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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN SLOVAKIA AS A FACTOR OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The social structure of Eastern Slovakia in comparison with other regions constantly demonstrates some specific features. They are a reflection of the geographical and natural conditions, and especially political, demographic, economic and cultural development in the past and the present. Level of economic activity, sectoral and social structure of the population determines the level of life and opportunities for the region. These are important factors that also constantly affect the nature, extent and dynamics of contacts, relations and cooperation between actors from both sides of the border with Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. Therefore, this fact has to be constantly reflected in the methodological training, studies of cross-border cooperation in Eastern Slovakia and within the assessment of its prospects for the future.

Keywords: *Eastern Slovakia, cross-border cooperation, social structure, economic activity, sectoral stratification, social composition of the population.*

After overcoming so-called Caribbean crisis and reduction of international tension between the then superpowers, the USA and the USSR, at once have arisen some alleviation of tension within the so-called Eastern bloc - so they called the Soviet Union and its companions, or satellites in Europe and in Asia in the West. One of manifestations of this new trend was the creation of space for simpler, not only formal relations between countries with different forms and degrees of totalitarian regime under the Communist Party, which were under the direct tutelage of the Soviet Union. [1, p. 217.] Thus also began to develop formal relationships between them, which also included contacts between regions that are located near their common border [2, p. 100].

Although the special relationships, that were called friendly, ones, existed even earlier within the “socialist camp” - in the second half of the fifties of the last century, - most of them actually existed only “at a distance”, were highly formalized and were recommended as a means of ideological influence by the “top”subject [3, p. 120]. But that does not mean they did not exist or there weren’t actual sister relations between them, especially considering the fact that often they were the only possible direct contacts with neighboring countries. Initially, especially in the second half of the fifties and early sixties, main proponents of these relations were primarily regions, counties or individual cities in the USSR and Czechoslovakia. Although usually central, more or less just mechanically defined, in the early years they did not bring many ideological, cultural or political benefits, not to mention their marginal, usually almost zero economic impact. [4, p. 95-96.] A special place in this respect belonged to the eastern region, which was formed on the basis of administrative reform of 1960, more or less through formal association of former Kosice and Presov regions. From the beginning it formed a perfect space for the development of “twinning cooperation” - it was the then term for cross-border cooperation. A particular advantage of the county, which then had no other of ten counties of the then Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, was the fact that it geographically bordered with three socialist states, namely the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary.

In addition, basically it were the cross-border regions, between which in the past were no borders or which had only internal borders - administrative in nature that became the state borders only in 1918, or in the case of Transcarpathia, even in 1939. [5, p. 92-93.]

A major advantage for cross-border contacts was considered the fact that the regions on both sides of the border in a sense constituted single socio-economic environment, which was characterized by compatible economic base with multiple identical elements, and similar social and demographic characteristics, which was considered a prerequisite not only for mutual understanding, but also the possibility to solve similar problems in this way. However, it seems that common features of

border regions, especially Eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathia were probably only a relative advantage in times of socialism, and now, as predicted by the researchers, Schengen border between the two countries is holding them back [6].

The fact is that these border regions were, and still are, lagging, mostly relatively marginal areas with certain imbalances, possible cooperation of which had a small synergistic effect. In other words, the integration of less developed regions only extends these regions, but, in fact, does not help them. On the other hand, although it sounds quite paradoxically, cooperation of more developed regions with less developed ones gives them some examples, momentum and impetus for the development while making more efficient production and innovative processes, and leads to progress in the more developed regions as well, unless there are some barriers [7, p. 65].

True that, the relative comparison also creates favorable conditions for cross-border cooperation. This applies, for example, to similar multinational environment in Eastern Slovakia and the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, which is a reflection of the historical development and which yielded essentially conflict-free coexistence of Slovak, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Hungarian and Jewish population. The same roots have religious tolerance, which allows the coexistence and mutual respect of the believers, regardless of their affiliation to the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, or Jewish denomination [8, p. 5-7].

