

Successes and Failures in the CBC History of East Europe (Retrospection to the Three Decades of My CBC Activities and Researches)

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Abstract: *The idea of co-operation (mainly for security policy and economic policy reasons) came to the front in the western part of the European continent some years after the World War II. The political background of the co-operation and union were given by the German-French reconciliation. The elimination of the damage that was caused by the Second World War's terrible destruction, the needs for the reorganization of the economy and the loss of the world market's leading role helped and hastened the co-operation. The result of them was the birth of the first organs and institutions of the European Union. In Western Europe the internal borders between EU member states were abolished in the first half of the 1990s. By the 1990s not only in economic, but also in political and legal sense the unified Western European market came into existence. By the end of the Second World War, the region had become a crucial strategic zone for the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact as a bulwark against Western capitalism and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Post World War II Europe saw the integration of the region into the 'Soviet Bloc' and its insistence on regional security i.e. state borders were fortified and rigid with little opportunity for local cross-border co-operation and inter-regional connections. Bilateral relations between the states of the region were strictly under the control of the central governments and largely confined to inter-governmental mechanisms. It was not until the end of the Communist system that the borders of the region became more permeable and renewed opportunities for cross-border co-operation were created. The aims of the establishment of the Carpathian Euroregion were to provide a proper organisational framework for the members in the co-ordination of cross-border co-operations, to promote a more rapid regional and economic development and – of course – to create good neighbourly relations between the stakeholders. In the past decades, the socio-economic lagging behind of the regions forming the Carpathian Euroregion became more accentuated within the periphery territories of East-Central Europe. One of the most important breaking out points for the lagging regions is the diminishment of the dividing role of the state borders and the strengthening of the external relations along the borders.*

Keywords: *CBC, geopolitics of East-Central Europe, Carpathian Euroregion, Institute for Euroregional Studies (IERS), DebOra project*

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Introduction

In the beginning of the 1990s the regime-changing countries, struggling with the tortures of transformation, like Hungary, Romania, Poland or the newly-born ones, like the Ukraine or Slovakia on the background of their internal political and economic problems were looking upon each other (i.e. their own neighbours) with an antipathy and fear. The Warsaw Pact was wound up, though it rather only extinguished but did not solve the tension or the unsettled ethnic and territorial problems between its member states, that occurred in the first half of the 20th century (or even earlier). Yet, in the bipolar world still has developed a kind of “silence and order”, but with breaking up the Soviet Union this also came to an end.

In 1992 the influential international periodical *The Economist* wrote, that with ceasing the “role of gendarme” of the Soviet Union the small countries of the Eastern-Central Europe that got rid of it will “take out” their old griefs felt towards each other and Europe may count on long political crises and local wars. The contributor of *The Economist* rendered three foci of crisis probable: one in the Baltic States, one in the eastern part of the Carpathian basin and one in the region of the Western Balkans. Indeed, the breaking up of the former Yugoslavia was followed by long and bloody wars, genocides and ethnic clean-ups. For instance, the status of Kosovo is unsettled up to the present.

Out of the three centres of crisis mentioned above the author considered the most dangerous the tensions in the Carpathian region, thus the future of this area was judged by him the most pessimistically. His prediction, fortunately, didn't come true, thanks first of all to the presence of local politicians, who could think in perspective and searched the ways of reconciliation and good neighbourhood.

By its formation the Carpathian Euroregion has already promoted the good neighbouring connections between the countries of the Eastern-Central Europe. The birth of the CBC organization in the eastern part of the continent – the first one with the participation of only former socialist countries – also wasn't easy, as several leading politicians assumed a squint intention in connection with it. Nevertheless, we succeeded in introducing the well-tried Western European practice in the Carpathian area, thus with its work and results the Carpathian Euroregion contributed to the stabilization of the region. In a few years the founder counties of Hungary, Poland and Ukraine could be joined by the Romanian and Slovakian counties intending to enter the organization. The CBC organization that embraces the bordering regions of the five countries, completed in this way, with its results obtained the attention of the EU, the NATO and several Western European Euroregions, for example the Maas-Rhein Euroregion. It has also entered the Co-operational Organization of the European Borderland Regions, established by the Committee of the EU.

In the last more than 20 years that passed since 1993 the activity of the Carpathian Euroregion has become diverse and besides the geopolitical function its cross-border social-cultural-economic role was strengthened. It has organized several conferences, discussions and initiated or helped the work of numerous other programmes. The twin-euroregional cooperation with the Maas-Rhein Euroregion was an outstanding success. Thus, for instance, the Carpathian Euroregion could participate in a great INTERREG III. C project, holding together 37 organizations of 14 countries. After 2004, with Hungary's, Slovakia's and Poland's joining the EU new chances have opened for the Carpathian Euroregion, new foundations and resources have become available for the CBC improvements.

In the period of 2014–2020 the Carpathian Euroregion is getting into a strategic position, as the eastern border of the European Union stretches across its territory. In my

opinion, the geostrategic role of the Carpathian Euroregion will be strengthened again and the promotion of Euro-Atlantic integration of the Ukraine will become its central task. It's a well-known fact, that the EU pays a particular attention to and provides a considerable financial support for the improvement of cooperation across the "internal borders". In our case a separate resource is provided by the Hungarian–Slovakian–Romanian–Ukrainian Programme of Cross-border Cooperation, which is based on the European Neighbourhood & Partnership Instrument (ENPI).

