

Comparison of the EU Funds for Cross-Border Co-operation of Schools in All Czech-Polish Euroregions

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Abstract: Article compares the ways in which the cross-border co-operation between schools is conducted in all six Euroregions on Czech-Polish borders. The main research methods were based on analysis of the microprojects, which were implemented in these euroregions. Research surprisingly declined initial hypothesis expecting the most frequent use of INTERREG funds in cross-border co-operation of schools in the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, due to the historical links between both parts of the Euroregion and almost non-existing language barrier. It also expected its lowest intensity and quality in the Euroregions Nisa-Nysa-Neisse. Research showed that certain “default setting” of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion has not automatically brought along the highest number of co-operation activities in the field of education – only partially in the use of “big” programme, jointly with subject from Euroregion Silesia, but it was absolutely different in the use of microprojects’ scheme managed by Euroregion. This must be attributed to the fact that co-operation of schools has not been understood as a priority. The more important element than “default settings” must thus be seen in the active approach of CBC stakeholders – mainly in the euro-regional secretariats.

Key Words: Cross-border co-operation in education, INTERREG programme, Euroregions

Introduction

Although it is the subject of an advanced integration process, the territory of the European Union does not yet represent a fully functional unit. The existence of differing administrative systems creates barriers to the balanced development of different European regions. Cross-border cooperation has an important role to play in eliminating these barriers. The question is whether cross-border co-operation (CBC) is being understood as something natural and desirable also by others than by its stakeholders and realisers of cross-border co-operation projects, as even the current post-modern people have been constructing their identities mainly on belonging to certain nationality and/or state.

In the light of this many cross-border co-operation stakeholders think and underline that it is important to confront the population living in the border areas with cross-border co-operation as soon as it is possible, ideally in its young age when visiting the school. The earlier the children are exposed to the contact with their fellows from the neighbouring country the bigger is probability that they will understand cross-border contacts and co-operation as something natural, nice and desirable.

1 Goal, methods and working hypothesis

In this paper I would like to focus on the role of EU funds, mainly INTERREG programmes, in cross-border co-operation of schools in euroregions on the Czech-Polish borders. I will work with pre-primary, primary and secondary schools – generally working with pupils and students aged between 3 and 19 years of age. The main goal of the paper is a critical comparison of use of INTERREG funds, mainly under the microprojects scheme, in cross-border co-operation of schools in all six euroregions on Czech-Polish borders: Euroregion Těšínské Slezsko – Śląsk Cieszyński (later on the name Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia will be used), Euroregion Beskydy, Euroregion Silesia, Euroregion Praděd/Pradziad, Euroregion Glacensis and Euroregion

Nisa-Nysa-Neisse. This comparison will attempt to analyse the contribution of other actors – mainly secretariats of the euroregions concerned - to the co-operation of schools. The article is an extension of my previous research, when I compared the CBC of schools in three selected euroregions on Czech-Polish borders: Nisa, Silesia and Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia (Böhm, 2015).

I will try to verify following working hypothesis: the most frequent use of INTERREG funds in cross-border co-operation of schools could be found in the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, due to the relatively stable population, historical links between both parts of the Euroregion and almost non-existing language barrier. The lowest intensity and quality of cross-border contact shall be found in the Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse, where the Polish part of the euroregion belonged to Germany until 1945 and where the major population exchange occurred after 1945 in both Czech and Polish part of euroregion. We can thus say that population is largely new in the both Polish and Czech side of the Euroregion. The Euroregions will act as cross-border co-operation drivers, mainly thanks to the EU funds/INTERREG microprojects schemes they administer.

To verify the hypothesis quantitative research methods will be applied. The role of EU funds as a motivation to establish cross-border co-operation will be analysed in the paper, more concretely relationship between microprojects' scheme under the Czech-Polish INTERREG programmes and their use by schools. We will compare the multitude and nature of the cross-border co-operation projects supported. We will work with the lists of supported projects, which involve the title of the projects and the project promoter. We believe that thanks to previous experience with this field we will be able to state thanks to the title of the projects and a project promoter whether the project addresses the field of education or not. This method cannot obviously guarantee 100% accuracy, but should be sufficient to help achieving the goals of the paper. The work based on analysis of the lists of supported projects was complemented by minor phone interviews with several experts/representatives of selected euroregions or stakeholders active in the CBC on Czech-Polish borders.

