

Partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities

Key success and failure factors for sustainable international municipal cooperation

This publication was written in the framework of the initiative “Bridges of Trust: Empowering municipalities in Ukraine and in the European Union through building municipal partnerships”.

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Introduction

Ukrainian municipalities have a long history of international municipal cooperation¹, especially with their counterparts in the member states of the European Union (EU). Today, there are a number of reasons why such cooperation remains as important and relevant as ever in the work of local governments across the country.

Whether it is to improve local public services and administration by learning and adopting the best European practices of local self-government, attract foreign direct investment, promote tourism and culture, local governments in Ukraine are eager to work and engage with municipalities in the EU.

At the same time, international municipal cooperation is not an easy and a straightforward process, especially for municipalities that have little or no international experience and very limited resources.

This publication was written in the framework of the initiative “Bridges of Trust”, which is committed to increasing and improving cooperation and exchange of best practices between municipalities in Ukraine and the EU. It provides:

- A short, annotated mapping of existing partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities;
- An analysis of key success and failure factors of international municipal cooperation with a special focus on cooperation between Ukrainian and EU municipalities;
- Recommendation for future sustainable cooperation between Ukrainian and EU municipalities.

Local self-government in Ukraine

Decentralisation reform, launched in 2014, resulted in significant changes in the territorial structure of local government in Ukraine. Today, the country consists of 1,469 territorial communities (down from 11,250), 136 districts (down from 490), 24 oblasts and Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The two cities, Kyiv and Sevastopol, have kept their special status, while the approval of the structure of territorial communities of Crimea will take place after the end of the illegal annexation of the peninsula by Russia.

As has been noted in the annual reports of the European Commission², the local self-government has been strengthened by the progress in the decentralisation process. The new laws increased competences and the size of local budgets across the country. The European Parliament has even called on the European Commission “to study the details of the decentralisation process closely and to potentially use it as a successful case study for other countries”.³

At the same time, a number of important issues, including adoption of Constitutional amendments to ensure irreversibility of achieved results, remain.

COVID-19 pandemic has also created additional challenges. In 2020, a law abolishing property taxes and land fees for two months, resulted in the loss of revenue for local budgets. The time for this development was especially regrettable since local governments had to significantly increase expenditure on health care activities, purchase personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, and to make other urgent expenses related to implementation of measures aimed at preventing the spread of coronavirus.⁴

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the term “*international municipal cooperation*” is understood as short- or long-term decentralised cooperation between two municipal authorities (local governments) from different countries. On the other hand, the term “*town-twinning*” generally goes beyond short-term cooperation of municipal authorities, it involves a long-term formal agreement, and may also include cooperation between businesses or civil society organisations of the partner municipalities. However, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish the two as the relationship can transform over the period of time. In this paper, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

² European Commission, Association Implementation Report on Ukraine 2018, 2019.

³ European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on the implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine (2019/2202(INI)).

⁴ Official letter of the Association of Ukrainian Cities, 16 March 2020, Available (in Ukrainian) at: www.auc.org.ua/sites/default/files/vysnovok_amu_3220.pdf

Partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities

1.1 Methodology

Information about existing partnerships with municipalities in the European Union (EU) was collected from official websites of Ukrainian municipalities between May–June 2021. Approximately 1400 websites were scrutinized for information about ‘twin-cities’, ‘partners’, ‘international cooperation’, ‘foreign guests’, ‘projects’, ‘memorandum’ and ‘agreement’. Furthermore, lists of existing partnerships in the framework of German-Ukrainian cooperation supported by Engagement Global⁵, and partnership initiatives between EU and Ukrainian municipalities supported by the U-LEAD with Europe Programme were included in the database. Finally, the websites of cross-border cooperation programmes, such as Poland-Belarus-Ukraine (2007–2013, 2014–2020), Romania-Ukraine (2014–2020), Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine (2007–2013, 2014–2020) were also consulted.

The method led to the identification of 184 municipalities that have some form of cooperation (usually based on a partnership agreement or a letter of intent) with municipalities in the EU. Most municipalities (56%) have more than one partner.

A special focus, when scrutinising websites, was placed on looking for information about concrete activities of the partners. For this purpose, relevant articles on municipal websites were skimmed through and short information about joint activities and projects were recorded.

In addition, in order to get a more in-depth information about the existing partnerships, seven phone interviews with representatives of Ukrainian municipalities were conducted (*Annex 1*). Municipalities were selected from the database while taking into account the geographic diversity, population size (focus on small and medium-size) and countries of cooperation in the EU (the 5 target countries of the initiative “Bridges of Trust”⁶).

