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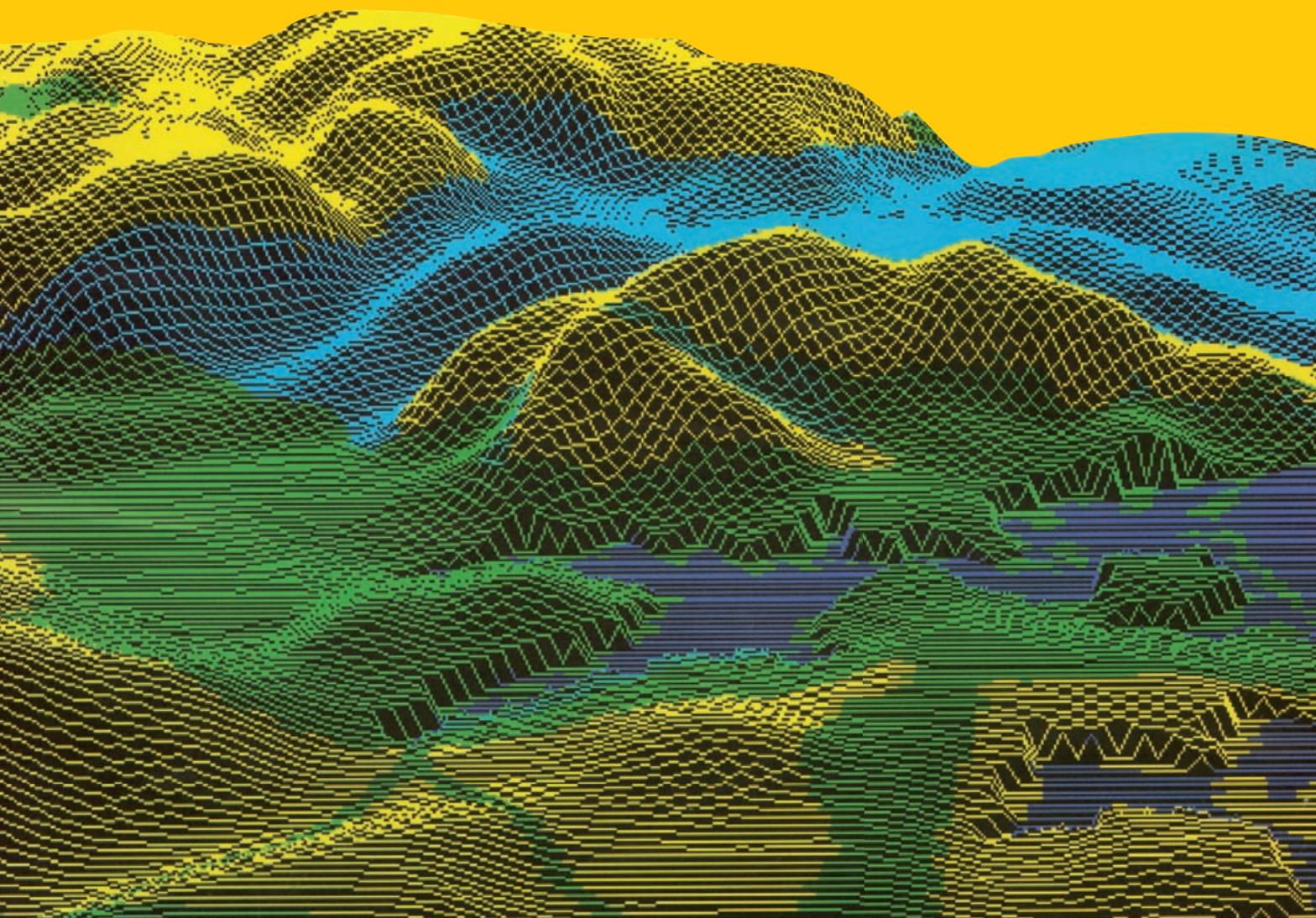




Fig. 2: Extensively exploited landscape of the Czech part of Šumava Mts. in the surroundings of Železná Ruda.

(Photo: S. Martinát)



Fig. 6: A view of the castle and the Vltava River in Český Krumlov – the second most visited tourist destination after Prague in the Czech Republic

(Photo: E. Kallabová)

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Articles:

- Milan BUFON
BORDER REGIONS IN A RE-INTEGRATED EUROPE 2
(Příhraniční regiony v evropském integračním procesu)
- Waldemar GORZYM-WILKOWSKI
EUROREGIONS IN POLAND 14
(Euroregiony v Polsku)
- Marián HALÁS
**DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION
 AND CREATION OF EUROREGIONS IN THE SLOVAK
 REPUBLIC** 21
*(Vývoj přeshraniční spolupráce a formování euroregionů
 na území Slovenské republiky)*
- Tamás HARDI
EUROREGIONS IN HUNGARY 32
(Euroregiony v Maďarsku)
- Stanislav CETKOVSKÝ, Petr KLUSÁČEK,
 Stanislav MARTINÁT, Jana ZAPLETALOVÁ
**SOME ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION
 IN EUROREGIONS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC ON
 EXAMPLE OF THE ŠUMAVA REGION** 43
*(Některé aspekty přeshraniční spolupráce v euroregionech
 České republiky na příkladu území Šumavy)*

BORDER REGIONS IN A RE-INTEGRATED EUROPE

Milan BUFON

Abstract

The role of borderlands in the European integration process is discussed in this paper. The actual political geographic issues of the continent are considered at the outset, based on three fundamental elements: territoriality, borders and integration. The argument continues with a presentation of the different levels of "borderness" in the EU member countries and the structure of different types of European borderlands, together with the main factors of differentiation. Subsequently, an examination of the institutional and functional aspects of cross-border cooperation in Europe is presented, with special emphasis on the organization of the so-called Euroregions, and on European cross-border initiatives and policies. In conclusion, there is a brief summary of several case studies in Slovenia, most typical of the European border countries, and the final discussion concerns the changeable status of borderlands in the context of a re-integrated Europe.

Shrnutí

Příhraniční regiony v evropském integračním procesu

Příspěvek se zabývá úlohou příhraničních regionů v evropském integračním procesu. V úvodu pojednává o aktuálních politicko-geografických problémech evropského kontinentu spočívajících ve třech základních prvcích: územnosti, hranicích a integraci. Poté pokračuje pojednáním o různých úrovních „hraničnosti“ u členských zemí Evropské unie, struktuře různých typů evropských příhraničních regionů a o hlavních faktorech jejich rozlišování. Uvádí rovněž úvahy o institucionálních a funkčních aspektech přeshraniční spolupráce v Evropě se zvláštním důrazem na organizaci tzv. euroregionů i na evropské přeshraniční iniciativy a strategie. V závěru článku se stručně uvádějí různé případové studie ze Slovinska – jedné z nejtypičtějších evropských pohraničních zemí – a příspěvek končí závěrečnou diskusí o proměnlivém statutu pohraničí v kontextu znovu sjednocené Evropy.

Key words: *political geography, border areas, cross-border cooperation, European re-integration, Slovenia.*

1. Introduction

In my opinion, the European political geography is based on three basic elements: *territoriality*, *borders*, and *integration*, which in turn are the results of both convergence and divergence social and spatial processes. As Poulantzas pointed out, space-time matrices in the pre-capitalist period were open; there was only a single known space based on a common civilisation and a common religion with all the rest being perceived as a no-land inhabited by barbarians (Poulantzas, 1978). Conversely, a capitalist space differs in the appearance of borders with space territorialization being a precondition for modernity. Therefore, there is a fixing of different borders and thus different insides and outsides, and citizenship, segregation of aliens and their exclusion from their full involvement in the national life, as features of this spatial power matrix which acquires in Poulantzas' opinion its purest form in the invention of the concentration camp. The main characteristic of the post-war European integration process, as the reverse model of nation-state exclusivism, is represented by

the fact that it first ploughed its way gradually and not without difficulties within politically stable states, where the process of national emancipation, or rather of nation-building was long over and had resulted in the formation of solid territorial states. With the increase of international integration in Western Europe, especially after the 1960s, the previous non-flexible model of industrialization, characterized by capital and job concentration as well as by the depopulation of peripheral areas and by the forced introduction of internal social standardization and cultural homogenization, began to disintegrate. The fostering of a more balanced regional development resulted also in the strengthening of regional characteristics, which the new regional development model could no longer ignore. The regional characteristics have in turn always been preserved in Europe by persistent historical and cultural elements of ethnic and linguistic variety. Therefore it is not surprising that the process of European integration was accompanied by a parallel process of ethnic or regional awakening of minorities and other local communities (Bufon, 1996a).

The major question that Europe facing at present is the effect of the collapsed bipolar system of the new world order. There are at least two contradictory processes at work. The first is the opening up of Europe to democratic ideals and representative politics, which follows the advance of social democratic capitalism eastward and its creation of new markets, resources and social organisations. New inter-regional trade and activity have accelerated since the demise of centrally planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in terms of cross-border cooperation. Previously suspect or fragile strategic regions have been transformed into pivotal nodes in an expanded European network of communication and trade. Such a change emphasises how geography and place are periodically reinterpreted and transformed.

Alongside the border as a markedly linear spatial and socio-political phenomenon that in the past played a role of the political and strategic isoline, a new geographic term border areas gradually entered political geography; it became clear that attention of political geographers should be turned toward the research of broader geopolitical aspects of political decisions and interventions in an area of which the establishment and changing of political borders is so emblematic, as well as toward social and spatial effects that the borders in a given regional reality have. Thus from a spatial point of view, modern political geography studies borders because they indicate the territorial dimension of political organisations and systems, while also affecting the formation of special border areas that do not only differ according to the nature of political border, but also continue transforming according to the changes in border location and the functional border dynamics (e.g. the border's high or low permeability). The significance of the geography of border landscapes lies therefore particularly in the fact that it does not only analyse borders in the framework of political-strategic and political-historical studies, but sets them in a framework of the research of processes within border regions and social spaces defined therein.

Several authors have tried to define in more detail the new tasks of political geography in this field and the methodology of research in the *geography of border landscapes*, but most of the papers dealing with regional aspects of border areas or with effects of the borders in a social space, remain fairly heterogeneous both from the theoretical and methodological points of view. There are only a few comparative studies that could contribute to the discovery and definition of basic processes in border regions; in fact, the more researchers have delved into analyses of these regions, the more complex and intricate has become the network of factors, effects and processes marking the structure and the dynamics of the development of border areas.

These not only result from the interaction of different cultural, social, economic and political factors and elements on an interstate level, but they also express the relationship between the local community and the respective centre, as well as the relationship between the actual two local border communities. Finally, it should be mentioned that precisely the differences brought by the border in the organisation of border areas make it very difficult to carry out a homogeneous analysis of border areas, since the typology and methodology of statistic data gathering on one side of the border are usually quite different from those on the other side. But even this fact has contributed to the phenomenon that the literature written up till now on the geography of border landscapes mainly comprises works dealing with border areas as part of individual countries only, while rarely extending over the political border to discover and define the so-called cross-border regions.

2. Theory and research experiences of the geography of border landscapes

Numerous studies have pointed out that it is precisely the border regions – in which the population from both sides of the border often displays joint regional allegiance or a cognate ethnic and linguistic structure – that are the linking element that in the most natural form and most effectively contributes to the development of cross-border relations and international integration; the individual border areas within these regions are on the one hand connected to the home country, while on the other, due to many affinities with the neighbouring area, they represent a genuine zone of transition. These aspects and functions of border regions have come to the fore of the European political interest through the consolidation of integration processes on the continent, although we could hardly maintain that any explicit regionalization of the European political life occurred concurrently. Thus, many research projects were carried out in the last decades with the purpose of defining the basic elements and processes in cross-border interconnection, and the effect exerted on such interconnection by the circumstances of more or less open borders. *Propulsive and rejecting factors in cross-border cooperation* were ascertained, for example:

- the same (high) degree of development of industrial societies in border areas
- a joint system of information, and knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country
- a positive attitude towards neighbours and cross-border cooperation
- lack of cross-border connections in transport infrastructure and communication
- incongruent planning of cross-border areas
- adjustment of the population to a closed-border situation

In addition to these, several other spatial and social processes in the transformation of border areas and their adjustment to the frontier regime were tackled, as well as elements of functional interconnection of border areas and their spatial extent. All these empirical findings obtained on the example of different central European border areas undoubtedly participated in the development of relatively early and consolidated concepts in setting up functional and regional-planning forms of cross-border integration, in which geography played an important role. On the basis of such concepts the *border areas* were defined as a special type of peripheral regions in which both economic and social lives are directly influenced by the proximity of an international border.

This framework provided a ground for development of that section of geography of border landscapes which mainly concentrated on researching individual border areas, and contributed to the completion of a more empirical methodology that would be better adjusted to concrete regional realities, and whose main characteristic was above all the fact that it perceived the border in an explicitly spatial – or more precisely – *zonal* sense. The border is not something separate from the territory surrounding it, but rather represents with it a constituent part of a specific border area. The very border area, on the other hand, is a relatively complex space, which may be – in case of a sufficient degree of connectedness with the neighbouring area or a manifest functional complementariness and integration with it – defined by a common term as a border or a *cross-border region*. Naturally, within such frameworks other kinds of interpretation are possible, too: some researchers emphasise broader regional infrastructural or macroeconomic aspects of cross-border cooperation above all, others stress the importance of small-scale cross-border exchange in microeconomic, social and cultural spheres. In the former case, standard research methods of economic and regional analysis are most frequently employed, while in the latter we can often find qualitative-oriented works drawing especially on the findings of modern social and cultural geography. One study conducted (Strassoldo, 1982) pointed out three main effects that the borders have on space: *direct* (e.g., doubling of the functions of both border areas), *indirect* (e.g., economic benefits created by the contact between two different systems) and *induced* (e.g., development of infrastructure). Further, according to their degree of openness the borders were classified into *permeable*, *rejecting* and *impermeable*. Of course, there are no completely closed or completely open borders; rather, nearly each border areas develop with a greater or smaller degree of openness. On the basis of the ‘openness’-‘closeness’ relation and the dynamic/static character with regard to border areas, Strassoldo defined four types of border situation: *situation of border*

area along an open and dynamic borderline, a *border-bridge situation* along an open yet static borderline, a “*no-man’s-land*” situation along a dynamic and closed borderline, and a situation of periphery along a static and closed borderline (Strassoldo, 1973).