Thus, we have plenty of opportunities and available resources of development, but we won't reach them sitting there doing nothing and waiting for good luck. Obtaining the EU-resources is possible only by a carefully thought-out strategic planning and programming work. The present regional strategy was already drawn up as part of this aim.

Carpathian Euroregion – 20 years for development of cross-border co-operation

In the countries belonging to the Carpathian Euroregion the uneven regional development and its consequence, the regional crisis is not only a problem for geographers, economists and sociologists, but the governments of the participating countries and the leaders of the county and settlement levels also became concerned about it. Uneven regional growth is understood similarly both by the researchers and the politicians: the positive results of market economy are concentrated into a few "privileged places", into the centres, while the disadvantages are left behind in the regions without relative production advantages, that is in the peripheries.

The peripheries are characterised by socially regressive processes which further deepen regional crisis. The entire area of the Carpathian Euroregion – concerning all member countries – is a periphery from a social and economic point of view. It may be established in general that these border regions did not count as regions to be developed in the decades before the 1990s. Following the change of regime, the competitive position of the core regions of these countries strengthened and their transition to the market economy may be regarded successful since even their adaptability was more intensive than that of the peripheries. Thus, the marginality and periphery of the regions belonging to the Carpathian Euroregion increased. Their social and economic backwardness – as opposed to the development of the core regions – accelerated in the past years.

The varying economic conditions within the region and the resulting varied economic development also contributed to the deficiencies of cross-border co-operations. This is especially obvious in the case of the cross-border trade relations where co-operation is impeded by the lack of border stations, weak financial systems and bureaucracy. In addition to these, the development of the "services" related to the international relations also shows basic differences between the countries of the region. State centralisation meant primary barrier in many Western European countries as well in the creation of cross-border co-operations and from this aspect the countries of Central and Eastern Europe may be regarded strongly centralised. This means a fundamental problem in building cross-border co-operations because the local governments largely depend on the governmental bodies.

In the 1990's – which are called a declarative stage by many – the legal and organisational frameworks were created for the co-operation within the Carpathian Euroregion Interregional Association following its foundation on 14 February 1993 in Debrecen. During its operation, the Euroregional Council and the Working Committees give evidence of more and more professionalism. Nowadays, the personal, organisational, financing and foreign political conditions – which are indispensable for a successful

operation – are ready for the successful management of the oncoming substantial stage when the forces may be concentrated on more fundamental tasks.

In the beginning of 1993, the founding self-governments of four countries decided to harmonise the development of their common border regions. The founding members included the following regions: Hungary–Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén, Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg, Heves, Hajdú-Bihar counties, in addition to four cities with county rights namely Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, Eger and Debrecen; Poland – the voivodships of Krosno and Przemyśl; Slovakia – the members of the “Carpathian Alliance”, that is, the cities and districts of Bardejov, Humenné, Mihalovce, Medzilaborc, Trebisov and Vrannov; Ukraine – the Transcarpathian oblast. After the establishment, the following regions joined the Carpathian Euroregion: Hungary - Jász–Nagykun–Szolnok county; Poland – the voivodships of Rzeszów and Tarnow; Slovakia – the cities of Kosice and Presov; Ukraine – Ivano-Frankiv’sk, Tsernivci and Lviv (Lemberg) oblasts; Romania – Satu Mare and Maramureş counties. The Slovakian self-governments, however, were not allowed to be active participants in the work of the Euroregion during the Meciar government.

The admission of the Romanian counties also happened among contradictory circumstances under the Ilescu government. Initially, the two applicant counties participated in the work of the organisation only as observers but at the end of 1993 the Council of the Carpathian Euroregion accepted the official application of Satu Mare and Maramureş counties and thus they became full members. The Romanian government, however, soon declared this step annulled and thus these counties were also forced to return to the observer status.

Figure 1: Geographical area of the Carpathian Euroregion



Source: edited by the author.

In the beginning of 1997, following the elections in Romania, Satu Mare and Maramureş counties became full members again and four new Romanian counties (Bihor,

Sălaj, Botoşani and Suceava) also applied for membership to the interregional association. In 1999 the new Slovakian government also agreed to the membership application of the two eastern regions (Kosice and Presov). Thus, today the area of the Carpathian Euro region is over 160.000 km² and the number of population living here is around 16 million with a population density of 98.9 person/km² (**Figure 1**).

As the above information show the Carpathian Euro region Interregional Association established in 1993 includes the neighbouring border regions of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania. The Carpathian Euro region is the first “clear” euroregional initiative in East Central Europe since it is founded only by border regions of post socialist countries.

Present geopolitical situation of East Central Europe

The present (and future) geopolitical situation on the area of the Carpathian Euroregion is further complicated by the different status of the member countries with regard to their EU accession. The next group of the mutual elements of the vision of the future are raised by the international economic relations. The “re-orienting *and* re-orientation” of the economic relations from the east to the west may result in ambivalent consequences within the region. It is a well-known fact that although the primary targets of the western working capital are Budapest, Bratislava, Warsaw and West Poland but beyond these the foreign capital investments usually “stop” at the Danube, Vah and Vistula rivers. In parallel with the EU accession of Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, the capital attracting ability of the Euroregion may considerably increase.

