

Recommendation

It is a great challenge and also a great responsibility to launch a new regional developmental periodical, especially when the characteristic of the series, as intended by the authors, is formed by the place, the time and the professional background.

By the turn of the millennium, social and economic disparities, larger than before, had appeared in Hungary. It is widely known that the performance measures of the capital city and of Western Hungary are more favourable than the national average, while those of other regions like Northern Hungary are weaker.

A considerable part of the population living in our region has suffered from the changes of the past decades. Mass communication reported primarily on backwards and the individual and communal failures. The special topics of our periodical have been formed by the editorial purpose to give opportunity to publish the regional developmental, urban, sociological and regional economic workshop activities that intend to solve the problems of this region struggling with special structural problems. On the other hand, the editors intend to present the research results that help positioning the region from different aspects in the national and European space.

The other and not at all secondary aim of the editors is to introduce the workshops dealing with the special problems of the region and to present the results of their cooperation. In the last one and a half decades, the research and educational capacity of regional sciences has strengthened in Northern Hungary and the number of experts working in the region has become considerable due to the efforts of the North Hungarian Research Department of the Regional Research Centre, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Regional Economies at the University of Miskolc. These experts are dedicated to deal with the regional and rural development problems, using their knowledge safe.

The time of starting this series is not accidental. Many of the works carried out in the workshops are worth being published for the wider public. On the other hand, there is also a healthy wish to prove that regional development profession can be taught and learnt! (Everyone has to do what he/she has learnt Cicero)

In the hope that our efforts will not be unavailing and that we can attract the attention of those interested in this field, *lector salutem!*

Miskolc, August 2004.

The editors

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Summaries

György Kocziszky:

Innovation potential analysis of the Northern Hungarian Region

Abstract

Innovation potential plays an increasingly important role in the competitiveness of small regions, counties and regions. It means that the global economic position of a country is determined not only by the innovations being present in the products and services developed in laboratories and research centres and successfully marketed, but also by every novel and successfully implemented idea that positions a region in the national economy of the country. On the other hand, as it is proven by international practice, only that region can be successful that presence is not linked to an original or a chance action, but to a process consciously performed by figures constantly in action and organised into an institutionalised network. One of the major tasks of our model program designed to elaborate a model for innovation-based economic development in small regions is to provide a guideline for working out small region innovation strategies in Hungary. The European Union is also making great efforts to strengthen innovation skills. The European Commission published its Green Paper on Innovation in 1995 and the Commission Staff Working Paper, 2001 Innovation Scoreboard in 2001. Innovation strengthening programs are operating currently in Europe in the form of Framework Programs 5 and 6, in which Hungary is also involved.

EUROSTAT databases are published regularly and their indicators can be used in attempts to measure and compare the development levels of innovation. These data (e.g. Statistics on Innovation in Europe), however, are of national levels and do not quantify the innovation potential of individual regions, although innovation is to be examined at regional level, for it may play a major role in bridging the gap by the backward regions.

In more developed market economies, competition and market regulating mechanisms play a greater role in strengthening and spreading innovation, but in backward region centrally controlled intervention is required. This will require the development of indicators and measurement and comparison methodology, which are suitable for quantifying the innovation potential also at lower levels of statistics and planning (NUTS IV-V). Based on them, realistic development strategies and programs can be planned and supported in order to close the gaps and decrease disparities.

That is why it is necessary to conduct the survey at settlement and small regional levels and to utilise them. In the East German counties, with the support of the Leader program, several projects are being developed with the objective of measuring and developing the innovation potential of rural regions. Their measurement methodology is similar to what we have in mind. We have contacted those involved in the projects.

General objectives of small regional innovation development

We wish to provide a model that will help small regions being formed in Hungary to work out an innovation strategy. The model proposed is significantly based on the methodology of regional innovation strategies (RIS) developed in the regions of the European Union, but it substantially relies on Hungarian innovation research practice and on the experience of the Institute of the Economics of Europe of the University of Miskolc in strategy development. The model takes into account the differences in the innovation infrastructure, institutional system and instruments of the innovation policy between Hungary and the EU member countries. It also takes into consideration the difficulties small regions in a weak position nowadays experience in enforcing their interests as well as the low amount of resources that can be used for technology and for research and development.

