

# The European Union as a laboratory of paradiplomacy in the context of international and domestic determinants of regions' foreign activities

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to propose an analytical framework of the EU as a laboratory of paradiplomacy in context of international and domestic determinants of the regions' foreign activities. The article shades some light on the definitions of paradiplomacy, which allow to understand the ambiguity of the status of regions in international relations. Firstly, the dimensions and types of paradiplomacy are identified. Secondly, the discourse concerning international and domestic determinants of international engagement of regional governments is identified. Then, the framework of the EU as a laboratory of paradiplomacy is explained in the three subsequent parts. Firstly, the EU is referred to as an *intermestic* determinant of paradiplomacy, what results from the specific nature of the EU that corresponds with the international and domestic determinants of paradiplomacy in general. Secondly, the EU is addressed as an arena of paradiplomacy where various patterns of regional governments' presence in Brussels are tested. Finally, paradiplomacy in the EU is addressed as a scholarly challenge for the further research.

**Keywords:** paradiplomacy, EU, international determinants, domestic determinants

## Unia Europejska jako laboratorium paradyplomacji w kontekście międzynarodowych i wewnętrznych uwarunkowań aktywności zagranicznej regionów

### Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zaproponowanie podejścia postrzegającego UE jako laboratorium paradyplomacji w kontekście międzynarodowych i wewnętrznych uwarunkowań aktywności zagranicznej regionów. Artykuł otwiera rozważania definicyjne, które pozwalają zrozumieć niejednoznaczność statusu regionów w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Następnie przywołane zostały wymiary i typy paradyplomacji. W dalszej kolejności, identyfikowane są międzynarodowe i wewnętrzne uwarunkowania międzynarodowego zaangażowania regionów. Podejście postrzegające UE jako laboratorium paradyplomacji wyjaśniono w trzech kolejnych częściach. W pierwszej, integracja europejska jest traktowana jako międzynarodowo-narodowa (*intermestic*) determinanta paradyplomacji, co wynika

ze specyfiki UE, która odpowiada międzynarodowym i krajowym determinantom paradyplomacji w ogóle. W drugiej, UE jest postrzegana jako arena paradyplomacji, w której testowane są różne formy obecności władz regionalnych w Brukseli. W trzeciej, paradyplomacja w UE odniesiona została do kluczowych podejść teoretycznych, które podejmują jej temat w kontekście badawczych ambicji jej teoretycznego uregulowania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** paradyplomacja, UE, uwarunkowania międzynarodowe, uwarunkowania wewnętrzne

The regions understood in this article as non-central governments<sup>1</sup> began to be considered in the category of international relations' participant in the 1970s, mainly due to the so-called New Federalism, which resulted in changes in federal states that enabled international activity of Canadian and US provinces. This vector in the area of international relations began to be successively and intensively explored in the 1990s as a result of global alternations of the international order related to the end of the Cold War and globalisation processes (Kuznetsov 2015: p. 43–44). In Europe, the particular mobilisation of regions in international relations is associated with the intensification of the processes of European integration, which fundamentally strengthened the role of regions (Hooghe 1995: p. 175).

Regions' involvement in international relations causes many difficulties in terms of proper defining of their activities in the scientific categories. In consequence, this increasingly interesting phenomenon still remains in a perspective of a scholar challenge. In traditional definition of international relations the regions' status is clear: they are not subjects of international law (Tomaszewski 2006: p. 74). Moreover, "regions do not have sovereign governments able to lay down their definition of the 'national interest' and to pursue it in a unified and coherent manner. Regions are complex entities containing a multiplicity of groups which may share common interests in some areas but be sharply divided on other issues (...). They must fit their own activities into a world dominated by national governments and transnational organisations, which they can rarely challenge head on but must work around or with" (Keating 2000: p. 3). Regions' external engagement is often "an activity that typically falls in a legal and constitutional grey zone because most constitutions almost always give exclusive powers over foreign affairs to the state" (Lecours 2008: p. 6). And states do not always share the conviction of delegating or assigning international competences to regions, fearing for the states' inconsistent presence in international arena or divisions and internal conflicts. However, this does not change the fact that regions are beginning to be perceived in the context of an actor of international relations, next to traditional state actors and non-state ones like transnational corporations, civil society organisations, etc. (see more: Keating 2001; Surmacz 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> In this article the notions "non-central governments", "regional governments", "subnational governments" will be used interchangeably.

