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CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN SLOVAKIA AND UKRAINE: VOLUME IV: PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ACTORS
Martin Lačný – Anna Polačková (eds.)
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This assessed publication is the latest of a series of publications stemming from a research project titled the “Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine and Cross-border Cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine: Implications and Opportunities”. It presents an empirically reach and detailed work, utilising and building upon an empirical template designed for cooperative work on European cross-border cooperation with the frame of EXLINEA research project supported by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme. The EXLINEA project did not include the border region in which the currently assessed publication focuses on.

Within the project assessed herewith, research has been conducted on the policies, practices and perceptions on the cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Ukraine with aim of identifying the political interests of the actors involved, their preferences / motivations, perceptions and strategies at three vertical levels – transnational, national, regional and local. The provided analysis in the publication itself focuses mainly on presenting the empirical research on perceptions of local and regional CBC actors, and the two main parts of the books have been designed accordingly. The focus is appropriate as the subnational levels are indeed the levels from which the existing comprehensive knowledge is has been lacking the most. The work thus provides an important contribution with its detailed and multidimensional analysis of the Slovakia-Ukraine border region, the importance of which is not limited to the region in question only, but carries a lot broader Europe interest – not the least in the context of the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement.

The authors have gone through a strenuous undertaking in identifying the key actors to be included in the study and followed the pretested empirical template systematically. It is seldom that one can read such an empirically rich text and gain such a holistic picture of a particular region, especially when the region under investigation is as complex as this one, based on a single work. The authors show great expertise not only in conducting comprehensive empirical research, but perhaps even more im-
importantly in presenting their work and findings in a clear and easy-to-understand manner. The results of the conducted research are explained thoroughly, backed up with well documental materiel, and illustrated with the help of supportive graphs and charts. The end result is a book that does not appeal only to scholars and stakeholders focusing on this particular region, but to anyone who is seeking to better understand the Slovakia-Ukraine border region, its various dynamics – or the lack thereof – and the impact of these to various levels of society.

In terms of more critical remarks, one could point out the strong reliance of the work on one type of material (the questionnaire) only, which natural comes with its limitations – as acknowledged by the authors. However, the authors are very aware of these restrictions and careful in making generalisations based on the findings. The merits of the work, however, clearly exceed this slight concern. As a scholar of who was strongly involved in the EXLINEA project, which gave inspiration to the presented work here, I cannot but say that I wish that the authors could have been included already in comparative frame of the EXLINEA, as the results provided in this publication would have of high importance to it. I have learned a lot by reading this book, and can see that it will become an important source material for anyone interested the in the dynamics of the Slovakia-Ukraine border region.