The strategic management of bottom-up initiatives can achieve a significant improvement in the condition of innovation systems at the national level as well. Our objective for small regions is to develop their innovation capacities, for the different forms of cooperation between businesses, the scientific and technology sphere to develop and for successful developers to be rewarded for their achievement.

The elaboration of the measurement and development strategy of small region innovation potential is a process that integrates all those involved in the research and technology development, supports them in thinking and acting collectively and in cooperating in order to improve the efficiency of innovation and to enhance the competitiveness and welfare of small regions.

Special objectives of the project are:

- Elaborating an independent, small regional innovation strategy covering the complete statistical area and based on the local conditions and potentials and prepared with the involvement of local and external experts.
- Creating connections between the small regional strategies of a region, consciously taking advantage of effects strengthening each other.
- Training innovation managers at small regional level to perform their functions.
- Elaborating and implementing a solution which will be of model value at national level; which may contribute to shape the image of the region positively and to strengthen the “knowledge-centred innovation regional image”.
- Preparing a manual for “small region innovation planning, managing and monitoring”, which will be suitable for successful application in the small regions of all regions, i.e. may contribute to building an innovation network.
- Comparing the innovation maps of the small regions of a given region (in harmony with the EU practice) and preparing projects for strengthening innovation.
- Elaborating local projects that can be connected to national and international (e.g. projects supported by the EU) projects. This will achieve continuity and a possibility for supplementary financing.

The process of performing the task

- The task will be performed in seven steps:
- The first step will determine the innovation potentials of the statistical areas of the region in accordance with EU standards (in accordance with the EUROSTAT measuring and quantification system).
- The second step will use the figures for a comparison that will position the small regions of the region at national and international levels.
- The third step will prepare the SWOT analyses for the “innovative small regions” for all the statistical areas of the region.
- The fourth step will compile the R&D future image for each small region with the involvement of local and external experts.
- The fifth step will elaborate small region level projects.
- The sixth step will formulate recommendations.
- The seventh step is continuous monitoring.

Éva G. Fekete:

The absorption ability and the position of small regions in the Northern Hungarian region compared to other small regions of Hungary

Abstract

The aim of the research carried out by the order of the Prime Minister’s Office, Office for Regional Development in 2003 is to create and test a method which could be used for measuring the absorption ability of small regions. We defined absorption ability as the receiving and locking ability of external capital in Hungarian small regional statistical-planning districts. The problem was very up-to-date because by 2004, Hungary had to prepare for the reception of the Structural Funds and the correct, effective and efficient use of the 1100-1600 billion forints available for Hungarian small regions (6-8 billions for each). The basic questions were the following:

- Which factors determine and how can small regions’ ability of locking external capital be measured?
- How can Hungarian small regions be evaluated according to their absorption ability?
- What further steps have to be taken to prepare?

Studying the relevant documents and special literature, we stated that the ability of absorbing EU funds was equal with the ability of elaborating and implementing relevant, attainable and sustainable projects. The absorption ability of small regions depends on spatial factors, development capacity and the ability to enforce interests. These factors together form the complex spatial indicator of absorption ability, which was determined as a value expressing the closeness to the small regional absolute maximum point tied to the biggest small regional values occurring in each indicator’s case.

The analysis of spatial factors of the absorption ability accomplished to Hungarian statistical small regions indicated that in the spatial formation of absorption ability, the closest connection could be proved with the indicators of being accessible and the present economic environment. According to the complex development indicator describing the situation of small regions compared with each other, which was created from the indicators of small regional absorption ability, the Hungarian small regions can be classified in three categories.

- The number of small regions with good (above 0.5) absorption potential is 42. Out of them, 18 constitute the group of small regions with the best spatial factors.
- Average absorption potential characterizes 91 small regions.
- 17 small regions have weak absorption potential.

At the same time, the defined regional categories of the spatial development factors mark out the target area of the subsidies which help achieving the goals of cohesion and sustainable development. On the basis of the development of absorption conditions, besides the usual Budapest-Győr and Budapest-Balaton spatial structural axes, the Budapest-Kecskemét-Szeged and the Budapest-Miskolc axes became important. At the same time, the significance of the Budapest-Pécs axes decreased.