The resulting data set has a number of limitations. First of all, it was not possible to collect reliable information from the websites of municipalities that are located in the temporarily occupied territories.

Secondly, not all municipalities include information about international municipal cooperation on their website, and there is a great variation in the quality of information between those that do. Therefore, the actual number of the existing partnerships between municipalities in Ukraine and in the EU is likely to be much higher than the identified. For instance, in 2010 the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) estimated the number of town-twinning agreements between Ukraine and the EU to be 799⁷.

Thirdly, the data set is limited in time to the period between 2010 and 2021. Hence, it can only provide a partial picture of the EU-Ukraine municipal cooperation.

⁵ Engagement Global, a German non-profit organisation whose mission is to support and strengthen the developmental commitment of the civil society, has a number of projects that specifically support development and strengthening of partnerships between Ukrainian and German municipalities. For more information (in Ukrainian language): <https://skew.engagement-global.de/proekti.html>

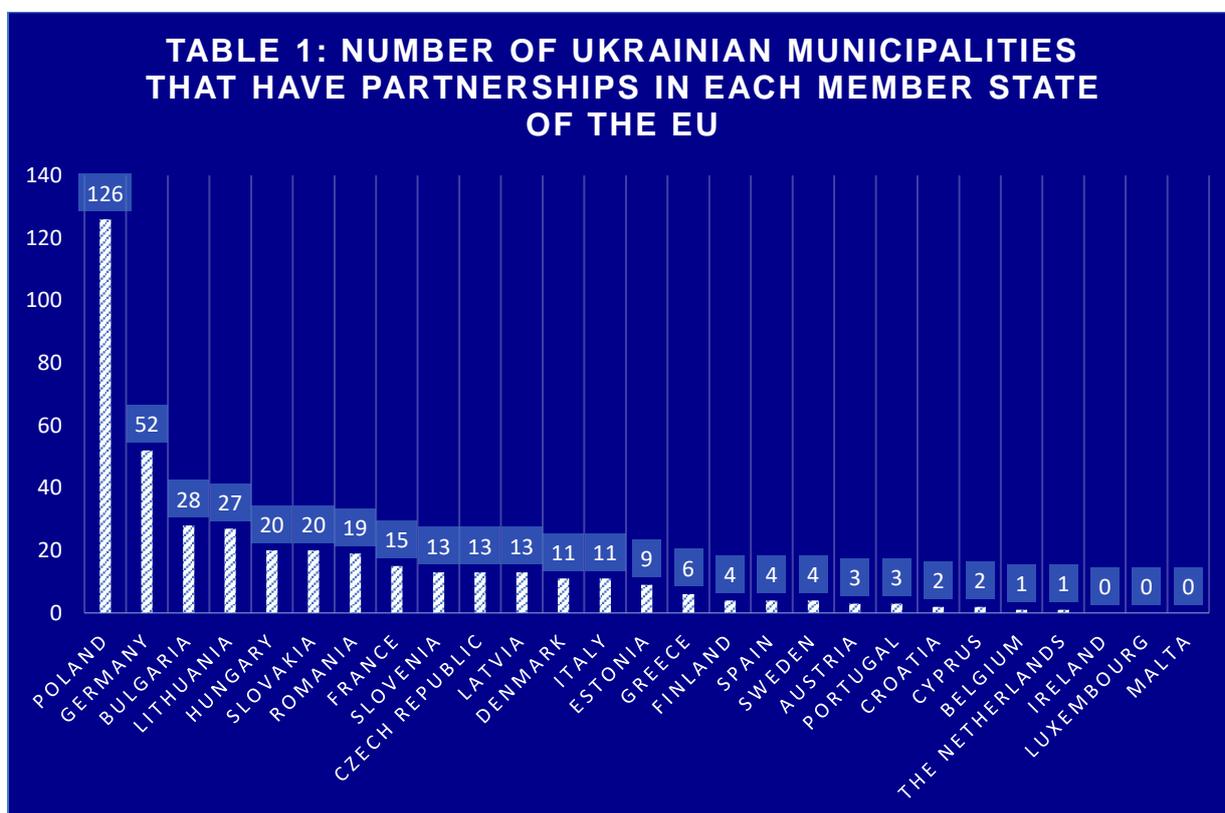
⁶ Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia

⁷ CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions). The number of twinings in the wider Europe in 2010. Available at: www.twinning.org/uploads/assets/news/Number%20of%20twinings%20in%20Europe%20in%202010.pdf

1.2 Analysis

Ukrainian municipalities were in the past or are currently cooperating with municipalities in most member states of the European Union (*Table 1*). Poland clearly dominates the scene. 126 Ukrainian municipalities have some form of official cooperation with Polish counterparts. This is followed by 52 Ukrainian municipalities that have established relations with German municipalities, 28 with Bulgarian, 27 with Lithuanian and the 5th place is shared between Hungarian and Slovakian municipalities which cooperate with 20 local governments in Ukraine.

