



CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION (CBC) BETWEEN THE KALININGRAD REGION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND POLISH NEIGHBORING REGIONS IN THE YEARS 1991–2020: A PROGRAM APPROACH

WSPÓŁPRACA TRANSGRANICZNA OBWODU
KALININGRADZKIEGO FEDERACJI ROSYJSKIEJ Z SAŚIEDNIMI
WOJEWÓDZTWAMI POLSKI W LATACH 1991–2020:
PODEJŚCIE PROGRAMOWE

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— ABSTRACT —

The article analyzes the development of cooperation between Russia's Kaliningrad region and Poland's northeastern voivodeships in 1991–2020. The authors conduct a brief historical analysis of regional sphere of international relations. This study compares two periods of introduction of programs aimed at the development of Polish-Russian CBC: years 1991–2014, and years 2014–2020. The conducted analysis proved that CBC support programs are one of the important tools for the development of border areas. Importantly, the implementation of the Poland-Russia CBC Program 2014–2020 coincided with the deterioration of political relations: both on the bilateral level of Polish-Russian interstate relations and at the level of the European Union–Russia relations.

— ABSTRAKT —

W artykule przeanalizowano rozwój współpracy między obwodem kaliningradzkim Federacji Rosyjskiej a północno-wschodnimi województwami Polski w latach 1991–2020. Autorzy poddali analizie historycznej regionalny wymiar stosunków polsko-rosyjskich. W artykule porównano dwa okresy realizacji programów mających na celu rozwój polsko-rosyjskiej współpracy transgranicznej: lata 1991–2014 oraz lata 2014–2020. Przeprowadzona analiza wykazała, że programy wsparcia współpracy transgranicznej są jednym z ważnych narzędzi rozwoju polskiego i rosyjskiego pogranicza. Co ważne, realizacja Programu Współpracy Transgranicznej Polska-Rosja 2014–2020 zbiegła się z pogorszeniem stosunków politycznych: zarówno na poziomie

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However, this did not significantly affect the conditions for implementing the program and effective cooperation between local governments and non-governmental organizations.

Keywords: Polish-Russian relations; cross-border cooperation programs; Kaliningrad region; northeastern voivodeships of Poland

polsko-rosyjskich relacji międzypaństwowych, jak i na poziomie relacji Unia Europejska-Rosja. Nie wpłynęło to jednak znacząco na warunki realizacji programu i efektywnej współpracy samorządów i organizacji pozarządowych.

Słowa kluczowe: stosunki polsko-rosyjskie; programy współpracy transgranicznej; obwód kaliningradzki; północno-wschodnie województwa Polski

INTRODUCTION

Cooperation between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and Poland's northwestern voivodeships have always depended on foreign policy as well as endogenous factors. The development of CBC was observed after the collapse of Soviet Union and opening of the Kaliningrad region for foreign partners. Important influential factor was also the international cooperation environment and the intergovernmental relations mechanisms that developed in the post-Soviet period in the Russian Federation and in Poland after the collapse of Eastern Block. This led to the opening of new opportunities of introduction and development of the regional and local-level mechanisms of international cooperation. Considerable experience was accumulated in collaboration between the Kaliningrad region of Russian Federation (since 1991) and the northwestern voivodeships of Poland.

This experience can be divided into two distinctive periods. The first one covers the years 1991–2014 when the Kaliningrad region was opened to external contacts and created new opportunities and tools of development of CBC. Important factor was also enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004, which – apart from negative factors related to the emergence of procedural barriers at the external borders of the EU – brought new financing opportunities for implementation of joint cross-border initiatives with foreign partners. Naturally, entities from Poland's border voivodeships became its principal partners. A crucial event was Poland's accession to the EU, which created new institutional and program conditions for transboundary cooperation with Russia's Kaliningrad region. After 2014, the program format of Polish-Russian border cooperation evolved into a major tool for analyzing and assessing the region's relations with

Poland's northeastern voivodeships, despite the fact that the political relations of the Russian Federation with the EU, including Poland, have deteriorated.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

It is worth noting that terminology and definitions referring to cross-border relations are ambiguous and require explanation. The basic notion used in this article is the concept of CBC. The CBC was defined for the first time in the European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions (1981), in the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (1980), and in the European Charter of Regional Self-Government (1997) (Castanho et al., 2017, pp. 1–2). In the first document, the CBC is defined as “concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighbourly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more contracting parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose” (*European Outline Convention*, 1980). CBC can be also defined as neighborhood cooperation between adjacent border regions (Modzelewski & Żukowski, 2013). It serves mitigating adverse effects of existence of borders through the implementation of joint ventures and solving problems, for instance, leveling the phenomenon of peripherality (Proniewski, 1999).

