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BASIC STUDY OF THE TRANSBORDER COOPERATION ON THE CARPATHIAN CBC MACROREGION

INTRODUCTION

In the period of 2007-2013 the Carpathian CBC Macroregion will get into a strategic position, as the eastern border of the European Union stretches across its territory. The geostrategic role of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion 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 development programme was already drawn up as part of this aim.

1. SITUATION ANALYSIS

In the countries belonging to the Carpathian CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion - 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 peripherality of the regions belonging to the Carpathian CBC Macroregion increased. Their social and economic backwardness - as opposed to the development of the core regions - accelerated in the past years.

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.

Besides the extreme political factions supporting the rigid dividing role of the state borders, the differences between the customs, financial and fiscal systems and the financial institutional networks also mean serious problems. Nowadays, those institutions are still missing which would support cross-border investments in the forms of loans.

Despite of the arising problems, we think that the activities of the Project "Borders for people" may grant a breaking-out for the regions concerned and may constitute a serious help in the solution of the existing minority problems (e.g. problems of minority education) as well. Of course, the "survival" of the Carpathian Euroregion

largely depends on how this interregional association exploits and dynamises the available resources (natural, economic and — above all - human resources) and how it can bring together the different interests in the co-operation. 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.

1.1. Geographical location

The Carpathians lending its name for the CBC Macroregion surrounds the Carpathian Basin in a huge 1500 km long curve from Western Slovakia (Dévényi pass) to South-Eastern Romania (the Iron Gates along the Lower Danube). The areas forming the Carpathian CBC Macroregion mainly belong to the North-Eastern Carpathians but in the west the euroregion stretches as far as the High Tatras in the North-Western Carpathians and in the southeast it includes considerable parts of the Eastern Carpathians such as the Harghita and the Csíki Alps.

It is only the geopolitical division of the region that exceeds the morphological division. In Europe which is highly divided by political borders it is only the area of the small Benelux states which have more borders per square kilometre than this region.

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 Przemysl; 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 - Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county; Poland - the voivodships of Rzeszow and Tarnow; Slovakia - the cities of Kosice and Presov; Ukraine - Ivano-Frankivsk, Tsernivci and Lviv (Lemberg) oblasts; Romania - Satu Mare and Maramures 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 Iliescu government. Initially, the two applicant counties participated in the work of the organisation only as observants but at the end of 1993 the Council of the Carpathian Euroregion accepted the official application of Satu Mare and Maramures 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.

In the beginning of 1997, following the elections in Romania, Satu Mare and Maramures counties became full members again and four new Romanian counties (Bihar, Salaj, Botosani 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 Euroregion 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.

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

1.2. Economy before the change of regime and the peculiarities of the transition period

The macroregion is characterised by low ratios with regard to the arable land as well which is also the consequence of the relief conditions. The Carpathian CBC Macroregion occupies 12.8% of the total area of the five countries but its share in arable lands is only 9.4%. Consequently, the ratio of grasslands (meadows, pastures) is higher in all member countries within the Carpathian CBC Macroregion than in the other parts of the countries. Even so, in some countries (Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia) the ratios of gardens, orchards and vineyards are also higher.

It may be stated about all countries that the ratio of the agrarian population per square kilometre is higher in the regions belonging to the Carpathian CBC Macroregion than the national averages. The structure of the population and wage earners is "the most agrarian" in its character in the euregion with respect to all member countries. It is in loose connection with the lower level of industrialisation as well as with the insufficient development level of the services and the low employment of the tertiary sectors. The interconnection is true for all countries and it especially sharply manifests itself in Ukraine. In Ukraine, 14.6% of the total population live on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion but 22.9% of those employed in agriculture work here. In Poland, the respective ratios are 7.9% and 13.1%. In Romania, the difference is relatively significant in the respective values (12.6 and 16.4%) while in the case of Hungary and Slovakia the difference is not that remarkable. On the whole, 12.2% of the total population of the five countries live in the macroregion providing 18.3% of the total number of the agrarian population of the five countries. Thus, despite of the less favourable geographic endowments, disproportionally more people earn their subsidies from agriculture.

It results in a very important correlation, namely that the share of the region from the agrarian population is not only much higher than that of the total population but also from the agricultural areas and arable lands. Thus, the arable land supply of the agrarian wage earners is much more unfavourable than anywhere else. The more intensive farming in some member regions - as opposed to the national average - does not help too much on the disadvantageous position of the land supply.