From the mid-sixties, Prescott began laying a great emphasis particularly on four problem groups that political geographers should take into account in their research into border landscapes (Prescott, 1965, 1987):

- border as an element of cultural landscape, its character, course and transformations
- characteristics and structure of border areas, regional differences and similarities between the two parts of border landscape; influence of political factors and the border on the development of separate regional forms in an originally uniform natural or cultural landscape
- impact of the border on spatial and social organization of the border area population, directions of its spatial mobility in everyday life, perception and appraisal of the neighbouring environment as well as one’s own
- relationship between the countries’ centres and border areas, political decisions affecting the border’s character, border regime and cross-border relationships.

In the same period, Minghi (1963) stressed the need for the political-geographic interest to be transferred from borders in conflict to “ordinary” border areas, and to concentrate on an in-depth study of the numerous aspects bearing influence on a harmonic co-existence of border populations. He later applied this concept to *House’s model* of cross-border interactions (House, 1981), which put a great emphasis on contacts and exchanges between the two determinate border areas, and onto *Rokkan’s model* of relationships between centres and peripheries in the process of political transformations of modern societies (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983). The first model established that while local cross-border exchanges cannot develop in a situation of borders in conflict or in countries with centralised state systems, they represent a greater part of cross-border interactions in “normal” international and domestic policy situations. The second model ascribed particular importance to regional movements in peripheral and most often also border areas, as well as to the role played by peripheral local communities and minorities in preserving their autochthonous settlement territory (cultural landscape), establishing cross-border contacts and limiting conflicts in case of division of this territory through the process of drawing borders. In short, modern research of border areas (Gallusser, 1994; Rumley and Minghi, 1991) has been dedicating much more attention to the *cultural*

aspects of border areas, and consequently to the local spatial behaviour of the border population and issues related to their regional, ethnic and linguistic identities.

3. Definitions of border areas and determining their extent

Parallel to the development of theoretical and methodological concepts, a need emerged in the geography of border landscapes for a more accurate definition of the very space along the border. Namely, the term *border area* is usually understood as the area within a determinate state in which influences of the proximity of a political border can be felt, while the term *border* or *cross-border region* denotes a space comprising the border areas on both sides of a border. As Perpillou already ascertained in the mid-sixties (Perpillou, 1966), some borders represent a geographic boundary between two countries, while around other borders small territorial units form within the neighbouring countries. Such a border region is thus not just a landscape, a part of which happens to be a border, nor is it the sum of two separate border areas. And neither is it an entirely homogeneous unit, as the presence of a border itself translates as a fundamental discontinuity for such a space. The interconnection of such a region should therefore be sought particularly in functional relationships between the two border areas in question, which can develop on the basis of ordinary gravitational trends between urban and employment centres and their hinterlands due to the existence of certain *disparities* – mostly of an *economic nature* – or due to the existing *affinities* – mostly of a *cultural character* – between one side of the border and the other (Guichonnet, Raffestin, 1974; Ricq, 1970). Therefore, a border region as such is asserting itself as a combination of the *principle of functionality*, which originates in the adjustment of the border population and border economy to the given circumstances, and the *principle of homogeneity*, which derives from the fact that both border areas often share the affiliation to the same cultural landscape, while the border population is characterized by the same cultural features.

Aside from these terminological problems there is also the question of the very *delimitation* of border regions. Although various international acts upon adoption of bilateral agreements on the regulation of cross-border movement of goods and people usually determine the border areas – for which special allowances are provided – as an area extending to a width of up to 25 km from the borderline, the actual extent of a border region can be quite different from the administrative or institutional one, and most of all much more differentiated (Biucchi, Godard, 1981; Ercmann, 1987). Wherever there is a cultural affinity between two border areas, the total extent of this space most often represents the basic core of a cross-border region. However, the borders of such regions differ greatly from one another according to the indicator of cross-border integration used, as these

can be influenced by different factors ranging from the very administrative division of the border areas to the transport and other infrastructural, demographic, economic, and also cultural, historical and physical factors. In circumstances of economic disparity between the two border areas, for instance, small-scale exchanges in the fields of supply, work and leisure time activities are more apt to follow the current differences in exchange rates, inflation rate and purchasing power, and therefore hardly represent permanent predispositions of individual border areas for satisfying and developing various social, economic and spatial activities. All these cross-border transactions are rather unstable and can lead the subjects interested now to this, now to that side of the border. An entirely different situation exists regarding cultural and other basic social contacts that originate from the need of the border population to maintain traditional links within the framework of a common cultural space, and are therefore characterized mostly by stability and persistence even in case of less open border regimes (Bufon, 1998a).

There are only a few cases of complete liberalization of border regimes in the world, but based on the integration processes so far, occurring most intensively on the European continent, it can be seen that the more the border area is integrated and the lesser the barrier effect of political borders, the more the border regions begin to act according to ordinary functional-gravitational principles. This type of development is especially noticeable in border cities that had been severed by the border from their traditional hinterlands and are now regaining their former function within the border area, while twin cities are merging into new and wider urban centres. On the other hand, in many areas where the border's function as a barrier has already been eliminated (e.g., among the signatory states of the Schengen Agreement) no distinct cross-border links can be observed, not even in institutionalised cross-border regions, where the persistence of political borders contributed to the formation of separate social spaces.

4. Border areas and cross-border regions in Europe

Being the cradle of modern nationalism and consequently the part of the world where the most numerous political-territorial divisions took place, it is only natural that Europe should also be the continent with the highest "border character degree," and with a suitably great need for cross-border cooperation and integration. If we define border areas or areas where the effects of the proximity of a political border are quite strong, as a 25 km-wide strip of land extending alongside the borderline, we discover that in Europe, where there are over 10,000 km of borders, border areas measure approximately 500,000 square kilometres in total and are inhabited by more than 50 million people, which equals the demographic

and territorial potential of a large European country, such as, for example, France.

In terms of *typology* (Bufon, 1998b), border areas and border regions in Europe fall into three basic groups: the *western European*, the *central European* and the *eastern European*. Typical of the western European group is the presence of “old” borders, which either belong to the antecedent type or developed parallel to the historical regions in this area. In this environment relatively early forms of cross-border cooperation emerged as early as the sixties and seventies, and in the same period the first cross-border regions formed on institutional bases as well. These include individual regions and other administrative units from both sides of the border and endeavour to solve determinate functional and planning problems within these limits, while at the same time encouraging the cross-border cooperation on a socio-cultural level, which is in these border regions usually underdeveloped. Also characteristic of this type of border region is the existence of individual administrative units of different rank conjoining into a cross-border interest network that could be defined as a “*region of regions*.”

The second typological group of border areas and regions is most characteristic of central Europe. In this area historical regions often do not match the actual space regionalisation in the framework of individual states because numerous subsequent delimitation processes took place – especially following the two world wars in the last century – thus politically dividing the originally homogeneous historical regions into several units. The persistence of socio-cultural links among the border populations within such historical regions in most cases led to the spontaneous formation of cross-border regions. Consequently, these cross-border regions do not fit the administrative spaces, rather match the existing or historical cultural regions; also, they do not enjoy any special support from the local or state authorities, which at times even resent cross-border cooperation because of unresolved issues between the two states that were caused by the delimitation processes. Nevertheless, aside from interstate cooperation and openness, such types of border region also display a remarkably high level of social integration, which usually leads to the formation of special cross-border spatial systems that could be defined as “*regions within regions*.”

The third and last type group is typical of eastern Europe, where we have to deal with a combination of old and new borders in a space that has been traditionally less developed and sparsely populated. Most significantly, the communist regime after World War II magnified this originally unfavourable situation in the border areas of eastern Europe by encouraging or causing the emigration of autochthonous populations and hindering the social and economic development of border areas in general.

The areas marked by such characteristics have, due to their own poor potentials, even in new circumstances – with the powerful ideological modification influences eliminated – very limited possibilities of creating advanced forms of cross-border cooperation and integration. Such border areas and the existing, often only nominal, cross-border regions, could therefore be defined as “*regions under reconstruction*.”

At the moment there are around 55 *cross-border regions of the institutional type* and over 30 *cross-border spatial associations of the informal type* in Europe. In the former type there are genuine international organisations of regional character, such as the working communities of the Alpine arc (Guichonnet, 1988). The *Arge-Alp* (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpländer) working community, which comprises the Swiss cantons of Graubünden, Tessin and St. Gallen, the Italian regions of Lombardy and Trentino-Alto Adige, the Austrian lands of Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg, and the German lands of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, was founded in 1972 with its seat in Innsbruck and had an influence on the formation of the *COTRAO* (Communauté de travail des Alpes Occidentales) and the *Alps-Adria* working communities. The latter was founded in 1978 in Venice, on the basis of previous contacts between the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region in Italy, Carinthia in Austria and the Republic of Slovenia in former Yugoslavia; this initial core was later joined by other Italian and Austrian regions, border administrative units of Hungary, as well as Bavaria and Croatia. Of special importance is that this working community was the first and most fruitful form of international cooperation between countries with very different socio-political systems; although after the fall of the communist regimes in the East and with Slovenia and Croatia gaining their independence, it lost some of its initial élan and part of its foundational intent with Slovenia and Croatia holding in this working community simultaneously the status of region and country. The *COTRAO* working community, which was formally established in Marseilles in 1982 and which comprises the regions of Aosta, Piedmont and Liguria in Italy, Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and Rhône-Alpes in France, and the cantons of Valais, Vaud and Geneva in Switzerland remained slightly more active. The eighties also saw the emergence of kindred working communities in the Jura and the Pyrenees.

Outside the Alpine arc locally focused cross-border associations are more common. The first such communities formed within the Scandinavian cross-border region that developed on the basis of an international agreement between Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland, signed in 1962 and amended several times since. Within the framework of this agreement 10 different regional cross-border associations now act; one of the first to emerge was “*Nordkalotten*” (Cape

North), encompassing the Norwegian counties of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark, the Swedish county of Norrbotten, and Finnish Lapland. A very well-known cross-border association in Europe is the Benelux interstate association, within which a special committee for joint spatial planning with four sector subcommittees has been active since 1969. Similar planning/territorial associations were formed some time later in the border area between Germany and neighbouring countries. An epitome of this kind of cross-border region is “*Regio*,” in the area where the state borders of Switzerland, France and Germany meet, with its seat in Basel. The rudiments of today’s association of “*Regio*” is “*Regio Basiliensis*” (Gallusser, 1981), founded in 1963 as a local liaison body between representatives of economy, science and politics, with regard to the problems that Basel was experiencing due to its border position, and its potential to be promoted to a wider international regional context for the same reason. Today this association has around 400 individual and 200 collective members, among which are different companies and the cantons of Basel-City and Basel-District. In 1965, the “*Regio Basiliensis*” example was followed by the French and German sides, which founded similar associations: “*Regio du Haut-Rhin*,” with its seat in Mulhouse, and “*Regio Friburgensis*,” covering the area of the city of Freiburg. Thus, the different aspects of the development of border areas and cross-border cooperation, and especially the issues concerning regional planning, preservation of environment, transport and communications, employment and daily cross-border migration, education, research, and social care have since been discussed and realised both separately, within the frameworks of each of the three subregions, as well as jointly, within the framework of the body comprising the representatives of all three areas. In addition, “*Regio*” is also one of the founding members of the Working Community of Border Regions established in Strasbourg in 1971.

Another well-known local institutional cross-border association is “*Euregio*” (Gabbe, 1983), which began forming as early as the fifties in the northern border sector between Germany and the Netherlands in the area of the Dutch provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland and the German states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony. This cross-border association consists of three different and autonomous municipality associations, two Dutch and one German, which include in total 104 municipalities. These select among themselves by vote the representatives of the cross-border council and the executing body, the Euregio secretariat located in Gronau, which employs both Dutch and German staff, presiding. One of the most important tasks of this association is coordination and joint implementation of socio-economic and spatial plans in the given border area, which is marked by a considerable difference between the better developed

and more densely populated Dutch part and the more peripheral and demographically weaker German part. In the first phase they worked on attracting new companies and economic activities to the Euregio area in order to strengthen their own economic potential, while since the mid-eighties they have been especially active in promoting and extending cross-border communication, decreasing operational costs in this field and encouraging the cross-border flow of technology.

The kind of orientation – very pragmatic and directed towards the planning/functional aspects of cross-border cooperation and integration – that distinguishes the above-described “*Regio*” and “*Euregio*,” and in general the German border areas that formed along the Polish and Czech borders under the name of “Euroregion” in 1992, is a reference point for various European commissions and especially the Working Community of European Border Regions (with the original abbreviation AGEG [*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäischer Grenzregionen*]). It is therefore no coincidence that the secretariat of this community, whose unofficial seats are otherwise located in Strasbourg and Bonn, and its offices of representation in Barcelona and Trento, should be situated in Gronau – the seat of “*Euregio*.” AGEG has to date contributed to the adoption of an important European convention on cross-border cooperation that was signed in Madrid in 1981, and has in the framework of the European “*Interreg*” programme formed a project called “*Lace*” (*Linkage Assistance and Cooperation for the European Border Regions*), which represents a sort of observatory of cross-border cooperation that various European border regions can turn to for technical and organisational support. This institution, too, is based in Gronau and has on the basis of the experience from Euregio prepared several schemes and recommendations on the economic cross-border cooperation and planning in border regions.

