

Introduction

The second issue of the North Hungarian Regional Strategy Papers presents the results of two research works supported by the North Hungarian Agency for Regional Development to the wide public. It is undoubted that clustering, as well as the role of the non-profit sector are new and so far slightly investigated topics of regional development in Hungary.

That is why we have devoted more space to the theoretical summaries and to present the western European experiences. The really new parts are the examination of the North Hungarian adaptations of innovations and the analysis of the position and chances of the region from the point of the given topic. Both studies describe the main aspects to be taken into consideration in the development and the tasks to be carried out in the region.

In the “*Workshop*” heading, we give a review about the planning processes, the institutional system of development and the regional developmental educational and professional cooperation in the region.

The new “*Facts*” heading presents the conditions of economic relations between Northern Hungary and the Russian and Ukrainian regions with statistical data.

The “*Observer of scientific literature*” section calls attention to the research report about the equal chances of men and women in Cserehát and to three small regional development programs.

We hope we manage to attract the attention of experts in regional development and politicians that make decisions about the development of the region, and that these publications will generate further ideas that will be then built in the regional policy. We encourage other experts as well to publish their professional and scientific results related to the development of the region. We are pleased to give opportunity to publish them in the North Hungarian Regional Strategy Papers.

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Dr. G. Fekete Éva
Chief editor

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Summaries

György Kocziszky:

Possibilities of forming health care clusters in the Northern Hungarian region

The first rudimentary forms of clusters appeared in Hungary only in the early 1990s; with a delay of over two decades as compared to the practice in western Europe. It can be largely accounted for by the fact that the overwhelming majority of Hungarian micro- small and medium-sized enterprises were only established in the late 1980s and early 1990s (following the collapse and privatisation of large-scale industry). The newly established (often forced) enterprises, however, have often been averse to any form of cooperation, therefore the recognition of the necessity of network cooperation and its unavoidability have become or will become evident only much later.

The paper examines the possibilities for health care clusters in northern Hungary. It analyses the conditions offered by the region (natural potentialities and conditions, labour potentials, the infrastructure, R&D and education and training potentials, the entrepreneurial structure), the external conditions for forming clusters and the cooperation willingness of potential partners. As a result of the research, the author outlines the potential functions of health care clusters; the legal and organisational forms. The author also offers proposals for regional level programs promoting cluster formation (PR/marketing programs providing the organisational/operational conditions and supporting cooperation).

Éva G. Fekete – Gábor Solymári:

The chances and conditions of establishing social economy in the North Hungarian region

Social economy is a well-known concept and widely implemented practice all over Europe. In this field, exact distinctions and definitions vary according to different theoretical and practical approaches. Considering the most accepted definition, social economy is the part of the third sector, and has three characteristic features: it meets defined needs for products and services by providing them, creates new jobs, thus improves the employability of those disadvantaged in the labour market, and builds social capital. The typical organizations of the sector are the social enterprises, which follow business and social aims at the same time. Since the middle of the 90s, the European Union has been operating official programmes and initiatives to tackle the problem of unemployment, especially that of the disadvantaged. Social economy thus became a crucial approach in these programmes, and also the part of the European Employment Strategy. The Hungarian non-profit sector has gone across a great improvement process and strengthened considerably since the end of the 80s, but the subsector of organizations dealing with employment projects is in its early childhood. There are still many conditions missing, especially the legal and financial hurdles, the lack of management experience hinder the development of the Hungarian social economy. The regional disparities, which can be perceived in all fields of the social and economic life in Hungary, also exist in the grade of the establishment of this sector, though the difference is significant between the capital and the other parts of the country in particular. In Northern Hungary, the demand for the services of the social economy is obvious in activities like community and personal services, settlement renewal and development, the protection of rural and natural heritage, forestry, touristic, information and cultural services, social retail and transport services, and agricultural production. Northern Hungarian social enterprises are not developed enough yet to fulfil their role in the labour market and community development. Their business aims are often unclear, usually lack market approach, and the structure of their activity is not elaborated properly. The survey indicated sharp differences between organizations in the number of employees and volunteers, and in the size of budgets. As for the future, working out the methods and framework of financial support, approximately 100 social enterprises with 25-80 employees each could be founded in the region, which would cost less than current public employment programmes for the unemployed. Developing social economy in Northern Hungary requires the creation of conditions for organization development, and the provision of professional experts, market background and financial support.

Conclusion: The establishment of the social economy in the Northern Hungarian region is a real, achievable goal. Besides its advantages expected in improving employment situation, meeting needs and building social capital, opportunity is created for the region to protect and keep playing its innovator role in the national development process.

Krisztina Szegedi:

The impact of Russian capital on the North Hungarian region

The study evaluates some key elements of Hungarian-Russian economic relations considered by facts and figures in the Northern Hungarian region. It includes the analyses of the condition of Russian language teaching

and skills, the development of Russian-Hungarian trade relations, FDI, and tourism in Northern Hungary and Hungary in general.

Considering the period of 1996-2002, in Northern Hungary, the number of students studying Russian decreased constantly; and at present this is below the national average. Hungary's external trade relations improved in the last ten years. In the early 90s, the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent State were the main trade partners of Hungary. The Russian slump of 1999 launched a backslide in trade relations between the two countries, but recovery began soon. Nowadays Russia is the 15th in the export and 5th in the import ranking list of Hungary. The typical Hungarian export goods are tinned fruits and vegetables, alcohol and medicines. Besides exporting a great amount of raw materials, Russia is one of the biggest energy-suppliers of Hungary.

From the aspect of foreign direct investment, Northern Hungary is the last among Hungarian regions. Though FDI inflow is growing in the region, it is still 3% of the total. The biggest part of the capital comes from Germany and the UK, and only 3% from Russia and Ukraine.

Since 1990, a sharp fall can be perceived in the number of foreign tourists in Hungary, especially in Northern Hungary. Until 2000, the number of Russian and Ukrainian tourists also decreased, but then started to rise. The rate of tourists mentioned above varies according to counties. In Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, their share was 8.5, in Nógrád, it was just 0.47 of the total number of tourists.

The conclusion is that we should utilize the resources and possibilities hidden in the economic and social life of Northern Hungary better. Improving Russian language skills, developing infrastructure and proper conditions for transport, promoting our sights and values of (Russian) tourist interest would contribute to the development of Hungarian and Russian economic relations.

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