The majority of these partnerships is based on official agreements with some of them going as far back in time as 1960s, the early years of international municipal cooperation in Europe. In line with experiences in other countries⁸, the common border, geographic proximity to Ukraine as well as common historical past have often played important role in the establishment of these relations. Therefore, it is not surprising that Poland, which has all of the above, is one of the countries with most links to the local government in Ukraine. At the same time, a number of new agreements between municipalities in the EU and in Ukraine have been signed in more recent years, especially following the start of the decentralisation reform in 2014.

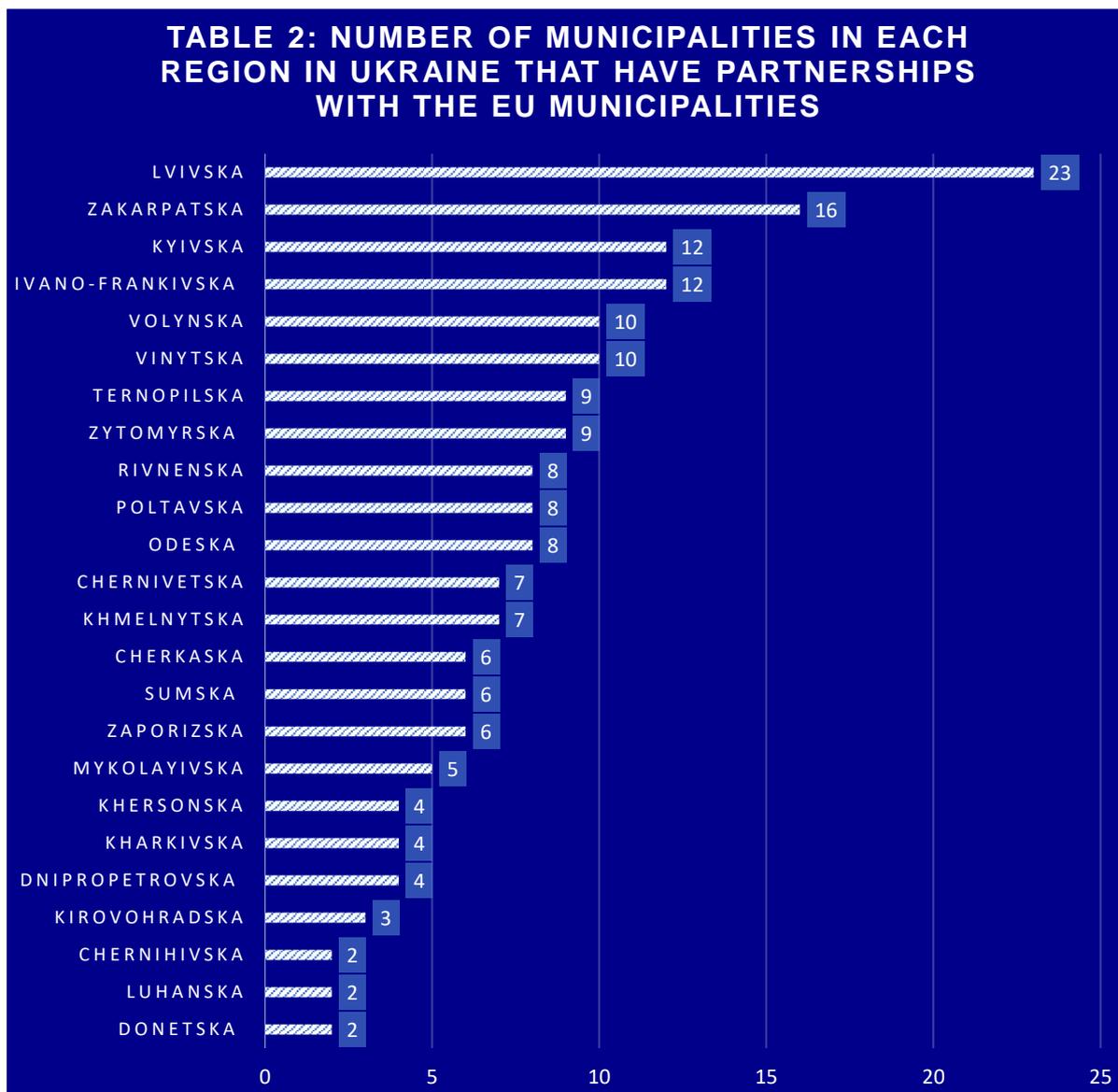


⁸ CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions). *Twinning For Tomorrow's World: Practical Handbook*. 2007. Available at: www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/twinning_for_tomorrows_world_en.pdf

When it comes to the geographic coverage, municipalities from each of the 24 Ukrainian regions are represented. However, there is a clear disbalance in terms of the number of municipalities per region that have

municipalities that have on average 110,361 people on their territory.