Further development in the creation of the so-called Euroregions, which are particularly numerous along the western German border, was accelerated by the reunification of Germany and the establishment of parliamentary democratic socio-political systems in the former communist countries of the eastern block. Many European initiatives designed to benefit the less developed and peripheral areas of the EU member states were expanded or introduced anew for the border areas in the East as well (Maier, Dittmeir, 1997). One of the programmes to be expanded and transformed within this framework was *Interreg*, which had until 1990 provided financial stimulation for the less developed border areas of Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece (Hansen, 1983). The new *Interreg* programme has since dedicated its attention also to the eastern border areas of the EU member states, such as Germany, Austria and Italy, while its mirror programme *Phare* was later created

expressly with the objective of international cooperation and modernisation of central European and eastern European countries outside the EU (Ferrara, Pasi, 2000). This foundation has already enabled the formation of the new Euroregions between Germany and Poland, and Germany and the Czech Republic, while regional cross-border initiatives in the border areas between Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia, and in those between Italy and Slovenia remain in their early stages.

5. Contribution of the Slovene geography of border landscapes in cross-border cooperation study

The most in-depth study conducted in the framework of the research of individual border areas in Slovenia and its neighbouring countries was that for the *Nova Gorica / Gorizia border region* on both sides of the Italo-Slovene border, which also introduced a renewed methodology of research into specific border areas (Bufon, 1994, 1996b). This includes first an analysis of the existing borders in the area and their mutual dependence, continuance in time, and spatial course with a special emphasis on the impacts that the new political delimitation had on the traditionally uniform regional reality and on the gradual development of models of cross-border exchange and cooperation. The *permeability* of the political border is of great significance and can be measured by means of typology and number of border crossings, as well as by the movement of cross-border passenger transport and possibly also freight transport by border sections and time periods. Further, it is important to analyse the *regional structure* of the border area and determine the degree of socio-economic accordance on regional and microregional levels, as well as to evaluate the processes of regional transformations in relation to the presence of a political border. Here, quantitative research methods of regional analysis are used; however, in case of border region studies the analysis covers the border area on the both sides of the border, for which purpose the statistical data used must first be accordingly uniform, and the analysis must include a statistical test of the borderline impact on regional differentiation and transformation. Research of *socio-cultural interconnection* of border populations and differences in the evaluation of one's own as well as the neighbouring border area, instead, are rather qualitative and will eventually reveal the motivations for cross-border movement, its direction and intensity, as well as the extent of different functional and cultural cross-border areas in everyday and ordinary performance of spatially-relevant social activities of the border populations (Bufon, 1995). Such methodology enables a typological classification of a border area and eventually also a comparison between different border areas in Slovenia and Europe. The use of analogous methodology in the analysis of socio-cultural aspects of border landscapes indicated a high degree of affinity

between the border populations of the Nova Gorica / Gorizia border region in comparison to the border areas in northern and southern Switzerland, which is evidently caused by the relative "newness" of the Nova Gorica / Gorizia border region, but also by the presence of a spatially and socially active as well as ethnically homogeneous population in its strict border zone. Analyses to date have shown that these border areas offer a very good foundation for the creation of mutually integrated social spaces and for the development of advanced forms of cross-border cooperation.

The development of border areas depends on a series of factors, such as broad geopolitical circumstances and a different history of determinate sections of the border, interstate political and economic relations, border permeability, regional circumstances and the dynamics of socio-economic development in border areas, but also the predisposition of the border area population to maintain and strengthen cross-border links. From this angle the different sections of the border can be classified by their permeability, dominant functional elements and other typological elements. The research conducted so far involving Slovenia (Bufon, 1996c, 2002a; Klemenčič, 1976) has shown that international factors, such as the increase of economic exchange, tourist flow and transit transport, combined with regional factors primarily referring to the movement of people, goods and communications within border areas, encourage all-around development not only of individual transport corridors or border centres, but also of a wider border area. Different border areas along Slovene borders have in this way grown into veritable border regions, although unlike other Euroregions they are not based on institutional but rather on spontaneous forms of cross-border integration, which are also of smaller territorial extent. One of their characteristic traits is a considerable influence of local factors, which originate more from a common territorial attachment than from current international-political and economic demands. In this sense Slovene geography has discovered new dimensions of research in the application of socio-geographic methods in the study of spatial functions of border communities, especially ethnic and other regional communities (Klemenčič, Bufon, 1994).

Indeed, it is in exploring the spatial extent of certain relevant social activities near and over the border, and in defining spatial functions of border social groups that we recognize the main contribution of Slovene geography to the research of border areas. It has been stressed that border areas and the cross-border relationships taking place therein have great significance not only in the sphere of social and economic integration on interstate and interregional levels, but also in the preservation of cultural features and the strengthening of interethnic coexistence and integration (Bufon, Minghi, 2000;

Bufon, 2002b). The element of border area is especially present where there are national minorities, and in Europe border areas with such characteristics are more the rule than exceptions. This is why it is possible to observe a marked predisposition for greater cross-border integration in all those Slovene border areas where members of autochthonous minorities or immigrant communities from the neighbouring areas populate at least one side of the border. This potential can then more or less effectively be modified by different territorial and regional orientations of these communities, which originate in the persistence and permeability of individual border sections, and also by the different degree of protection and development of minority communities in the respective state systems. All this is opening a series of new aspects in border areas that are gaining increasingly more importance in the process of European integration, eliminating traditional functions of political borders and laying the grounds for mutual understanding within the culturally diverse European space.

6. European regions and borderlands: where unity and diversity may coexist

The significance of place is usually related to individual subjects, drawing together the realms of nature, society and culture. On that basis becomes evident that place contributes not only to the understanding of self and identity, but also to the constitution of collective identity through territoriality based communities. Most often the relationships of self and community to place are associated with difference, particularism, and localism. Thus the association of place with particularism and *ethnos*, and space with universalism and *demos* reflects the combination of two quite distinct philosophies (Casey, 1997).

These two views are also evident in discussions of building political community in the EU, in which both supporters and critics have been concerned with its apparent lack of a strong sense of identity and political community. Analysts have noted the EU's "democratic deficit", referring in part to the common view of its bureaucratic or rather Eurocratic origins and its relatively weak connections to the general populace of Europe. The EU has sought various ways to overcome this deficit, such as the implementation of the subsidiarity principle, which involves a vertically distributed sovereignty matching functions with the appropriate spatial scale of political community, but public indifference remains a concern. Often the debate on European political community follows a continuum formed by two poles: liberalism and communitarianism (Enrikin, 2003). The first position emphasizes rational planning and modernization, the second stresses social attachments and belonging. On the one hand there is space economy and concerns with location and barriers to movement as reported in several publications of the

European Commission, seeking a land of the free flow of people and goods, which will necessarily produce a European citizenry with changeable and flexible identities and thin connections to place and regional cultures. On the other hand we find cultural pluralist models that consider ethnic, regional, and national communities to be the locus of personal and group attachments and political identity.

The differences among these geographic conceptions become more apparent in the consideration of borders. In the market model, the internal borders of Europe disappear, but an external border is erected instead. In the cultural pluralist model, the zones of inclusion and exclusion remain clear and marked by places of thick cultural attachments. The borders within Europe change but overall are strengthened or made increasingly impermeable, and since internal borders provides an instrument for diversity, external borders become redundant. Once again one faces the dilemma implied in the opposition of *ethnos* and *demos*: boundaries help to create diversity and common identity, and their elimination risks to create a uniform, placeless world with weakly attached citizens. A possible solution is sought in the emergence of overlapping, differentiated places of attachment with relatively permeable boundaries: the regions.

Of course, the process of European integration also consists in creating a supranational common space or a sort of macro-region. In a way, the same process could be found during the national integration period, when internal regions of European countries were often more diverse than the whole countries were from one another. The problem is that a EU seeking common identity will have to provide both internal coherence and external closure, projecting thus nationalist ideology in European public life and integration (Calhoun, 2003). The alternative is not a strictly unitary but rather overlapping social and political organization on various scales, not necessarily bounded at the edges of nations or nation-states. We must also not neglect that states spatiality remains a major actor, and that national governments have not only transferred power downward but have attempted to institutionalise competitive relations between major subnational administrative units as a means to position local and regional economies strategically within supranational (European and global) circuits of capital. In this sense, central governments have attempted to retain control over major subnational political-economic spaces through the production of new regional scales of state spatial regulation.

As Keating argued in one of his papers (Keating, 1996), new types of regionalism and of region are the product of both decomposition and recomposition of the territorial framework of public life, consequent on changes in the

state, the market and the international context. He noted how regions are not natural entities, but rather social constructions, in a given space, representing the confluence of various economic, social and political processes in territory. In this perspective, the regional space could be simultaneously a territorial space, a functional space, and a political space. But it should be also clear that there is no regional level of government in Europe and that regions remain in many parts of Europe an “invented” category which plays only a sporadic and partial role in the continental architecture of politics. In some cases, there emerge powerful regions, in other, large cities may constitute themselves as social and spatial actors.

Nevertheless, the European integration process has deeply challenged the Westphalian system as an “organization of the world into territorially exclusive, sovereign nation-states, each with an internal monopoly of legitimate violence” (Caporaso, 1996). Even though such an idealized model has never been completely realized in practice, it continues to dominate our thinking about politics and institutional change in the new millennium. In fact, the most far-reaching transformations beyond the Westphalian system have occurred in Europe, where integration is becoming embedded in a wider discourse on globalization and regionalization. The debate has been centered on two questions: first, does the EU still represent an inter-governmental regime dominated by the executives of the nation states or has it evolved beyond such a state-centered system, opening up the question of state-centric versus multi-level governance – a concept which is still inclined to the notion of territoriality. This is particularly the case of borderlands and cross-border regions, the “front lines” of territorially demarcated modern states (Blatter, 2003). These areas are being shaped by intensive socioeconomic and sociocultural interdependencies and are no longer at the “periphery”, but are quite often witnessing economic prosperity above the national average. Cross-border cooperation has been helpful not only in respect to new and concrete integration forms between neighbouring states but also in removing the problem of the “other” within the EU space.

Current processes in European “contact” areas are increasingly influencing the shaping of people’s personalities, making them “multi-lingual” and “multi-cultural”, despite the opposition of traditional “uni-national” political structures. With the abandonment of the old demands for boundary revision, pursued by various nationalistic myths, modern European societies are intensifying their efforts to increase border or rather cross-border cooperation and in this framework the spatial function of national minorities is acquiring greater importance. Thus, if on the one hand it is true that the majority or dominant group, independently of its political

attitude towards the minority, cannot deprive it of its potential regional role, then on the other hand the actual implementation of this role still very much depends on its institutionalization and wider social promotion. Research investigations in Central European border areas have shown that the intensity of cross-border cooperation depends above all on the presence on both sides of the border of urbanized areas and also of national minorities, together with traditional cultural and social ties on the basis of consolidated former territorial units (Bufon, 1998c). This situation could be explained by the need for the local population to maintain the historical regional structure, which the various border changes destroyed, especially in the gravitational, economic, social and cultural senses. Paradoxically, the greater the problems in the political division of a homogeneous administrative, cultural and economic region, the greater is the probability for such a politically divided area to develop into an integrated border region. These new forms of cross-border regionalisms are of particular interest in Central Europe, where they have not only an important functional role in the implementation of social and economic integration at the inter-state and inter-regional levels, but also in the preservation of cultural features and the strengthening of inter-ethnic coexistence and cooperation. This is especially the case in those areas where there are national minorities or historic cross-border regional communities present, and such areas are more a rule than exceptions not only in Central Europe.

7. Conclusion

The geography of border landscapes with its social, cultural and political aspects has been gaining increasing importance in the process of the “humanization” of the traditional geographic approach to the issue of political and other social and cultural borders. In addition to the cross-border “macro” transactions between border communities, “micro” transactions on the level of border populations and border areas in providing for everyday vital necessities and for the transition from conflicting to harmonious forms of border character are now coming to the fore. Since many social and economic “micro” transactions are related to cultural links among the border populations, and since such links remain relatively stable even in cases of international political transformations, it is possible to observe the apparently paradoxical fact that the border areas with the greatest possibilities for development into a border region are those which have in the recent past overcome the greatest problems during the process of division of formerly unified administrative, cultural and functional spaces. A second paradox is that demand for more intense and institutionalised cross-border cooperation is actually greater in “old” and peripheral border landscapes than in the “new” and urbanized ones where “spontaneous” functional cross-border relations are already well

developed. A third paradox is found in the relationship between cross-border cooperation and inter-community communication. On the one hand the increasing cross-border cooperation helps to increase communication between border communities and thus to reduce social distances, providing greater opportunities for both socio-economic and socio-cultural integration. On the other hand cross-border cooperation and integration are challenging both the traditional peripheral condition of some border areas and the established coexistence practices between local and regional groups, which were typified by infrequent communication. As a reaction, new forms of micro-nationalism and other conservative attitudes of “self-preservation” may develop, typically connected with the peripheral status of these areas (Bufon, 2003).

