Hungarian papers.

Concerning the yearly distribution of articles, two surges are visible, one in 2000 and a larger one in 2003 and 2004, after which the number of articles declined, but stabilised at a higher level than previously. The first surge can be linked with the Hungarian government's Status Law concerning benefits granted to Hungarian minorities living across the borders; the second is the joint result of the approaching 2004 EU enlargement and the possibility on the part of Hungary to grant minorities across the borders a form of dual citizenship. Both of these show an increase in more polemic articles as debate concerning these matters was undergoing. Especially strong were the fears and hopes associated with changing visa regimes and border control after Hungary's accession; these events were linked with a considerable demonstration of negative sentiment.

## 6.2 Scales of representation

The reports and analyses of the journals examine the border from various dimensions. The most common dimension is the *transnational, intergovernmental* one, inasmuch as governmental leaders, diplomats and politicians can never avoid the problems of bordering. The questions of obtaining, regulating, easing and complicating visa are a constant source of controversy, where the governmental levels are always "optimistic", but, considering the existing problems, may not dodge the issue. Authorities try to dampen the contention over visa requirements by drawing attention to the more modest administrative fees, and, if possible, avoid the questions of security, refugees and smuggling. The region dimensions of contact between countries are primarily linked to the opportunities and tasks of economic cooperation, environmental protection, disaster prevention, and infrastructural development. As an example, at an opening speech of new crossing station, the Hungarian minister of finance stated that "*it is the success of the representation of interests that Brussels has approved the modernisation of small border crossing stations – in addition to Lónya, Barabás–Mezőkaszony [Koson].*" (Kárpátalja, 15 December 2006)

The *local political dimension* is closer to the average citizen. Here, there is emphasis on the slowness of bureaucratic administration, the corruption and rough manners of administrative officials, the specific circumstances of border crossing, and the advantageous and disadvantageous consequences of the border's proximity to individual welfare. One mayor explained: "*It was proven previously that if there are no direct relations between the people on different sides of the border, they will find it harder to solve several of their problems.*" (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 2 March 2004) "*We often forget that, willing or not, these villages became gateways to the European Union and their inhabitants become border crossers because of their needs. They have to face the Brussels requirements daily, and*

when they cross the state border, they are stepping not just on the soil of Hungary, but also united Europe.” (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 30 September 2006)

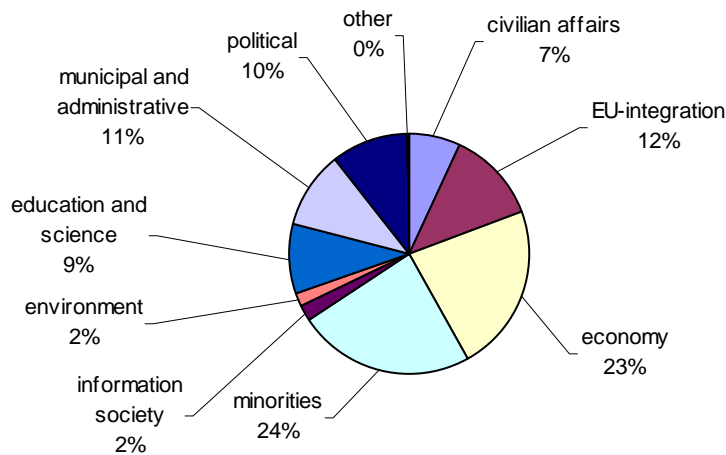
Naturally, the *symbolic representations* of the border are commonly found in the press, as a bridge, a gateway, but it is just as often seen as an iron curtain, dividing wall, the end of the world or a periphery between two worlds (“Far from Civilisation”, Kárpáti Igaz Szó 2006). In the study period, the case of the village Szelmenc became of symbolic importance, and a proof of the successful EU enlargement – “the last iron curtain of Europe has finally disappeared”.

### 6.3 Thematic analysis of border issues

During the analysis, we identified ten general themes to categorise the articles (Figure 2). Here, EU-integration, economic concerns and minority issues were the most prevalent. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, it was the Transcarpathian periodicals which had a stronger focus on minorities; meanwhile, Kelet-Magyarország was clearly dominated by formal affairs and the economic side, with a presence of EU-integration and municipal-administrative questions, and out of a total of 70 articles, a mere two addressed crossborder relations from the minority viewpoint. Although the sample size does not allow us to draw definitive conclusions, it appears that Beregi Hírlap is similar in this respect.

Figure 2

*The distribution of selected articles by topic*



Source: Author's construction.