2 Theoretical background

The cross-border co-operation and forms of its governance have been subject of attention of many researchers since the beginning of 1960s at least, when the first cross-border co-operation structures have been set on Dutch-German borders. The first of them, Euregio, offered a “terminus technicus” to be used when setting up cross-border co-operation structures (Dokoupil, 1999). Euroregions have been understood as almost a synonym of cross-border co-operation or cross-border regions. A cross-border region is not only a territory, but is also its engine (Schmitt-Eggner, 1998). This foresees the existence of a specialized body responsible for cross-border co-operation management. Contribution of these specialized bodies towards cross-border co-operation of schools will therefore be assessed.

The regions are one of the key recipients of EU funds. When cross-border co-operation was connected with EU funds via the INTERREG programme in the end of 1980s, the number of cross-border initiatives dramatically increased (Böhm, 2014). Some authors (i.a. Scott) (2000) consider working with INTERREG as a primary purpose of Euroregions. Therefore we will attempt to analyse the role of EU funds as a motivation for cross-border co-operation of schools.

„Institutional thickness“ concept (Amin, Thrift, 1994) belongs to the group of institutional regional development theories. This partial theory says that institutions are not formal organisations only, but they mainly create informal conventions, habits, network of relations, which stabilize and stimulate performance of regional economies. Success of regions in the long-term horizon is then dependant on the ability of local actors to create such institutions, which can create good framework conditions for economic and social regional development (Rumpel, 2002). We will assess in this paper how six selected Euroregions create conditions for efficient cross-border co-operation of schools.

Whereas cross-border co-operation has presented a frequent field of interest for researchers representing many scientific disciplines, the cross-border co-operation in education has attracted considerable less attention so far. When talking about cross-border co-operation

of school and reflection of geographical proximities of neighbouring country in school curricula in Czech-Polish conditions I was only able to find dissertation thesis of Ondřej Lochman, who called for „more in depth research of attitudes and knowledge of pupils in the Euroregion Nisa towards/about their neighbours. Hand in hand with this, research should be done on forms of implementation of European dimension in schools of the Euroregion Nisa that would be focused on the school written curricula and teachers“ (Lochman, 2009).

3 Geographical and political confines of selected target territories/Euroregions

The Czech-Polish borderline is with its 792 kilometres one of the longest ones in Europe (it is the longest Polish and the second longest Czech state border). As many other borders in Central and Eastern Europe also this one experienced many changes during 20th century. Creation of Poland and former Czechoslovakia was one of the World War I results. As mentioned, short military conflict between both countries ended up by international arbitrage in 1920, when the questioned territory of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia was divided between both countries along the river and railway and not according to the nationality; most of the inhabitants of the Czech part declared Polish nationality. Also thanks to that division the relationships between both countries – Czechoslovakia and Poland – remained rather cold in the period between both World Wars. Tensions resulted into a short Polish occupation of the Czech side of the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, which followed the Treaty of Munich in the end of September 1938 and which ended a year later when Nazis conquered Poland.

After end of World War II the original borderline from 1920 was restored. As German-Polish and Polish-Soviet borders moved westwards the border changed accordingly. Despite the fact that both countries belonged to the eastern Soviet block the permeability of borders was rather low and cross-border co-operation virtually non-existing. Polish-Czechoslovak relations of the divided region were intensified only after 1989, when totalitarian regimes in Poland and Czechoslovakia/

Czech Republic fell down. Both countries declared their intention to join the western co-operation structures and decided upon intensification of mutual regional co-operation when establishing regional Visegrad group in 1991. The 1990s also brought along the creation of cross-border co-operation mechanisms at the lower levels of public administration in all countries of ex-Soviet block. Initially euroregions were created between municipalities representing western or the eastern part of Europe (such as trilateral Czech-Polish-German Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse founded in 1991), later on they were also founded between countries of the former eastern bloc themselves, including the Czech-Polish borderline (Euroregion Glacensis in 1996, Praděd 1997, Silesia and Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia in 1998 and Beskydy in 2000).

