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Article in *Tourism Review* · February 2007

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# How to promote a Cross-Border Region as a Tourism Destination – The Case Study of the Bug Euroregion

TOMASZ STUDZIENIECKI & TOMASZ MAZUREK

**Abstract** *As much as any cross-border destination may be an attractive notion, it clearly requires more profound research as both theoretical and practical research seems hardly satisfactory. This paper will attempt to present tourism development of the cross-border region of Bug, consisting of three national components: Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian. There are both advantages and disadvantages resulting from the fact that one part of the destination belongs to the European Union (EU) and the other does not. The authors analyse the potential of the Euroregion and present main actors responsible for the destination development. Based on both desk and field research, special attention is given to the model of tourism organisation. The theory of tourism transformation is carefully scrutinised. One can distinguish 4 stages of this process, namely: preparation, creation, verification, gratification (Studzieniecki 2000, p127).*

## 1 Introduction

At the outset it needs to be pointed out that the authors visited the three components, conducted several interviews and examined available information both from primary resources (the Internet, statistical data) and complementary resources (reports and literature). Plainly, one of the purposes of their visits was to assess the capability of creating a destination by euroregional actors.

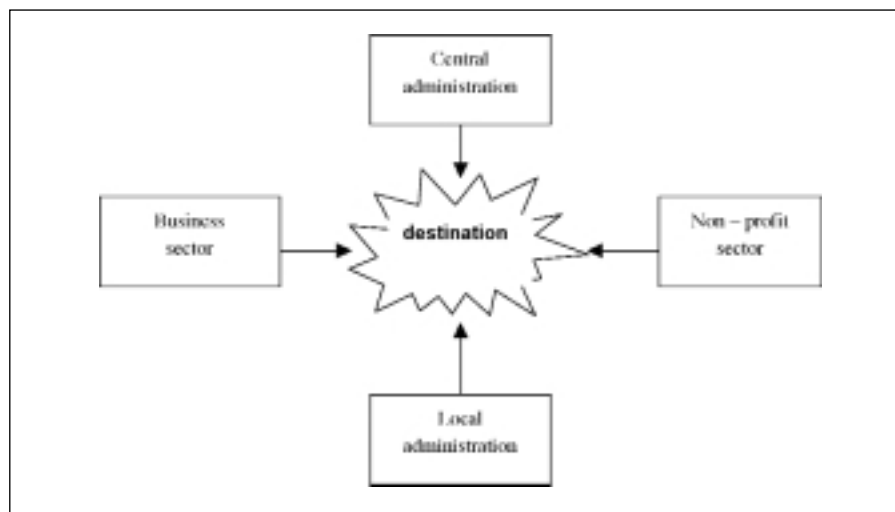
The traditional model destination may be composed of four crucial actors (Fig. 1):

1. business sector
2. non profit sector
3. local administration
4. central administration.

The role of particular actors depends on the national structure of tourism. In the Euroregion local administration seems to be the main actor. Cross-border tourism development should be co-ordinated by producers in four stages, consequently: preparation, creation, verification and gratification (Fig. 2).

One of this processes should be a tourist product. This paper will offer the answer whether such a product exists or not. From the Bug documents it is apparent that the Euroregion has set out the following priorities: administrative reforms, regional economic development, welfare schemes and ecology.

Figure 1: The main actors creating destination

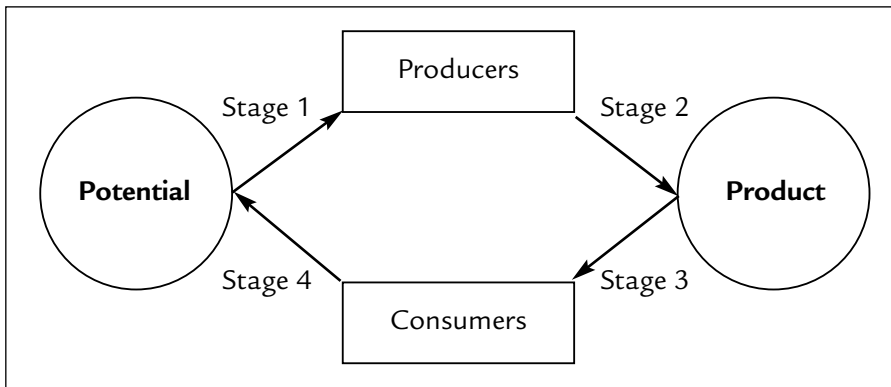


Source: own concept based on (Studzieniecki 2000, p80)