Topics related to *EU-integration* are divided into two clearly separable groups. The first group includes articles on the relation of EU-integration and the whole of Ukraine; while crossborder relations are always mentioned, they are done abstractly, and the focus is on diplomacy between Ukraine and the EU. Governmental actors, county-level self government politicians treat the EU border position as an opportunity and source of future potential; in these circles, scepticism is uncommon about Ukraine's eventual EU membership – if not in the short, then the longer term. The Ukrainian prime minister, opening the “symbolically significant border crossing station” at Szelmenc, stressed that “*Since achieving independence, Ukraine has enjoyed good relations with its neighbours, and since Slovakia is now an EU member, the expected growth of our economic and cultural relations will facilitate Ukraine's convergence towards the European integration*” (Kárpátalja, 30 December 2005). The EU is often linked to support, tenders and values such as equal opportunities, especially respect for the rights of national minorities, tolerance, rule of law, democracy, social security and welfare. The Hungarian government is much more active on this level than the Ukrainian one, where its partner is as often the state administration of Transcarpathia as not. The political relations of Hungarians in Hungary and those living beyond its borders are important here, as their hopes for free movement and more openness, and fears of the contrary are a relevant influence on Hungarian diplomatic efforts.

The second group is related to integration's effects on the concrete border area between Hungary and Ukraine. While inter-governmental viewpoints are not absent, there is much stronger focus on locality and regional interests, not to mention integration's consequences for personal traffic. Party politicians, mayors, journalists, artists, leaders of civil associations and private individuals tend to hold nuanced positions. They use the union as a reference and contrast to the domestic reality, with more pessimistic expectations about gaining from EU funds and attaining values.

Europe itself is seen in a way that isn't always so rosy. The threat, and later reality of the “Schengen horror” is identified with Europe's selfishness, isolationism, obsession with securitisation and hypocrisy. The stream of refugees, human smuggling, and the deplorable conditions of refugee camps, conflicts during border crossing are linked to the image of a rich and egocentric west. “*If someone wants to visit a country in the Schengen zone, probably the most civilised part of the world, should prepare to undertake a visa application process where the treatment is anything but civilised*” (Kárpátalja, 29 February 2008). “*In its current form, the Schengen system represents a loss of illusions with a yet undeterminable impact for anyone who, at the Soviet Union's dissolution, witnessed the breakdown of the iron curtain, and believed in the slogans about the free movement of persons and goods*” (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, November 2007). The controversial nature of the situation is proven by the frequent reports about criminality on the borders. “*Strict controls are justified because there has been an increase in*

*the illegal trafficking of humans and goods, especially cars, across the border. In the first quarter of 2006, 1139; in the preceding one, 5000 illegal immigrants were detained” (Kárpátalja, 23 June 2006).*

It is notable that precious little attention was devoted to the Carpathian Euroregion and multi-lateral border relationships: where borders are mentioned in the press, they are usually referring to the one between Hungary and Ukraine. This demonstrates a difference of perspectives between Ukrainian and Hungarian residents. The former are more aware of Transcarpathia’s role as a region bordering four states (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania) than the latter; however, in the case of Hungarians, crossborder relations are more likely to go beyond general “good neighbourhood” and to develop institutional channels.

In the area of the *economy*, a mixture of topics ranging from Hungarian–Ukrainian trade relationships to transportation and the possibilities of Transcarpathia’s catching up through crossborder cooperation is seen. The outlook is most often through reports of official relationships between states and regional/local administrations; the weakness of economic actors in the neighbouring regions means that relatively less attention is devoted to private entities and, since they are usually active in other areas, CSOs are conspicuously absent.

With Hungary’s EU-accession, on one hand an increase of articles devoted to projects part-financed by the European Union can be seen, but there are also some doubts about the effects of border control on the opportunities of small trade and local entrepreneurs. Borders are not significant barriers to large actors, but are seen as a clear impediment to small ones. The closeness of small businesses to the personal level, and the ease of identification guarantees them a stronger place in the minds of communities than their economic share; this is eminently visible in this case as well.

The question of small-scale border trading and smuggling as a form of livelihood is a constant point of debate where issues of excusable need clash with concerns over its long-term consequences: *“We see that those who have accumulated a larger amount of capital this way usually started an enterprise; probably a café or a general store. But the majority of people living off petrol tourism have just been weaned off work, because smuggling was easier and more lucrative. Change will be hard, but it will have to happen in thinking, in mentality. In the areas I have mentioned, smaller and larger factories are opening one after the other, and they are often struggling with labour shortage. It may sound trite, but we have to restore the respect of work”* (from an interview with József Tarpai, director of the Hungarian–Ukrainian Regional Development Office, Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 22 December 2005).

The activity of *minorities* in Transcarpathia is a peculiar cross-sectional issue of the civil dimension. Almost all articles concerning minorities are focused on the Hungarians of Transcarpathia and their relations to Hungary. While there are mentions of Rusyns/Carpathian Ukrainians, and occasionally Slovaks and Ro-

manians, they more often appear either as side-notes, or in news related to cultural events.