Furthermore, the larger the municipality the more partnership agreements it has with the



partnerships with their EU counterparts. Municipalities in the West of Ukraine have far greater number of partner-municipalities in the EU compared to the municipalities in the East of the country (*Table 2*). Proximity to the EU borders and opportunity to receive funding for joint projects between partner-municipalities in the framework of various cross-border cooperation programmes financed by the EU, can partly explain this difference.

The size of the municipality also matters. Today, most existing partnerships have been established by those Ukrainian

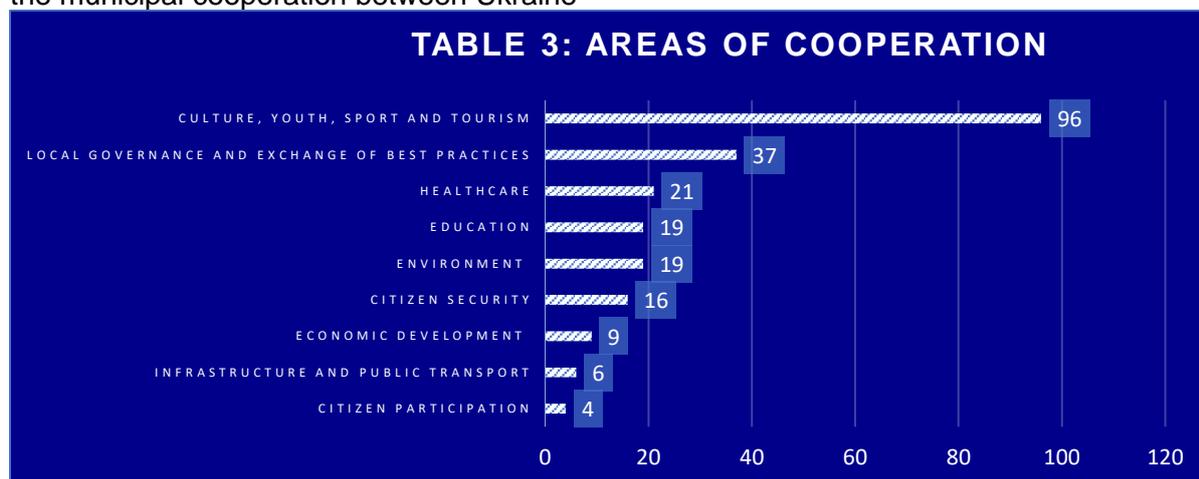
EU counterparts. One possible explanation for this is the fact that the larger municipalities have more capacity and financial resources to engage and to do an outreach to the potential partners.

We have also divided activities of partner-municipalities by specific topics of cooperation: 1) culture, youth, sport and tourism; 2) local governance and exchange of best practices; 3) healthcare; 4) education; 5) environment; 6) citizen security; 7) economic development; 8) infrastructure and public transport; 9) citizen participation (*Table 3*). It is important to

note, however, that municipalities often have activities in more than one of these areas and partnership agreements tend to include a wide spectrum of topics for cooperation, but the actual activities are often limited to a few of them. At the same time, we were unable to identify any information about joint activities between partners on the websites of approximately 23% of identified Ukrainian municipalities which can mean that those partnerships are not fully active.

Based on the data collected from the websites of the Ukrainian municipalities, activities in the field of culture, what has been previously confirmed at least by one study focusing on Polish-Ukrainian municipal cooperation⁹, youth exchanges, participation of clubs in sport competitions and tourism-related joint activities dominate the municipal cooperation between Ukraine

and the EU today. At the same time, there seems to be a growing realisation, according to the local officials that were interviewed for this publication, that international municipal cooperation can and should go beyond these traditional areas and focus more on other important topics (e.g. economic development).¹⁰ This thinking is very much in line with the current views on international municipal cooperation in the EU, which show an additional tendency to complement traditional bilateral international municipal cooperation with engagement in international networks of municipalities (e.g. [Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#), [Urban Development Network](#), etc.)¹¹.