Researchers point out that CBC consists in creating a network of connections that helps in developing socio-economic cooperation in borderlands and enables to dispose of the cultural and social barriers in local communities of border areas. It is also emphasized that the active CBC should be based on neutralizing barriers in the cross-border flow of production factors as well as environmental conditions (Kurowska-Pysz, 2016, p. 230). Other researchers add that to the spatial dimension, as the CBC covers various spheres: political, economic, legal, administrative, linguistic and cultural sphere, which extend the focus of analysis of the specific structural and functional patterns of the border relations (Beck, 2018). M. Slusarciuc (2013, pp. 267–270) remarks that the main aims of CBC are: the transformation of the border from a line of separation into a place for communication between neighbors; the overcoming of mutual animosities and prejudices between peoples of border regions which result from historical heritage; the strengthening of democracy and the development of operational regional/local administrative structures; the overcoming of national peripherality

and isolation; the promotion of economic growth and development and the improvement of the standards of living; the rapid assimilation into or approach towards an integrated Europe.

Some researchers propose to study the CBC by analyzing the strength of connections and integration of borderlands located on both sides of the border. In the literature it is emphasized that borders can play role of a buffer separating two countries or role of area of integration (Malkowski, 2015). On the other hand, O. Martinez (1994) distinguishes the following types of borderlands from the perspective of character of economic cooperation: alienated borderlands, co-existent borderlands, interdependent borderlands, and integrated borderlands. In turn, K.J. Lundquist and M. Tripp (2009) propose to divide the CBC of regions into the following stages of intensity: weakly integrated regions, semi-integrated regions, and strongly integrated regions. The proposed models for explaining cooperation and cross-border integration do not take into account the possibility of appearance of factors hindering cooperation across borders, e.g., closing of a border, hardening of relations, or loss of mutual confidence of actors (Durand, 2015). All definitions and scientific views include the conclusion that the CBC is based on cooperation of various entities located on opposite sides of the border and this cooperation has a sufficiently long history and specific results. All the indicated definitional conditions are fulfilled by the cooperation between the Kaliningrad region and Poland's northeastern voivodeships.

The methodological instruments used in the study result from the findings presented above. Firstly, the method of comparative analysis was used. This study compared two periods of introduction programs aimed at the development of Polish-Russian CBC: years 1991–2014, and years 2014–2020. The next method used in the study was the qualitative analysis of the adoption of CBC programs in Polish-Russian borderlands in two analyzed periods and impact of the programs on quality and effectiveness of cooperation. The influence of general political relations between Russian Federation and Poland as well as relations between Russian Federation and the EU on the conditions of implementation of CBC programs was also the subject of analysis. Another method used in the research was the historical analysis. The subject of analyses was historical periodization of changes in the CBC between the Kaliningrad region and Poland's northeastern voivodeships.

The preliminary assumption of the study was that the following general periods of changes in conditions of the CBC can be defined: until the enlargement of the EU in 2004, years 2004–2014, and years 2014–2020. The article also explores

the results and sufficiency of CBC programs on the potential of development of Polish and Russian borderlands. The general hypothesis of the article is that deterioration of relations between Russia and Poland and – in general – between Russia and West since 2014 did not impact the conditions and effectiveness of CBC program instruments implemented in the period 2014–2020.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE KALININGRAD REGION OF RUSSIA AND THE NORTHEASTERN VOIVODESHIPS OF POLAND BEFORE 1991

The years of 1946–1991 were studied in the context of the Kaliningrad region by a number of Russian and Polish scholars. Researchers tried to demonstrate and explain how the concept of interregional cooperation have evolved in the years of ‘Soviet-Polish friendship’, despite the fact that the Kaliningrad region during the Soviet period was, in fact, a closed region with limited access for foreigners (Fedorov & Korneevets, 1999, p. 208; Kretinin et al., 2016). The common origin of the Soviet and Polish regions, which emerged on the territory of former German region of East Prussia after World War II, affected their specific historical identity and awareness. The residents of the Soviet Kaliningrad region and the northeastern Polish voivodeships were settling new lands in a similar cultural and historical setting. Most of them had to take the risk of leaving their familiar surroundings to look for a better life for their families. V.M. Kuzmin (1991, p. 308), considering the Soviet-Polish relations through the prism of collaborations between party and public organizations, emphasized the exceptional circumstances of the historical, economic, and political development of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Poland’s bordering regions.