activities. The article opens with definition considerations, which allow to understand the ambiguity of the status of regions in international relations. Next, the dimensions and types of paradiplomacy are identified. Then, the discourse concerning the international and domestic determinants of international engagement of non-central governments is described. The framework of the EU as a laboratory of paradiplomacy is explained in the three subsequent parts. Firstly, the EU is referred to as an *intermestic* determinant of paradiplomacy, what results from the specific nature of the EU that corresponds with the international and domestic determinants of paradiplomacy in general. Secondly, the EU is addressed as an arena of paradiplomacy where various patterns of regional governments' presence in Brussels are tested. Finally, paradiplomacy in the EU is addressed as a scholarly challenge for the further research.

### **Conceptualisation of regions' international activities: paradiplomacy or ...?**

Labeling the external activities of regional governments has been challenging in the academic literature. The most frequently used term 'paradiplomacy' has been incorporated in different styles and not in the same meaning by scholarly attempts of exploring the phenomenon of subnational governments' involvement in international relations. In fact, one of the founding fathers of 'paradiplomacy' concept, Ivo Duchacek, started in 1984 with the term 'microdiplomacy' what might suggest a speculative dimension of conceptualizing the region's actorness in international relations at that time. Moreover, the term of 'paradiplomacy' had been engaged by Rohan Butler in 1961 to describe "the highest level of personal and parallel diplomacy, complementing or competing with the regular foreign policy of the minister concerned" what usually meant "unofficial or secret negotiations that may take place in a shadow of official diplomacy, 'behind the backs' and 'under the table'" (Kuznetsov 2015: p. 26). The correlation between international engagement of regions with the term 'paradiplomacy' was forged by Panayotis Saldatos (1990: p. 34), who understood it as "a direct continuation, and to various degrees, from state government, foreign activities". This approach was supported by Duchacek (1990: p.32) who claimed that the term actually adequately referred to the analysed phenomenon: "parallel to, often coordinated with, complementary to, and sometimes in conflict with center-to-center 'macrodiplomacy'".

Without contesting the phenomenon of regional governments' involvement in international relations, the term of 'paradiplomacy' had been criticised, mostly by John Kincaid who proposed to use the term 'constituent diplomacy' which was meant to upgrade the sense of meaning of regions' actorness in international relations. In his opinion, paradiplomacy equaled secondary what could not be the case of units in federal states, like the US, where "the states are co-sovereign constitutional polities with the federal government, not sub-national governments" (Kincaid 2001: p. 1). Similar arguments were shared by Brian Hocking (1996: p. 39) who claimed, that "neologisms (...) – 'paradiplomacy' and 'microdiplomacy' implied some second-order level of ac-

tivity, the parent concept – diplomacy – being the rightful preservation of national governments". A second argument was of far more significant reason. In his view, the term 'paradiplomacy' limits regional governments to "unitary actors, whereas, in reality, they represent quite complex patterns of relationships both inside and outside their national settings, and embrace a diversity of interests". Instead he proposed the concept of 'multilayered diplomacy', understood as "densely textured web" in which regional actors "are capable of performing a variety of goals at different points in the negotiating process. In doing so, they may become opponents of national objectives, but, equally, they can serve as allies and agents in pursuits of those objectives" (Hocking 1993: p. 2–3).