4 Definition of the Euroregion

The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) sets the following criteria for the identification of Euroregions (Lochman, 2009):

- an association of local and regional authorities on either side of the national border,
- a crossborder association with a permanent secretariat and a technical and administrative team with its own resources;
- in the private sector, based on non-profit-making associations or foundations on either side of the border in accordance with the respective national law in force;
- in the public sector, based on inter-state agreements, dealing among other things, with the participation of territorial authorities.

5 Basic information about euroregions on Czech-Polish borders

There are six euroregions, which cover the entire length of Czech-Polish borders.

5.1 Euroregion Beskydy

The youngest and the most eastern one is a trilateral (Czech-Polish-Slovak) Beskydy Euroregion, founded in 2000. The euroregion was

created as the last one and has, compared to other euroregions, rather disadvantageous default position for Czech-Polish CBC – its member municipalities are not situated on the very border, as Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia is situated there. As it was also created later than any other Czech-Polish euroregion, Euroregion Beskydy distributes significantly lower amount of money for Czech-Polish CBC of its members and entities situated there.

5.2 Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia

The first steps within the framework of CBC were made by the local authorities of (until 1920 one town) Polish Cieszyn and Czech Český Těšín, and it was an impulse for further activities. Formal cooperation between both cities commenced after the signing of the agreement on regional cooperation on 24 March 1993 in Český Těšín. Six years later another agreement was signed, pursuant to which a coordinating group responsible for the further development of Polish-Czech cooperation was established. The group's tasks comprised the exchange of information in the field of culture, sports and passenger traffic. The thriving cooperation in the field of information exchange naturally turned into an idea of the formation of a euroregion.

5.3 Euroregion Silesia

Euroregion Silesia refers to the common history of Polish and Czech Silesia, which until 1742 was entirely under the rule of the Habsburgs. After losing the war with the Prussian King Frederick II the greater part of Silesia was taken over by Prussia, and the newly established border slowed down, and over time completely stopped the development of mutual contacts. The divided area was never merged back, and after World War II - Upper Silesia became part of Poland and Czech Silesia part of Czechoslovakia. Although, only a “green border” was dividing both countries, the border itself was closely guarded and the border crossing was possible only in a few designated areas. Contact between people from both sides of the border and the development of cross-border cooperation has been made possible after democratic changes that took place in both countries in 1989. The real

culmination of a cross-border cooperation on the Czech and Polish border occurred in the 1990s.

Euroregion Silesia was founded on 20th August 1998. At the beginning it covered only a few cities, towns and communes of the Polish and Czech side with a minimum of human resources and technical facilities. Today, Euroregion Silesia has almost eighty members (municipalities), its Polish seat is in Racibórz and the Czech in Opava.

5.4 Euroregion Praděd/Pradziad

Euroregion Praděd/Pradziad is composed from mountainous, rural and much less inhabited Czech and densely populated Polish part, which is situated in the lowlands. The default setting of the euroregion implies the way how Czech-Polish complementarities in the territory can be used – one of the main co-operation aims is tourism, as many Polish tourists visit Jeseníky Mountains

Historically there should be no major antagonisms between population of both sides of the euroregion: there was a major population change mainly on the Czech side after World War II, as the German speaking population was expelled from the territory. The change on the Polish side was not so major, yet the territory created a part of Germany until 1945. Nevertheless default conditions for CBC could be seen as less favourable than for example in Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, where no major population exchange occurred and language barrier is very low.

5.5 Euroregion Glacensis

Euroregion Glacensis is the largest Czech-Polish Euroregion with the longest common border. Its named after Latin language version of the historically Czech, currently Polish town of Kłodzko (Kladsko in Czech). Most of the territory on the Czech side was not so heavily affected by population change after World War II (as it was the case for example for Euroregion Nisa), the change of population on the Polish side was somewhat more substantial. Yet there are no major obstacles for the mutual CBC based on unresolved joint history, such as they are for example in Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia.