Exchanges of best practices between local officials of the partner-municipalities are also widespread. These exchanges take different forms and cover a wide array of topics (e.g. investment attractiveness, strategic planning, human resource management). In the past, most of the knowledge exchange took place during bilateral meetings, study visits and trips of Ukrainian municipal officials to their EU counterparts and vice versa. However, since 2020, after COVID-19 made it very difficult and often impossible to travel, the partners have started to hold meetings and

exchange best practices online. This is likely to continue in some form even after the travel resumes fully as it helps to save scarce financial resources, increase the number of participants and the frequency of meetings.

Cooperation in the healthcare field mostly revolves around donations of or funding to purchase equipment to improve material and technical base of healthcare institutions in the Ukrainian municipalities and training of Ukrainian doctors in the institutions of the EU peer-municipalities. German municipalities are especially active in this field. The

⁹ Bogorodetska, Olha. Cooperation between the twin cities of Ukraine and Poland in the context of European integration. 2016. (in Ukrainian). Available at: <http://spspecrada.chnu.edu.ua/res/spspecrada/3/bogorodycka.pdf>

¹⁰ Interviews with local officials from Irpin and Khust, 2021.

¹¹ Insights from the meeting of the CEMR Expert Group on Town Twinning, online, 21 June 2021.

COVID-19 pandemic and a piecemeal healthcare reform have only exacerbated the already difficult situation with healthcare in Ukraine.¹² Hence, the needs of the Ukrainian partner municipalities in this area are likely to only increase in the future.

In education, the cooperation between Ukrainian and EU municipalities is often based on additional agreements between educational institutions of the partner-municipalities (e.g. high-schools, technical colleges, universities). Some of the activities in the framework of these partnerships include exchanges of teaching staff and directors of educational institutions often with an aim to incorporate new innovative practices or new technology into educational processes in their municipalities.

Environment is another area of cooperation between Ukrainian and EU municipalities. Activities in this field include exchange of experiences on waste management, energy efficiency of municipal buildings and wastewater treatment.

On citizen security, we were able to identify only a small number of activities between Polish and Ukrainian municipalities in the West of the country. Polish municipalities have donated technical equipment and transferred best practices from Polish voluntary fire and rescue units to the newly created similar structures on the territory of their partner-municipalities in Ukraine.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery was the lack of information, on the websites of Ukrainian municipalities, about joint activities on economic development, infrastructure and public transport. According to summaries from study trips to the EU municipalities found online, experiences of attracting investments, meetings with economic development agencies and visits to the local companies are often an important part of the agenda of the study visit.

However, there is little information about joint projects that go beyond this level of engagement.

Last but not least, we were able to identify only a few joint activities or sharing of best practices on how to increase the involvement of citizens in local governance, which shows that this is not a high priority for the partner municipalities.

Key success and failure factors for international municipal cooperation

More than five decades of experiences and thousands of case studies from Europe and around the world have allowed both academics and practitioners to draw certain conclusions about the factors that contribute to the success and failure of international municipal cooperation. While some of them have a broad application others might vary according to a specific local context.

An important piece of work in the field is the study by De Villiers, De Coning, and Smit (2007) in which the authors carry out a quantitative analysis to test success factors of twinning identified through many years of experiences by Sister Cities International, the United Nations Development Programme, the City of Bonn as well as various other researchers.¹³

The authors found that proper partner selection plays an important role and they recommend to look for those that are committed, show understanding, cultural sensitiveness and have an overall positive attitude. Marketing of the partnership to all stakeholders (e.g. citizens, business) is also very important because it helps to secure a more active participation. Quality of the management and a well-conceived partnership strategy which spells out objectives of the partners are also important success factors.¹⁴

¹² European Asylum Support Office, "Ukraine: FFM Report – healthcare reform and economic accessibility", January 2021.

¹³ De Villiers, J. C., De Coning, T. J., Smit, E. V.D.M. Towards an understanding of the success factors in international twinning and sister-city relationships, *South African Journal of Business Management*, Cape Town, Vol. 38, Iss. 1, 2007, pp. 1-10. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajbm.v38i1.573>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

These conclusions correspond with the twinning experiences of CEMR and its members, a core activity of the organisation since its creation in 1951. At the same time, other factors, also influence success of the international municipal cooperation:

1. Similarity of the twinning partner in the number of inhabitants, the geographic location, the economic activities, historic links, the main social or environmental issues.
2. Planning sustainable partnership from the start to help ensure persistency over the years.
3. A support structure (e.g. steering committee, twinning association) to keep the twinning motor going.
4. Importance of developing a budget and attracting finances for cooperation.
5. Participation of schools and young people will lead to visibility and involvement of a major part of inhabitants (e.g. parents, teachers and school staff, etc.).
6. Being open to new cooperation techniques, exchange of experience as well as joint reflection on specific issues in order to bring improvements to the partnership.
7. Inclusion of a European dimension to help strengthen European unity and forge a European identity are especially relevant in the European context.¹⁵

In addition to these, experiences on decentralised cooperation of [PLATFORMA](#)¹⁶ show the importance of political leadership, collaborative and well-organised team work of different services of a municipality involved as well as the existence of an international department.

