

Introduction

State borders separate and make connections. The north Hungarian region used to be mainly separated from the Slovakian part of Uplands for many years by the state border set after the Treaty of Trianon. Since 1990, and especially since the accession to the European Union, we have felt that state borders can also make connections. This conclusion is indicated by the reconstruction of ruined roads and bridges and by the restart of thinking together.

Common actions can be realized through understanding each other. The first step of understanding is cognition. Therefore, the third issue of the North Hungarian Regional Strategy Papers has been devoted to the recognition of the cross-border relations of the region. We give an insight to the analyses in this field, to the documents of the common planning and developing work and to the commonly initiated and realized projects. The selection is not complete by any means. We still have materials for another cross-border issue. Hopefully, even more scientific analysis will have been carried out by then and the results of the common development work will be able to be evaluated.

Like in the case of other issues, we hope that the papers included can help the formation of the strategic directions to develop the region, the decision making that contribute to reaching the aims and the follow-up and feedback of the results.

We wish you a pleasant reading and wait for your comments on our current topic or your proposals related to the content of the next issues.

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Dr. G. Fekete Éva
Chief editor

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Summaries

István Mezei:

Chances of Hungarian-Slovakian Cross-Border Relations

In my paper, I introduce the international economic processes which have imposed new market procedures on the peoples of the Carpathian Basin, breaking the former unit of labour division between new political borders. This was confirmed by Czech/Slovak politics which created a new and permanent labour division within the new borders, after 1920 on their own territories, and it was rather closed and not open to Hungary and the other parts of the Carpathian Basin. This is the reason why the areas along the border remain peripheries in both countries (and why the zone along the Danube in Hungary remains a link to Western Europe without making the northern bank of the Danube its gravitation area), and these peripheries will always be obliged to implement certain developments with small funds gained from tenders of regional development but they will never reach the extent of the dynamics of the country. Therefore, in the future, a much smaller scale of controlled cross-border relations will mean the new form of cooperation.

Judit Molnár:

Comparative human geographic analyses in four European borders

Objectives of the research: 1. to compare the characteristics of four border regions, namely the Ukrainian - Hungarian, Slovakian-Hungarian, Austrian-Hungarian and Irish-Northern-Irish ones and to synthesize the results. 2. to identify the main factors having an effect on the social, economic and political relations across these borders. It was revealed that the main factors affecting the border area: Permeability of the frontier depends on the political situation, presence of checkpoints on the border (difficulty or perceived difficulty in crossing, militarization, etc.). Legal border crossing was more frequent when there were close familiar relationships between people living on two sides of the border. The intensity of illegal border crossing depended on the economic and political situation. In areas where there is a big difference in the price of certain goods between the two countries, some inhabitants try to exploit this. The findings suggest that another main factor of border life and contact is the fact whether the area is rural or urban. It appeared to be easier to build cross-border relationships in urban areas.

Éva G.Fekete:

KÖZTÉRKÉP: Presentation of characteristics in public administration and regional development in order to strengthen cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Hungary

The North Hungarian Regional Development Agency (NORDA) and the Kassa District Regional Development Agency declared the launching of cross-border cooperation and the creation of services supporting the cooperation as their common objective in 2003. It was revealed that the structures of public administration and regional development should be analyzed in the Northern Hungarian region and the neighbouring Slovakian counties of Kassa and Besztercebánya. The aim of the analyses was to provide sufficient information in quantity and quality for those who are interested. The survey covered six areas: public administration, regional development, tasks of the authorities, education, civil organizations and successful projects. This job was carried out by professionals of the two regions with the assistance and management of the Centre for Regional Studies North Hungarian Department. This study contains the comparison of structures in these two countries and the summary of the crucial conclusions. Comparing the possible areas of cooperation and the structures determining the framework of cooperation, it can be concluded that the structure of regional development objectives can be harmonized through cross-border cooperation, which is a more important priority in Hungary. Both countries consider employment, environment protection and the development of SMEs to be pivotal issues. Besides, transportation and the improvement of the quality of life could be fields of cooperation. The actors of regional development are similar, but in Hungary the institutional structure is more differentiated. The professional background is developed in both countries with the difference that in Hungary several private experts work, while in Slovakia experts can be found primarily in public agencies. The plans and the planning process have a different significance - Slovakian plans also contain defined project ideas, in Hungary this approach has already lost its significance. The support and regulation needed for the realization of cooperation ideas became almost the same because of the EU membership. The complicatedness of the authorization process, however, makes the assistance of a national expert indispensable. Information systems, which help the process of regional development providing data and information, are established, their operation, however, is far from perfect. Disseminating information at local level and the provision of interactivity are the biggest problems. This study

may establish a common programming process which makes local initiatives continuous, predictable and makes synergies completely utilizable. This process shall promote the creation of partnership relations among local development actors, establish the professional background needed for future common strategies and prepare the ground for making contacts and common projects. The planning of cross-border cooperation and the realization of common projects shall become much easier and prompted because both countries are EU members. The geographical, historic, economic and social interdependence opens the gates for cooperation between Southeast Slovakia and North Hungary.

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