5.6 Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse

The founding conference of Euroregion Nisa was held on May 23rd–25th 1991 in Zittau, under the auspices of six presidents: Vaclav Havel, Richard von Weizacker and Lech Wałęsa. Over 300 representatives of

Table 1: Basic Statistical Data on Czech-Polish Euroregions

Euroregion	Founding date	Nr. of inhabitants in thousands				Surface in thousand in sq.km				Nr. of members			
		Total	CZ	PL	D/SK	Total	CZ	PL	DE	Total	CZ	PL	D/SK
Nisa-Nysa-Neisse	21.12.1991	1578	426	590	571	12 591	2499	5595	4497	295	131	51	113
Glacensis	5.12.1996	770	255	515		5249	1721	1328		150	115	38	
Praděd/ Pradziad	2.7.19970	761	133	628		7656	1900	5756		112	73	39	
Silesia	20.9.1998	771	488	283		2732	1224	1508		76	56	20	
Těšín/ Cieszyn Silesia	22.4.1998	672	360	312		1730	763	967		29	12	17	
Beskydy	9.6.2000	1300	161	844	296	6343	972	3288	2083	181	63	38	

Source: SITEK, S. Přeshraniční spolupráce v rámci euroregionů v česko-polském pohraničí. In KASPEREK, B. (ed.) *Euroregiony česko-polského pohraničí*. Cieszyn, 2014.

borderland communities from the six countries took part in the event. The decision to establish the “Triangle of Six Lands”¹⁹⁰ was a milestone for the future of the region. The Conference adopted a memorandum that defined the intentions, forms and scope of future cooperation. The Euroregion was officially established in December 1991 during the 1st meeting of the Euroregion’s council. At that time it was the first cross-border structure for Central – East Europe and deserved a very high level of positive political attention (Lochman, 2009).

6 Scope of activities of Euroregions

When comparing statutes of all six euroregions we can state that scope of their co-operation activities is very similar. Only euroregions Nisa-Nysa-Neisse and Beskydy declare lower number of co-operation activities, but this should be attributed partly to the higher number of co-operation partners of these trilateral constructions. In practice their co-operation scopes do not differ much from another (four bilateral) euroregions.

Table 2: Scope of Activities of Czech-Polish Euroregions

Co-operation field	Nisa	Glacensis	Praděd	Silesia	Těšín Silesia	Beskydy
Information exchange	X		X	X	X	X
Economic development		X	X	X	X	X
Environmental protection		X	X		X	X
Crisis and natural disaster management		X	X	X	X	
Cultural exchange		X	X	X	X	
Education, youth and sports		X		X	X	

Co-operation field	Nisa	Glacensis	Praděd	Silesia	Těšín Silesia	Beskydy
Tourism	X		X		X	
Technical infrastructure		X		X		
Regional development	X	X			X	
Transport and communications			X		X	
Human resources development and quality of life				X		X
Labour market				X	X	
Spatial planning				X		

Source: SITEK, S. Přeshraniční spolupráce v rámci euroregionů v česko-polském pohraničí. In KASPEREK, B. (ed.) *Euroregiony česko-polského pohraničí*. Cieszyn, 2014.

7 European Funds

One of the major tasks of all six euroregions is management of the parts of INTERREG bilateral cross—border co-operation programmes. This is represented by a so-called “small project fund” used to finance the smallest projects, especially non-investment and people-to-people ones. These projects represent cooperation of local communities at both sides of the border. Their aim is the development in the fields of human relations, mutual educational, cultural, sports and leisure time activities, public service etc.

All six euroregions obtained a possibility to co-manage these grant schemes relatively shortly after their creation: already in the end of 1990s the Phare pre-accession programme had its cross-border co-operation branch. Although Czech Republic – Poland programme was directed especially to support big investment projects, the «Joint Small Project Fund» (JSPF) supported smaller non-investment «people-to-people» projects was an integral part of the programme as well. The

JSPF was constituted in the form of a grant scheme financing small projects up to 50.000 EURO per project. The total amount earmarked for small projects represented 10 % of total financial means of the programme each year.

As the JSPF was very successful tool for support non-investment “people-to-people” projects, in 2004, when the Initiative INTERREG IIIA the Czech Republic – Poland started, the JSPF was replaced with a similar tool – so called Micro-project Fund/Microprojects Scheme. Allocation of 5.1 million EUR, which was a subsidy of the European Regional Development Fund, was intended for the whole duration of the programme and represented 15 % of total financial measures. Maximum financial support was 20.000 EURO per project.