The 1950s brought a greater openness of the Kaliningrad region to cooperation with external partners. P.P. Polkh (2013) argues that the Polish-Russian CBC started on June 30, 1956, when the USSR and the People’s Republic of Poland signed an agreement on cooperation in sphere of production, culture, and trade. In the 1970s, the newly established Olsztyn, Elbląg and Suwałki voivodeships (as a result of administrative division reform in Poland) joined the cooperation with the Kaliningrad region. For instance, in 1970, the region and the voivodeships exchanged 29 delegations and groups comprising 469 people on each side. In years 1978–1979, the Kaliningrad region sent 99 delegations and groups, totaling 1,704 people, and welcomed 94 delegations and groups, totaling 1,674 people. In

1986–1987, the voivodeship and the region exchanged three thousand people comprising 500 delegations, which was the largest number of visits over the thirty years of cooperation (Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017).

It is worth emphasizing that inhabitants of the Kaliningrad region did not have an opportunity to cross the Soviet-Polish border freely. The region was closed, and all international contacts were highly formalized. However, even the small number of contacts between Kaliningraders and the residents of the border voivodeships of Poland helped to overcome the feeling of isolation, facilitated cultural and trade exchange, and contributed to innovations in organization and technology – this factor also helped to curb xenophobia and challenged the stereotypes of the peoples living across the border, especially in the context of the deterioration of Polish-Russian relations in the next decades (Wojnowski, 2006, p. 155).

Restrictions and barriers in developing bilateral contacts were caused both by initiatives of local authorities as well as institutions of central authorities of Soviet Union and Poland. However, there were certain achievements. These included the development of a four-year cooperation program for 1987–1990, by the party committees of the Kaliningrad region and the Olsztyn voivodeship. The relevant protocol to the Declaration on Soviet-Polish cooperation in ideology, science, and culture was signed on May 27, 1987 (Kuzmin, 1991). From the perspective of the history of international relations that document was an important landmark on the way to program-based cooperation.

Presented genesis of relations between the Kaliningrad region and Poland's border voivodeships until 1991 shows that cooperation was relatively productive and fruitful. A significant limitation on the development of bilateral contacts, especially personal ones, was the closed status of the region. However, cooperation between cultural and educational institutions was rapidly developing at that time. This provided groundwork for future collaboration in a new international environment, which emerged after the collapse of the USSR and was one of the reasons for change in the geopolitical position as a factor of development of the Kaliningrad region.

THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION
AFTER 1991: BILATERAL DIMENSION

At the beginning of 1990s, a continuation of cooperation was an enormous challenge to most territories of the former USSR, including the Kaliningrad region. Significant challenge was the transition of Russian economic and political system. Before the collapse of the USSR, the Kaliningrad region was a closed territory, but the restrictions on mutual border crossings after 1991 were lifted. In the first half of the 1990s, commercial contacts between Russians and Poles were rapidly developing. According to the Polish customs service, the number of crossings of the Polish-Russian border was gradually increasing from 1991 to exceed 5,000,000 instances in 1997 (Anisiewicz & Palmowski, 2016). This was a result of not only the lowering of administrative barriers but also the launch of infrastructure projects focusing on motorways, railways, seaport cargo handling, etc. In 1992, the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on border checkpoints was concluded. The border could be crossed at three railway checkpoints and four motorway checkpoints (*Dogovor...*, 1993). On December 7, 2010, the Grzechotki-Mamonovo 2 fifth international motorway checkpoint was opened to accommodate the increasing number of border crossings, which caused the existing checkpoints to operate at full capacity (*10-lecie otwarcia przejścia granicznego...*, 2020).

The starting document that formed the legal basis of Polish-Russian political relations after the collapse of the USSR was Treaty on Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation, signed on May 22, 1992. In the article 10 of the Treaty, the need to develop regional cooperation between entities from Russia and Poland was pointed out (*Dogovor...*, 1992). The principles of bilateral cooperation in a new geopolitical environment were enshrined in the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on cooperation between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and the northeastern voivodeships of the Republic of Poland, which was also signed on May 22, 1992 (*Soglashenie...*, 1992).