These are additional aspects of the study of cross-border cooperation contributed by the post-modern geography of border landscapes. Still, these are just starting points that political geography should work in the effort to eventually tackle the issue of territorial behaviour of regional and local communities alongside the border and their cultural and spatial identities in greater depth; to extend the research interest from the functionally better connected areas to other border areas, and discover the reasons for weaker cross-border integration; to systemize and correspond research work on the newest and increasingly important ‘outer’ border sectors of the enlarged EU, as well as on other border sections; to verify the relationships between the social and spatial situations near political and various internal borders of EU member countries; to carefully reflect on the new role of European border areas from the standpoint of their political and economic geopolitical integration and the latter’s effect on internal regional development.

Thus it seems that Slovenia – due to its size and the above-mentioned research topics – might be a very suitable and convenient “lab” for studies on and analyses of border landscapes, border relationships and cross-border integration in circumstances of the preservation of cultural diversity, as well as of their spatial impacts on “new” and “old” border areas within the new European political setting. The experience of both Slovenian and European geography of borderlands shows, in fact, how important it is for the European integration that a practicable form to its “unity in diversity” policy be found, not only in the EU core areas but also in the outposts of its enlargement strategies, and particularly in peripheries which are contact zones between cultural or historical environments and may represent spaces of potential social and political conflict (Bufon, 1996a, 2001).

In fact, these challenges and the new European model will be tested and eventually become operative in many European “contact” areas. It is not that much a question of international contact and of organisation of functional economic, social, and administration hindrances in cross-border traffic, as it is a question of contact between different nations, ethnic, and linguistic communities, and of creation of actual rules for coexistence and preservation of cultural peculiarities. The elimination of these last “borders” will imply a definitely new idea of the traditional, ethnocentric conceit and social behaviour based on the exclusion of “others” and “different” ones represented by the classical nationalism. We are thus turning back to “borders” and “territoriality”, two terms which reflect and claim again concrete observations of the „local spatial behaviour“. And these are all terms for which geographers in the re-integrated continent are expected to provide new assessments.

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EUROREGIONS IN POLAND

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Abstract

Euroregions along the Polish borders have been formed since the early 1990s. At present there are seventeen of them, formed along the whole Polish land border. As far as the Polish side is concerned, Euroregions usually consist of council unions. The activity of the Euroregions involves cross-border integration, as well as socioeconomic development in the broadest sense of the word. Main barriers to the efficient activity of Euroregions are financial restrictions. Additionally, in the east of Poland there are difficulties with passing the border, as it is simultaneously the eastern border of the European Union.

Shrnutí

Euroregiony v Polsku

Euroregiony podél polských hranic se vytvářely od počátku devadesátých let minulého století. V současnosti činí jejich celkový počet sedmnáct a nacházejí se podél celé státní hranice Polska. V případě polské strany se euroregiony obvykle skládají ze svazů obcí. Činnost euroregionů se týká přeshraniční integrace i socio-ekonomického vývoje v nejširším slova smyslu. Hlavní překážkami pro efektivní činnost euroregionů jsou finanční omezení. Kromě toho se na východě Polska objevují problémy s přechodem hranice, neboť se současně jedná o východní hranici Evropské Unie.

Key words: Poland, euroregions, cross-border regions, cross-border integration

1. Theoretical background

The end of the 20th century brought numerous signs of the progressing transnational integration on social, economic and political levels. The integration was of both national, regional and even local character and extent. Most of phenomena connected with the integration were spontaneous (automatic). They represented one of the effects of changes occurring within the structure of world economy, evoked by the technological revolution and by the accompanying changes in the value and distribution of goods and services as well as labour and capital resources. The above mentioned processes are often described as globalization. The political liberation, and the resulting socio-economic liberation occurring in the Eastern and Central Europe in the 1980s and 1990s were essential impulses for the multi-aspect integration taking place on various spatial scales. Due to the increased level of liberty, the social and economic life of countries in this part of Europe could follow the steps made by the societies of Western Europe, where the mechanisms of international integration have been taking dozens of years. Moreover, a number of signs of the international integration resulted from the conscious stimulation on the part of public authorities. The stimulation was conducted by the administrative units of particular countries (central, regional and even local) and by the EU institutions.

The structures defined as “euroregions” play an important role in the integration at regional and local levels. The term of “Euroregion” is used interchangeably with other terms such as “trans-border region” or “border region”. It has been used in the European (also in Polish) geographic literature for a long time. However, it is mainly used in political and commentary publications, especially with reference to concrete spatial and organizational structures. In their general sense, the concepts of “euro-region” or “trans-border region” are still defined ambiguously. It is striking that a basic document concerning the trans-border integration in Europe – “the Madrid Card”, i.e. the European Framework Convention about the trans –border cooperation adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe in Madrid in 1980 (Europejska Konwencja..., 1993) – does not provide a direct and clear definition of the above mentioned concepts. Thus, it means that the terms of “euro-region” and “trans- border region” can be understood as diverse structures, even if they do not constitute economic regions in their strict sense.

The most reliable, at least in political terms, publications of the Council of Europe (e. g. Handbook on Transfrontier Cooperation..., 1995) use a rather broad definition of a trans-boundary region (formulated by D. de Rougemont, 1978). According to this definition, a trans-

boundary region is a potential region which can be treated as a whole geographically, historically, ecologically, nationally, economically, etc. The region, however, is simultaneously divided by a political border into areas subordinated to different state authorities. The above definition is clearly broader than the previous definition by N. M. Hansen (1977), according to which a trans-boundary region is a hub region whose center is to be a borderline city spreading its influence to both sides of the border. Thus, a trans-boundary region is mainly understood as a “region of intervention” (see e.g. B. Kayser, 1966), whose functioning is still meant to lead to the possible rise of an integrated spatial socio-economic structure comprising the areas divided by the political border. Such an understanding of euroregion has to cause a necessity of establishing both an entity which would stimulate the cross-border integration and the structure that would be a tool of the integration. Therefore, euroregions are commonly understood to be only formal structures (e.g. unions of municipalities) created for the needs of trans-boundary cooperation by local and regional authorities, sometimes also with the help of economic and social institutions (Gabbe, v. Malchus, 1995).

In the Polish geographic literature there are clearly reflected two (obviously closely interconnected) ways of trans-boundary region understanding. One of these trends, being of a rather geographic character (e. g. Mazurkiewicz, 1993), considers a region of this type to be a structurally new kind of economic region, namely an integrated or integrating group of hub regions, which forms around as many regional centers as there are countries in whose territories the trans-boundary region spreads. The other trend emphasizes rather the institutional aspects of trans-boundary regions – described in this respect more often as “Euroregions” (e. g. Eberhardt, 1996).

2. Premises of forming Euroregions along Polish borders

The beginnings of the cross-border cooperation with the participation of Poland date back to the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. It became possible mainly thanks to transformations taking place at that time in Poland and in the whole Central and Eastern Europe. These transformations brought social and economic liberties and permeable political borders. The fact that Poland increasingly aspired to enter the supranational structures of Western Europe was a contributing factor in the establishment of trans-boundary structures. On 16th December 1991 Poland signed a European Agreement – about the association with European Communities. One of the results of signing this agreement was Poland’s joining the European Charter on Territorial Self-Government, which obliged the countries-signatories to respect

among other the right of self-governing communities to international cooperation. On 19th January 1993 Poland also joined the above mentioned European Framework Convention of Cross-Border Cooperation between Communities and Territorial Authorities (“the Madrid Charter”). Simultaneously, the Polish government signed a number of agreements with the authorities of neighbouring countries on interregional and cross-border cooperation. There also arose units within the central administration which were to support and coordinate lower rank initiatives in terms of trans-boundary contacts. The above mentioned political activities created a legal framework for the activity of local and regional authorities in relation to trans-boundary contacts. They also allowed the participants of such contacts to use the European Union resources designed for investments and other forms of activities as realized by the Polish participants of the cooperation together with the partners from the other side of the border.

Poland, against the background of other countries of this part of Europe, has exceptionally strong historical motivation towards the development of cross-border cooperation. Most of its current 3,050 km long state border was established in the 20th century. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries only a little above the current 700 km long Polish state border was a political frontier (between Germany and Austria-Hungary). As many as over 1,700 km of state border were marked out after World War II – the whole border with Germany, Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine. These are state borders of a subsequent character. Their current shape cuts through spatial structures existing for ages: hub regions, transportation networks and sometimes even single urban centres. As a result, (mainly at the eastern border) the Polish population settlements function beyond the Polish borders and minorities of neighbouring nationals live within the borderline of Poland.

Such a distribution of state borders and the fact that for many years they were totally regionally and locally impenetrable had to result in the fact that areas situated near the borderline were affected by a number of aspects connected with social and economic negligence. Most of borderline areas have a lower index of gross domestic product per capita and a higher unemployment rate. Almost all these regions are affected by the negative migration balance. It means undoubtedly that inhabitants of these regions do not perceive them as places ensuring appropriate living conditions. In such a situation it is obvious that regional public authorities tried to use this fact as a factor which could stimulate social and economic development from the moment when the state border permeability started

to increase. Establishing euroregions was to be one of tools stimulating the development.

3. Character and structure of euroregions

The first euroregion (Nysa) was established with Poland's participation at the end of 1991. Its establishment was one of the consequences of the absorption of the German Democratic Republic by the Federal German Republic. The newly created structures of the union counties (lands) of East Germany submitted proposals concerning the management, the rearrangement and the putting into order of the lower Odra River region, severely affected by a dozens-of-years long hermetic border division. Other euroregions began to rise in 1993. During the next 6 years (up to 1998) there were created as many as 12 Euroregions, i.e. the majority of currently functioning structures of this kind.

From the very beginning, euroregions established along the eastern border differed significantly from those along the southern borderline, and especially from those at the western border. The signatories of western and southern euroregions were mostly town or gmina (commune) authorities (at that time – i.e. until 1998 – constituting the only level of self-government in Poland). At the eastern border the signatories of the agreements on establishing euroregions were generally the authorities of the then government voyevodships (similarly the public administration was represented by signatories on the part of Ukraine and Belorussia). It largely resulted from historical differences in the shape of the settlement pattern between particular parts of Poland. The network of towns in the eastern part of Poland is quite scarce. Besides, very few large cities are situated in a direct vicinity of the state borderline. Therefore, cross-border contacts in the East had to be undertaken on a regional level (voyevodship level). As a consequence, the spatial shape and the area size of euroregions developing along the eastern borderline were from the very beginning significantly larger than structures of the same type created along other borders.

Since the beginning of 1999, there has been a new administrative division in Poland, connected with the functioning of the next two (apart from gminas) levels of local self-government of counties and voyevodships. Instead of the previous 49 small voyevodships of a government character, there are currently 16 large voyevodships of a mixed government and self-government status. They are divided into over 300 counties (and several dozens of cities excluded from counties), and the counties are in turn divided into gminas (some of which have a status of cities). The new territorial and political order has influenced the areas and organizational character of a number of previously established euroregions. From among their signatories

the voyevodship governors withdrew and became replaced by the newly created voyevodship and county (Polish "powiat" – a secondary level of the administrative division) self-governments. In relation to this, boundaries of the Polish parts of euroregions were adjusted to the boundaries of the new voyevodships or counties.

After 1998, a few more euroregions were created. Besides, quite a uniform political and organizational structure of the majority of them was formed. Euroregions as the institutions functioning in a couple of state legal areas do not have legal autonomy. Their governmental structures are created according to the principle of parity, by the entities functioning within the legal systems of particular states. In most euroregions communal unions function as the entities of Polish law appointed by self-governments which declared their participation in a particular euroregion. These communal unions in turn appoint their representatives to common units of a euroregion. Only in a couple of small euroregions (e.g. Tatry) the self-governments directly delegate their representatives to common units. The units are of the same type in most of the euroregions. The most important body is as a rule, the council (consisting of top rank representatives of the signatories) whose task is to determine the directions of the development of a euroregion and to coordinate the work of all its units. The council supervises working groups (commissions) which are of an expert and consulting character. The groups deal with the issues which are of prime importance for the development of a particular euroregion and for the progress of cross-border integration. The issues mainly concern economy, transportation and border checkpoints, environmental protection, youth and spatial planning. In most of the euroregions there are also auditing commissions whose task is to control the adequacy of financial management and economy. Both the council and the above mentioned bodies are units that meet only every certain time. Normally it is the secretariats that manage the work of most euroregions. As a rule, every domestic part (therefore also the Polish part) has its own secretariat.

There is currently a total of 17 euroregions functioning at the Polish border, as shown in Tab. 1 and Fig. 1 below. Most of them show significant activities. However, some of them run only very limited activities or are still at their organizational stage (e.g. the Dobrava euroregion, the status of which has not been formalized yet).