The largest sum of financial means for the small projects of local communities was earmarked in Operational Programme of Cross-border Cooperation the Czech Republic – the Republic of Poland 2007–2013 (OP CBC CZ-PL). The Micro-project Fund represented a flexible instrument for implementation of the smallest projects of the Programme, both non-investment and small investment ones up to 30.000 EURO, with total cost of the joint complementary project up to 60,000 EUR. In total, 20 % of the total programme allocation was allocated to the Micro-project Fund (i.e., in total 43 891 869 EURO from the European Regional Development Fund).

The eligible area of the Micro-project Fund was identical with the eligible area of the OP CBC CZ-PL. Six euroregions have been made responsible for managing microprojects schemes: Nisa – Nysa, Glacensis, Praděd Pradziad, Silesia, Těšínské Slezsko – Śląsk Cieszyński, Beskydy – Beskidy. What is important: the same principles, structures and comparable amounts will apply also for the work with the new INTERREG CZ-PL programme in 2014–2020 period.

7.1 Euroregion Silesia

In 2007–2013 period the Czech part of the Euroregion approved 199 microprojects for future funding, the amount approved reached 3,2 million EURO. Out of these projects 58 were directly implemented by elementary or secondary schools or NGO founded by teachers, moreover

some 10 projects were implemented by universities. More than one third of all project, more concretely 34 %, were focusing on the co-operation in the field of education.

This number highly exceeds the numbers recorder in other analysed euroregions. This can be attributed to the special attention which both euroregional secretariats dedicate to the co-operation of schools. This accent was repeatedly stressed by all interviewed experts, who underlined that Euroregion Silesia is known in “euroregional circles” as “schools euroregion”.

7.2 Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse

In 2007–2013 period the Czech part of the Euroregion Nisa approved 234 microprojects for future funding, the amount approved reached some 2,9 million EURO. Out of these projects 36 were directly implemented by elementary or secondary schools or NGO founded by teachers, moreover some 4 projects were implemented by local university. This means that some 17 % of all supported projects were directly focused on the co-operation in the field of education.

7.3 Euroregion Praděd/Pradziad

In 2007–2013 period there were 396 projects supported under the microprojects' scheme in the both Czech and Polish part of the Euroregion Praděd/Pradziad, with allocation almost 3,8 million EURO. 65 of these project, more than 16 % of the entire share, were submitted by schools, for projects in the fields of education, culture and mainly sports.

7.4 Euroregion Glacensis

The Euroregion Glacensis had a possibility to distribute the highest amount of funds under the microproct's scheme (more than 5,8 million EURO), which resulted also in the highest number of 413 implemented projects. 50 out of these projects were focused on the co-operation in the field of education, which is slightly above 12 %. On the other hand, due to a very high number of supported projects, it was no possible to conduct a sufficiently deep analysis. Therefore we must estimate that

there are were also many other projects focusing on education, where we would not have identified the topical orientation of the project according to its title and/or promoter.

7.5 Euroregion Beskydy

There were 54 projects of Czech beneficiaries implemented under the Euroregion Beskydy Microprojects' scheme in 2007–2013 period. The amount approved for their implementation slightly exceeded 870.000 EURO. 13 % of the project (7 in total) addressed the field of primary and secondary education.

7.6 Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia

There are difficulties in obtaining data from the Czech side of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, therefore we selected from all (Polish and Czech) projects supported. There was the lowest share of school co-operation project in the Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion, only 39 out of 284 supported projects. This number also includes 5 co-operation projects submitted by universities. The total number of supported projects in the field of education slightly exceeds only 13%, the figure similar to the figure of Euroregion Beskydy, where much lower number could be expected due to the worse default CBC settings. The most active project beneficiary was the elementary school for Polish minority with seat in (Czech) Bystrice, which implemented 6 projects.

8 Use of Czech-Polish cross-border co-operation programme outside the microprojects scheme

Except for the possibilities offer by microprojects schemes schools could also have used the funds from the “big” Czech-Polish cross-border co-operation programme, which was the most generously funded cross-border co-operation programme in the whole in EU in 2007–2013; given the length of the border and the fact that border region still belong among the poorer ones in the EU this will also continue in 2014–2020 programming period. The 2007–2013 CZ Czech-Polish Cross-Border Co-operation programme worked with financial

envelope of 219,46 million EURO. It supported project in six thematic priorities, focused on 1) transport, environment and risk management, 2) co-operation in the field of entrepreneurship and tourism – which also involved co-operation of education providers and 3) co-operation of public institutions.