A lot had been done in most of the East Central European countries for operating the society and economy on the basis of the European system of values, for the creation of their organisational and institutional systems in the past fourteen years. The regional relations and interregional co-operations play an essential role in these processes. Thus, the Central and Eastern European changes in 1989–‘90 constituted a milestone in the history of the countries of the Carpathian Euroregion which opened up new opportunities for cross-border co-operations. The rapid increase in the number of Euroregions in the region was mostly the result of the encouragement of the European Union and its prospective supports. However, – while several examples could be listed for the success of these initiatives – the initial impulse was followed by coming to a sudden stop in many cases which was accompanied by the lack of results. The main reason for the recoiling is usually the insecure financial background which often results from co-ordination.

Despite all these, there was a considerable step taken forward on the area of the Carpathian Euroregion Interregional Association with regard to cross-border co-operations. The step forward is partly due to the fact that the common goals were drafted in these regions for the joint representation in various fields of life. These include the infrastructure (improving traffic, transport and communication conditions), opening of new border stations and the elaboration of cross-border programmes. The cross-border (partly pan-European) alliances play a special role in this process and later the financing possibilities provided by EU funds will be important as well (INTERREG most of all) – especially after the accession.

Balance of the co-operation until now

Drawing the balance of the euroregional co-operation so far, it may be established that there are really significant results in many areas. Taking into consideration the experiences of the western regional co-operations, nevertheless, it is not surprising that the explicitly economic results are not yet considerable. Although the expectations in the

region are enormous – in the beginning many thought the Euroregion to be a new international organisation replacing the Comecon – for a long time the actors of economic life were busy with getting to know each other and mapping the risk factors in the partner countries. Nevertheless, all those personal contacts and relations are of special importance which actually paved the way for the creation of the Euroregion. It is more especially true for the actors of business life. Though the available statistics does not show it but it may be rendered probable that many foreign investments were made on the initiation of the entrepreneurs in the region in each other's countries – based on the local knowledge and good neighbourly relations. In the past few years, there were several international fairs in the region related to the Carpathian Euroregion. The co-operation agreement signed by the representatives of the Chambers of Regional Economy of the five countries in 1993 most definitely promotes economic development whose aim is to deepen the relations between the enterprises. The evolvement of the economic relations – trade, transport, tourism – of the region defined as the Carpathian Euroregion greatly depends on the solution of the problem of crossing the borders which initially used to be serious physical barriers. In accordance with it, one of the most important initial practice-related objectives was to initiate the opening of new border stations and the modernisation of the existing ones. Remarkable results were achieved in this field. Following the proposals of the experts of the Euroregion a large number of border stations were opened in the past years.

There were numerous initiatives for the creation of special economic zones and duty-free zones (e.g. creation of Chop-Interport duty-free zone). A Slovakian–Ukrainian–Hungarian Small Border Economic Sub-region was formed. The main objective of the sub-region with Mihalovce and Uzhgorod as its centres is the promotion of the entrepreneurial co-operations.

The biggest result of the co-operations in the field of tourism and ecology is the East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve realised within the framework of the UNESCO programme. There is also a joint programme for the improvement of the water quality in the environs of Uzhgorod. The most remarkable result of the work within the Euroregion is the three editions of the tourist map of the Carpathian Euroregion. The ecotourism's values and potentials of the Euroregion are acknowledged even by international tourist experts. There were serious achievements in the fields of the educational and cultural co-operations. Several joint research projects were started as a result of the meeting of the university rectors of the region in Košice in the spring of 1994. The creation of the proper structure for the co-operations – including the organisational and financial issues as well – is a very problematic and time-consuming task. The situation of the Carpathian Euroregion is much more complex than that of the Western European Euroregions. It is even more complex than the ones along the western borders of Poland and Hungary. Nevertheless, it is also true that the expectations from the Euroregions in our region are too high.

In the first years, it was the economic sphere that demonstrated that the Euroregion stood its place as an interregional organisation in the various fields of regional co-operations. Many cities of the Carpathian Euroregion host international exhibitions and fairs where the organisers asked for permission of the use of the name and logo of the Carpathian Euroregion. These international programmes provided grounds for the widening of the business relations of the exhibitors and businessmen. Many of the international exhibitions and fairs became regular since some of them are organised annually, e.g. the KONTAKT in Krosno, the FARMER EXPO in Debrecen, the FAIR IN AGRIA in Eger, the COPUS EXPO in Slovakia – just to mention some of the most important ones. The most frequent accompanying programmes of the exhibitions and fairs are businessmen meetings, sports and cultural programmes. Besides the international exhibitions and fairs, there have been many

conferences so far. One of the most important ones was held in Sanok in October 1993 about the role of the private and civil sphere in cross-border co-operations. Businessmen conferences were held in Miskolc in the summer of 1994 and in Debrecen in December 1995 which were attended by the representatives of the chambers of commerce and industry within the region, of the funds for the promotion of enterprises and of the private sphere. These programmes were supported partly by the local governments and partly by the Institute for East-West Studies and the Council of Europe.