In the last decade, important analyses have also been made on international cooperation of Ukrainian municipalities with their EU counterparts, even if the topic remains understudied. In a 2016 research

on cooperation between 199 Polish and Ukrainian twin-towns, the author was able to provide a list of factors that hinder or make the existing cooperation impossible:

1. Lack of joint activities. Partnership existing on paper only.
2. Lack of similar challenges and diverse strategic priorities for development.
3. Lack of management experience and understanding of international municipal cooperation of relevant public officials.
4. Lack of citizens' awareness about cooperation added value, especially on municipal websites.
5. Lack of regular contacts between partners.
6. Weak or no branding of a Ukrainian municipality in the partner-municipality.¹⁷

In another recent article, A. Pintsch (2020), conducted a study on international municipal cooperation of all municipalities which were founded in 2015 as a result of the amalgamation process.¹⁸ The survey, distributed in 2019 among the heads of the municipalities, found that even though the municipalities value international cooperation and think it is important to develop relations with their EU counterparts, there is a number of challenges that prevent them from doing this. According to those surveyed, the main constraints for international cooperation are:

1. Absence of qualified staff (very few have a dedicated EU or international affairs specialist).
2. Lack of capacities to engage and of experiences of international cooperation.
3. Difficulties with finding partners abroad.
4. Lack of foreign language knowledge.
5. Pressure of other urgent tasks and issues.¹⁹

¹⁵ CEMR, "Ten Keys to Success". Available at: www.twinning.org/en/page/ten-keys-to-success#.YR_2P44zblU

¹⁶ PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation.

¹⁷ Bogorodetska, Olha. Cooperation between the twin cities of Ukraine and Poland in the context of European integration. 2016. (in Ukrainian). Available from: <http://specrada.chnu.edu.ua/res/specrada/3/bogorodycka.pdf>

¹⁸ Pintsch A., Decentralization in Ukraine and Bottom-Up European Integration. In: Shelest H., Rabinovych M. (eds) Decentralization, Regional Diversity, and Conflict. Federalism and Internal Conflicts. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-030-41765-9_12

¹⁹ Ibid.

Experiences from the recent projects as well as our own interviews with the representatives of seven Ukrainian municipalities (*Annex 1*) confirm some of these conclusions.

In the final report of the U-LEAD-supported initiative “Travel to Know – Travel to Change”, which helped to create new links between Ukrainian and Slovenian municipalities in 2018–2019, lack of a common language was identified as one of the key challenges for establishing lasting partnership.²⁰ All of those interviewed for this publication strongly agreed with this observation. According to the local officials, English is playing an increasingly important role as a language of international municipal cooperation and of joint project work, especially for cross-border projects funded by the EU. Today, Ukrainian municipalities find different ways to help them breach the language barrier. In Khust and Irpin municipalities, which have active cooperation and joint projects with their partner municipalities in the EU, responsible local officials speak in the language of the partner. However, they admit that not all municipalities have the capacities to do this. In other municipalities, such as Kaniv and Izium, services of translators are employed when necessary. Google Translate has also become a useful tool in the written communication between Ukrainian and EU partners.

Other challenges that have been identified by the above-mentioned initiative include the lack of funding needed for traveling abroad and keeping regular contact with the partners in the EU.²¹ Funding is an important component for any short- or long-term endeavour, especially one that includes long distances and ambitious joint projects to improve local services or infrastructure. Ukrainian municipalities would have liked to have access to a greater number of regular programmes that support international municipal cooperation between Ukrainian and EU municipalities.

The official from the Irpin municipality noted that work of Engagement Global could serve as a good model for these programmes while the interviewee from Yuzne stressed how pertinent such funding is for those regions of Ukraine that currently have no access to the resources of the EU’s cross-border cooperation programmes.

At the same time, an important factor which should not be underestimated is a motivation of the municipality to succeed. In fact, according to the official from the Khust municipality, it is the single most important factor, and no number of trainings and transfer of knowledge and case studies on how to build a successful international partnership can replace motivated leadership and staff.