While EU-accession is often evaluated as an opportunity for “national unification”, pessimistic voices are more common. When the mother country’s efforts to ease border crossing are mentioned, Hungarians living across the border are none too enthusiastic, especially those who enjoy a closer relationship with opposition parties in Hungary. *“Returning to national visa, we should not depreciate it. I say that the Asians hiding in Transcarpathia and waiting for, or organising their opportunity to illegally cross the border, would happily have it for two or three thousand dollars. And it would be worth it, since once someone enters Hungary, nobody will ask where he came from and where he is going”* (Kárpátalja, 3 February 2006). Professional, more reserved opinions also seem to do away with illusions: *“We have to accept that international legislation for the protection of national minorities are alien to the EU and will likely remain that way”* (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 25 November 2004).

The issues of the status law and dual citizenship were reported on frequently; these political attempts to find a new peaceful resolution to the dilemma of Hungarian minorities across the border became an intense emotional experience for the communities in question, while, as we can see in the case of Kelet-Magyarország, the attitudes in Hungary proper were more indifferent. We can not only speak about these initiatives as political, but as things related to personal and collective identity, historical memory, coexistence with dominant ethnicities, etc. They have become highly symbolic affairs, and their failure to achieve an equitable, satisfactory conclusion has resulted in disappointment, and the awakening of fears about rejection/unwantedness, a new isolation and consequently assimilation, the destruction of cultural identity.

Attitudes expressed after the failed 2004 December referendum are representative of popular sentiment, and also of self-image (all quotes from Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 7 December 2004): *“Unfortunately, it could be expected that the mother country wouldn’t need us, and it looks like we are excluded from the nation. It is questionable how we will cross the Ukrainian-Hungarian border after the Schengen visas are introduced in 2007. But this is what we got, this is what we have to like.”* (Zoltán Szilvási, mayor of Nagydobrony [Velika Dobrony]) *“It is easy to be a Hungarian in Hungary. The only one who can really value this identity is someone who can’t experience the mother country as her own: we, the newly out-cast, those who live in minority. I would like to send this message to the Hungarians in Hungary: you didn’t deny us of anything except the feeling that we here in Transcarpathia are the same as you.”* (Erzsébet Ljáh, a doctor from the Childrens’ Polyclinic in Uzhhorod) *“Not to be rude, but those in the mother country pretend as if their kin across the border were lepers. They are wrong: these people don’t even like to take donations, they would just like to stand on their own feet. Granting dual citizenship would only have been a symbolic gesture,*

*strengthening the cohesion of the Hungarian nation. And this is important from this respect, that someone who doesn't really have a homeland, someone who has been given the minority's lot, for them, it is especially important to have this support.*" (Endre Hidi, ceramic artist from Nagydobrony)

In Transcarpathian Hungarian publications, as elsewhere, this issue is inseparable from that of EU-integration, and whether it is a solution to this old problem. Kelet-Magyarország has emphasized the more positive opportunities of the process, while Transcarpathian organs are more pessimistic – only expressing hope for long term improvement. In addition to the previous question, the rest of the articles are about the day-to-day affairs of the Hungarian community of Transcarpathia: regional political events, cultural life, education and science, and relations to Hungary. Minority issues are heavily framed in cultural language; much more rarely are they thought of from any different viewpoint.

All in all, Hungarian–Hungarian civil relations are characterised by political factionalism, the stronger initiating role of the mother country's side, the transfer of EU knowledge, and also development programmes whose recipients are primarily Hungarian-inhabited settlements. This phenomenon has led to the situation where some Ukrainian civil actors feel that the Hungarian minority has “appropriated” the Hungarian border, and are therefore looking for partners from farther away.

*Civilian issues* in the screened articles are strongly bound to locality and overwhelmingly cultural; education plays a smaller role, and the growth of small-scale development cooperation between CSOs in Transcarpathia and Hungary can be seen. The threefold interrelation of civil society, Europe and the border is a complex question that could be seen only rarely in the journals. Naturally, one of the fundamental reasons was the low level of organisation in civil society, and also, that in this early stage, civil society is only rarely able to handle crossborder or multilateral contact-building. Reports in journals are usually about events organised by foreign (Hungarian or international) organisations in Transcarpathia. Ukrainian civil organisations tend to be recipients, but not generators and active, mutual partners of civil relations. In the evaluation of cooperation, the use of EU funds or their attainment is always cropping up as a primary source of motivation, “*because the EU rewards these common applications*” (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 13 June 2006). This can be a motive even for international civil organisations: “*The Brussels office of the International Red Cross constantly lobbies for support to reintegrate countries neighbouring the European Union*” (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, 2 June 2005). The relevance of face-to-face contacts is lesser than funding, but can be observed. Calvinist preachers from Transcarpathia have justified their “agitation” campaign in Hungary before the Hungarian referendum on dual citizenship with the following: “*if only people could hear with their own ears that preachers across the border speak the same language and follow the same faith they do*” (Kárpátalja, 26 November 2006).



