

SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: CURRENT PROBLEMS IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND THE NEIGHBORING EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on studies of cross-border socio-ecological and economic cooperation in the field of forestry. It emphasizes the fact that cross-border cooperation is an instrument designed to facilitate the expansion of interstate cooperation and the implementation of the sustainable development concept. Current problems in the field of protection, use, and reproduction of forest resources in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring European Union countries are considered. The concept and essence of the ideas of greening the economy and greening of education are analyzed. For more thorough theoretical-methodological and applied research in the field of forestry, it is appropriate to apply an interdisciplinary socio-ecological and economic approach at different territorial levels. The paper analyzes the national legislation of Ukraine and the international conventions regulating the conditions for cross-border cooperation in the field of environmental protection and the use of natural resources. In the end, the proposal is to create joint research centres for sustainable development and to establish a system of cross-border management, control and monitoring in the field of forest use in the border regions of the neighboring countries.*

Key words: *sustainable forest management; cross-border cooperation in Ukraine; forest resources; sustainable development.*

1. Introduction

At present, in the European integration process of Ukraine, the protection, use, and reproduction of forest resources are among the most relevant socio-ecological and economic problems in the border

regions of Ukraine and the neighboring countries of the European Union (EU).

Today, the issues of sustainable forest management in the regions adjacent to the border of Ukraine and the EU states are not sufficiently explored. That is why, at the present stage, the acquisition of complete and reliable information on the

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social, ecological, and economic condition of forest resources in these regions is becoming more important and relevant.

The actuality of the transboundary cooperation between Ukraine and the neighboring countries in various spheres of human activity was justified by scientists, representatives of civil society organizations, and politicians during the Parliamentary hearings on the theme «Transboundary cooperation as a factor of European integration process of Ukraine» (June 8, 2016). Emphasis was placed on the fact that «cross-border cooperation in various forms of inter-territorial cooperation is not only an effective factor of Ukraine's international activity, but also an important tool for the development of regions, cities and territorial communities, especially those that border with neighboring countries or have established relations with territorial partners in other countries» [18].

Cross-border cooperation is an instrument designed to promote the expansion of intergovernmental cooperation and the implementation of the concept of sustainable forest management, and includes a number of defined socio-ecological and economic goals.

The aim of this study is to develop theoretical principles, a methodological basis, and practical recommendations for sustainable forest management in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries.

2. Methods and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical and methodological foundations of the study are based on the holistic socio-ecological-economic analysis of the transborder cooperation between

Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries in the field of sustainable forest management.

Such scientific methods have been applied as literature overview, analysis, synthesis, and logical generalization of the conceptual framework for the necessity and prerequisites of the greening of economy and education concepts in order to train specialists for sustainable development. A comparative analysis of the most actual current problems of forest resource use and management at the cross-border level between Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries is provided herein.

3. Results

Cross-border cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management is carried out at different levels (state, regional, and local). Such cooperation contributes to international integration, the exchange of experiences, and development in the social, ecological, and economic spheres in the border regions.

In the last 10-15 years, considerable attention has been paid to the development of cross-border cooperation in all areas of human activity in Ukraine. Furthermore, the legal basis for such cooperation has been developed.

It should be noted that on the basis of the results of the Parliamentary hearings on June 8, 2016 on the theme «Transborder cooperation as a factor of European integration process of Ukraine» (August 23, 2016), the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «On approval of the State program for the development of cross-border cooperation for 2016-2020» was adopted [17].

In this Resolution, attention was drawn to the fact that «the development of cross-border cooperation is one of the priority tasks for the state regional policy implementation», and that «the development of cross-border cooperation is a priority of the EU Neighborhood Policy implementation».

Taking into account the European integration process of Ukraine, the political and legal mechanisms for the preparation and implementation of joint projects and programs of cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the EU states have been established.

The purpose of these projects and programs is to increase the socio-economic, ecological, scientific and technical, educational and cultural development of the subjects of cross-border cooperation. The sources of funding for the transborder cooperation projects are mainly connected with local budget resources and international assistance.