One of significant indicators of improvement of bilateral relations was also the development of diplomatic missions in both states. It is remarkable that the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland functioning since May 7, 1992, was the first diplomatic mission to open in the Kaliningrad region. The first

representative of Poland in Kaliningrad was Consul General and Minister Plenipotentiary Jerzy Bahr (*Chronicle of the Consulate...*, 2017). Currently, the eleventh Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Kaliningrad is Anna Nowakowska.

On the other hand, an interesting phenomenon of international relations in the 1990s was the missions of Russian regions abroad. Amid the post-Soviet chaos, Moscow did not have time to get into the details of regional international initiatives. Federal law No. 4-FZ *On Coordinating International and Foreign Economic Ties of Regions of the Russian Federation* was adopted only on January 4, 1999 (Federalniy zakon..., 1999). The Kaliningrad region had three missions abroad: in Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. The most effective was the Kaliningrad Mission in Poland, which was established on September 16, 1992 (*Soglasovana kandidatura...*, 2004). In 1997–2000, the operations of the Kaliningrad Mission were largely determined by Poland's administrative division reform which created new municipalities, the country's accession to NATO in 1999, as well as the preparation for the accession to the EU in 2004. A major concern was the new visa rules (Żęgota, 2012). Significant changes took place in Polish voivode's offices and sejmiks (regional parliaments). The administrative reform made all bilateral agreements between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and the Polish voivodeships legally ineffective. Thus, one of the key objectives of the Mission was to establish contacts with new heads of the voivodeships and to prepare new cooperation agreements. In 2007, the governor of the Kaliningrad region Georgy Boos closed the Kaliningrad Missions abroad due to their ineffectiveness (Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017, p. 119).

Alongside the opening of the Mission in Poland in 1992, a number of Polish-Russian advisory bodies started their operation. One of them was the Polish-Russian Council on Cooperation between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and the regions of the Republic of Poland. Its first meeting took place in Svetlogorsk in October 1994. One of the latest manifestations of the Council's activity was its sixteenth meeting, which took place in Olsztyn on October 5, 2016 (Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017, pp. 119–120). The Council comprised twelve commissions focusing on checkpoint operations, combating crime, environmental protection, joint use of the Vistula Lagoon as well as the use EU funds.

The deteriorating relationship between the Russian Federation and the West after 2014 was certainly the factor influencing the legal and institutional foundations of cooperation between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and Poland's northwestern voivodeships, but – in opinion of the authors – not in practical dimension of this cooperation. At the level of the EU-Russia relations,

this meant a real freezing of institutional cooperation. On the other hand, with regard to bilateral Polish-Russian relations, the most important factors were bilateral political and economic sanctions and suspension, in July 2016, of the local border traffic (LBT) mechanism at Polish-Russian border. The suspension and then non-restoration of LBT on the border with Russia provoked critical comments, especially from local government officials and representatives of local communities in the areas covered by the mechanism on both sides of the Polish-Russian border (Żęgota, 2018, pp. 51–52).

PROGRAM-BASED COOPERATION IN THE YEARS 1991–2014

The intensification of Polish-Russian cross-border contacts in the 1990s laid down groundwork for program-based cooperation. Sometimes this process was included in the higher-level interactions between the regions of the Baltic Sea. One of the first interregional mechanisms was the institution of Euroregions (Lepik, 2009). A Euroregion is a European region comprising border areas of two or more European states. Euroregional cooperation can be interpreted as a special type of CBC, characterized by a high degree of institutionalization of cooperation (Gwizdała, 2015, p. 450). The term dates back to the oldest European initiative – the Euroregion transboundary cooperation program, which was launched in 1958 to bring together German and Dutch borderlands (Szymański, 2011, p. 96). Much later, in February 1998, the Euroregion Baltic (ERB) was created. It comprised border areas of Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation (Modzelewski, 2015, pp. 175–178).

The ERB became somewhat of a hub for transboundary contacts between ordinary citizens, politicians, economic partners, social activists, and public and educational institutions. The Euroregion supervised implementation of the PHARE program. In 1999–2006, according to the ERB secretariat, the PHARE program had two major priorities — cooperation in the Baltic Sea region and collaboration with the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. Over six million euro was earmarked to the applicants from ten countries which implemented projects aimed at supporting small and medium enterprises and educational institutions, to promote youth exchange programs, and to hold sporting and cultural events, conferences, and workshops (Magier, 2009).