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Figure 2: The four stages of destination development



Source: own concept based on Studzieniecki 2000, p127

Each country in the Euroregion has a different concept of tourist products and tourist policies, so compromise seems to be a challenge. It can be proved that tourism can act as a catalyst for structural adjustment and development of cross-border regions, especially if they possess common heritage.

The research undertaken in the Bug Euroregion shows that there is a great potential but the product has not been created yet.

## 2 The concept of destination development

### 2.1 Preparation

The Bug Euroregion is one of over a hundred cross-border areas in Europe. It consists of three national components: Polish, Belarusian and Ukrainian (Fig. 3). The Bug River links all of them. Delimitation of the Euroregion is solely based on the administrative criteria. The three components are administrative units:

1. Lublin Region (województwo) in Poland,
2. Brest Region (oblast) in Belarus,
3. Wolhynia Region (oblast) in Ukraine.

Figure 3: Euroregion Bug



Source: <http://www.tric.info/cgi-bin/info.cgi?doc=%2Ftrc%2Fbug%2Findex.html&lng=en>; [www.aebr.net](http://www.aebr.net)

The Euroregion, with its population exceeding 5 mills. inhabitants, covers the area of 78.048 sq. km.

The three regions have institutionalised their co-operation in 1992 by signing the collaboration agreement. "The main aim of the agreement was to develop co-operation in the fields of: regional development, transportation, communications, delivery of energy and water, nature protection, industry, trade, agriculture, education, science research, healthcare, culture, arts, tourism, recreation, crime and public menace prevention."

In order to undertake marketing activities the logo for the Bug Euroregion has been produced (Fig. 4)

Figure 4: Logo of the Bug Euroregion and symbol of E – marketing

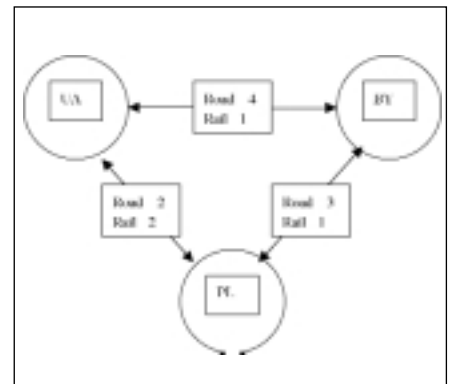


Source: ([http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page\\_id=27](http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page_id=27))

As much as the integration between the three parts is still in process, there are too many differences between the respective countries. Organizational aspects where administration authorities have different political visions may be one of the examples. There are still problems with unifying citizens, economy, policy and legal aspects (Polski 1997, pp177 – 181). Borders and histories of nations still remain barriers (Rapacz 2004, p23).

Travellers crossing the borders face several problems such as long queues, red tape, and poor quality of services. This phenomenon mainly refers to tourists travelling by car. It is relatively easier to travel by train (Fig. 5).

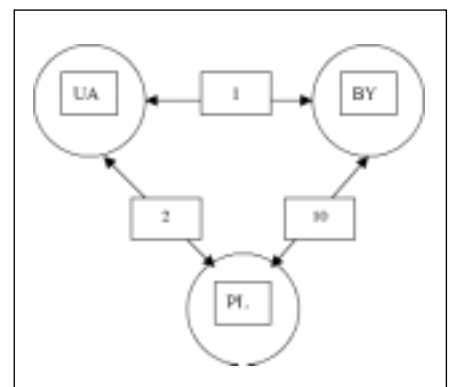
Figure 5: The number of border points between national components



Source: own concept based on the Polish Border Guard's data

The Bug Euroregion has neither "capital" nor "centre". The decision making process is decentralised in such a way that there are three national offices (Fig. 7).