4. Subject and rules of cross-border cooperation

The circumstances behind the rise of particular euroregions were (at least in the sphere of political declarations) quite similar. So are, as declared by them, their activity aims and trans-boundary cooperation areas. The most frequently mentioned aims are above all:

Name (in Polish)	Date of establishment	Memberships countries (except Poland)	Area (thousand km ²)		Population (millions) 31.12.2003	
			total	Polish part	total	Polish part
Pomerania	15.12.1995	Germany, Sweden	44.0	21.6	3.6	1.7
Pro Europa Viadrina	21.12.1993	Germany	10.6	6.1	0.8	0.4
Sprowa-Nysa-Bóbr	21.09.1993	Germany	10.7	8.9	0.9	0.7
Nysa	21.12.1991	Germany, Czech Republic	11.4	5.6	1.5	0.6
Dobrawa	25.01.2001	Czech Republic	•	•	•	•
Glacensis	05.12.1996	Czech Republic	5.0	2.9	1.0	0.5
Pradziad	02.07.1997	Czech Republic	5.0	3.2	0.7	0.5
Silesia	20.09.1998	Czech Republic	2.7	1.5	0.5	0.3
Śląsk Cieszyński	22.04.1998	Czech Republic	1.6	1.0	0.6	0.3
Beskidy	09.06.2000	Czech Republic, Slovakia	5.1	2.4	1.0	0.6
Tatry	26.08.1994	Slovakia	10.1	4.6	1.1	0.6
Karpacki	14.02.1993	Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine	161.2	17.9	15.7	2.1
Bug	29.09.1995	Belorussia, Ukraine	80.9	25.1	4.9	2.2
Puszcza Białowieska	25.05.2002	Belorussia	8.0	2.1	0.2	0.1
Niemen	06.06.1997	Belorussia, Lithuania, Russia	89.3	20.7	4.8	1.2
Bałtyk	22.02.1998	Lithuania, Russia, Latvia, Denmark, Sweden	101.0	42.5	5.9	3.6
Łyna-Ława	04.09.2003	Russia	•	•	•	•

Table 1: Euroregions at the Polish borderline

Source: Euroregiony na granicach Polski....2004, and own information of the author

- eliminating or lessening the problems connected with the functioning of state borders (opening new border checkouts, developing borderline infrastructure, simplifying procedures for the population of borderland areas, etc.),
- alleviating barriers between the populations of particular nationalities in a euroregion, resulting from historical, cultural and language conditions,
- protecting and improving virtues of the environment – especially its components which can cause the tourist attractiveness of a euroregion to grow,
- overcoming the social and economic negligence of the areas of euroregions, mainly through their economic and tourist promotion,
- forming awareness and attitudes of children and youth towards their integration with their peers from the other side of the border,
- fighting natural disasters or their consequences.

Rising external resources for financing mutual undertakings is a specific aim of the activity of the euroregions operating at the Polish borders, and it is common practically for all the structures of this type. The above mentioned resources come from the budget of the European Union that treats euroregions as one of key mechanisms creating new economic and political realities in Europe.

So far the practical forms of euroregions' activities have varied quite significantly. Dominating activities were rather of a "soft" character. In the second half of the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century, the euroregions realized e.g. joint tourist or economic promotional activities. The structures of euroregions worked out or coordinated the preparation of mutual programs or strategies of social and economic (sometimes also spatial) development. They issued numerous common multi-language materials promoting the tourist virtues of particular euroregions. At the same time, systems (networks) were created which were to ensure the cooperation of tourist agencies and firms operating on both sides of the border. Some euroregions jointly organised economic fairs and exhibitions – both within their territories and outside them. There was also a number of cross-border cultural events – mainly taking advantage of folk traditions in a particular euroregion. The work with young people consisted mainly in holiday student exchange programs and meetings of students from schools of different levels. Even a few kindergartens and schools were established to be attended by children from the borderline gminas attend. The functioning of euroregions facilitates the cooperation of universities, which (as was in the case of the Euroregion of Nysa) lead to common curricula of some MA majors.



Fig. 1: Euroregions with Polish participation

Source: *Euroregiony na granicach Polski...*2004, and own information of the author

Concrete investment activities connected with the transformation of the management and development conditions constituted only a small part of the activities of euroregional structures. It was generally caused by a high cost of this kind of undertakings. At the same time, the euroregions and the self-governments as their participants had usually a very poor financial potential. Hence, most of investments were realized using external resources. Therefore, euroregions often lobbied the governments of particular countries to allocate certain funds for investments essential for the development and integration of the borderline areas. In recent years, this lobbying contributed to modernize some border crossings, creating a few new ones, improving the technological condition and capacity of roads leading to the borders.

The effectiveness of the activities of particular euroregions and their influence on the factual developing of the borderland area and on lessening the negative effects of state borders varies significantly. The improvement of the condition of the borderline transportation infrastructure undoubtedly brought about some results for the functioning and integration of the regional social and economic space. Activities of a promotional or social character can be effective only after a longer period of time. In some cases the structures of euroregions were helpful in fighting natural disasters – e.g. in 1997 at the Polish-Czech border and at the Polish-German border. However, it is generally observed that the functioning of euroregions does not have a definite influence on the rate and trends of the development of the Polish borderland areas. Today practically almost all Polish

gminas situated in the neighbourhood or vicinity of the state border are within the area of a euroregion (sometimes even two of them). Despite that, a larger part of these gminas have a significantly lower level and rate of development than centres and areas at a more favourable geographical location.

5. Barriers to the development of Euroregions

There is a number of factors limiting the influence of trans-boundary structures onto the life in the borderland area. Financial limitations are the basic problem. As a consequence, a number of euroregions and self-governments as their participants consider it obvious that most of the activity should be financed from government or European resources. This idea was often reflected in facts. In the western borderland area all euroregions used the EU funds a number of times. Among other things, they participated in the subsequent editions of INTERREG, PHARE CBC programs and, till the late nineties, also of PHARE CREDO. In the other borderland areas, especially at the eastern border, the use of EU funds was of a smaller extent. It reflected negatively in the effectiveness of activities of the already existing here euroregions. It also has a bad influence on the very possibility of the functioning of such structures. For example the Karpacki Euroregion practically suspended its activity in the period when it did not have finance from outside.

The dependence on resources from outside affects also the continuous changeability of the territorial structure of the Polish part of the euroregions and their membership. A lot of Polish gminas, and especially counties (particularly financially weak self-governments) enter euroregions in hope to obtain additional financial means. In a situation when such means do not appear (it is also necessary to pay the membership fees), a number of self-governments drop out of the associations which constitute the Polish parts of euroregions.

There is a considerable problem hampering the proper functioning of euroregions. It consists in the fact that territorial divisions, political systems and the rights of the respective administrative units of various levels in the neighbouring countries are different than in Poland. Moreover, those countries have also different financial abilities. It is a factor which limits the perspectives of undertaking mutual activities.

In the case of euroregions larger in size, there are spatial barriers of cooperation. These barriers are of natural character (relief, pattern of large rivers) and antropogenic (especially the insufficient number of proper roads or the lack of a sufficient number of bridges over borderline rivers). These problems affect a number of euroregions in a different way. However, they concern mainly those

that are situated along the eastern Polish state border (Karpacki, Bug, Niemen).

The processes of European integration affect in a different way the functioning of euroregions situated along different borders. Poland entered the European Union on 1st May 2004. At the same time, EU was joined by the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania. The membership of these countries (together with the older one of Germany) significantly eased the contact between their institutions and inhabitants – especially on local and regional levels. Thus, it became a factor undoubtedly stimulating the trans-boundary integration. At the same time, however, together with Poland's entering EU, its eastern state border became the outer border of EU. It forced the Polish government to create a number of formal and legal barriers preventing an uncontrolled inflow of people and goods. Among other things, Poland introduced, not obligatory before, visas for the citizens of Belorussia and Ukraine who wanted to come to Poland. Visas for Polish citizens were also introduced by Belorussia. These decisions significantly limited the crossing of the Polish eastern border and greatly decreased the intensity of everyday contacts among the inhabitants of the borderline areas of all neighbouring countries. As a result, the intensity of activities developed by existing here euroregions decreased, too.

In the case of euroregions situated at the Polish-Belorussian border (Bug, Puszcza Bialowieska, Niemen) another factor limiting their activity consists in conflicts between the governments of the two countries, concern the treatment of Polish national minority in Belorussia.

It is probably not possible to determine the perspectives of development of euroregions existing at the Polish borders. It seems that the euroregions at the border with Germany, the Czech Republic and to some extent with Slovakia have the greatest chance of playing an important and positive role in the future. First of all, they function in a contributing political environment facilitating trans-boundary contacts and promising to support their activity from the outside. Moreover, they comprise relatively small areas. Therefore, they concentrate their activities on local problems which are of key importance for the life of their inhabitants. Besides, the small territories of a very often common historical and geographic background make it possible to relatively quickly foster the feeling of community among the inhabitants of the domestic parts of these euroregions.

Most of the above possibilities do not concern the euroregions situated in the East, mostly at the borders with countries not belonging in the European Union and of a low level of economic development. Their situation and ability to operate are and will probably be less favourable. Moreover, a significant geographic differentiation and poor

domestic transportation connections of the euroregions do not promise rapid economic and social integration processes. However, real mechanisms of the functioning of euroregions are so complicated and dependent on so many factors that you can not even in the least negate the legitimacy of the existence of such structures. Moreover, it seems that it is because of the numerous barriers that the euroregions operating at the eastern border should be especially supported. The areas they are situated in, mainly due to their location on the map of Europe, their history and economic significance, deserve to develop and overcome the frontiers which divide them.

6. Conclusion

Euroregions at Polish borders are one of the effects of the political and economic transformation from the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Since 1991, there have been established 17 Euroregions whose areas line the whole state border of Poland. The euroregions do not possess a legal personality. Therefore, local government units operate them on their behalf. They consist of representatives from the concerned gminas, counties and voivodship self-governments. As

the euroregions declare them, the aims of their activities are usually connected with the trans-boundary integration and with the social and economic development of borderline areas. Their concerns comprise the issues of economy, tourism, environmental protection, culture, education, border checkouts and transportation infrastructure as well as spatial planning. The range of euroregions' activities is limited by insufficient financial means. A number of undertakings realized by the euroregions is financed by the governments or by the European Union. The barriers to their effective activity are also legal and political differences among the respective countries, poor transportation connections, and at the eastern border – also a large size of the areas constituting the respective euroregions and the fact that the eastern state border of Poland is also the outside boundary of the European Union. It seems that euroregions at the eastern and southern borders have better chances of playing a positive role in the future. They are of a smaller size and at the same time they have better chances of rising funds for their activities. Euroregions situated at the eastern border should be actively supported so that they could come up to the economic and political needs of the area.

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DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND CREATION OF EUROREGIONS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Marián HALÁS

Abstract

Cross-border cooperation, which has existed in Western Europe since the 1950s, has developed in Central and Eastern Europe only after 1990. This paper provides basic information about the development of cross-border cooperation and the formation of Euroregions in the Slovak Republic. This process is at the stage of formation and institutionalisation, due to legislative obstacles. The stage of realising concrete forms of cooperation can begin only after the stabilization of new regional self-government. The spatial differentiation and regionalization of Slovak border regions is accounted for, in this study, primarily by the relations between the given territory to that on the other side of the State border.

Shrnutí

Vývoj přeshraniční spolupráce a formování euroregionů na území Slovenské republiky

Přeshraniční spolupráce, která v příhraničních regionech států západní Evropy funguje už od 50. let 20. století, se ve střední a východní Evropě začala rozvíjet až po roce 1990. Cílem příspěvku je poskytnout základní informace o vývoji přeshraniční spolupráce a o vzniku a formování euroregionů zasahujících na území Slovenské republiky. Kvůli legislativním překážkám je tento proces v přechodu mezi institucionální a realizační fází; plnohodnotná realizační fáze v pravém slova smyslu se může naplňovat až po stabilizaci funkcí a pozic nově vytvořených regionálních samospráv. Příspěvek se zároveň pokouší přiblížit stručnou prostorovou diferenciací a regionalizací příhraničních regionů Slovenska, která vychází především ze vztahu příslušných příhraničních regionů s územím z druhé strany státní hranice.

Key words: Cross-border cooperation (CBC), euroregion, Slovak Republic, regional self-government, Phare CBC, Interreg

Introduction

The position of border regions is one of the most significant limiting elements in their development. This development is substantially conditioned by their position in a wider geographic framework and by the development of interactions with the surrounding territorial units. The state border represents an important phenomenon that acts in space as a greater or smaller barrier and its permeability considerably affects the socio-economic development of the borderland. The function of the border passed through relatively dynamic changes in the history. Since the second half of the 20th century, the influence of the border has been gradually diminishing in western Europe. As a result, border regions can develop in all directions of geographic space, while in centralised

political systems these regions have conversely a limited possibility for developing only inland (i.e. towards centres of the respective country). This often makes the borderland a socially and economically marginalised area.

In our contribution we aim at evaluating the development of border regions in the Slovak Republic during the transformation period. From the beginning we provide their basic characterisation issuing from hitherto researches on the single borderland sections conducted by: Jeřábek, Dokoupil, Havlíček (2004) and Halás (2005) – the Czech section; Rechnitzer (2000) – the Hungarian one; Drgoňa (2001) – the Polish one; Rajčáková (2005) – the Austrian one; Popjaková (1995) and Ivanička (1999) – the Ukrainian section. The main attention will be paid to the state of cross-border

cooperation with the neighbouring countries, to the issue of forming euroregions and to their activities since the birth of independent Slovakia until now.

1. Basic characterisation of Slovak border regions

Geomorphologic conditions and the broken relief result in a rather specific regional structure of the Slovak Republic. It is therefore very problematic to divide the territory of Slovakia into the "borderland" and "inland". (This fact is manifested to a high extent also in the formation and delimitation of euroregions in the given territory – see the following chapters.)

Substantial differences may also be found in the individual sections of the state border. The broken relief along the borderline is one of reasons for the uneven distribution of border crossings. They (with some exceptions) have remained so far the only possible points to cross the state border. The border crossings determine the character of the borderline as a barrier and a possibility of contacts and cooperation among border regions. The best road accessibility is on the border with the Czech Republic where one road border crossing is – on the average – situated per a border segment 15.7 km long. According to this indicator, it would appear that the interconnection with Austria is satisfactory as well (one road border crossing per 21.2 km). This border is, however, markedly different. Three road border crossings out of all five are concentrated in the area of Bratislava. In the Záhorie region, the passage through the Morava River is provided by a ferry in Záhorská Ves and a pontoon bridge in Moravský Svätý Ján; both much affected by the height of water level. The interconnections with Ukraine (one road border crossing per 49.3 km) and Poland (one road border crossing per 49.7 km) are insufficient for the moment. In addition, the crossings with Poland are unevenly distributed; an inadequate network of road border crossings is evident especially in the eastern part of the border. On the contrary, road border crossings on the Hungarian border are spread more evenly. Here, in a contradiction to the other Slovak border sections through which mountain ridges run, the Danube River represents a great obstacle. Sections between bridges over the river are relatively long. Thus, the bridges fulfil the function of "funnels" for the movement of inhabitants (mostly those of Hungarian nationality) from the Danubian Lowland to the territory of Hungaria. There are not many traffic limits at the road border crossings. But, besides the existing standard border crossings, also the establishment of a higher number of non-standard possibilities to cross the state border would be welcome. Among them, for instance, biking trails, hiking trails and access roads to objects from the other side of the border would be of a local significance (such as cottages, private lands, small gardens, etc.).