As a consequence of the more and more initiatives and programmes, the preparation of a Calendar of Events for the Carpathian Euroregion was among the plans of the Secretariat many times. It was first prepared by the Hungarian partners in 1994 then again in 1995. With the help of this, the potential attendants were given a concise picture of the economic, cultural and sport programmes in the region which made it easier for them to check in on time. The creation of more humane conditions of border crossing between the member countries was one of the most important issues at the creation of the Carpathian Euroregion which aimed at prompt possible solution. Dr. Pál Virágh, the Secretariat General in those days, sent a letter to the foreign ministers of the five countries and asked for giving priority to the opening of new border stations and the modernisation of the old ones on the area of the Carpathian Euroregion.

Among many other things, it was this initiative that enabled the inauguration and modernisation of border stations between the member countries along the Slovakian-Polish, Polish-Ukrainian and Slovakian-Hungarian borders. It was the Carpathian Euroregion that initiated the renovation of the Tisza Bridge at Záhony and it also had a special role in the construction of the new camion terminal inaugurated in 1996. Following the “restitution” of the Romanian counties, new border stations were opened on our initiatives along the Hungarian-Romanian border as well.

The Foundation for the Development of the Carpathian Euroregion established by the supports of the IEWS and the Mott Foundation is taken as regarded milestone in the history of the Euroregion. It was registered in Kosice at the end of 1994. Its current name is Carpathian Foundation and it provides technical assistance and certain amounts of financial supports for the self-governments and civil organisations on the geographic area of the Carpathian Euroregion. Its objectives include the encouragement and support of local activities and initiatives for the acceleration of the development of the Euroregion.

The most significant cross-border social relations in the Carpathian Euroregion

In the nineties, after the democratic changes in the Central European countries, cross-border co-operations became important from a political perspective as well. Regional co-operations promote the evolution of the Europe of Regions and the etherisation of borders. Nevertheless, they also limit the sovereignties of the nation states for the sake of international integration.

The international relations of the Carpathian Euroregion show an encouraging development. In 1994 it formed a connection with the representatives of the Euregio Maas-Rhine. Those invitations through which the representatives of the region could introduce the Carpathian Euroregion at the conferences and annual meetings of the Council of Europe in Ljubljana and of the Association of European Border Regions in Trieste, Timișoara, Rhein and other cities meant the international acknowledgement of the organisation. The Carpathian Euroregion had remarkable achievements not only in the field of economy but also in the scientific and cultural fields. The leaders of higher education created a really well functioning forum called “Rectors’ Alliance” which unites

the rectors within the Euroregion. The leaders of the universities and colleges within the region agreed that the regional higher education centres should not follow the capitals but they could create such cross-border regional role in higher education for which the capital "is neither able nor suitable". A need which had been actually often emphasised earlier by the experts of regional education researchers.

The autonomy of higher education institutions has an important role in the formation of cross-border co-operations. The knowledge and registration of these processes are very important and instructive since they presumably pave the way for the closing-up of the participating institutions for a wider European co-operation. For the promotion of the EU harmonisation processes we need to be aware of the strategies of closing-up, the problems of the participating institutions and the tactics which lead to the solution of these problems. Universities and colleges play a distinguished role in the regional co-operations because science is almost always international. In the past few years such universities and colleges built relationships which are situated in the same regions but on the other sides of the borders (for example, Debrecen-Oradea, Nyíregyháza-Beregovo, Miskolc-Košice, Rzeszów-Lviv). The importance of the international scientific and higher education co-operation programmes may be also supported by the fact that these relations may mean survival for the intelligentsia on the two sides of the borders without moving to and settling down in the neighbouring country. Today, the professional training and extension training have more and more importance since the development level of a country is highly influenced by the quality and variegation of education. The social and cultural co-operations and exchanges of experience between the countries greatly promote it.

The international relations of the Carpathian Euroregion also show an encouraging development. In February 1994, the intercommunication started with the representatives of the Euregio Maas-Rhine who got an insight into the everyday life of the member countries during a short visit. The shooting of a film by the ART STUDIO (Brussels) was of primary importance from the aspect of the positive image-building of the Carpathian Euroregion. It showed the results and problems of the Carpathian Euroregion to Western Europe. It is of fundamental importance, from the aspect of social relations, that the Carpathian Euroregion has organised numerous conferences and fairs which "brought together" the international representatives and this contributed to the strengthening of the mutual cross-border relations and the exploration of the possibilities for co-operation. The high number of guest performances, exhibitions and study-tours organised by the Working Committee on Culture and Education promote the improvement of interethnic relations. The majority of the cross-border social co-operations, however, are still at the initial stage and therefore they are not really effective in the formation of the Europe of Regions. Several examples demonstrate that the aim of the CBC activity of certain institutions and establishments at the moment is to break out from the minority situation or to assist the institution in its survival.

Joint representation: the relationships between the Carpathian Euroregion and the institutions and organisations of the EU (Euregio Maas-Rhine, AEBR)

The western institutions supporting co-operation within the Carpathian Euroregion in the past and at present as well may be grouped into three categories: 1. IEWS with a distinguished role, seated in New York, 2. institutions and tender forms related to the EU, 3. other international, American, Japanese, etc. organisations and funds.