At the official level were less discussed certain attributes of Eastern Slovak region, which objectively contributed to the development of cross-border cooperation. This includes primarily its rural character, which cannot objectively greatly encourage it. The bearer of this type of relationship is primarily urban population with high levels of education, who embrace the trends of modernization. Problems in this area enhance the large number of small villages, this it leads to life problems, and therefore, naturally, also to negligence of the outside superstructural phenomena. The obvious disadvantage in this area is the fact that until the end of the sixties of the twentieth century, 34% of the economically active population of the region had to commute daily

to work outside their locality, and thus social limits of working hours were quite extended [9, p. 64].

In the analysis of cross-border cooperation of counties, organizations, businesses or institutions of Eastern Slovakia with partners from neighbouring regions abroad, including, obviously, the most developed sister relations with comparable entities of current Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, not common is the factor of social structure.

Although it is also a clear reflection of geographical and natural conditions, but primarily it is about political, demographic, economic and cultural development of the region's past and present. For this reason, the social structure of the population of Eastern Slovakia, compared to other regions, always demonstrated some specific features that can not but affect the development of certain social phenomena.

The level of economic activity, sectoral structure and social structure of the population define quality of life and opportunities for the region. These are important factors that also constantly affect the nature, extent and dynamics of contacts, relations and cooperation between actors on both sides of the border with Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. This fact should in any case be reflected, on the one hand, in the methodological training, studies of cross-border cooperation in the east of Slovakia, but also within the evaluation of its prospects or opportunities in the present. The share of economically active persons in the total population steadily increased substantially evenly since 1961 both on the Slovak general scale, and in Eastern Slovakia, namely from 41.7% to 51.1% or from 40.3% to 49.9% in 2001, while in the East it fluctuated at a lower level around 1.5 - 2%. A parallel increase in the number of economically inactive people with their own source of income in this period (from 9% to 20% or from 11.7% to 18.4%) clearly indicates the overall aging of the population and the relatively higher birth rate in Eastern Slovakia. This trend confirms a declining share of dependent persons, which, due to part of child population in the East is 3% higher.

Development of the main indicators of the economically active population in this period shows us a Table No 1 [9, p. 52-54, 10, p. 489, 11, p. 164-165]. And Table No 2 [12, p. 21-23, 13, p. 17, 161, 295].

Table № 1

**Economically active population in the eastern region of Slovakia
in 1961-1980 in %**

Year of Census	1961	1970	1980			
Region	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia
<i>Economically active population</i>	40,3	41,7	41,9	44,1	48,0	49,8
<i>Economically inactive with their own source of income</i>	11,7	9,0	16,1	13,8	13,4	14,0
<i>Dependent persons</i>	48,0	49,3	42,0	42,1	38,6	36,2
Total No	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table № 2

**Economically active population in the eastern region of Slovakia
in 1991-2001 in %**

Year of census	1991	2001		
Region	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia
<i>Economically active population</i>	48,3	49,6	49,9	51,1
Including maternity leave	6,2	5,9	5,1	4,9
unemployed	4,9	4,1	25,8	20,4
working pensioners	2,7	2,9	3,2	2,5
<i>Economically inactive with own source of income</i>	16,7	17,6	18,4	20,0
Including non-working pensioners	99,9	99,9	94,3	94,3
others	0,1	0,1	5,7	5,7
<i>Dependent persons</i>	35,0.	32,7	31,7	28,9
Of them children under 15 y.o	75,7	74,4	73,9	71,3
Total No	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

While the differences in the intensity of economic activity in the eastern provinces of Slovakia actually could directly affect the twinning and cross-border relations, the same cannot be stated in the case of branch structure of the economically active population.