1.1 The Slovak-Czech borderland

The history of the Slovak-Czech border is the shortest, but at the same time one of the longest. Explanation for this is relatively simple. Despite the fact that the border as a dividing line between the two sovereign countries officially came to existence only on January 1st, 1993, the territories of Slovakia and Czech lands had been divided from each other by approximately the same line for a very long time; basically since the beginning of the 11th century. From the geographical viewpoint, the north-eastern part of the border is formed by ridges of the western arch of the Outer Carpathians (the Jablunkov Intermontane, the Moravian-Silesian Beskids, the Turzovka Highlands, the Javorníky Mts. and the White Carpathians in the longer central part), the south-western part is constituted by the Morava River up to its confluence with the Dyje River. The border area in the Czech Republic is made up of these administrative regions (from the north to the south): Moravian-Silesian, Zlín and South-Moravian with the centres in Ostrava, Zlín and Brno, respectively. The border area in Slovakia is represented by the Žilina, Trenčín and Trnava regions.

In the national comparison, the border regions on the Slovak side of the border belong to the most advanced. It is absolutely not the case of the northernmost segment (Kysuce region) where we register an increased out-commuting orientation towards the labour market of North-Moravian regional centres. The central section of the border (Stredné Považie region) has a central traffic position with a less pronounced orientation towards the Moravian side. Best possibilities to integrate are in the South: a region economically developed above the average within a wider range of Bratislava's influence, good transport interconnection and the location of regional centres in direct contact with the border. From the Moravian side, regional differences among the individual sections are not fundamental. However, when evaluating them comprehensively, we have to state that these regions economically rank below the national average. The weakest settlement hinterland on the Moravian side is in the central part of the Slovak-Czech border.

1.2 The Slovak-Hungarian borderland

The Slovak-Hungarian border is the longest Slovak border. It is defined mainly by the courses of the Danube and Ipeľ Rivers. The western and eastern parts of the border lie in lowlands – northern extremities of the Pannonian Basin. The central part of the border is moderately dissected and lined with the highest Hungarian mountain ranges along it on the Hungarian side. The territory of six zhupas (megye) on the Hungarian side is traditionally considered to represent

the northern border regions. Starting from the West to the East, they are zhupas as follows: Győr–Moson–Sopron, Komárom–Esztergom, Pest, Nógrád, Heves, and Borsód–Abaúj–Zemplén. The border area in Slovakia is delimited by southern parts of the Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, and Košice regions.

Economic development in the border regions of both countries is markedly different when comparing the western and eastern parts. An exception in the East is merely made by territories of large cities – Košice and Miskolc with their immediate hinterlands, being considerably developed above the average in comparison with both sides of the eastern section of the border. The western part of the borderland has very good prerequisites for development. The triangle of Vienna–Bratislava–Győr is one of the most promising (not only) border regions in the post-communist countries.

1.3 The Slovak-Polish borderland

The Slovak-Polish border is formed by mountain ridges of the Carpathians along most of its length. Only in a small part of the historical region of Spiš, the border is constituted by the Poprad R. and Dunajec R. The borderland is mountainous on both sides of the line, with smaller plain segments in basins. In the central section of the border (Tatra Mts.), the relief represents a greatest barrier with elevations exceeding 2,500 m above sea-level. This is the area with the highest mountains of the two countries. The connection (aerial tramways, etc.) between the Slovak and Polish parts of the Tatra Mts. has not been sufficiently realised so far. The border area in Poland is constituted by southern parts of these voivodeships (województwo): Silesian, Lesser Poland and Subcarpathian, with centres in Katowice, Cracow and Rzeszów, respectively. In Slovakia, the borderland is formed by the northern parts of the Žilina and Prešov regions. The economic situation, similarly to the Slovak-Hungarian borderland, is in both countries more favourable in the western section of the border. As for Poland, the areas around Katowice and Cracow traditionally belong to the economically more developed regions in the country. Moreover, Cracow itself is one of the most important cultural and historical centres of Poland. As for Slovakia, most significant centres are Žilina, Upper Považie, Poprad and Prešov.

1.4 The Slovak-Austrian borderland

The Slovak-Austrian border is the second shortest one but extremely significant from the economic and political viewpoints. Until May 1st, 2004, i.e. until the accession of the Slovak Republic and neighbouring countries into the European Union, it was the only

border section linking Slovakia with the EU. The border is almost along its entire length made up of the Morava River, just in a rather short section it is the Danube River. Finally, the Slovak-Austrian border is delimited on agricultural lands too but only in a very short segment in the vicinity of Bratislava. The borderland in Slovakia is constituted by the western part of the Trnava and Bratislava regions (or directly by the city of Bratislava), while the Austrian borderland includes three federal lands (die Bundesländer): Burgenland, Lower Austria and Vienna.

An important fact considerably influencing the cross-border cooperation is the proximity of both capitals – Bratislava and Vienna. However, from the economic aspect, the situation is different on each side of the border. In Austria, the region directly adjacent to the border (i.e. not the Vienna area) ranks with the least developed regions of the country. Conversely, in Slovakia, Bratislava is matchlessly the most advanced region from the economic point of view. Spatially, its development is gradually proceeding also to other parts of the Slovak-Austrian borderland – i.e. to the northern hinterland/catchment area of Bratislava (the southern part of the Záhorie region).

1.5 The Slovak-Ukrainian borderland

The Slovak-Ukrainian border is the shortest Slovak border. The northern part of the borderland is formed by a sparsely populated area with well preserved natural conditions. The southern part lies in a plain area of an extremity from the Pannonian Basin and is characterised by orientation towards agriculture. This borderland in Slovakia comprises the eastern parts of the Prešov and Košice regions, in Ukraine it is the Transcarpathian region with the centre in Uzhgorod.

The regions along both sides of the border belong to economically least developed areas in the given countries. They are – particularly in the northern parts – sparsely populated and without important industries. On the other hand, this provides space for a potential development of tourism, but its underdeveloped local infrastructure is a main obstacle. Negative is also the fact that there is a stricter security regime and limited capacity on the Slovak-Ukrainian border due to the transition to the Schengen acquis.

2. Development of cross-border cooperation and activities of Euroregions in the territory of Slovakia

The first euroregions in the territory of Western Europe began to be created already in the late 1950's, namely on the Dutch-German border. In 1958, the term Euregio was applied for the first time (it was for a concrete area, later this term was replaced by the generally used

name Euroregion). Then, in the 1960's, many problems pertaining to regional development, education including language, commuting matters, transport and technical infrastructures or the environment started to be solved in a cross-border way. The principal goal of newly establishing cross-border structures was to support regional development in often neglected marginal areas being quite remote from metropolitan centres of single countries and to overcome cultural, societal and economic differences on both sides of the border. A significant motivation for cross-border cooperation was also to bring together people who thus learned to understand each other and to overcome ingrained stereotypes of perceiving the neighbouring nation through common work for the benefit of the region. As regards the post-communist countries, the cross-border integration at a regional level started to be discussed in the early 1990's. This may be deemed a continuous adapting to the situation in the democratic Europe. However, this process did not progress evenly in the entire former communist block; we register several radical spatio-temporal disparities in it.

2.1 Institutional-legal framework for cross-border cooperation

Cross-border cooperation is the most effective instrument to gradually reduce the impact of the border. At the same time, cross-border cooperation is an important part of integration processes in Europe. This cooperation is supported through several international agreements and documents. Its development was most substantially influenced by the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities signed in Madrid on May 21st, 1980, effective from December 22nd, 1981. In this document, all activities aimed at strengthening and promoting neighbourly relations between inhabitants of borderlands on both sides of the common State border are considered to be cross-border cooperation. According to the Council of Europe, the given activities make a basis for meeting its main objective – the unification to the greatest degree possible of European countries and their populations (Marhulíková, 2005).

The Slovak Republic too gradually created legal conditions for cross-border cooperation and ratified European documents. The European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its Additional Protocol (definition of the rights of respective territorial communities or authorities to conclude agreements on cross-border cooperation) came into force on May 2nd, 2000. The Protocol No. 2 to the European Outline Convention, concerning inter-territorial cooperation, came into effect in Slovakia on February 1st, 2001, and the European Charter of Local Self-government came into force in the country on June 1st, 2000. Slovakia signed bilateral intergovernmental agreements on cross-

border cooperation with Poland in 1994, with both the Czech Republic and Ukraine in 2000, with Hungary in 2001 and with Austria in 2004.

On the basis of Weinberger's theory (1995), we may divide the institutions entering the process of cross-border cooperation into normative and real ones. The former define the overall framework and rules, primarily expressed in legal norms and directives that specify the conditions and forms of realisation to a large extent. The latter include the existing subjects, organisations and associations directly carrying out the cross-border cooperation. The systems of neither type of institutions were sufficiently developed in Slovakia for a long time; more correctly, their competencies were not unambiguously defined (Zemko, Buček, 2000). Still in 2001, the Office of the Prime of the Slovak Republic and eight other Ministries partook, directly or indirectly, in cross-border cooperation. The registration of euroregions was made in a parallel way at the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and uniform criteria for the establishment of euroregions did not exist. Owing to that, the process became rather untransparent. At the same time, the societal perception of the term euroregion was thus deteriorating. Only since 2002 the situation in this field has gradually been stabilising – associations that are national representatives of Euroregions have been registered at the Ministry of Interior, the other competencies and project activities fall under the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic.

In 1999, the Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) PHARE CBC became a part of the Office of the Prime of the Slovak Republic, while until then it was administered by the Office for the Strategy and Development of Society. Thus, the Office of the Prime became chronologically the already 5th institution assuming the respective competencies in the 1990's. It means that – in contrast to neighbouring countries – Slovakia has at all times new representatives participating in meetings and preparing relevant documents, who naturally could not be adequately competent, adapted and oriented in the given issue. Unclear and chaotic rules simultaneously generated a system openly encouraging corruption; it is no wonder that a scandal regarding the misuse of financial means from the PHARE fund by employees of the Office of the Prime broke out.

The process of forming the real institutions was in a similar situation as well. All legal documents coordinating cross-border cooperation began to be adopted only at the end of the 1990's. Until then, several important instruments creating the legal framework for cross-border cooperation and especially for establishing euregional structures were absent in the Slovak legal system. Initially, the Slovak side was represented by heads of local authorities

and representatives of local State administration during the meetings/negotiations on cross-border cooperation. But later it was shown that no legal norm in Slovakia mentioned the involvement of local State administration authorities in the process. Therefore, their participation was not backed up by law and got in conflict with the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

As Slovakia lacked a legal basis for the cross-border cooperation of cities and communes nor the self-government of regions and its organs was established by law, the only self-government territorial units became cities and communes. That is why, when the problem of representing the Slovak party at the level of regions corresponding to regional self-governments in the neighbouring countries arose, cities and communes began to unite together. They created interest associations of legal entities substituting to a certain degree the non-existing self-government regions. These special interest associations were not in an equivalent position with foreign partners (zhupas in Hungary, voivodeships in Poland, etc.) because – contrary to them – they did not have any possessions/money and had no required competencies.

From the beginning of the 21st century, the situation has been resolved and gradually stabilised. Slovakia has already created the elementary institutional-legal framework for cross-border cooperation, which is comparable with neighbouring countries. With regard to the approximately 5-year period of delay in this process, however, Slovakia is a little less experienced in this field in confrontation with the other V4 countries.

2.2 Formation, development and spatial distribution of euroregions

The above-mentioned institutional-legal delay in the comparison with the neighbouring countries has to be related to the overall political development of Slovakia before 1998. Efforts to maintain the centralised

power and not to disturb the still remaining strong position of the State brought about the suppression of all processes that resulted spontaneously from local or regional initiatives, including the cross-border cooperation. When the Carpathian Euroregion was established in February 1993, Slovakia could even not become its regular member. In contradiction to regions in Hungary, Poland and Ukraine (Romania joined in December 1993) Slovakia became just an associate member. Official reason was the incompleteness of a new territorial-administrative organisation of the country. Apparently, it would not have been a problem to resolve this fact in detail within the signed agreement, but according to information from lobbies there were also fears from a potential threat to the territorial integrity and Slovak borders by the Hungarian party and other similar inadequate arguments. As a result, the Košice and Prešov regions became regular members of the Carpathian Euroregion only in 1999. Therefore, the only euroregion covering the territory of Slovakia and officially functioning in the country before 1999 was the Tatra Euroregion. It was established in 1994 and it is therefore the oldest of Slovak euroregions. Its members are cities and communes lying in the Orava, Liptov and Spiš regions as well as gminas lying in the Podhale and Gorce regions.