The definition disputes mentioned above reflect the problems with conceptualisation and localisation of international activities of regions in key categories of international relations. However, as Kuznetsov (2015: p.28–29) concludes: "all proposed alternatives did not earn enough credit to substitute *paradiplomacy* as the major term in academic discourse. An accurate glance at the bulk of literature of the 1990s and 2000s gives us strong evidence of that because it shows that scholars may easily operate different terms in their works, but the concept *paradiplomacy* became the central starting point for both those who prefer this neologism and those who claim to have coined something better". The term is as problematic and ambiguous as the external activities of regions, however, this does not change the fact that regional involvement in international relations has been increasing, what is immanently associated with changes in international arena and on nation-state level.

## Dimensions and types of paradiplomacy

While understanding that paradiplomacy is generally about subnational governments' presence and activities in international relations, it is also important to understand that in the case of each region paradiplomacy does not mean the same, mostly in the sense of motivations, goals, possibilities and constraints. In this context André Lecours (2008: p.2–4) distinguishes between three layers of paradiplomacy. The first one is mainly about economic issues, focusing on attracting foreign investments, targeting new markets for export, establishing trade partners. There are no political aspirations nor cultural matters at stake in this type of paradiplomacy which is "primarily a function of global economic competition". The examples of such paradiplomatic layer can be found among American states, Australian states as well as Canadian provinces other than Quebec, namely Ontario and Alberta. The characteristic feature of the second layer of paradiplomacy is its extensiveness and multidimensionality because it involved cooperation in cultural, educational, technical, technological aspect. This cooperation is usually labeled as "decentralised cooperation" and refer mostly to European regions without prominent political goals. The third layer of paradiplomacy bases on political considerations. As Lecours (2008: p. 3) concludes: "Here, sub-state governments seek to develop a set of international relations that will affirm the cultural distinctiveness, political autonomy and

the national character of the community they represent". The layers can be cumulative depending on the variables mentioned above, international incentives and conjuncture and results of strategies the regional governments adopt.

Due to multitude of regional governments that perform different layers of paradiplomacy, it has been a challenge to develop a typology of it that would not lead to oversimplification (Magone 2006: p. 7). One of the most frequently mentioned is that developed by one of the founding fathers of the paradiplomacy concept, Ivo Duchacek, who in 1986 concluded that: "The various initiatives taken by non-central governments on the international scene have so far assumed four distinct yet interconnected forms: (1) transborder regional microdiplomacy, (2) transregional microdiplomacy, (3) global paradiplomacy, and (4) protodiplomacy" (Kuznetsov 2015: p. 27). The first type means trans-border formal and informal contacts between regions that share geographic proximity and the resulting similarity in commonly shared problems and methods of their solutions. Transregional microdiplomacy stands for connections between non-central governments that are not neighbours. Global paradiplomacy, as Duchacek describes, "consists of political functional contacts with distant nations that bring non-central governments into contact not only with trade, industrial or cultural centers on other continent but also with various branches or agencies of foreign national governments" whereas protodiplomacy contains the most distinctive political aims it means "activities of non-central governments abroad that graft a more or less separatist message onto its economic, social and cultural links with foreign nations" (Kuznetsov 2015: p. 27).

Another frequently mentioned is that proposed by Robert Kaiser who distinguished between three types basing on the forms that paradiplomacy adopted in the global governance system (Magone 2006: p. 8). The types are as follows:

- 1) Transborder regional paradiplomacy which relies on formal and informal contacts between neighbouring regions across national borders;
- 2) Transregional paradiplomacy which is understood as cooperation with regions in foreign countries;
- 3) Global paradiplomacy which rests on political-functional contacts with foreign central governments, international organisations, private sector industry and interests groups.

While sharing many similarities, Duchacek's and Kaiser's typologies capture different types of relations the regional government establishes in the international area, these are between regions themselves as well as other actors like states, international organisations, etc. However, according to José M. Magone (2006: p. 9–10) they miss one additional level that cannot be ignored, that is between the global and the regional. He suggests introducing an another type: transnational paradiplomacy which means a cooperation between national governments, which forms a context for regional governments and different interest groups to take part in common projects. As he explains: "The gatekeeper for such paradiplomacy are the national governments, but the real actors come either from civil society or subnational governments" (Magone 2006: p. 10).