The fact is that it has a direct impact on the region's economic performance and living standards, and the internal and external economic relations. Therefore, the development of cross-border cooperation could be somewhat slowed down due to the large share of agriculture in the economic structure of the region, although the latter has also quite rapidly decreased. The share of employees in industry in the East was compared with the total Slovak lowest parameters, the difference ranged from 2.8% (2001) to 5.5% (1961). Usually the region showed better results compared to the national average only in the construction and transport, this was due to less-developed material and technical base of the region and thus further development of its infrastructure or its significant size and consolidation of the railway network, as well as road network.

It is no accident that it was precisely the Eastern Slovakian construction companies that had the greatest success in business in the Transcarpathian region since the nineties.

The share of persons employed in trade and services over the study period was always lower, which was, apparently, due to urbanization and the general level of development of individual regions.

Conversely, faster growth and increase of the number of people who work in the non-production sphere, in Eastern Slovakia clearly reflect the need to strengthen the social improvement of the region, especially through the creation and spread of educational, medical and cultural institutions. This fact has had a very positive impact on the development of friendly relations, which in the eighties increasingly manifested also in production, in the form of exchange of experience, use of advanced technology and direct industrial cooperation.

Development of structural stratification of the economically active population during the test period shows us a Table № 3 [9, p. 52, 123, 10, p. 491, 11, p. 166-167, 13, p.19, 163, 297, 14].

Table № 3

Sectoral structure of the economically active population in the eastern region of Slovakia in the years 1961-2001 in %

Year of census	1961	1970	1980	1991	2001					
Region	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia	ESR	Slovakia
<i>Agriculture</i>	37,3	33,8	21,5	20,4	16,8	16,2	15,2	13,9	5,8	5,4
<i>Industry</i>	22,9	28,4	29,7	33,8	32,4	35,9	31,1	33,1	29,6	32,4
<i>Construction</i>	13,0	11,2	12,6	10,9	13,1	13,5	9,7	9,3	5,4	5,0
<i>Transport</i>	7,2	6,5	8,5	7,3	7,3	7,2	7,2	6,3	5,5	5,2
<i>Trade and crafts</i>	7,4	6,3	7,8	8,2	11,2	7,2	12,0	12,2	6,9	8,0
<i>Non-production sphere</i>	12,2	13,8	19,9	19,4	18,3	19,0	20,0	20,7	22,2	24,4
<i>Not stated and not specified</i>	—	—	—	—	0,9	1,0	4,8	4,5	24,6	22,6
Total No	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

With regard to the the social base, cross-border cooperation relies mainly on the category of employees who constantly have been living in Eastern Slovakia, from 1961 till the last census, and represented a lower share of the economically active population stratification than the average across the country. The difference in 1970 was 6%, but in 2001 only 3.4%. Second, in our opinion, fairly negative factor was the large proportion of cooperative farmers and groups of individual farmers, which in 1961 accounted for 6.6% of the economically active population. [15, p. 108.]

Further development of changes in the social composition of the population of Eastern Slovakia shows a Table № 4. [9, p. 122, 11, p. 169-170, 13, p. 19, 163, 297.]

Table № 4

**The social composition of the population of Eastern Slovakia
in the years 1991-2001 in %**

Year of census	1970	1980	2001			
Region	ESR	Slova- kia	ESR	Slova- kia	ESR	Slova- kia
<i>Workers</i>	60,5	56,3	60,3	59,1	45,8	45,4
<i>Officials</i>	22,8	28,8	26,7	31,5	24,6	28,0
<i>Cooperative farm- ers and artisans</i>	12,0	11,2	10,1	8,4	—	—
<i>Individual farmers</i>	4,6	2,0	1,1	0,1	—	—
<i>Self-employed per- sons</i>	—	—	—	—	3,9	7,7
<i>Other categories</i>	0,1	1,7	1,8	0,9	25,7	18,9
TOTAL No	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Compared with the general Slovak indicators, in Eastern Slovakia blue-collar workers were fewer. In general, the proportion of workers also increased until 1980, since then it has decreased. The proportion of traders and entrepreneurs in Eastern Slovakia has been remaining very low. This will no doubt have a negative impact on economic activity of the region abroad. At the same time, trade and industry chambers on both sides of the border had been working well in the early nineties and still remaining very active in this area. However, much depends on the phased implementation of certain integration ambitions of Ukraine regarding European Union [16, p. 23-25].