At the same time, those that have the motivation but lack practical experiences would benefit from the trainings on how to effectively set the agenda for international cooperation, organise and share the workload, draft joint projects, monitor and learn how to adjust the parameters of the partnership if needed, according to the official from Irpin.

Finally, COVID-19 has created both opportunities and challenges for international municipal cooperation. Some partners have fully embraced online meeting platforms and even intensified the cooperation. For example, due to COVID-19, activities of partnerships that were established within earlier mentioned “Travel to Know – Travel to Change” were transformed into online Forums “Bridges of Trust: Solidarity among Mayors”. Furthermore, U-LEAD with Europe organised virtual study visits of 9 Ukrainian municipalities to Guldborgsund (Denmark) in the framework of its twinning programme.

Others had to put their joint projects on hold and hope about being able to visit their partner municipalities and to continue cooperation in the near future.

²⁰ Centre for European Perspective, Initiative “Travel to Know – Travel to Change”. 2018-2019. Unpublished Final Report.

²¹ Ibid.

Examples of successful partnerships

Shchyrets, Lviv region (population 11,750) and Gudensberg, Germany (population 10,000)

Shchyrets and Gudensberg signed a partnership agreement in 2012. In the recent years, supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gudensberg has been helping its partner with the establishment of a central sewage disposal system. In 2020, as soon as the first cases of COVID-19 were registered in Shchyrets, the local association of the German Red Cross, with the help of local authorities, sent protective clothing to the medical staff of the Shchyrets outpatient clinic of general practice and family medicine. In the past, the community also received cardiographs, infrared thermometers, medical stretchers, oxygen masks, and other equipment. The effectiveness of this cooperation was recognized in 2018, when it passed several selection stages of the prestigious German Sustainability Award and made it to the top-7 municipal partnerships globally.

Myrhorod, Poltava region (population 50,467) and Anykščiai, Lithuania (population 22,623)

Myrhorod and Anykščiai signed a partnership agreement in 2017. In 2018, the partners submitted a joint project “Strengthening the administrative and institutional capacity of Myrhorod municipality” and received support from the Development and Democracy Promotion Program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. In the framework of the project, Myrhorod delegation attended seminars on the use of renewable energy sources, energy saving in the residential sector and waste management during their visit to Anykščiai. As part of the project, energy experts from Anykščiai also visited Myrhorod and met with employees of housing and communal services, budgetary institutions and local deputies. The experts prepared a comprehensive energy audit of one of the secondary schools.

Lityn, Vinnytsia region (population 21,900) and Wolsztyn, Poland (population 13,723)

The cooperation between Lityn and Wolsztyn dates back to 2006 and is recognised in an official partnership agreement. In the last 3 years the partners focused their efforts on citizen security and improvement of the Lityn fire protection station. In 2019, after several working visits to Wolsztyn, the head of one of the villages located in Lityn municipality, decided to set up a voluntary local fire brigade based on the Polish model. The Polish partners have donated a fire truck, emergency rescue equipment and other materials to support the newly-established fire brigade and help them respond more quickly to fires and other emergencies in the municipality.

Kaniv, Cherkasy region (population 27,330) and Viersen, Germany (population 77,376)

Kaniv and Viersen started co-operating in 1993. Since then, hundreds of Kaniv children underwent rehabilitation in Viersen. For 15 years, “Friends of Kaniv” financially supported a territorial center for the elderly and a rehabilitation center for children with special needs. Medical workers of the center received a salary supplement, and a number of single elderly people monthly financial assistance under the Pensioner Viersen – Pensioner Kaniv Program.

Recommendations for the future EU-Ukraine municipal cooperation

In addition to the important factors that were outlined previously (pp. 9-10), a number of recommendations, based on the analysis of the specific context of the EU-Ukraine municipal cooperation, can be made.

To the local authorities:

- Be proactive and look for opportunities to not only establish a new partnership, but to also improve the existing one by attracting external financial resources or exchanging best practices.
- When establishing a new partnership, prioritise municipality with whom you not only have common interests but also a common language of cooperation.
- Assure political support and leadership in the very beginning of the partnership. Do not take it for granted as maintaining this support on both sides can be challenging.
- Define objectives, agree on the plan and a budget for cooperation and appoint responsible persons for partnership maintenance. Be open to an honest assessment of the progress of the partnership, and be proactive with proposing changes if the partnership is not progressing.
- Place high importance on the knowledge of English or other foreign language during the recruitment process of the colleague(s) who will be responsible for international cooperation. Fund language classes and professional trainings, and create a system of incentives and bonuses to motivate current employees to expand their skills.
- Be open about the problems of your municipality with the partner and do not set up a fake façade, especially during official visits, as this will only undermine the trust of your partner. Use the problem to rally and motivate your partner to help the community.
- Create and regularly update a dedicated internet page on your

official website containing all the relevant information about the partnership. Use traditional and social media to inform and involve general public in the activities of your international partnership.