The labour force/arable land ratio is shifted to the advantage of the labour force in comparison with the national averages in all countries except for Hungary. It is even more convincing if we take into account the quality of the arable lands as well and in this case Hungary cease to be an exception perhaps, just like it is not an exception in the relation of the arable land/agrarian population ratio either.

The contrast is especially sharp between the shares in the arable land (9.4%) and the agrarian population (18.3%) - which is the double. This means that there is a considerable relative agrarian over-

population in the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. Its shares are, of course, differentiated in the various countries: the contrast is the most remarkable in Ukraine (arable land: 8%; agrarian population: 22.9%) but the Roumanien differences are also very high (6.6% and 13.1% respectively). Consequently one of the biggest problems of the entire region is the agrarian over-population.

As a consequence of the disadvantageous physical geographic and soil endowments, the lower ratio of arable land, and the less developed technical level of agricultural production as opposed to other parts of the countries, the production value per one hectare of agricultural area is much below the national averages. Thus, the share of the area of the macroregion in the national agrarian production is quite below its share in agricultural areas. The intensity of agricultural production is considerably below the national average so the area belonging to the euregion may be regarded as less developed not only from the aspect of industry but agriculture as well. There are, of course, significant differences in the extent of backwardness between the intensity of agrarian production by countries. The share of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion in the agrarian population of the member countries is high above its share in the value of agrarian production: that is, the level of agrarian productivity is below the national averages in each country. This is partly the result of the agrarian over-population and partly the sign of the socio-economic backwardness.

The present agriculture in the group of countries constituting the Carpathian CBC Macroregion is in a special transition phase and shows a very heterogeneous picture:

Large-scale agriculture is a sector consuming its past, equipment and capital. There is hardly any chance of raising its apparatus to a compatible level again.

The household family plots are into an effective farming economy. Their leaders are, entrepreneurs with important connections many of who use the machineries and buildings inherited from the socialist period. Their future depends on whether they will be able to modernise their equipments and whether they will be able to find funds for their developments and secure markets for their goods.

The family farms carry on many-branched and more and more intensive farming. A considerable part of them evolved from household farms and deal with greenhouse farming, growing of fruits and vegetables, animal breeding. They are not as capital sensitive as the previous group but depend more and more on the market conditions and subsidisation policies.

Compensation brought about the establishment of hundred thousands and millions of small-scale farms (mainly with an auxiliary function) in all countries which are actually hardly able to produce goods. Their income producing abilities are extremely small and their importance lies in self-supply. They have undoubtedly performed a great service with providing temporary modest incomes and occupation for the rural population otherwise condemned to unemployment. They have rather blighted prospects and it is uncertain how long they will be able to survive.

Nowadays, the transformation of the economies of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion happens among circumstances created by a deepened regional crisis. The "falling behind" of the macroregion from the core regions of their own countries is an essential characteristic of the regional crisis. In the counties of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion, the transformation of economy is accompanied by severe unemployment problems. One can hardly find a settlement on the area of the euregion where the unemployment rate does not reach the double of the national averages in each country. Thus, the voivodships, counties and oblasts here have been among the first ones in the ranking with regard to the unemployment rate.

In the past few years, the rural population of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion had to endure a series of unpleasant (external and negative) impacts - like a dumping - which made life drastically more difficult. The dismissals due to the decrease in the production of the large-scale industry built on the eastern export, the liquidation of business domiciles with obsolete equipments in the countryside and the rapidly growing rate of unemployment had distinguished roles in this process. As a consequence of the economic and political crisis in the large scale farms the rural social guarding net became more and more pulled apart which used to be not negligible stabilising factors

in some countries until the early nineties (for example, through the side-line activities).

From the end of the past century the area of the present Carpathian CBC Macroregion was abundant in labour force. Only some industrial and mining districts were exceptions from it. The cities of the region had inner labour resources until the beginning of the eighties and thus their attraction of labour force only intensified in the previous decade. Those who were looking for work in the region, therefore, mainly found jobs in the far away cities and industrial plants which is one of the reasons for the considerable migration loss. At the same time, however, many undertook long-distance commuting as well and thus the majority of the long-distance commuters originated from the counties of the euregion. Out-migration and long distance commuting intensified especially after 1960.