One of the key objectives of ERB is to develop strategic initiatives aimed at the sustainable development of collaborating regions. Despite the often-voiced

skepticism about the effectiveness of the Euroregion institutions, the ERB evolved into an important political platform for forwarding common interests at the levels of regional and national administrations and the EU. Tangible results include the contribution of ERB to the adoption of resolutions on the common problems of the Baltic region (EU policy on cohesion, navigation, environmental protection, and transport infrastructure). Another major result of political cooperation in the framework of ERB was implementation of the South Baltic CBC Program (Magier, 2009). As W. Jastrzębska (2008, pp. 98–100) stresses, “the EU considers Euroregions a form of regional policy and a tool to include the new member-states into the structures of united Europe. Euroregions are shaped by different political and economic interests. According to official EU documents, Euroregions must serve the common good through consolidating efforts beyond national borders”. The Kaliningrad participation in the Euroregion structures was met with both enthusiasm and skepticism. This institution was the first transboundary alliance that de facto recognized the equal right of the Kaliningrad region to contribute to a common Baltic policy.

The region's accession to the Euroregion structures gave confidence that partner regions facing similar problems would provide necessary support, which was very important in the period of economic instability (Żukowski & Chelminiak, 2015). The funds allocated for the ERB projects in 1998–2005 amounted to 8.9 million euro, which was enough to support 240 initiatives. The experience of holding international meetings and implementing joint projects was invaluable. Later, it helped the Kaliningrad region to adapt to the EU's new program policy towards border regions and to lay down groundwork for a long-term partnership. However, the activities undertaken in the framework of the other Euroregions with the Kaliningrad and Polish participation – Neman, Šešupe, and Łyna-Ława – were much more modest than those pursued by the ERB. As a rule, the other regions focused on meetings between officials and joint socially significant projects. In analyzing the history of program-based cooperation between the EU border regions and the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation, it is important to remember that a wide spectrum of political and financial instruments with different goals and criteria was used in different periods. These instruments also differed in decision-making procedures and legal implementation of decisions.

In the 1990s, the key EU tool for supporting cross-border and interregional cooperation financed from European structural funds was the INTERREG initiative. It was followed by INTERREG I (1990–1993), INTERREG II (1994–1999),

and INTERREG III (2000–2006) (Olejniczak, 2008, pp. 105–122). The Kaliningrad region did not share a land border with the EU before Poland's accession. That is why the region was covered by intergovernmental programs. This decision was based on the belief that intergovernmental cooperation was more comprehensive than cross-border contacts and thus better suited to meet the needs of the maritime Baltic region. At the final INTERREG III stage, the program's budget was estimated at 4.875 billion euro (*A Guide...*, 2001).

The INTERREG program was implemented simultaneously with Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS), which brought together the EU and 13 partners in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The two programs functioned independently but they were coordinated. TACIS was initially aimed at implementing projects with regions of third countries whose economies were undergoing a transition. It is important to understand that the functional part of the TACIS program was developed by the European structures in 1991 in great haste. They had neither necessary information, nor cooperation experience, nor strong ties in newly established republics. The official stance was that the geopolitical changes, which were brought about by the collapse of the USSR, created a political, economic, and social vacuum, which had to be filled (*The European Commission's Tacis Programme...*, 2007). TACIS comprised national and multilateral programs. One of the latter was a CBC program bringing together four states – Russia (including the Kaliningrad region), Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. In 1991–1999, over 4.226 million euro was allocated to support 3,000 projects. In 2000–2006, the program's budget amounted to 3.138 million euro. In the Russian Federation, TACIS focused on support for institutional, legal, and administrative reforms, for private sector and economic development, for overcoming the transition effect, and for nuclear security.

After the enlargement of the EU in May 2004, the issues of European trans-boundary cooperation were singled out to form the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The ENPI was a mechanism for developing the EU's external relations. Since 2006, EU regulations have not used the term INTERREG. However, it continued to exist unofficially as somewhat of a brand (INTERREG IV). The Kaliningrad region became part of the Lithuania-Poland-Russia trilateral CBC program for 2007–2013. In effect, due to a delay in the signing of financial agreements, the program was approved only at the end of 2008 and launched at the beginning of 2010.

The program had a solid legal framework based on Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of October 24, 2006,

laying down general provisions establishing ENPI, and Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of June 25, 2002, on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities. The program's preamble stressed that the EU was particularly interested in the Kaliningrad region surrounded by EU member states. Its objective was to support the development of the socioeconomic potential of the Kaliningrad region and the adjacent areas. The Lithuania-Poland-Russia CBC program was designed to give a local and transboundary perspective to possible solutions and ensure a 'leverage' effect (*Coherence with Community Policies...*, 2007).