To the external actors that support development of EU-Ukraine municipal cooperation:

- Help to improve capacities and skills of the administrators and managers responsible for international partnerships in their municipalities by organising trainings and workshops on managing strategic alliances, strategic planning, implementation or evaluation of strategic performance, grant writing and public communication.
- Aim to provide tailor-made solutions based on the specific needs of concrete municipalities.
- Establish an annual funding programme to support partnerships between municipalities in Ukraine and in the EU member states.
- Create a network for the exchange of best practices among partnered municipalities, and organise an annual event (conference) where such practices could be showcased, discussed, and further disseminated.
- Focus on supporting municipalities from Eastern Ukraine that want to establish new or to strengthen existing partnerships. This will help to level up the current geographic disbalance which favours Western regions of the country.
- Use the momentum created by the COVID-19 to promote online twinning as a new form of international municipal cooperation and an effective way to reduce the costs for travelling and transportation while still maintaining the regular contact.

Annexes

Annex 1

Phone interviews with Ukrainian municipalities

Municipality	Region	Population	Partner-municipalities in the EU countries (start of cooperation)
Khust	Zakarpatska	81,136	1. Hungary: Nyírbátor (2012), Komárom (2017), Szirmabeseny (2013) 2. Slovakia: Lipany (2015), Snina (2008) 3. Poland: Lesko (2009), Hrubieszów (2010), Chełm (2011) 4. Czech Republic: Žďár nad Sázavou (2017) 5. Romania: Sighetu Marmăției (2017)
Irpin	Kyivska	67,188	1. Germany: Borna (1976) 2. Poland: Pisz (2008) 3. Lithuania: Panevėžys, Alytus district (2009)
Yuzhne	Odeska	35,273	1. Bulgaria: Dimitrovgrad (2010), Kavarna (2016) 2. Hungary: Körmend (2014)
Dubno	Rivnenska	37,676	1. Poland: Giżycko (2000), Sokolów Podlaski (2005), Czerwionka-Leszczyny (2019) 2. Czech Republic: Uničov (2011) 3. Bulgaria: Belogradchik (2010)
Pryluky	Chernihivska	53,907	1. Poland: Kościerzyna (2003), Ostrołęka (2006)
Kaniv	Cherkaska	27,331	1. France: Lambersart (2018) 2. Germany: Viersen (1993) 3. Poland: Człuchów (2008), Chełmno (2016) 4. Estonia: Viru (2013)
Izium	Kharkivska	57,536	1. Latvia: Tukums (2019) 2. Poland: Andrychów (2017)



The Council of European Municipalities and Regions is Europe's most senior organisation of towns and regions, founded in 1951. It brings together 100,000 local and regional governments through 60 national associations. CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), through which it represents European local and regional governments at international level. CEMR promotes the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe founded upon local self-government and respect for the principle of subsidiarity. CEMR advocates on behalf of local and regional governments to make sure their voice is heard in Europe, shifting the focus to local democracy and autonomy. This advocacy work stands on CEMR member associations' experience and expertise.

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PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation. All are engaged in international cooperation for sustainable development. PLATFORMA is a hub of expertise on local and regional governments' international action, gathering towns and regions, their European and global networks, and regional and national associations. With its partners, PLATFORMA defends the role of towns and regions in EU development policies, promotes international cooperation between cities and regions across the world and facilitates knowledge exchanges and peer-learning between towns and regions and their associations. In 2015, PLATFORMA signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the European Commission. Its signatories commit to take action based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development. The PLATFORMA secretariat is hosted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

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U-LEAD with Europe: Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development Programme is a multi-donor action of the EU and its member states Germany, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia and Slovenia to support Ukraine on its path to strengthening local self-government. U-LEAD promotes transparent, accountable and responsive multi-level governance in Ukraine and empowers municipalities. U-LEAD with Europe has its regional offices in all 24 oblasts of Ukraine and co-founded the EU Project Office in Mariupol, Donetsk Oblast, to support the Sea of Azov region. Through its powerful network of experts, the Programme provides training and consultations on topics related to local self-government and regional development to local government and state bodies, primarily to municipalities, as well as provides professional advice on strengthening local and regional development to the national level, improving coordination between different ministries and levels of government.