By the beginning and middle of the eighties, full employment could be "ensured" in the euregion: thanks to the obsolete heavy industrial mammoth factories of the formerly "prospering" industrial regions which by now turned to "rust zones", mines trading at a disadvantage and the out-of-date home industries ("kocerajok") of the market towns and villages.

At the end of the eighties, due to the drastic decrease in the number of constructions and investments first the unskilled long-distance commuters were stricken by the dismissals then their ratio grew among the dailies as well. Besides the large-scale heavy industries, the home industries created by "rural industrialisation" and the co-operative production sidelines went broke and dismissed their mainly rural workers.

On the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion the rate of unemployment exceeds 30% in many districts even today. Some of the unemployment, of course, is of structural nature here as well so the difference derives from the qualification of the labour force and the demands of new work places. At the same time, there is a great danger that the unskilled unemployed with low cultural level (who constitute quite a large amount of the unemployed) will be ousted from the labour market and will get to the social periphery for good. A regionally rather differentiated picture is hidden behind the

regional averages concerning the unemployment and unemployment means the same problem everywhere by no means.

The reduction in the income from external employment and external sources, of course, had an inductive impact on the ventures. This mainly meant that many auxiliary farms on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion transformed into part-time family farms, and some part-time family farms became family ventures.

The family farms included in the survey were usually lacking capital and were established on own savings almost exclusively, while only a few relied on private loans or loans from relatives and a negligible part based its start on bank loan. They hardly knew anything about corporate loans or resumption loans and the only related stories were about unpleasant experiences of friends. The surveyed family farms mostly dealt with animal breeding. A higher proportion of family farms concentrating on crop production occurred in certain agricultural areas of the counties with lowlands and hilly regions (crop, corn, grape, fruit, and vegetables).

The family farms usually produce traditional goods applying traditional methods. The experiences about the introduction of new plant or animal species are unfavourable. The reasons for the failure - in our opinion - were being late and defencelessness. Our experiences were that the innovation chain broke on the area of the region meaning that the innovation centres do not diffuse the necessary information into the peripheries.

The rural population of the macroregion is overcome by social, political and economic uncertainty which generated introversion and instinctive defence in the people. Apart from this, most of the interviewees have hopes in the future of family farms, although their arguments are not too convincing (e.g. there will always be a need for agricultural products; one needs to work; at least the family will not starve to death).

The transformation of the rural regions on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion happens basically in the same way in all countries. Concerning its socioeconomic impact, however, this process induces bigger changes in the region (due to the dominant weight of agriculture here) than in the core areas of the participating countries. It is a basic problem that the agriculture of the region - in

our opinion - did not lose but is temporarily forced to miss a significant part of its domestic market. Thus, the real loss of market is the result of the insolvency of the markets within the country - meaning primarily the population.

The present structure of operation, of course, is only a starting state. Depending on the market, profitability and financing possibilities and the concentration of the ventures - in our opinion - is an unstoppable process. Of course, it will be all commanded by the market competitiveness and this will require concentration into competitive sizes of production. Nowadays, the agriculture of the euroregion is dominated by private property. The agrarian population, however, is socially divided and full of tensions. Progress is impeded by the lack of the land market, the low land prices and the high proportion of owners physically detached from the land.

The high number of new agrarian entrepreneurs may be also explained by the fact that the rapid employment rearrangement of the past decades was neither total nor perfect. The retention of the rural dwellings, the cultivation of family relationships and the presence "second (agrarian) economy" for ensuring significant rounding out of earnings - because of the modest and insufficient industrial incomes - kept alive a semi-peasant state into which it was easy to "return" after becoming useless in industry.

In our opinion, it is possible that a rapid concentration will start in the near future in the family farms on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. Hopefully it will coincide with the labour power demands of the other - mainly tertiary - economic sectors. For in this case it may be taken for granted that the majority of the agrarian entrepreneurs in the villages will leave the agricultural activity which provides only low living standards and stagnation. Naturally, there are considerable differences between the various countries by the intensity of agricultural production.

There is a great need for the intensification of the production structure for the development of the rural regions on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. In addition to this, it would be also important if the rural population were able to get access to considerable auxiliary earnings besides agriculture.

The unfavourable political processes and relations may set serious barriers to the economic development. Now, however, we are in such a peculiar and irreproducible situation when the relations between the border regions may change essentially and their co-operation may rely on a completely different and new basis.