European integration is a priority for the state policy of Ukraine. Efficient cross-border environmental and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU is an important instrument for the European integration course of Ukraine and the main mechanism for the practical implementation of European standards. Therefore, there is a need to develop a theoretical-methodological and practical basis of environmental and economic spheres that would ensure the practical implementation of the sustainable forest management concept, both at the national, and transboundary level of Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries.

The state of forest resources depends primarily on the human attitude towards forests. Until recently, the attitude

towards forests, both in Ukraine, and in the neighboring EU countries, had a clear consumerist nature, where forest resources were seen as the only economic factor. This attitude of society towards forests is wrong and not conducive to effective cross-border socio-ecological and economic cooperation regarding sustainable forest management and the efficient development of civilization in general.

Today, the main problem in the unsustainable use of forest resources and the inefficient efforts towards its conservation in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries is caused by the lack of societal understanding of the priorities for the environmental conservation of the environment and the benefits of sustainable forest management. In this regard, solving complex problems in the forestry sector in the border areas requires forming a new socio-ecological and economic vision, new ethical priority values, and new regulations to provide a science-based concept of sustainable forest management.

In our opinion, providing the conditions for sustainable forest management in the border regions of the neighboring states is possible only by greening the economy and greening of education, aimed at training for sustainable development.

By **greening the economy**, we understand the process of implementation and realization of the appropriate ecological-economic system, which ensures the optimal quality of the environment, efficient use, protection, and reproduction of natural resources, as well as environmental safety at all levels (local, national, transboundary, and global) [5].

It should be noted that the problems of greening the economy in the border regions of Ukraine are left out of the attention of the higher echelons of state power, although in the signed agreements between Ukraine and the neighboring states (for example, Articles 290, 292, 296, 338, 360, 362, 363, 364, 379, 411, 414 of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union), the need to protect the environment is emphasized [21].

In our opinion, **greening of education** is a purposeful educational process of pupils and students training for the formation of their proper ecological, economic, political, environmental, and legal ideology and professional competence in accordance with the requirements of the concept of sustainable development [5].

In Ukraine, the need and prerequisites for greening the economy and greening of education through training for sustainable development is included in a number of regulations:

- The Law of Ukraine “On Environmental Protection” (dated 26.06.1991) [9];
- The Law of Ukraine “On the Basic Principles (Strategy) of the State Environmental Policy of Ukraine for the Period until 2020” (dated December 21, 2010) [12];
- Decree of the President of Ukraine- On 2020 Sustainable Development Strategy (January 12, 2015) [15];
- The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) “The Future We Want” (Rio de Janeiro, 13-22 June 2012) [13];
- Ukraine's voluntary commitments at “Rio + 20” summit on greening of

education (Rio de Janeiro, 13-22 June 2012);

- Decree of the President of Ukraine “On the National Strategy for the Development of Education in Ukraine until 2021” (June 25, 2013) [14];
- An Agenda for Sustainable Development until 2030 (New York, September 25, 2015);
- Framework for Action «Education-2030» (UNESCO, November 05, 2015);
- Decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine «On Greening of Higher Education of Ukraine in order to prepare specialists for sustainable development» (dated November 27, 2015), and others [16].

In our opinion, nowadays, the main problems in cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and the adjacent states of the EU in the field of sustainable forest management are:

- the insufficient rates of socio-ecological and economic development in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring states of the EU and the lack of appropriate tools for the implementation of the sustainable forest management concept in these regions;
- the lack of proper organizational and legal conditions for cross-border cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management;
- the low level of infrastructure provision and monitoring methods for sustainable forest management in the border regions;
- the lack of proper ecological information warning about natural disasters and protection against

- emergencies, as well as about the sustainable use of forest resources;
- the declarative nature of the common priorities of interstate cooperation in the field of forestry;
 - the limited arsenal of instruments for implementing sustainable forest management projects in the border regions;
 - the distinction between the rules and procedures for funding cross-border cooperation projects for sustainable forest management;
 - the low activity of participants in cross-border cooperation at the level of districts and territorial communities;
 - the unequal access of Ukrainian participants to financial resources within the framework of the realization of cross-border cooperation programs with EU states [17].