The creation of the Euroregion probably would have been postponed without the efficient assistance of the IEWS. In the realisation of the idea, the Institute took an active

part for many years not only via counselling and financing but also in the concrete work. It created a post for a so-called “representative” in each country who got involved in the basic organisational works and in the co-ordination of projects. After a few years of very active collaboration, however, the IEWS thought that the euroregion needs to stand on its own feet and therefore it started to reduce its participation which has been actually terminated by today. The final decision was induced by the bankruptcy of the Ukrainian bank which was responsible for the money of the Euroregion. As a consequence of this, it established a separate institution called Foundation for the Development of the Carpathian Euroregion seated in Kosice whose operational area geographically corresponds to that of the Carpathian Euroregion. The two organisations in the past few years functioned in parallel – but neither co-operating nor rivalling – with each other on the same geographic area. It must be noted, however, that the Foundation wishes to – and is able to – ease the problems and difficulties of the region through its tenders. At the 30th meeting of the Council in Uzhgorod the leaders of the two organisations signed a Co-operation Agreement and from that time on the two organisations were aiming at a closer co-operation.

For the Carpathian Euroregion, it is of primary importance to co-operate with the European Union and to exploit the opportunities offered by it. The intensive interest of the EU is signed by the fact that in the beginning of 1994 a delegation arrived to the area of the Carpathian Euroregion from the Euregio Maas-Rhine. The significance of the event was that it was the first time when a Western European Euroregion started co-operation with an East Central European one. The most important Western European partner of the Carpathian Euroregion so far had been the Euroregion Mass-Rhine named after the two very important European rivers: Maas and Rhine.

Factors promoting and impeding progress

The infrastructural supply of the Carpathian Euroregion is backward and below the national averages except for the relatively developed railway networks which is a historic heritage and in some countries the relatively good quality of road networks. These – it seems – cannot be helped yet even if there is collaboration within the Carpathian Euroregion because of the lack of sources and – often accompanied with – the lack of experts.

Significant changes may be expected on the area of the Carpathian Euroregion in the economic situation partly as a result of the general economic prosperity of the participating countries and partly of the bigger role of the EU funds. The latter requires a more successful utilisation of the tendering opportunities and the EU membership of some of the countries may contribute to it. We are planning to analyse these options in detail in the near future. Besides the political barriers, the differing (after all, however, uniformly unfavourable) economic, social and infrastructural conditions of the member countries also appear as factors slowing down co-operation and impeding progress. These are such negative factors that the Carpathian Euroregion cannot solve on its own but it may facilitate the work of the decision makers with constructive proposals. The varying economic conditions within the region and the different economic development resulting from them also contribute to the inadequacies of the cross-border co-operation.

On the basis of the information concerning the Carpathian Euroregion and its financial background we think that at present the only large-scale change in the financing questions may be expected from the European Union funds both in the mid and long term. The own resources of the self-governments are very narrow – even paying the membership fee causes problems – and the presence of other support forms is occasional and mainly related to smaller projects or depend on personal relations. According to experts, the rise may only be expected from the EU funds, although, however, the way

leading to them is not easy either. The above-described organisational changes would be necessary for the successful tendering activities, so there is a need for a professional permanent secretariat with qualified professional employees speaking the “EU language”. Now we are facing a *circulus vitiosus*. There is no professional secretariat without money but there is no satisfying tendering activity without a group of professional experts and this means that no money may be expected. Someone should risk the breaking out from this magic circle. It would be worth to scrutinise the Polish model for the others too where they are trying to create a kind of a local budget with taking membership fees from the settlements that is from the lowest level of the co-operation. The involvement of external experts and employees (like experts from governmental organisations) into the tendering activities come into question as well as the employment of a paid tender writer and observer expert coming from there in the beginning.

Having a scarcity of financial sources, the primary condition for the operation of the Carpathian Euroregion would be the building of a rich and effective relationship system with the European Union and the maximum exploitation of the opportunities offered by the co-operation and the tenders. There has never been a shortage in interest and potential supporters. The West was a great patron of this East Central European co-operation form from the very beginning, inasmuch that – as it was seen – it played a significant role even in the creation of the Carpathian Euroregion – primarily through the IEWS and the Council of Europe. The Carpathian Euroregion – as a unique phenomenon in the East Central European region – was regarded as a model in the West. However, to change the sympathy and interest into financial support would need concrete and realisable projects – which may be handed in as tenders – and an organisation which is ready to renew itself. It becomes obvious when preparing the strategic development programme that the EU funds are not enough in themselves to elaborate and implement the development programmes. The PHARE programme, for instance, also regarded self-supply obligatory from 1995 in certain projects. Consequently, without other resources (e.g. regularly paid member fees, self-governmental, governmental, foundation resources etc.) the different EU funds will not be available. Therefore, a common fund should be created as soon as possible which would provide the required self-supply for the expected INTERREG projects. Even in the light of what is written above, the possibility of getting supports from outside the EU – like sponsorship – should not be neglected. This, however, requires such an intensive activity – including PR activity – as it did in the golden age of the co-operation, around 1994–‘95. At that time the co-operation had its own newsletter published in several languages and its logo could be seen at dozens of international fairs, professional meetings and other programmes. It must be admitted that unless a group of a large number of international experts (possibly from all five member countries) is employed to undertake the organising activity, the tendering and the management of the programmes as part of their job requirements, the above aims cannot be achieved. The participations at the professional meetings, the inter-university co-operations and especially the cultural and fine art co-operations play the most important role in the Carpathian Euroregion in transmitting innovations across the borders.