There is an opportunity for the active interconnection of the peripheral regions and for a new co-operation form, the development of cross-border regional integrations. The basis for this interregional co-operation is provided by the political and economic transformation processes of the early nineties. The change of regime and the stronger links with Western Europe raised the hope of founding cross-border co-operations in our region too and thus created chances for the adaptation of the Western European experiences.

1.3. Present geopolitical situation of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion

The strong presence of the peasant folk traditions, the underdeveloped urbanisation, the traditional religious bonds and the strong traditions of the left-wing (mainly rural and not urban vernacular) movements within the national political formula stress the conservative - Christian - national characteristics in the regions of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. It is not contradicted by the fact that the electoral results often express the dissatisfaction with the social situation and not only the support of the historic traditions (or in some cases being against them). (The deviation from the national average in the election results are variegated by the strong presence of the Hungarian minority parties - especially in Romania and Slovakia - organised on a nationalistic basis.)

The present (and future) geopolitical situation on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion 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, Kiev and East

Ukraine but beyond these the foreign capital investments usually "stop" at the Danube, Vagh and Dnieper rivers. In parallel with the EU accession of Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, the capital attracting ability of the euregion 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 22 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 CBC Macroregion which opened up new opportunities for cross-border co-operations. The rapid increase in the number of euregions 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 CBC Macroregion 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 (ENPI most of all) - especially after the accession.

1.4. The most significant cross-border social relations in the Carpathian CBC Macroregion

The social and economic success of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion largely depends on how this interregional CBC-activities exploits and dynamises the available resources (natural,

economic and - above all - human resources) and how it can bring together the different interests in the co-operation. Cross-border co-operations in the higher education - both educationally and culturally - are enabled by the already started "de-etatism" which significantly reduces governmental intervention in the management of the universities. The governments manage their education and cultural policies by financing instead of administrative interventions and this makes it possible to develop regional education and cultural policies.

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, Nyiregyhaza-Beregovo, Miskolc-Kosice, Rzeszow-Lviv).

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.

1.5. Factors promoting and impeding progress

The infrastructural supply of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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.

The procurement of EU funds, however, does not only require the above listed preconditions but also the implementation of the tasks within the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. As it was described in the previous chapters the precondition of the allotment of financial instruments is that the Macroregion has an integrated development concept for a multiannual period.

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.

Our study conducted in the member countries of the Carpathian Euroregion unfortunately confirmed us that this transnational organisation established 20 years ago "preceded its time" in the region. The copying and borrowing of the Western European models was not yet successful because of the unsettledness of the hosting conditions. The economic conditions are immature and temporary in our region. Lack of capital is usual which causes the gaining grounds of grey (or black) economy in the cross-border economic relations. Due to the peripheral economic position, the obsolete economies of the regions here cannot fulfil those expectations which are essential for a successful European economic cross-border co-operation system.

From our survey it emerges that the five countries do not have yet the demand to develop their border regions through a common regional development policy together. According to our researches it is this attitude that impedes co-operation within the Carpathian euroregion both principally and politically. At the same time, this is the same factor that underlines the extremely important geopolitical importance of the Carpathian Euroregion which was emphasised by Mrs. Catherine Lalumiere in Debrecen in 1993 at the founding ceremony.

The prominent representatives of the socio-economic life and - often - of the self- governments do not yet feel the importance of innovations even in their own countries and they do not have yet developed a "receptor" for sensing innovations. In those regions, where there are examples for these (like in Eastern Hungary, Southwest Romania) they are only used for the development of their own regions or settlements. The participations at the professional meetings, the inter-university co-operations and especially the cultural and fine art cooperations play the most important role in the Carpathian CBC Macroregion in transmitting innovations across the borders.

At present, the peculiarities, tasks and objectives of the working commissions and euregions constitute quite a disorganised mixture in the activities of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion. 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 euregion into an "umbrella organisation". A consciously conducted "profile clearing" and the making relations with the other euregions 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 nineteen 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.

2. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS IN THE CARPATHIAN CBC MACROREGION

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, microregions 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 CBC Macroregion, 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 CBC Macroregion is less and less wanted by the stakeholders. The series of disappointments and deceits made the producers on the area of the Carpathian CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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 CBC Macroregion 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 macroregion

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.

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