In general, people in Eastern Slovakia still support, show interest and see the benefits of cross-border relations and cooperation for their life and further development. To some extent in this will also play a role long tradition of cross-border contacts, and although they have gone through various vicissitudes, they always have had mainly

positive feedback. At the beginning of their development, it was rather a matter of desire and vision, because there were no real economic and social conditions for their implementation. After creating, expanding and improving the material base of production, human resources, and culture, different legal and administrative barriers have become obstacles that could not offset even substantial political and ideological support for cross-border relations and cooperation. On the other hand, the theory and practice confirm that the cross-border relationship is always a positive influence on the development of economic and social structures in these border regions [17, p. 34-38].

In the early nineties of the twentieth century, despite the very difficult problems connected with the transformation of post-socialist and post-communist countries, cross-border cooperation could acquire broader and firmer contours. This did not happen because on the side of representative offices of Slovakia and Ukraine then started to manifest negative excess sensitivity with respect to indicators of state sovereignty, also associated with some allusions to specific events and actions of the distant and recent past. This situation has affected the process of formation, the specific shape and functioning of the Carpathian Euroregion, although initially it was just a very interesting, ambitious and promising project supported by the European authorities and the public [18, p. 38-44]. In subsequent years, the entire segment of cooperation with the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine adversely affected the integration ambitions of Slovakia, which ultimately meant the introduction of the Schengen visa regime and border, and had further complications resulting from the accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union, NATO and the Eurozone. Cross-border relations and wider cooperation of Eastern Slovakia with neighbouring counties in Hungary in vain has penetrated various political hostility from the centres, exacerbated by deliberate provocations and opening of historically closed minorities' and regional issues. These problems are extremely difficult to overcome, and although cross-border relations have achieved obvious success, the whole field continues to be too dependent on changes in the political structure in the two countries.

Finally, we allow ourselves to assume that not only cooperation, but also even some form of integration, which was initially a dream, then political propaganda, still later attempts of a few enthusiasts and smart entrepreneurs and firms, eventually would become an economic and social necessity. Economic and social development in Europe and the world more and more evidently demands it.

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The social structure of Eastern Slovakia in comparison with other regions constantly has some specific features. Reflect geographical and natural conditions, but also traits of political, demographic, economic and cultural development in the past and present. Economic activity rate, branch structure and social composition of the population determine the standard of living and opportunities to develop the area. This is an important factor, but which permanently affect the nature, extent and dynamics of contacts, relations and cooperation between players on both sides of the border with Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. This should reflect in methodological training, in research of cross-border co-operation in Eastern Slovakia, and the assessment of its prospects for the future.

Keywords: *Eastern Slovakia, cross-border cooperation, social structure, economic activity, sectoral stratification, social composition of the population.*

Социальная структура восточной Словакии в сравнении с другими регионами государства постоянно обладает некоторыми специфическими особенностями. Они являются отражением не только географических и природных условий жизни населения, но и важных явлений экономического, политического и культурного развития общества в прошлом и настоящем. Степень экономической деятельности, а также отраслевая структура и социальный состав населения определяют возможности для развития области и уровень жизни людей. Это важные факторы, которые постоянно влияют на характер, масштабы и динамику контактов, отношений и сотрудничества между предприятиями-

ми и учреждениями по обе стороны от границы с Польшей, Венгрией и Украиной. Это должно по-прежнему отражать вовремя методологической подготовки всех проектов, в течении научных исследований и в рамках оценки их перспектив на будущее.

Ключевые слова: *восточная Словакия, приграничное сотрудничество, социальная структура, экономическая активность, отраслевая стратификация, социальный состав населения.*