At present, the peculiarities, tasks and objectives of the working commissions and Euroregions constitute quite a disorganised mixture in the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion. Most of the failures and the sense of frustration mainly result from this. This realisation made the Hungarian National Side to hand in its “Proposal” at the 31st meeting of the Council in which it did not only redrafted the mission goals but also encouraged the transformation of the Euroregion into an “umbrella organisation”. A consciously conducted “profile clearing” and the making relations with the other Euroregions created

in the region and the share of responsibilities together with them may help on this problem. The union, informing, managing and tendering of the sub-regions could be one of the main tasks of the Carpathian Euroregion which could ensure the required frames with its networks, experiences and relationship systems obtained during the co-operation. The encouragement of the individual activities of the sub-regions and the provision of assistance for them are especially important.

Drawing the balance of the co-operation within the Carpathian Euroregion until now, it may be established that the so far passed eleven years proved to be not enough for the achievements of all those sublime goals which were set by the participants (the founding and the later joining members). It is included in every country analysis that the economic closing-up of the participating countries and the dissolution of their peripheral situation within their own countries had not happened yet. It is true that no miracles should be expected in few years and moreover this euroregional co-operation is still at its initial stage. The lessons of the Western European co-operations taught us that these kinds of results can only appear after many years of persistent work even among much more favourable circumstances than that of the Carpathian Euroregion. The extrication from this severe socio-economic situation may be expected from the general prosperity of the East Central European countries, the accession to the European Union and from the enlargement of the EU funds. Of course, the latter requires a better and more successful exploitation of the tendering possibilities and this would be further influenced by the EU membership of certain participating countries. Despite of the arising problems, we think that the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion may provide a realistic breaking out possibility for the economy of the region and it may even help to solve the existing ethnic-minority problems. If the above goals are fulfilled then the Carpathian Euroregion International Association may as well be really a bridge in the Europe of Regions which connects the countries of the region and the macro-regions of our continents and thus it may be an instrument for the successful socio-economic rise of the region.

Regional development potentials in the Carpathian Euroregion

The most important precondition for the success and efficiency of the regional policy is that those conditions are provided on the levels of politics and regional development which result in the welfare of the counties, micro-regions and settlements and the people living or working there. The role of these factors is especially important on those areas which are in a peripheral situation from the aspects of economic development and spread of capital and innovation, and/or have more disadvantageous endowments with regard to their economic and production potentials. (On the area of the Carpathian Euroregion, unfortunately, these two negative tendencies occur at the same time strengthening each other.)

In the economies of the EU states the current market and production regulations and their organisational and institutional systems developed during several decades. The "liberality" of the domestic markets within the member countries of the Carpathian Euroregion is less and less wanted by the stakeholders. The series of disappointments and deceits made the producers on the area of the Carpathian Euroregion sceptical and desperate. Unless this atmosphere is resolved there would not be improvement and the susceptibility to the novelties would prevail only limitedly in a narrow circle.

In the Carpathian Euroregion where agriculture in a broad sense will be presumably a decisive element of development in the long run where the farming, processing of the vegetable and animal products and the services related to it will be of special importance from the aspect of the living standard of the inhabitants. Therefore, the

seizure of these opportunities and sources is very important. In the absence of conscious help on the governmental level and favourable economic-political environment, the regions forming the Carpathian Euroregion are not able to promote themselves from their present situation. Today, there is a “market nadir” in all sectors of agriculture (corn, meat, milk, vegetable, etc.). The markets of these traditional products are limited even at the best quality which presumably will not change in the near future. Agricultural overproduction sets serious problems in the European Union as well. A change of paradigms, therefore, is necessary in the economy which may be realised only with a large-scale re-training and with a successful development of human resources.

The Carpathian Euroregion is characterised by a chronic lack of capital and the past years even consumed the surplus resources and the last reserves of agriculture. Only such new ways would let us break with the present situation which are able to serve the living of the rural population in some form as well. An important pledge of the switching over to the new path are governmental assistance, disposal of the necessary information and creation of market security let it be either about semi-processed products from family farms, or change in the structure of joint companies into the direction of a work intensive activity, rural, medical, hunting, etc. tourism, goods produced with environment-friendly technologies or the related services.

On the basis of the above, the predictable realistic vision of future supported by the present processes – taking into consideration our EU-accession as well – must calculate with the relative (continuous) diminishment of the socio-economic weight of the agriculture and the activities related to it. In the social sphere, the primary breaking-out directive is tertiarisation but it is only possible with the enlargement of the specialised trainings and education. The transformation of the economic structure – taking into account the considerable devaluation in the past decade – may only happen in parallel with the advance experienced on other areas of economy as well. Otherwise, the already present process of pauperisation may further strengthen and result in the total and final falling behind of the settlements and their inhabitants.

