



Backing reforms: city-to-city cooperation with Ukraine



As EURO CITIES, the network of over 130 major European cities, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa and Lviv, we welcome the signature of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine. The associated efforts to reinforce democratic structures and procedures, including at local and regional level, are particularly important. In many of our cities, there is also visible citizen support for these continuing efforts.

EURO CITIES has had a working group addressing the city dimension of the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) since 2005. This group has had a particular focus on the eastern dimension and is open to our members from European cities in the EU and in the European neighbourhood countries. The working group has met on many occasions to discuss a range of issues, including the democratisation process and the wider acceptance of European values in neighbourhood cities. Our work on this has been guided in particular by the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The European Commission's 'Support Group for Ukraine' will play an important role. A key dimension to the reform agenda is decentralisation of power and the creation of genuine, local self-government. Given that big cities are drivers of development, in Ukraine as in other countries, well-functioning local self-government in major cities is crucial.

Based on our experience of city-to-city support, we would like to confirm our readiness to support the reforms being carried out in Ukrainian cities. Some of the main areas for city-to-city cooperation within the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership, under the ENP and the supporting financial instruments, could include:

- supporting local democracy
- the functioning of local government including the fight against corruption
- cooperation with civil society and NGOs
- local transport planning
- education and youth exchange
- culture
- economic development including supporting SMEs
- environmental issues, including energy efficiency and climate change

We are confident that the experience of our own working group, and our expertise in these areas, can be of considerable value, and could prove useful for assistance programmes and projects. Appropriate ways to support decentralisation and other reforms at local level could include: partnerships and twinning, exchange of staff and experience, internships, youth exchange, advice, seminars, training, study visits and joint events.

We look forward to contributing to the work of the 'Support Group for Ukraine', and the further shaping and implementation of the reform agenda, that is being prepared in the context of the Association Agreement.

Annex 1 - examples of ongoing city-to-city cooperation with Ukrainian cities

Within EUROCITIES there is a great deal of experience of city-to-city cooperation with Ukrainian cities. Through this collaboration we have established important relations between local governments. Many of our cities can also build on their own experiences of the introduction of local democracy around 25 years ago.

Nuremberg: Next year marks 25 years of twinning between the cities of Nuremberg and Kharkiv. This successful city collaboration is based on a wide range of exchanges and activities, including knowledge transfer and good governance within municipal services in areas such as education, universities, health, the environment, sport, culture, city marketing, high technology, business and economy.

Close cooperation with associated NGOs like the twinning organisation Partnerschaftsverein Nürnberg-Kharkiv and the Nürnberger Haus in Kharkiv has brought with it great benefits, especially in terms of social projects. It has also improved quality of life for citizens of Kharkiv.

Warsaw: Over the last decade, since joining the EU, Warsaw has intensified its work with Ukrainian partners Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv and Odessa. The projects that have been carried out so far focused on principles and European values to be adopted at local level, such as good governance, strengthening local democracy and civil society in cooperation with local NGOs, and fighting corruption.

Some particular projects worth noting focus on practical aspects of environmental protection in cities, technical support for the functioning of local administration, workshops on youth city councils and practical solutions for health care system at city level. Programmes around cultural exchanges have been particularly important, such as 'Go East - The Eastern dimension of artists' mobility'.

Vienna: Relations between Vienna and Lviv, former capital of Austrian Galicia and Lodomeria, have been close for years and have led to a wide range of collaborative ventures. Most projects have been implemented in cooperation with the Austrian Exchange Service in Lviv, with a strong focus on culture, art, and literature. Last year a symposium on 'politics - media - ethics' was held at Lviv's Catholic University, where the Go-Governance association gave lectures and participated in a panel and audience discussion on good governance.

2012 marked the 20th anniversary of the cooperation agreement between Vienna and Kyiv, which has extended into many fields, from urban development and transport policy, energy efficiency, e-government and education, to preparations for the European football championship 2012. In the context of the Black Sea project, as well as the Danube Region Strategy network, the city of Odessa is an important member and partner.

Lublin: At present, the municipality of Lublin is implementing seven projects in partnership with Ukrainian cities, part-financed by EU funds (Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine 2007-2013), together with Rivne, Lutsk, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Ternopil with a total budget of €2,855,000.

The projects target specific challenges in the areas of culture, SMEs, youth, ecology, quality of life and improvement in the quality of services provided by local authorities.

In 2012, to enhance and systemise cooperation with Ukrainian partners, the municipality of Lublin, Lublin Voivodeship and the United Nations Development Programme in Poland established the Centre for Eastern Competences. The centre's mission is to set the guidelines for cooperation between the European Union and Eastern Europe, to provide a platform for dialogue and to eradicate existing stereotypes and prejudice. The key events being implemented under the patronage of Lublin's Centre for Eastern Competences are:

- Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress (<http://www.kongres.lublin.eu>)
- Eastern Economic Forum Lub-Invest (www.forum.lubelskie.pl)
- Culture for Eastern Partnership. (<http://epccongress.eu/>)

Leipzig: The cities of Leipzig and Kyiv were twinned in 1961. Despite major political changes, the two cities have succeeded in keeping up their relationship. They have tried to find new fields of cooperation, especially over the last 15 years. In the field of the economy, cooperation between the two chambers of commerce has been especially important, and specific areas of cooperation between the two cities include waste management, environment and vocational training.

Active sister city associations in both cities have helped to facilitate school cooperation, youth exchanges (several each year), exhibitions, lectures and workshops. The second German Ukrainian sister city conference took place in Leipzig in 2011. Since the beginning of 2014, Leipzig has been supporting the Maidan movement in various ways. Churches, associations and local foundations raised money in support of the victims of Maidan and their families. Leipzig mayor Burkhard Jung went on a short trip to Kyiv in March 2014 (accompanied by a delegation of journalists, citizens and staff members) to meet the acting city government and express solidarity. Leipzig has already sent specialists (psychologists) to help traumatised victims.

Leipzig is planning to send experts in the field of public administration, real estate management and environment after the elections to help the new city government restructure its work. Leipzig also cooperates with Lviv in the field of urban planning. An expert delegation from Lviv will visit Leipzig in September 2014.