That is why today, Ukraine must make a lot of environmental and economic efforts aimed at developing effective cross-border cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring EU countries. This is imposed by the necessity of closer cross-border cooperation in terms of European integration.

According to scientists, the process of formation of an effective system of sustainable forest management should be carried out on the basis of a synergistic approach [6], which consists in the interdisciplinary integrated application of the social, ecological, and economic mechanism of forest management. The absence of such a mechanism complicates the implementation of sustainable forest

management in the border regions of Ukraine and the adjacent states.

Given that Ukraine is a forest-deficient country (its forest cover is 15.7%, while an optimum forest cover is nearly 20-24% [6]), appropriate science-based action programs should be developed to ensure the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable forest management in all the regions of Ukraine, including the border areas.

Since under the influence of anthropogenic (illegal logging, fire, damage, etc.) and natural (windbreaks, hurricanes, heavy snowfalls etc.) factors, significant forest areas in Ukraine have been lost, then in the near future it will be difficult to achieve optimal forest cover.

Taking into account that the border territories of the neighboring states have many common features regarding the natural-geographical aspect, the issue of cross-border cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management is particularly important and relevant.

The main legal acts in Ukraine that regulate the conditions for cross-border cooperation in the field of environmental protection and the use of natural resources, as well as the procedure for access to environmental information, are the Constitution of Ukraine (dated 28.06.1996), the Laws of Ukraine «On Transboundary Cooperation» (dated 24.06.2004), «On Environmental Protection» (dated 25.06.1991), «On Information» (dated 02.10.1992), and other laws, as well as various international conventions such as the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (Geneva, 1979), the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Toxic Wastes and Their Disposal (Basel, Switzerland, 1989), the Convention on the

Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (Helsinki, Finland, 1992), the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 1992), and other agreements that regulate transborder relations in this area [4].

It should be noted that nowadays, there is not always appropriate access to complete and reliable information about the state and use of forest resources on the border territories of the neighboring countries. In this regard, it is necessary to develop an effective system of cross-border management and control in the field of natural resource protection (forest, water, land etc.). This will allow solving a number of interstate ecological, economic, and legal problems in the field of forestry.

It follows from the information mentioned above that the solution to the existing problems is related to the effective use, reproduction, and protection of forest resources in the border regions, which is possible under the conditions of wide and active social, ecological, and economic cross-border cooperation.

In order to ensure the appropriate protection, use, and reproduction of forest resources on the border territories of the neighboring states, it is advisable to establish joint research centers for sustainable development, and to establish a system for cross-border management, control and monitoring in the field of forestry that takes into account the interests of the neighboring countries and complies with the principles of sustainable development.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The main directions of cross-border socio-ecological and economic cooperation between Ukraine and the EU should include the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, environmental security, the creation of favorable natural living conditions for present and future generations, and the improvement of human well-being.
2. The main environmental and economic problems in cross-border cooperation in the field of forestry between Ukraine and the neighboring countries are related to society's lack of understanding of the priorities in preserving the natural environment and the benefits of sustainable forest management.
3. The transition to sustainable forest management in the border regions of Ukraine and the neighboring states is impossible without greening the economy and education in order to prepare specialists for sustainable development.
4. Solving current problems in forest use at a transboundary level between Ukraine and the neighboring countries of the EU requires an appropriate level of social, ecological, and economic knowledge.
5. Cross-border cooperation in the field of protection, use, and reproduction of forest resources is an important component of transboundary cooperation of Ukraine in the European integration process.
6. Effective management and control in the field of forest management in the border regions is impossible without the joint efforts of the neighboring states and the introduction of strategic

action programs and mechanisms for their implementation.

7. The creation of joint cross-border research centres for the sustainable development of Ukraine and the neighboring countries would enable the effective use of the scientific potential of the border regions and the practical implementation of the concept of sustainable forest management in these regions.

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