Figure 6: The number of trains per diem between national components



Source: own concept based on Polish Railways data <http://www.pkp.pl>

Regional government authorities represent the Belarusian and Ukrainian components. In Poland the association of self-governments has been set up in order to coordinate the activities of the Polish component of the Bug Euroregion. The membership is not obligatory, yet each member is obligated to pay a membership fee (Fig. 8).

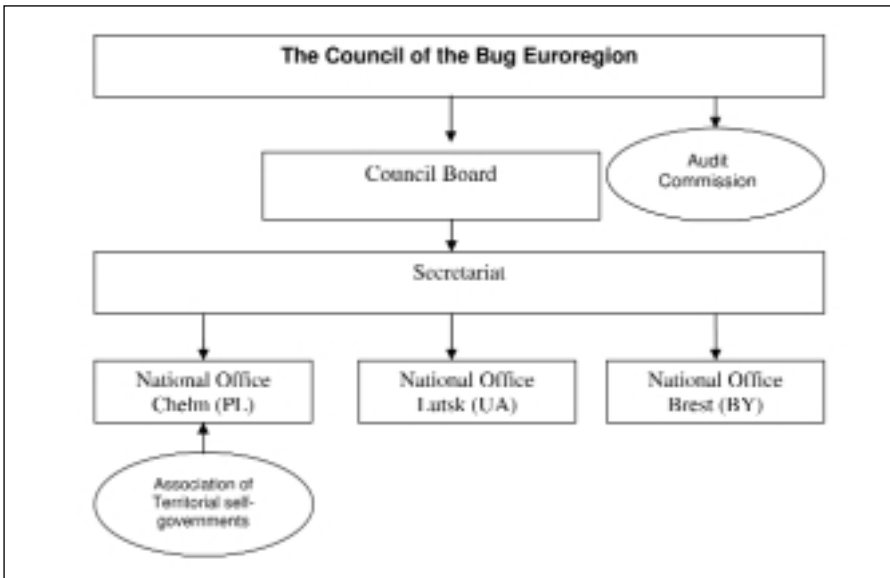
### 2.2 Creation

The Bug Euroregion is a member of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). Since 1999 it has distributed EU cross-border co-operation funds. The value of small projects had increased (Fig. 9).

Like in other euroregions tourism is mentioned among development priorities. According to the Euroregion officials: “from the perspective of a few years of realisation of projects, it can be easily seen that PHARE funds were of great importance for the beneficiaries, coming mostly from local governments of Lublin Voivodeship and their smaller units with their own budgets being too small. It was even more difficult in the case of foreign partners, none of which declared its own financial involvement. Nevertheless, each of them realised the tasks entrusted to them within the projects. In most cases it was content-related and administrative aid, although sometimes the partner had to cover the costs, which did not qualify for refund (e.g. transport of participants, advertising events in the media, preparation of materials for conferences and seminars). The realisation of Small Projects Fund brings permanent effects in many fields of euroregional co-operation, enabling exchange of experience and limiting prejudice”. ([http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page\\_id=26](http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl/viewpage.php?page_id=26))

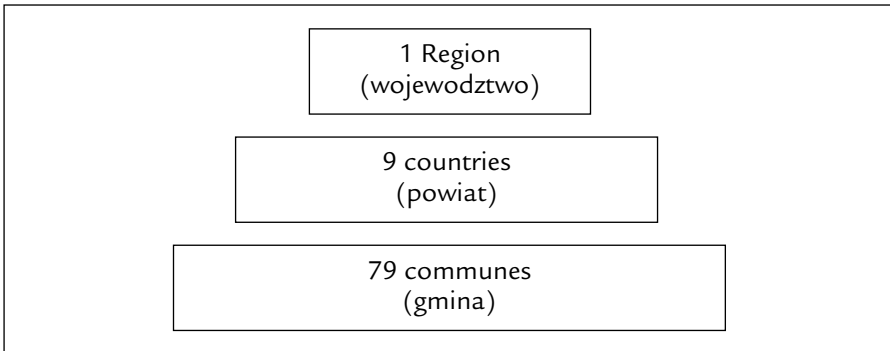
Presumably marketing experts would find it challenging to promote it in the tourist market as a new destination. However, it has a unique tourist product that may be addressed to the market niche looking for “genuine tourism”.