Other topics have received less attention in the journals. *Information society*, which a very small but distinct interest of the press, is almost completely about building the lacking infrastructure of Hungarian schools and communities (through the so-called “tele-houses”), by state help and civilian, often charity-based initiative. *Environmental protection* is likewise a “one-issue” field: the most relevant question of environmental protection on the Ukrainian-Hungarian border is flood control and the management of the Tisza valley. *Education and science* is a question relevant to the whole region, even if the venues are local: it has been realised that education and science are sources of not only economic prosperity, but once again, keeping and enriching cultural identity and transcending borders. This realisation is reflected in the relatively large attention paid to this question in Transcarpathian Hungarian periodicals (and conversely, their absence in Kelet-Magyarország and Beregi Hírlap, where minority concerns are rarely present). An interview draws parallels between the role of education, science and European integration: “It is important to remark that in my eyes we aren’t talking about ethnical topics, and especially not nationalist reminiscences. The cause of Hungarian language, Hungarian culture and Hungarian scientific life is in many respects more than an issue of an ethnicity. ... I am positive about regional cooperation across the border we have been seeing thanks to EU projects. Borders fade not only when we tear down border control stations. We can recognise huge possibilities in the areas of scientific cooperation as well.” (Dénes Berényi, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kárpátalja, 15 July 2005). Articles about *municipal and administrative topics* are most commonly about the affairs of individual settlements or neighbourhood relations; in the last few years, local and regional development projects have reinvigorated these with possibilities of partnership. Finally, approximately the same characteristics can be attributed to *political articles* as EU-integration: dichotomy between national politics, which touch borders indirectly, and local/regional politics, where the opposite is the case. Observations made concerning the relative importance of the Ukrainian and Hungarian government stand here as well.

It is apparent from the screened press articles that the European Union has not only been a driving engine and part-financer of crossborder civil relationships, but has also been influential in thematising the press and setting the issues of the border area’s European integration agenda. The inhabitants of Transcarpathia (Hungarians and non-Hungarians) have also formed their self-image with regards to the European Union and its Neighbourhood Policy through the issues of crossborder civil cooperation.

## 7 Conclusions

Ukraine, independent since 1991, is struggling with a permanent crisis of interior politics, economics and society (since the announcement of independence, the country has had 18 governments). In its constitutional structure, from presidential through semi-presidential republic, there has been constant movement towards government based on parliamentary majority. In exterior political orientation, the political treatment of the Russian, European Union and United States system of contacts has been continuously changing. In 2004, the country became affected by the new European Neighbourhood Policy. The ENP and radical interior upheavals (the Orange Revolution) coincided to a great extent. From Autumn 2004, the role of civil organisations has especially been on the increase, and they have become real shapers of interior politics.

On the national level and in Transcarpathia, in part due to the internal structures of the country, a system of organisations established on different levels and active in various areas has appeared. Multiple specialised organisations of the UN, US and European governmental and non-governmental organisations, large international private foundations and relief organisations are present and active.

The development of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border area and the realisation and support of the European Union’s neighbourhood policy has been strongly related. The European Union, through announcing different tenders, has become one of the largest donors of regional civil initiatives. In training and education, neighbourhood policy has gained an eminent position. In the regional development of the border area, and maintaining crossborder cooperation, in establishing the basic conditions and possibilities for organisations of a high importance, European Union, Hungarian, and endogenous local government resources have appeared side by side. Between local and regional governments, high-intensity and daily contacts have been built.

In the common border area, a large number of “real”, bottom-up civil organisations have also appeared. They are able to influence processes, but at the moment, they do not dominate the management of the ENP, or crossborder regional development initiatives. It is visible that the configuration of civilian initiatives has been closely embedded into the formal frameworks of cooperation between the neighbouring states, the border regions and their linkages towards the European Union. Not just civilian initiatives, but the economic, minority and EU integration policies of Hungary and Ukraine have manifested in the establishment and objectives of civil society organisations. It is visible, however, that in spite of differing agendas, there has been a clear desire for maintaining and broadening the current system of neighbourhood cooperation projects, while agendas of securitisation have been seen in a negative light.

Concerning crossborder relationships, contacts between individual inhabitants pose a question of central importance. In this respect, there should be a high em-

phasis on changing visa regimes (visa relaxation, visa requirements, Schengen visa), and in this process, the European Union's visa and border crossing policy is not always judged positively. In the system of cooperation initiatives between Ukraine and Hungary, direct crossborder contact-building should be encouraged, and new opportunities explored to benefit from the special position of the region in a multilateral framework of four different state borders.

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