The program's budget was 146 million euro – over 124 million provided from the EU funds and approximately 22 million euro from the Russian Federation. Sixty projects received financing within the program, including 53 regular projects selected through open competition and seven major strategic projects. The major strategic projects addressed the common problems of the Lithuanian, Polish and Russian regions covered by the program. Four projects focused on environmental protection, namely, improving the ecological quality of the Neman River and the Baltic Sea, ensuring the sustainable development of coastal zones, and improving the quality of nearshore waters of the Vistula Lagoon, the Bay of Gdańsk, and South-East Baltic in general. The other three projects sought to improve the region's accessibility. They boosted the development of near-border transport infrastructure and increased traffic safety at checkpoints on the border between the Kaliningrad region, Poland, and Lithuania (Kaliningrad-Mamonovo 2, Sovetsk-Panemunė, and Gusev-Gołdap). The total budget of major projects amounted to 78.418 million euro. Twelve new infrastructure objects were erected, 22 km of new roads, bridges, and elevated highways were built, and 64 km of water drain and sewage pipes were laid to meet the needs of two million people residing in the border areas. According to the head of the Joint Technical Secretariat of the program Małgorzata Woźniak, the Lithuania-Poland-Russia CBC program for 2007–2013 stood out in the underlying political situation and created a link between the EU and Russia. The program not only helped to overcome barriers to the region's sustainable development but also contributed to mutual understanding between both parts of cooperation (*Results of the Cross-Border Cooperation Program...*, 2016).

COOPERATION IN THE YEARS 2014–2020

In the next budgetary perspective of the EU for 2014–2020, financial resources were provided to support CBC at the external borders of the EU. With regard to the Polish-Russian border, the Poland-Russia Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014–2020 was the main program instrument for supporting CBC. The goals and challenges of new program were presented at the initiating conference of the Poland-Russia CBC program for 2014–2020, which took place in Gdańsk on December 8, 2016 (*Registration for the Programme...*, 2016). According to the new EU financial perspective for 2014–2020, the previous Lithuania-Poland-Russia program for 2007–2013 was divided into two programs – Poland-Russia 2014–2020 and Lithuania-Russia 2014–2020 – in the framework of the European Neighborhood Instrument. It was declared that, in a long-term perspective, the successful implementation of the Poland-Russia program for 2014–2020 will contribute to closer integration of the program territory on both sides of the Polish-Russian border. The program includes Poland's Pomeranian, Warmian-Masurian, and Podlaskie voivodeships and Russia's Kaliningrad region. Its budget totals 62.3 million euro – 41.7 million provided from the EU funds and 20.6 million by the Russian Federation. Grants are allocated for projects aimed at promoting local culture and historical heritage, environmental protection as well as improving transport and communication infrastructure. The Lithuania-Russia 2014–2020 program was approved on December 19, 2016. Its budget is 17 million euro (*European Commission Approves...*, 2016).

The main objective of the Poland-Russia CBC Program 2014–2020 is to support the CBC in the social, environmental, economic, and institutional sphere. Within the Poland-Russia CBC Program support for projects could be obtained by applicants who are legal persons established in the Program area or by international organizations from the Program area. The main objective of the Program is development of cooperation in three selected areas (priorities): 1) promotion of local culture and preservation of historical heritage, 2) environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation and improvement of accessibility to the regions, 3) development of sustainable and climate-proof transport and communications networks and systems.

The individual priorities include various types of activities. Priority 1, "Cooperating on historical, natural and cultural heritage for their preservation and cross-border development", regards to joint initiatives and events on promotion and preservation of local culture, history and natural heritage as

well as joint projects concerning preparation and realization of investments in tourist infrastructure and services increasing the sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage in the tourism. Priority 2, “Cooperation for the clean natural environment in the cross-border area”, includes projects aimed at preservation and sustainable use of natural assets such as parks, water supplies, etc., development of the CBC to protect valuable ecosystems and endangered species as well as water resources management in connection with climate changes (floods, droughts, water shortages). In turn, within the priority 3, “Accessible regions and sustainable cross-border transport and communication”, projects related to joint investments in the quality and accessibility of the social and economic infrastructure, common development of multi-modal transport systems as well as projects aimed at developing and improving the quality and safety of existing communication links would be carried out (*About the Programme*, 2014).