Figure 7: The organisational structure of the Bug Euroregion



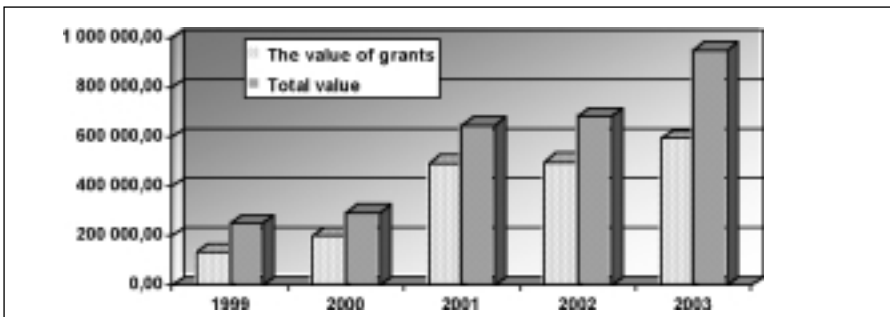
Source: Own concept based on information from National Office in Chelm

Figure 8: The Association of territorial self-governments - membership



Source: own concept based on information from National Office in Chelm.

Figure 9. The value of Small Projects in Euroregion Bug during the period 1999 – 2003 [euro]



Source: <http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl>

Photo 1: The image of the Bug Euroregion



Source: Tomasz Mazurek

The core product may be based on both natural and historical heritage. It is mainly intangible. The three components have never been excessively developed and this what may be treated as disadvantage by a tour-operator becomes an advantage satisfying the needs of a specific tourist. In this case a potential is a product. According to experts a product can be based on nature, historical and modern architecture, museums, conferences, exhibitions, trainings, walking and cycling trails, cultural meetings and more (Go\_embski 1999, p56).

As far as the destination management is concerned, the three components are rather non-compatible and transnational product exists more virtually than in reality. However, a few tourism projects were financed from the CBC funds (Fig. 10).

One of the projects was called "Euro-triangle of friendship" (Fig. 11).

The main idea of this product was to present the most significant components of the common heritage and to encourage individuals to travel within the Bug Euroregion. The authors have verified consumption of the product. It has been proved that there are 31 different barriers (visa, extra insurance, strict customs control, strict border control) for travellers (Studzieniecki, Mazurek 2006, pp106-115).

### 2.3 Verification

In order to examine determinants of cross-border tourism development in the Bug Euroregion the research was conducted in 2004 in three national components. It consisted of seven questions. In every country a hundred of respondents has been interviewed (Telipski, 2004 p48) (Fig. 12).

### 2.4 Gratification

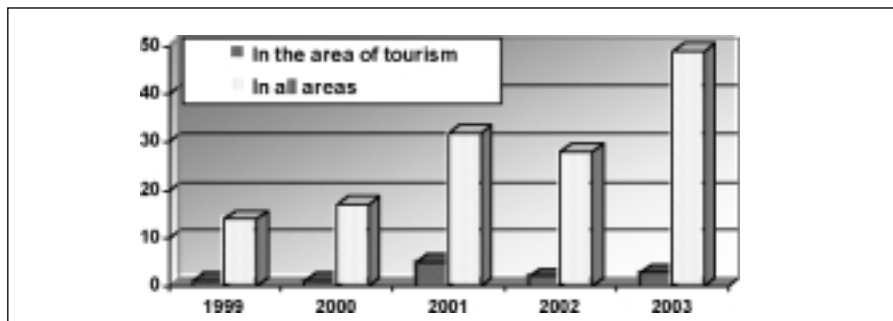
Cross-border tourism should create synergy effects and multiply incomes generated by hospitality. There are no data available to estimate the economic results of tourism in the Bug Euroregion. However, one may point out several intangible benefits:

- know-how transfer
- preparation of potential products
- partial reduction of border barriers
- intensification of promotional activities
- several amenities improvement.

It seems too early to promote the Euroregion as a destination but it may function as an umbrella facilitating development of national destinations. At this point, it should be admitted that synergy effects foster cross-border co-operation. The Polish authorities of the Bug Euroregion use promotional materials on the neighbouring countries, published by UNIDO and targeted at the business sector (Fig. 14).