In the Northern Hungarian region, according to spatial factors, small regions situated along the M3 motorway as a main spatial structural line (in close relationship with attainableness) are the most suitable to receive external economic resources. The Eger small region is the 7th most attractive small region in the country. This is followed by the small regions of Miskolc, Salgótarján and Gyöngyös in the 21st, 22nd and the 28th place, respectively. Besides the areas which are far from the centres along the Northern and Eastern borderline and cannot be accessed easily, the small regions of Szécsény, Balassagyarmat and Pásztó turn up as the inner periphery of the region.

The analysis of the coincidence of spatial production factors and the supportable objectives from the Structural Funds in the frame of the Hungarian National Development Plan between 2004 and 2006 revealed that a significant part of the measures did not contain geographical preferences at all, e. g. in these cases areas with more developed spatial factors would start with more chance. Among the measures, the rural development and some regional development objectives are the ones which help definitively the disadvantaged areas. These cover the 10 percents of the total amount of money.

The results of the survey carried out in 15 sample small regions (3 of them are in Northern Hungary) and former researches on assessing small regional development capacity reveal that the development of small regional development capacity has at least the same role in determining the absorption ability as the spatial factors. There is no unambiguous relationship between the development of small regional capacity and spatial factors. In the case of our sample, small regions with the most developed development capacity are from the category of the weakest spatial conditions. At the same time, nor can the reversed relationship be generalized. The small regional development capacity is formed mostly by plan supply, the density of connections network, professionals supply and the financial background. In the case of half of the associations, lack of capacity can be expressed according to at least one point of view. The most shortfalls are in the field of planning (despite the lively planning processes in the near past). Primarily not the programmes, but their lack of colourfulness and the project plans built on them can be indicated.

The small regional development associations of the Northern Hungarian region show strong dispersion which is similar with the national situation.

Beyond planning, on the basis of the other three main conditions, approximately the one-fourth of the associations needs being developed.

Our recommendation is that capacity analysis must be carried out for every small region. In this process the questionnaire elaborated by us and the marginal values created by the sample can help. On the basis of the results of research, the capacity-building plans are to be worked out for small regions. The elements of the plans:

- the development of organizational structure, documents needed for operating, list and system of conditions of rules;
- description of planning processes;
- information strategy;
- human resource management, training plan;
- financial strategy.

General frames help small regional absorption, which should be constructed and regulated centrally. The elements of these:

- the plan law, which regulates the process of programming, authority, harmonizing plans;
- helping the creation and operation of national initiatives, forums, which build connections between small regional organizations and other participants of regional development;
- carrying through the process of the institutionalisation of small regional development, determining the authority and the division of tasks among different types of institutions;
- clearing up the legal status of small regional managers, accepting it as a job;
- constructing the system of the vocational training of regional development;
- constructing the national and regional small regional development information system.

János Zsúgyel:

The impact of the factors affecting regional development disparities in the EU-27 member and candidate countries

Abstract

The paper analyses the regional development disparities of the EU-27 member and candidate countries and their factors at the regional level. The author analyses the data published by the European Commission in the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion. The analysis deals with descriptive statistical methods and cluster analyses.

The GDP per capita figures of the EU-27 member and candidate countries show that the EU-15 countries have a favourable position comparing with the new member and candidate countries. In the elimination of the development disparities the Western European countries were also more successful than the new member states. Because of the low level of general development, the regions of the candidate Balkan countries have a lower level of regional disparities than the other Eastern European countries. The regional disparities are more serious in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia where the developed central regions and the less developed rural regions caused that phenomenon.

The author investigated the determinants of the spatial disparities based on the following available figures:

- activity rate;
- high level educated population rate;
- number of patents per one million inhabitants;
- employment rate in the tertiary sector.

The investigated figures represent the human resource potential of the economy, the scientific technological progress and the modernisation level of the economy.

The relation between the income level and the investigated figures show only a weak connection measured with the correlation coefficient. The cluster analyses divided the EU-27 regions in more and less developed regions proved that high activity rate, high rate of educated population, high number of patents per one million inhabitants and high employment rate in the tertiary sector are necessary to achieve high income level in the regions.

In the developed regions' cluster that includes the regions with the best figure due to all four coefficients, there are only 29 Western European regions. None of the Eastern European regions could be a member in the developed regions' cluster.

This fact shows that the elimination of the development disparities between the EU-15 and the Eastern European countries is possible only in a longer historical process.

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