Subpriority/measure 2.3 was supporting co-operation in the field of education; there were some 11 million EURO allocated for this, part of this allocation must have been sent to other subpriorities of the programme due to relative lack of interest to implement projects in this field compared with another cooperation areas such as tourism.

According to available sources there were 20 projects supported in the field subpriority 2.3 operation in the field of education. None of these projects was led by elementary or secondary school; sometimes they only were parts of the partnerships. Out of these twenty projects the vast majority was implemented on the eastern part of the border: five projects were implemented and led by Technical University Ostrava, mostly in partnership with the Opole University of Technology, other most active project promoter was Palacky University in Olomouc with four projects. Other six important public universities with seat in the western part of the border (Technical University of Liberec, University of Pardubice and University of Hradec Králové) did not implement any project. This can partly be attributed to the fact that these schools don't have their natural counterpart in the Polish side of the border in the programme territory, but it also gives a picture of the lesser intensity of mutual contacts in the field of education in the western part of the Czech-Polish border. Except for the universities other important promoters of educational projects on Czech side of the borders come from Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion and at least partly employ people who represent Polish minority living in the Czech Republic. The best possible example is the Pedagogical Centre for Polish Minority Education in Český Těšín, which implemented four innovative projects in 2007–2013 period and which primarily focuses on creating cross-border networks of co-operating schools.

Based on the outcomes of the analysis of the use of the funds from Czech-Polish Cross-Border Co-operation Operation Programme - both

in the “big” programme as well as under the microprojects scheme – we can conclude that the role of strong institutions in initiating and supporting CBC of schools is important – this can be documented by good results of Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse in promoting cross-border co-operation of schools under own microprojects’ scheme, compared with low involvement of schools from this Euroregion in the use of the “big” programme, where the Euroregion has no decisive competences.

Conclusions

This article had an ambition to verify the working hypothesis expecting that the most frequent use of INTERREG funds in cross-border co-operation of schools could be found in the Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, due to the historical links between both parts of the Euroregion and almost non-existing language barrier. It also expected its lowest intensity and quality in the Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse.

This working hypothesis was not confirmed. Research very clearly showed that certain “default setting” of Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia Euroregion has not automatically brought along the highest number of co-operation activities in the field of education – only partially in the use of “big” programme, jointly with subject from Euroregion Silesia, but it was absolutely different in the use of microprojects’ scheme managed by Euroregion. This must be attributed to the fact that co-operation of schools has not been understood as a “top-priority” by mainly Czech part of secretariat, which supported projects submitted by municipalities mostly. This applies mainly for the Czech side of Euroregion – the Polish schools can apply for funding only via municipalities as they don’t have legal personality.

The analysis of the use of INTERREG funds under the “big” programme showed that subjects from Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia belong, jointly with those from Euroregion Silesia – mainly Technical University of Ostrava, to the frontrunners in the use of these funds for co-operation. Therefore we can conclude that the statement in previous paragraph that co-operation of schools has not been understood as a “top-priority” by mainly Czech part of secretariat is correct.

This contrasts with approach showed by representatives of Euroregion Silesia, who articulated co-operation between schools as a very priority and developed much effort to make it happen – which has clearly been achieved. Representatives of Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse, where the working hypothesis expected the lowest co-operation intensity, managed to support higher share of co-operation projects between schools than Euroregion Těšín/Cieszyn Silesia, where the co-operation was surprisingly lowest one – which sharply contrasts with the most favourable default co-operation settings. Interviewed experts expressed also certain reservedness of Czech part of the secretariat towards supporting projects of cross-border co-operation between Polish minority schools from the Czech side with schools from Polish side (with reference to the Polish-Polish co-operation – this problem has not been encountered in outstanding part of the borderline). To conclude this part: the most important precondition for implementation of cross-border co-operation is not any “default setting, characterized by minimal language barrier and a joint history, but a will to co-operate and existence of institutions creating (CBC favourable) conditions.

This leads us to the full confirmation of secondary working hypothesis stating that Euroregional structures have been acting as co-operation drivers, mainly thanks to the EU funds they administer. The most illustrative in this are the excellent results achieved by Euroregion Silesia and also Euroregion Nisa-Nysa-Neisse in animating and promoting the cross-border co-operation of schools.

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