A more intensive acceleration in the formation of euroregions in Slovakia took place as late as in 1999-2000, which was associated with the ratification of the already mentioned European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities with its Additional Protocol and with the accession of the country to the European Charter of Local Self-government. In this context, four euroregions were established (including the acceptance of the Carpathian Euroregion) in Slovakia in 1999; in 2000 even another five (Tab.1). The process was gradually stabilised in 2001 with the creation of the

Euroregion	Partners	Establishment	Centre (in Slovakia)
Pomoravie–Weinviertel–Jižní Morava	A, CZ	23.06.1999	Holíč
White Carpathians	CZ	30.07.2000	Trenčín
Beskid Mountains	CZ, PL	09.06.2000	Žilina
Tatra	PL	26.08.1994	Kežmarok
Carpathian	H, PL, RO, UA	25.11.1999	Prešov
Košice–Miskolc	H	01.12.2000	Košice
Slaná–Rimava	H	10.10.2000	Rimavská Sobota
Kras	H	01.03.2001	Jablonov n/Turňou
Neogradiensis	H	25.03.2000	Lučenec
Ipeľ	H	06.08.1999	Šahy
Váh–Dunaj–Ipeľ	H	03.07.1999	Nitra
Triple-Danube	H	25.01.2001	Dunajská Streda

Table 1: Euroregions situated in the territory of Slovakia

Triple-Danube Euroregion and the Kras Euroregion to complete the list.

The Tatra Euroregion was established at least five years before the other Slovak euroregions. Since 1999, euroregions were formed primarily in marginal and economically underdeveloped areas (this development is shown in Fig. 1). More specifically, in Southern and Eastern Slovakia – i.e. in territories that need more internal and external stimuli for development. At this stage, a larger part of the Slovak-Hungarian borderland

was incorporated in the process. It is that part of the borderland which has less natural obstacles and barriers for a potential cooperation; moreover, with ethnically and linguistically related populations living on both sides of the border. Likewise, the Pomoravie–Weinviertel–South Moravia Euroregion was among the first. At that time, Austria was the only neighbour of Slovakia, which was the Member State of the EU. Owing to that, the greater experience of the Austrian side could be used. Austria had an interest to cooperate because the Weinviertel is one of underdeveloped Austrian regions and its

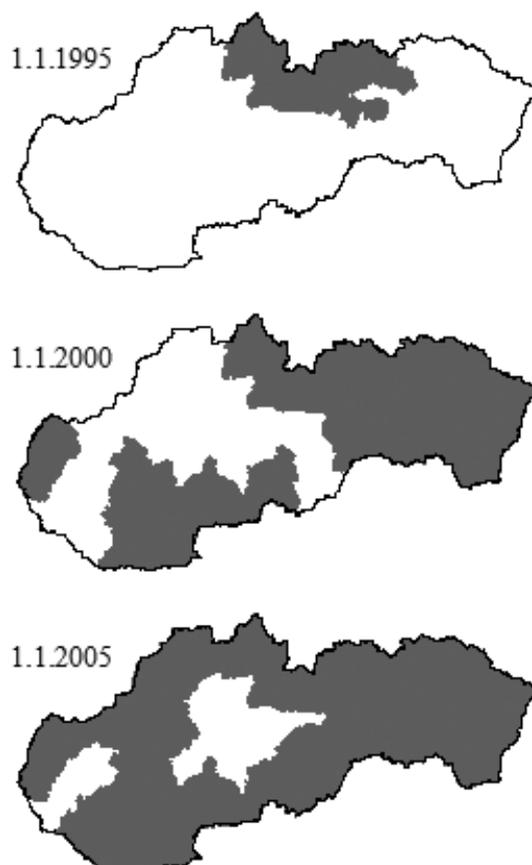


Fig. 1: Spatial development of euroregions in the territory of Slovakia

development was spatially limited by the Schengen border which was difficult to pass in the section with Slovakia.

The reform of public administration delegated most of competencies in the field of cross-border cooperation to regional self-government authorities, i.e. to the so-called higher territorial units (HTU) established on January 1st, 2002. In this connection, one has to look at the location of HTU centres towards the state border. For instance, the city of Banská Bystrica – located almost in the very heart of Slovakia – does absolutely not correspond to attributes of a city that should administer cross-border cooperation. It is imminent that the hitherto centralisation might be replaced by another centralisation, but at a lower

hierarchical level. Therefore, the proposed division of the Banská Bystrica HTU and the creation of Gemer–Novohrad HTU with the centre in Lučenec (or Rimavská Sobota) would certainly be well-grounded. This is the most acute case but, e.g. the Trnava HTU is defined in a little advantageous way too. Its centre – the town of Trnava – is located quite close to the Austrian border, but the region as a whole neighbours only with Hungary and the Czech Republic as for communications. The implementation of an alternative made up by 12 HTUs in Slovakia would entail that also cities such as Lučenec, Michalovce, Poprad with better prerequisites to fulfil the tasks of cross-border cooperation – would appear as centres.

By the number of participating countries, the bilateral cross-border cooperation dominates (9 of 12 cases) especially on the Slovak-Hungarian border – 7 euroregions. Most of the euroregions are represented by more or less compact territories. The Košice–Miskolc Euroregion has a special character, practically showing in the collaboration only between these two cities. The Košice–Miskolc interconnection originally arose within the Carpathian Euroregion by signing the agreement on the cross-border cooperation. It is planned to be gradually extended to the surrounding area that should be defined later (the contemporaneous Košice region for the Slovak party and the Borsód–Abauj–Zemplén zhupa for the Hungarian party).

The Carpathian Euroregion is an untypical case of the euroregion with an obvious supra-regional character contrary to the others. Total population living in this territory (141,485 km²) amounts to 14.8 million which is 2.9 times more than in whole Slovakia. This makes the position of the Carpathian Euroregion specific not only in Slovakia but also in the European comparison. The Slovak part of the Carpathian Euroregion covers 10,459 km² (21.3% of the Slovak territory) with 1.1 million inhabitants (20.5% of the Slovak population). The other euroregions have a regional character. This should, however, be absolutely no obstacle to successfully develop in them cooperation at the local level, too. If not taking into account the one of Košice–Miskolc, the smallest euroregion is that of Triple-Danube lying in Slovakia in the districts of Dunajská Streda and Galanta and having altogether 1,716 km² (3.5% of Slovakia's territory) with 205 thousand inhabitants (3.8% of the country's population).

Some Euroregions in Slovakia have already accommodated in advance and reflect the exact limits of administrative regions and self-government HTUs. For example, the White Carpathians Euroregion occupies the territory of the Trenčín region, the Váh–Dunaj–Ipeľ Euroregion covers the territory of the Nitra region and the Carpathian Euroregion lies within the limits of the Prešov and Košice regions. Other euroregions do not respect the limits of HTUs and are even overlapping in certain cases. We register 17 districts in total (of these four urban ones – Košice I, II, III and IV) whose territories fall under two different euroregions, the Rožňava district even under three euroregions. Particularly the existence of the Kras Euroregion and the Slaná–Rimava Euroregion may be considered paradoxical as they cover approximately the same territory.

Conversely, the territories of 19 districts (including all five in Bratislava) are not included in any euroregion existing in the country up to now. These territories form two continuous areas on the map of Slovakia. In both cases they are basically central areas. It can be said in general that one of them is the area which is central from

the geographical point of view (the already mentioned problem of the Banská Bystrica HTU and the proposed, but finally not approved Gemer–Novohrad HTU); the other is the area that is considered central from the economical point of view (the territory along the Bratislava–Trnava axis as an economic core of Slovakia).

As to the starting position and natural prerequisites for regional development, differences between them are relatively high. It is Bratislava that unambiguously dominates, with the greatest potential and the most progressive trends of development. These are based on a favourable geoeconomic position and economic potential as well as on the accessibility and potential on the part of Austrian and Hungarian partners. Although the cooperation of the Vienna–Bratislava–Győr triangle has practically been discussed since 1989, it is still being implemented in a spontaneous way and has not been officially declared and sealed through the formation of a euroregion until now. However, in comparison with other regions, Bratislava has had a hitherto legal advantage to be able to act as the capital as a self-government region. There are also some projects at a national level that have been supported in this space. On the other hand, this proves the fact that the economically advanced regions do not need any institutionalisation to cooperate; in their case the cooperation takes place on the basis of natural relations.

Analogically to the situation in the neighbouring countries, a representative organisation of euroregions – the *Association of Euroregions in Slovakia* (AES) exists also in Slovakia. It was established in the city of Žilina on May 5th, 2001, and currently it has eight members of which three founding members can be found – the Pomoravie–Weinviertel–Jižní Morava Euroregion (represented in Slovakia by the Záhorie Regional Association), the Beskids Mountains Euroregion (the Beskids Region Association) and the Slaná–Rimava Euroregion (the Union of Slaná and Rimava). Later the Triple-Danube Euroregion (represented by the Danubian-Lower Váh River Regional Association), the Carpathian Euroregion (the Carpathian Region Association), the Tatra Euroregion (the Tatra Region Association), the Váh–Dunaj–Ipeľ Euroregion (the Váh–Dunaj–Ipeľ Regional Association) and the Kras Euroregion (the Kras Euroregion Association) joined the AES.

Merely three euroregions in Slovakia are members of the pan-European *Association of European Border Regions* and, at the same time, these have been evidently most active so far in general. The Tatra Euroregion became a member of this Association in 1996 to be followed by the Carpathian Euroregion (at that time without the Slovak party) and by the White Carpathians Euroregion which joined the Association of European Border Regions in 2000.

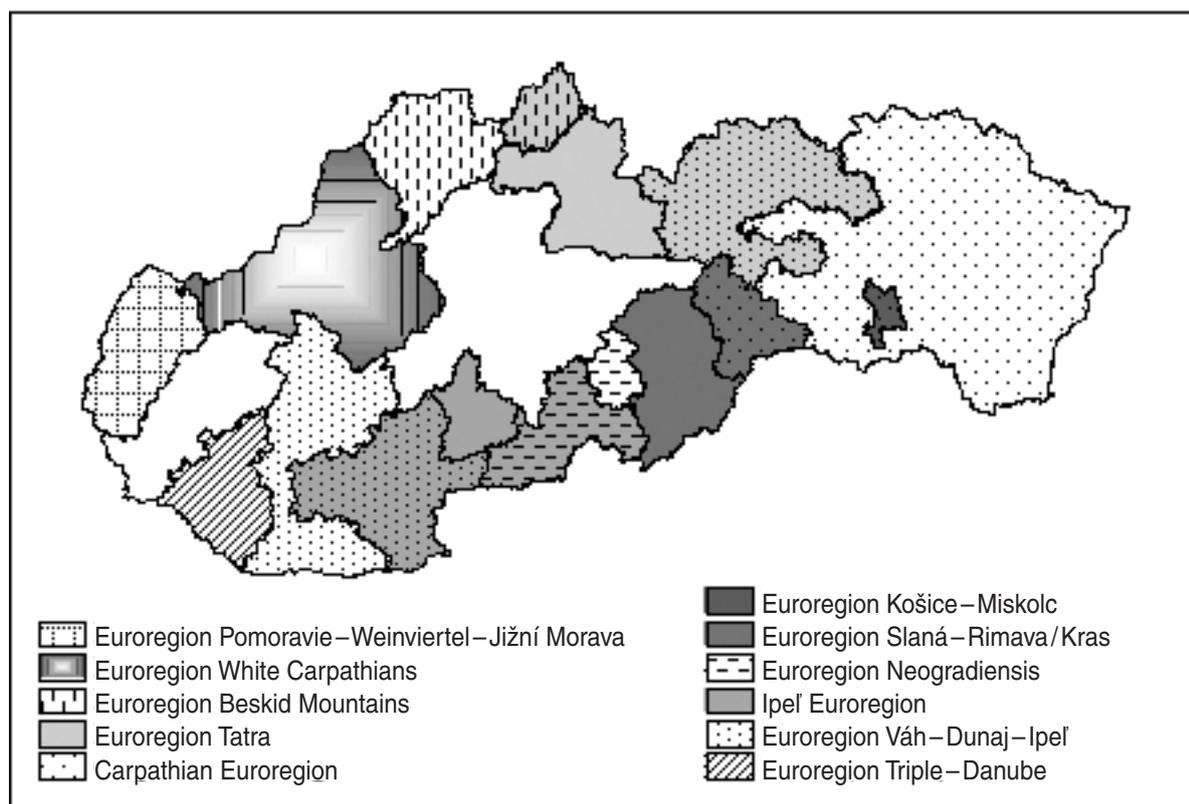


Fig. 2: Euroregions situated in the territory of Slovakia

2.3 Activities and funding of euroregions

The primary objective of the created euroregions should be to support the activities aiming at a spatially unlimited development, naturally interconnecting these euroregions with neighbouring regions in all directions of the geographical space. Such a development should aspire to minimise the influence of the border and its barrier effects. Šindler and Wahla (1999) see the cardinal purpose of euroregions in getting to know and understanding neighbours, in building confidence, reducing the disadvantages of borders, suppressing the negatives resulting from marginal positions of borderlands, and improving living conditions of inhabitants. The fulfilment of these goals is not simple; it should include cooperation in several spheres with regard to specificities of a given space. The representatives of euroregions in Slovakia consider the following domains/aims to be the most significant: improvement of the communication connections of a concrete region with the territory on the other side of the state border (e.g. bridges, roads, railways, biking trails, border crossings and their equipment); promotion of the region and enhancement of its attractiveness for tourism and recreation (presentations at exhibitions and fairs, info-centres, informational brochures and other publicity materials, internet sites); amendment of legal norms and conditions supporting the entrepreneurial sphere, facilitating the trade or the access of economical subjects to the territory of the neighbouring country; joint proceeding in the field of environment protection

and creation; involvement in and coordination of participation in support programmes of the EU (according to an inquiry conducted with representatives of individual euroregions in July and August 2001).