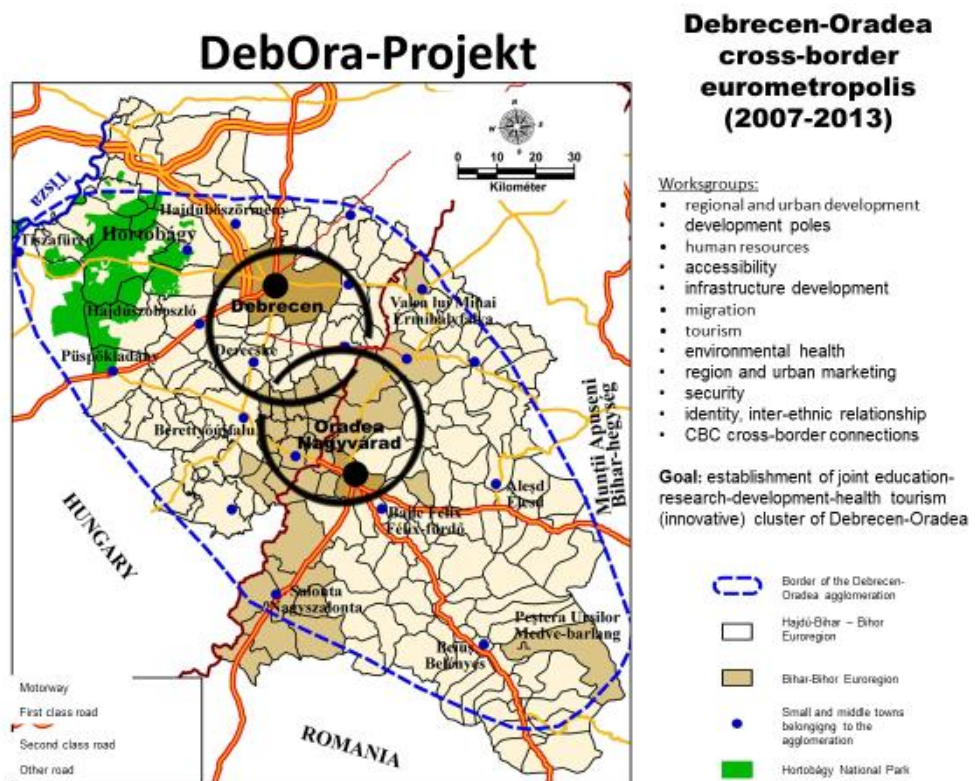
Consequently, the modernisation of economy and its gradual structural transformation have to be executed in parallel with each other and with the continuous consideration of the interconnections. At the same time, the ten years backwardness of the infrastructure must be recovered, the adjustment of the approach and mentality of the inhabitants to the expectations of the market economy must be achieved and the education level of the population and the widening of the knowledge also have to be solved. Thus, education has to fulfil an important role. The overall execution of these tasks presupposes the elaboration (and then execution) of a complex strategic development programme based on a well-grounded and realistic situational analysis and prepared with the involvement of the inhabitants, economic actors, self-governments (and their institutions) and the civil sphere and relying on their active participation. The consideration of the EU regulations is very important partly because of our accession and partly because of the inclusion of the EU funds into the developments promoting the process of accession. This is true despite of the fact that the EU regulations mean difficult barriers. Nevertheless, getting acquainted with the barrier functions will help us to avoid the unforeseeable difficulties.

These barriers, however, do not only set bounds but also provide protection in the long term: for the EU regulations and procedures require (and enforce) strictly regulated market conditions which rules on the one hand defend the stakeholders from the market defencelessness and on the other hand continuously lead into the direction of productive–service–landscape sustaining activities which contribute to the improvement of the quality of life. That region which adopts itself to these external conditions shall choose the

directed gradual transformation process and thus may avoid the later coming drastic changes accompanied by severe social tensions which are executed relatively quickly due to the external circumstances.

Debrecen and Oradea have common historical and cultural roots and though these centuries-old ties after Trianon and during the communist period became weaker, the two cities managed to establish closer links during the last two decades. Oradea (the *comitat* or county seat) and Debrecen belonged to the same administrative unit till almost 800 years. While Oradea was the county seat, Debrecen had economy and educational functions. Debrecen and Oradea are twin towns to each other. This manifold co-operation that characterizes the two cities' relationship includes all fields of the life and it cannot be listed. We have to mention that in Central and Eastern Europe there were twin towns and similar county connections (maybe between those counties, which can be found on both side of the border) during the socialist period as well. These connections were mainly formals and they were hardly more than a protocol or a cultural relationship.

Figure 2. Debrecen – Oradea the cross-border Eurometropolis (DebOra)



Source: edited by the author

From the 1990s, both Debrecen and Oradea's leaders, have favoured (among others) the economic, cultural and scientific strengthening of the co-operation. These initiatives – by the help of the European Union's cohesion policy, which supports with important sources the different Eurometropolises' common cross-border plans and aims – can conduct to the establishment of Debrecen and Oradea's common educational, R&D and health tourist innovative cluster. Jean Monnet Research Institute (Institute for Euroregional Studies "Jean Monnet" European Centre of Excellence – Oradea/Debrecen),

which was founded some years ago, took in hand the common projects' scientific establishment. The elaboration of the innovation-directed, cross-border common economic development and co-operative projects contribute the establishment of Euroregions and Eurometropolises. Researches have been started (among other things) in favour of the establishment Debrecen – Oradea cross-border Eurometropolis (DebOra Project). The researchers of IERS intend to support with their scientific achievements, the two cities' co-operation (Project DebOra) (**Figure 2**).