The Program area covers the territories located in north and northeastern part of the Republic of Poland and part of Baltic coast territories in the Russian Federation. In Poland, it covers Pomeranian Voivodeship, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, and Podlaskie Voivodeship, and in Russia it covers the Kaliningrad region. What is more important, the Program area overlaps with the areas of integration and the Russian-Polish CBC observed previously. Thus, the implementation of the Program strengthens the positive impact of CBC and stimulates the development of new spheres of cooperation. Moreover, the Program area consists of the core regions and the adjoining regions. On the Polish side of the border, the core regions consist of Starogard, Gdańsk and Trójmiasto subregions of the Pomeranian Voivodeship; Elbląg, Olsztyn and Ełk subregions of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship; and Suwałki subregion of the Podlaskie Voivodeship. On the Russian side of the border, the core region consists of the Kaliningrad region. The adjoining regions consist of two subregions: Słupsk subregion of the Pomeranian Voivodeship, and Białystok subregion of the Podlaskie voivodeship.

The program funds were allocated in large infrastructure projects and regular projects. Large projects received funding without a competition procedure. The first one, “Development of tourist-recreational potential and water tourism in Svetly and Malbork towns (Phase 2)”, is implemented by Administration of “Svetly urban district” (Russia) and Municipality of Malbork (Poland). The project’s main objective is to support local culture and preserve the historical heritage of the cities of Svetly and Malbork and to develop a water tourism between the Kaliningrad region and the Pomeranian Voivodeship by using the international waterway E-70. The second large project, “CBCycle: Cross-border cycle routes

for promotion and sustainable use of cultural heritage”, is implemented by local authorities from both sides of the border. The project aims at improvement of the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Kaliningrad region and northeastern Poland by creating a common cycle route, integrated and connected with EuroVelo cycle routes. The third initiative concerns the construction of the new route bridge over the Łyna river in Bartoszyce (Poland) and renovation of streets and sidewalks in Gusev (*Large Infrastructure Projects*, 2016).

The program supports the implementation of regular projects that are selected in an open competition procedure. Due to the significant delay in the implementation of the program, only one call for proposals within the framework of three priorities was announced: Heritage, Environment and Accessibility (priority “Border Security” is not implemented). Within the framework of the first priority, twelve projects are carried out. The projects are connected, among others, with the development of cross-border tourism, joint actions to share the amber heritage, cooperation for the development of preservation of the historical, cultural and natural heritage of the cross-border area as well as the revival of the cultural and historical landscape of the small towns in Russian and Polish areas of the Program. As part of the “Environment” priority, ten projects have been directed to implementation. The initiatives are aimed at protection of natural heritage in a cross-border area through the improvement and development of water-sewage infrastructure, cooperation for the protection of the Vistula Lagoon by regulating the water and sewage management of key agricultural and tourist areas, protection and sustainable use of water recreational facilities in border cities as well as development of infrastructure for a clean environment in the cross-border area. Four projects are implemented as part of the third priority, i.e., „Accessibility”, among others, aimed at improvement of the road infrastructure in cross-border cities and development and improvement of the quality and accessibility of the social infrastructure through modernization of the roads in the Polish-Russian borderland (*Regular Projects*, 2019).

It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of the program is well rated both by the inhabitants of the Polish-Russian borderland, as well as representatives of local government units from border areas and local politicians. They indicate, among others, that the delay in the implementation of the program (caused by protracted implementation procedures on the Polish side) caused concern of local self-governments about the program conditions for supporting the Polish-Russian CBC (Żęgota, 2020, pp. 90–95). In addition, researchers and observers of the Polish-Russian CBC emphasize that the significant deteriora-

tion of political relations between the West and Russia and in bilateral Polish-Russian relations did not significantly affect – as it was initially feared – the implementation of the program. It is estimated that the Poland-Russia CBC Program 2014–2020 will significantly contribute to the strengthening of CBC, despite the deterioration of relations at the level of central political authorities of both states. This is a phenomenon of the CBC in Europe and a good example of the effectiveness of regional and local actions (Żęgota, 2018; Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017).