Borders may be barriers. There are several problems in national policies in tourism aspects. In Belarus, for example, the National Development Program 2001 – 2005 has not been implemented. Belarusian tour-operators pay huge taxes and the government attempts at trying to monopolize the tourism sector and merge it with trade unions. As the Ministry of Sport and Tourism announced, tourism companies will be subject to control with the aim of increasing income. (Urbanowska 2003, p45). In the Bug Euroregion marketing activities are based more on social than commercial bases. Promotion is still a challenge for marketers. Tourism needs free market economy.

Figure 10: The number of Small Projects in the Bug Euroregion during the period 1999 - 2003



Source: <http://www.euroregionbug.lubelskie.pl>

Figure 11: The concept of "Euro-triangle of friendship"



Source: <http://www.euromixbug.org/index.php/pl/euroregion/mapa>

Figure 14: The synergy effects created by promotional activities



Source: [www.unido.pl](http://www.unido.pl)

Figure 12: The results of the research conducted in the Bug Euroregion in 2004

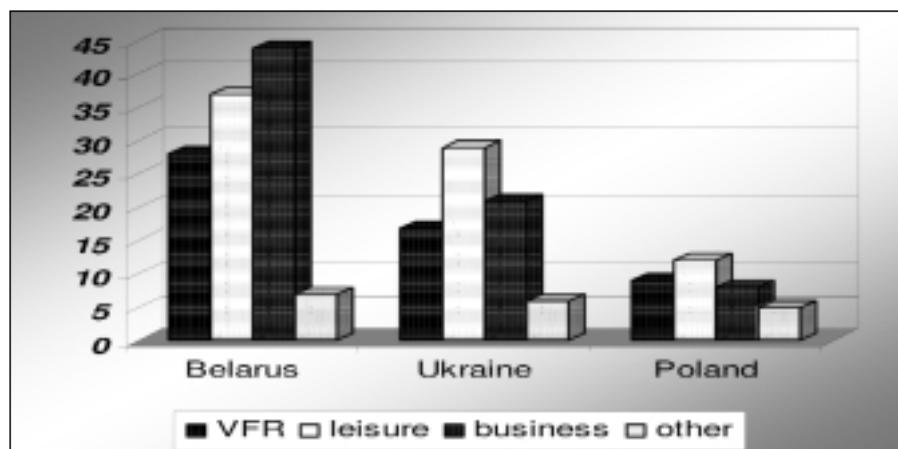
Question	PL	UA	BY
1. Have you heard about euroregions?	57% yes 43% no	53 % yes 47% no	46 % yes 54% no
2. Do you know that you are in a euroregion?	31% yes 69% no	41% yes 59% no	26% yes 74% no
3. Do you know the name of the euroregion?	21% yes 79% no	24% yes 76% no	18% yes 21% no
4. Are there any results of cross-border co-operation in the Bug Euroregion?	(Selected answers by respondents aware of being in the Bug Euroregion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ new contacts and friendship</li> <li>■ overcoming the language barriers</li> <li>■ support for business co-operation</li> <li>■ cultural and education exchange</li> <li>■ knowledge of the cultural heritage, tradition and language of neighbours</li> <li>■ new promotional materials</li> </ul>		
5. What should be done to improve activities of the Bug Euroregion?	(Selected answers by respondents aware of being in the Bug Euroregion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ more information about activities</li> <li>■ overcome travel barriers (visas)</li> <li>■ strengthen cultural and scientific co-operation</li> <li>■ implementation of projects in tourism</li> <li>■ prepare new tourist routes and trails</li> <li>■ increase the number of border crossings</li> <li>■ facilitate better co-operation between business sectors</li> </ul>		
6. Do you know any projects implemented in the Bug Euroregion?	No respondent knew such a project.		
7. Have you been abroad in the Bug Euroregion during the last 3 years?	UA – 25% BY – 9%	PL – 52% BY - 28%	UA – 60% PL – 56%

Source: Telipski 2004, p48

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Figure 13: The purpose of travelling in the Bug Euroregion



Source: Telipski 2004, p49