The circumstance, which also played part in the maintenance of the periphery situation until the East-Central European countries' joining to the European Union could have been changed by better traffic conditions. After the change of regime it was easier to cross a border, and the number of border stations also increased, but their location were not ideal and sometimes people living crow-flight have to take a long journey to cross the border and to get to one another. The co-operation was made difficult by many other things too. "The varying economic conditions within the region and the different economic development resulting from it also contributes to the inadequacies of cross-border co-operation. This is especially obvious in the case of the cross-border trade where co-operation is hindered by the lack of border crossings, the weak fiscal system and the bureaucracy".

Western European examples demonstrate that the border position do not mean disadvantage for the social-economy development necessarily, moreover it could be positively favourable as well. The quality of life of those people who live in the border regions could improve if the possibility of co-operation among countries, regions and settlements developed (for example twin towns connections, mutual labour force exchange and nature protection, common regional and settlement development, retail connections). Where the borders' permeability increase, there the linking character become stronger and the local development could build on new territorial co-operations. But where the borders' dividing and separative character remains stronger, there, for example in some border regions, the peripheral character will dominate in the future too.

One of the best examples for the good scientific co-operations is the project of Debrecen – Oradea Institute for Euroregional Studies (IERS), which was established some years ago. The co-ordination, organization and direction of different researches of University of Debrecen and University of Oradea are the "Jean Monnet" European Centre of Excellence's most important task. The support of those researches, which target area is the Hungarian-Romanian border regions and the development of the cross-border connections are the most important tasks of the Centre. The region marketing, whose aim is stressing of cross-border investment possibilities of the Hungarian-Romanian border regions acts very important part among the IERS's projects. The Institute for Euroregional Studies' bi-annual journal is the EUROLIMES.

Conclusions

The regions with favourable economic and natural resources which lie close to the core areas and regional axis and which are able to have a wide scale of communication with the centres and have labour forces satisfying the demands of the large companies become renewed and gain new functions. On the other side, the backwardness of the hardly accessible regions lying at large distances (due to the underdeveloped nature of transportation) from the urban poles of development with loose textures and less qualified population and less developed infrastructure which are dominated by agriculture will increase because the population cannot be ensured proper living circumstances.

In the backward regions, the task of local development is partly to create favourable conditions for the investors through the development of the infrastructure and human resources. Nevertheless, the demand for the development of the local entrepreneurial level is also formulated in these regions more precisely whose final aim is the satisfaction of the demand of the domestic market. In the dynamic regions the development of the local enterprises built on the demands of the domestic market appears in the form of the easing of the economic defencelessness, while in the backward regions it becomes the main factor of the population keeping ability. The key issue of the immediate future in the Carpathian Euroregion is that how efficient it will be in accelerating the transformation of the producers to become entrepreneurs who are able to produce high quality goods with the help of an effective support system (investment supports, support of the land purchase of farmers, vocational training etc.) which will mainly have to be formed in parallel with – but by all means separately from – the educational-training elements of the environmental and social supportive forms. Severe future conflicts might be avoided by the leaders of the member countries of the Carpathian Euroregion if they set as a goal the social evolution, environmental harmony and economic development together with the development of human resources.

In the European Union – and in other developed regions of the world as well – it is a rather generally accepted notion that the modern regional development is based on the development of human resources. For the leaders of the Carpathian Euroregion, therefore, the development of education and training and the encouragement of investment and reflation of entrepreneurship might mean the basic breaking-out points and the support of the priorities related to it and the implementation of programmes might be of primary importance in the rise of the region. The Carpathian Euroregion Interregional Association may have a decisive role in the acceptance and implementation of the operative programmes on reflation and encouragement of investment, and on education, training and employment which were already authorised with project management. The member self-governments of the Euroregion must continue their active participation and co-operation.

We think that the Carpathian Euroregion still has to carry out considerable lobby activities to be able to get access to most of the development funds becoming available in East Central Europe. It is essential to create absolute consensus between the member self-governments in relation to the proposals of the strategic programme. Regional development may only be successful in the Carpathian Euroregion if co-ordination intensifies between the partner self-governments.

One of the new supporting funds of the European Territorial Cooperation is the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which serves the development and cooperation of the external borders with Ukraine and the borderland regions, mainly by means of the Hungarian–Slovakian–Romanian–Ukrainian Programme of Cross-border Cooperation. Territories supportable through this programme cover a remarkable part of the Carpathian Euroregion, so we can state, that this Programme of Cross-border Cooperation “was announced directly for us”. By its help and by joining our forces we can achieve spectacular results in the future.

In 2013 we celebrated the 20th anniversary of founding the Carpathian Euroregion. Over the last more than 20 years, beside many problems, the co-operation among the joined local authorities resulted in remarkable successes.

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