These observations were confirmed by the activity of Euroregions. Among the Euroregions in which participants from Poland and the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation operate, in the period 2014–2020, the ERB was again the most active. During this period, a number of projects were launched aimed at deepening cultural cooperation, cooperation between entrepreneurs, promoting innovation and environmental protection. One of the most important projects is “CONTRA – Conversion of a Nuisance to a Resource and Asset”, implemented with the participation of the Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic in partnership with subjects from Poland, Russia, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Estonia. The project is related to building of tools for the management of marine material in the Baltic Sea region. Its value is EUR 2.56 million, and the funding from the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme amounted to over EUR 1.9 million (Projekty, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

The article analyzes the historical, formal, legal and program conditions for the development of Polish-Russian CBC. The study covers two main periods: 1991–2014, and 2014–2020. During the first period, cooperation was conditioned by objective factors, resulting from the changing interstate relations in Central and Eastern Europe: the collapse of the Soviet Union, the initial opening of the Kaliningrad region to economic cooperation, effects of the economic crisis in Russia in 1998, and then changes of Russian authorities in 2000. An important factor was also the enlargement of NATO and the EU to the East. As a result, the Kaliningrad region was surrounded by the member states of both organizations. On the one hand, it made the functioning of the region difficult and limited its economic development prospects. On the other, it enabled to develop the CBC on the basis of programs supporting cooperation of borderlands. After 1991,

cooperation intensified as legal and institutional framework for Polish-Russian border cooperation emerged (Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017; Modzelewski, 2006).

After 2014, the determinants of Russia's political relations with the West changed significantly, including relations with the Kaliningrad region neighbors: Poland and Lithuania. The indicator of deterioration of relations was not only the suspension of meetings between the EU and Russian leaders, but also the suspension of LBT mechanism on the Polish-Russian border and the sanctions war between Russia and the West. In these difficult conditions, the Poland-Russia CBC Program 2014–2020 was implemented. The aim of this study was to analyze the Polish-Russian CBC from the perspective of the implemented programs of borderlands' cooperation. The analysis of the influence of political determinants of relations on the possibilities of program implementation was carried out. Efforts were also made to demonstrate the positive impact of the Poland-Russia CBC Program on the development of joint cross-border initiatives. Amid a cooling of intergovernmental ties between Russia and the EU, the very fact of launching a new round of CBC programs was a great success. As a rule, joint projects do not have a political dimension, but they directly influence the socioeconomic development of border regions (Mironyuk & Żęgota, 2017).

It should be noted that both the Polish and the Russian side agree that the goals of the EU's major interregional and CBC instruments were achieved with regard to the Kaliningrad region in 1991–2014. During this period, the Kaliningrad region was prepared for the negative effects of EU enlargement to the East. In addition, a number of CBC programs based on the INTERREG initiative have been successfully implemented. This provided a stable basis for the further development of joint activities, also based on the operation of Euroregions.

At the same time, bilateral cross-border relations were adversely affected by a number of political factors. The example of this was suspension of visa free regime on Polish-Russian border. The reasons for the unilateral decision of the Polish government to suspend the LBT regime from July 4, 2016, are difficult to grasp. Over the four years of the LBT functioning, there was not a single case of a serious breach of the rules. The number of mutual border crossings and bilateral trade reached the absolute maximum (Żukowski, 2013). A significant contribution to the socioeconomic development of border areas made the Polish-Russian LBT mechanism a strong argument for expediting a visa free regime with the EU (Kretinin & Mironyuk, 2014).

According to researchers' insights, in 2011–2013, the Baltic Sea region turned from a site of bloc struggle into an area of active and versatile governmental and

non-governmental contacts, even though falling short of the cooperation ideal. Some Russian and international scholars called it a “testing site” and a “laboratory for European integration”, to emphasize the unique and innovative nature of the contemporary Baltic region (Sergunin, 2013). In this context, the Kaliningrad region can serve Russia’s foreign policy goals and become a political regulator of Polish-Russian bilateral relations. As an important regional partner, Poland is a legitimate platform for establishing transit connections between the West and the East. Other important areas of cooperation include bilateral trade, research, technology, culture, tourism, and visa regulations.

In view of the long-lasting practical cooperation between the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and the Polish voivodships, it seems necessary to develop an empirical model of Polish-Russian relations for a long-term perspective. One of useful tools of research on the CBC is program approach. The conducted analysis proved that the CBC support programs are one of the important tools for the development of border areas. Importantly, the implementation of the Poland-Russia CBC Program 2014–2020 coincided with the deterioration of political relations: both at the bilateral level of Polish-Russian interstate relations and at the level of the EU-Russia relations. However, this did not significantly affect the conditions for implementation of the program and effective cooperation between local governments and non-governmental organizations. The proof of the effectiveness of CBC programs is the interest of local governments and social organizations in participation in the subsequent CBC support programs.

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