Besides the above-mentioned fact (the non-existence of regional self-government authorities in Slovakia before 2002), we also observed a poor coordination of central bodies responsible for the cross-border cooperation, inadequate competencies at a regional level, the absence of common funds and co-financed activities, differences in customs regulations, and limitations of cross-border contacts. Other restricting elements include an insufficient network of border crossings, their low capacity, or the impossibility of easy border crossing outside the official border crossings. Some of these problems began to be solved after 2001 or following the country's integration in the EU. However, the biggest problem – financing – still persists.

At the initial stage, the euroregions in Slovakia were financed mainly from the state budget that largely supported the launch of their activities (establishing secretariats, current expenses, publicity). In 2000, the euroregions of Beskids Mountains, Váh–Dunaj–Ipeľ and Carpathians thus received a sum of 1.66 mil. Slovak crowns. In 2001, eight other euroregions (all remaining except for the Kras Euroregion) were given a total aid of 2.55 mil. Slovak crowns. It was a lump starting financial injection in all cases; the euroregions did not need to show their own activities. The financial support

for euroregions in 2001 was approved in April 2000 and, as a matter of fact, it was one of the key reasons for the emergence of a large part of them. It follows that the euroregions were established mostly to use the allocation of the state subsidy without any previous active cross-border cooperation carried out in the country.

Since 2002, all competencies in this sphere were transferred to the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic and also the strategy of financing the euroregions was changed. It is possible to apply for and to receive financial means only for the implementation of concrete projects. At the first stage, projects within the system meant to support euroregional activities were classified into five areas – human resources, preparation of planning and development studies, environment protection and creation, development of tourism, public relations. In 2003, the areas of support were reclassified into two basic categories: preparation of supporting documents for investment projects to be implemented in euroregion territories and financed from domestic and foreign funds (category I); activities aimed at the promotion and reinforcement of developmental potential in border regions (category II).

In 2002, the number of projects supported in this way was 16 with a total subsidy reaching 17.6 mil. Slovak crowns (with 11 euroregions participating) and in 2003 it was 28 projects subsidised with 6.4 mil. Slovak crowns (with 10 euroregions participating). In the latter year, the total amount of subsidy was reduced, namely for two reasons: ineffective management of resources in the preceding year and efforts to allocate subsidies only in the case of co-financing a project. For the period of 2004-2006, the support of euroregions from the state budget was to stabilise with a gradual reduction of subsidies and their transfer to category I. In 2004, it was 38 projects that were aided with a total subsidy of 11.6 mil. Slovak crowns (and with 11 euroregions participating); for 2005-2006 the planned subsidy amounted to about 6 mil. Slovak crowns per year. In general, there were 82 euroregional projects supported in 2002-2004 with a sum of 35.6 mil. Slovak crowns. After 2003, when the financing was divided into two above specified categories, a total of 12.1 mil. Slovak crowns were invested in the projects of category I, and 5.9 mil. crowns in the projects of category II.

Cross-border cooperation is promoted by the EU through several programmes and initiatives. It is a part of the INTERREG Programme (this including also the transnational and interregional cooperation) which is regulated by directives for the structural funds of the Union. It has been in operation since 1990 (in 1990-1993 as Interreg I, in 1994-1999 as Interreg IIA, in 2000-2006 as Interreg IIIA). The INTERREG Programme was

originally aimed at the internal borders of EU countries only, later it included also the external borders between the old member and accession states. In doing so, it helped to prepare the latter for integration effected in 2004. One of the essential tasks of the currently running Interreg IIIA Programme is to enhance the standard of border regions with respect to commercial, economic, tourist, social and cultural relations with the neighbouring regions. The NUTS III regions located along the borders are the areas of preference. In 1994, the PHARE CBC (cross-border cooperation) Programme was launched covering the borderlands of member states with the then candidate countries. Since 1998, this Programme has been enlarged to include the internal borders among the candidate countries (within the additional PHARE Credo Programme). The INTERREG as well as the PHARE Credo Programmes have their priority spheres of activities which however overlap in many aspects. Insufficient communication and coordination between them have been much criticised in Slovakia.

In reality, the Euroregions have no political and just a minimum economic power. They are not official territorial units, being in principle merely the interest regions. Certainly, their primary objective was to resolve urgent problems in border and marginal regions of countries. Jirousek (2005) argues that new member states of the EU disseminate – by means of euroregions – a European influence in their environment. Thus, the euroregions can be an excellent platform to build relations from below and a driving force for citizen initiatives. For this reason, it is sometimes problematic to identify distinct spatial contexts in the detailed analytical evaluation of the euroregions' activities. The impact of euroregions on the space is seldom of a larger-scale character, but rather of a mosaic nature. It depends upon the activities of regional (or local) leaders and personalities or their groupings, which thus contribute to the development of some micro-regions using also the framework of cross-border cooperation for the purpose.

3. Conclusion

The development of cross-border cooperation and cross-border integration processes at the regional (or local) level – i.e. the formation of regions situated on both sides of the state border (called euroregions in Europe) – was relatively complicated in the territory of the Slovak Republic during the transformation period. In comparison with the neighbouring countries, this development showed several different features. We try to identify them in a synthetic form at the end of the paper.

The political situation existing in Slovakia until 1998 caused that favourable conditions for the development of cross-border cooperation were not created there. It

may be even said that it was deliberately hindered in some cases. Efforts to maintain the centralised power and not to disturb the still remaining strong position of the state brought about the suppression of all processes resulting spontaneously from local or regional initiatives, including the cross-border cooperation. Therefore, the first euroregions in Slovakia began to arise with approximately a five-year delay as compared to the other V4 countries.

The institutional stage of cross-border cooperation in Slovakia faced considerable problems. Competencies were not made clear enough, moreover – they were changing. It was possible to use experience (relatively good institutional frameworks) from such neighbouring countries as Hungary and the Czech Republic. As for Poland, its experience from the Polish-German cooperation could be used better; the Slovak border with Austria is quite short. Although it was the only border with the European Union until 2004, the cooperation with Austria was insufficient. A long section of this border is difficult to cross; in addition, the Austrian partner was less active.

In most cases, the euroregions in Slovakia were formed not as a product, but only as a potential generator of cross-border cooperation (in the opposite way than a natural process should go). They used resources allocated from the state budget, but some of them then reduced their further activities. At present, the euroregions in the country are in transition between the institutional and implementation stages and therefore their qualitative selection has to come

inevitably. It will be necessary to search other (especially external) sources for financing in the future.

After improvement of the situation during 1999-2001, a great number of euroregions emerged in the country. Most of them were established on the Slovak-Hungarian border. The euroregions are spread across most of the Slovak territory (not only in border regions). Formally only a smaller area in the central part of Slovakia (the city of Banská Bystrica with its wider surroundings) and the economically most advanced Slovak region along the axis of Bratislava–Trnava are not included in the cross-border cooperation.

It was never a case that Slovakia had in the foreign partner a strong leader moving cross-border cooperation within the euroregion forward, to a higher qualitative level. This would be required particularly in marginal regions of eastern and south-eastern Slovakia. Development at the regional and namely local level is largely conditioned by activities of individuals and small interest groups – regional and local personalities. These actors contribute most to the development of marginal and border regions and the cross-border cooperation may be one of instruments to help them in this field.

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EUROREGIONS IN HUNGARY

Tamás HARDI

Abstract

Hungary is bordered by seven countries, and its location in the middle of a basin makes cross-border cooperation really important. Many Euroregions were and are established with Hungarian participation. The number of participants is large and there are many kinds of them, but the activity of these institutions is blocked by many factors. Besides characterizing the border regions, this study presents a typification of these organisations, their tasks and the scope of their activities.

Shrnutí

Euroregiony v Maďarsku

Maďarsko sousedí se sedmi zeměmi a tato jeho poloha ve středu kotliny činí přeshraniční spolupráci vskutku velmi důležitou. Mnohé euroregiony byly a jsou zakládány s maďarskou účastí. Počet zúčastněných je vysoký a účastníci jsou různého druhu, činnost těchto institucí je však blokována mnoha faktory. Kromě charakteristiky těchto přeshraničních regionů přináší tato studie i typizaci těchto organizací, jejich úkoly a oblast činnosti.

Keywords: *Euroregion, Hungary, Carpathian Basin, cross-border cooperation*

1. Introduction

Hungary is situated in the middle of the Carpathian Basin and is bordered by seven countries: Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

Our common borders started up mainly at the end of World War I. These borders had a role of dividing for decades, disconnecting river basins, settlement structures and infrastructure lines.

Due to the above facts, the cross-border cooperation is really important for Hungary to help the lives of those living in borderland regions.

With the growing permeability of borders, the cross-border cooperation started to grow since the second half of the 1990s together with the participating Hungarian euroregions. Participating organisations are of many kinds: state participation, settlement level, and also civil organisations take place in different cooperations. (Sometimes just the name reminds on the original operational form of „euroregion“.) The number of organisations is growing fast, but many of them can not really show up with real operation. It is worth thinking about their lack of operation, and difficulties, as well as to point up good examples.

2. Spatial problems caused by state borders in the Carpathian basin

Borders in this region are relatively recent, with their functions frequently changing. A fundamental geographical problem of the Carpathian basin, therefore, is how the borders drawn inside an organic spatial unity impact the existing relationships. The problem significance is highlighted by the fact that, usually, the borders do not follow established, organically integrated geographical structures: conversely, they often reach beyond the former public administration boundaries, transportation networks and economic connections.

Hence, actual borders were set primarily on the basis of geopolitical considerations prevailing at the time of ‘delimitation’ rather than by any kind of spatial logics – a factor which makes the study of cross-border relationships in this part of the world extremely important. In addition to simple reports, there is a need for a continuous search for solutions to problems caused by discontinuity in space - without disturbing current national borders (Hajdú, 1997). One also needs to ask how to restore the freedom of movement and relationship networks for inhabitants living in the proximity of borders.

The problem is very complex, and the opening of borders and the liberalisation of traffic are not in themselves adequate solutions.

- Numerous connections were severed and became one-sided - which relegated many border areas to a peripheral situation. This is typical of areas where the centre of the area was detached from at least a part of the organically integrated area around it – and especially when the new centre is difficult to access for the population.
- Many towns lost their access to their natural agglomerations and so these were hindered in their subsequent development. Interestingly, with few exceptions, all of Hungary's major towns are situated in the close vicinity of today's national borders.
- In consequence, certain economic activities declined where business connections, economic inputs, access to labour, transportation facilities or markets were lost.
- The railway network was practically completed by the beginning of the 20th century in the Carpathian basin, but since then no major new lines have been constructed. The road network also runs in parallel with the railway network. The new borders simply cut off vital elements of these networks. When looking at the geographical structures of Hungary, it is clear that the new borders left Hungary with only radial lines of transportation, whilst the adjoining parts with sub-centres (that is, major towns) were left to neighbouring countries. This had a significant (negative) impact on the transportation network in Hungary and caused a multitude of problems.
- Throughout past decades, local government, infrastructural and sectoral developments were pursued independently from one another, and, in consequence, the results of these developments are often incompatible. In addition, parallel developments took place on both sides of the border to replace the lost connections. The product of such developments is now potentially an increased competition between the neighbouring areas upon the re-opening of borders, and so we may expect a renewed rivalry among towns as well as among various economic sectors.
- In addition to the problems induced directly by the creation of new borders, the development strategies of state socialism discriminated against several areas in border areas, and especially against those close to the Austrian-Hungarian border. This has simply exacerbated negative peripheral tendencies.

In the 1990s, the general situation of borders changed fundamentally. In western – and especially in north-western areas – proximity to the border increased in value due to the early influx of foreign direct investment

and an increase in the migration of labour. In contrast to this, in the more peripheral border areas (and especially at the Ukrainian-Hungarian, Romanian-Hungarian, and some eastern sections of the Slovak-Hungarian borders) the effects of their unfavourable position continue to be palpable, and it might be said, in fact, that their situation has even worsened with an increase in the proportion of disadvantaged population groups and discrimination against them in the job market.

By way of summary, differences in development levels and directions among the border areas grew in the 1990s, although, owing to its favourable geographical location between three centres of the region (Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest), the development of the north-western part of the Carpathian basin accelerated. At the same time, areas on the periphery are underdeveloped on both sides. They were – either partly or totally – unable to recover in the 1990s from the damage caused by the earlier loss of growth potential, and so the restoration of cross-border connections is a key requirement for the future growth and for the decreasing isolation of peripheral areas.

3. Euroregions with the Hungarian participation

For Hungary, the establishment of cooperative relationships is of strategic importance. Relative to the surface area of Hungary, the length of borders is considerable, and as compared with the European Union a significant population share lives in border-zones. Indeed, fourteen out of nineteen counties have common borders with some of the neighbouring states (Enyedi, Horváth, 2003).

Along the Hungarian state borders, numerous euroregions or euroregional initiatives were implemented during the last ten years with most of them being launched after the Madrid Convention in 1997¹. Another incentive for launching joint initiatives was the emergence of programmes specially developed to improve the collaboration between the borderland regions. The Phare Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programme has been functioning on the Austrian-Hungarian border since 1995, a programme which, first limited to this specific border, was subsequently extended to every other border of Hungary. With the exception of the Austrian-Hungarian border, the financial support is relatively small (2-3 million/year/border). Nevertheless, the availability of funds has prompted various actors, especially local authorities, to assert their determination to participate. According to current figures, there were fifteen euroregional organisations formed by 2004 (Tab. 1, Figs 1-3) with a wide range of contributors and different regional scopes.

1) European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities.

Cooperation	Year launched	Participants		Surface area km ²	Population
		Hungarian	Neighbouring		
Carpathian Euroregion	1993	counties	town+district (SK), voivodship (PL), county (UKR and RO)	160,000	16 million
Danube–Kris–Mures–Tisa Regional Cooperation	1997	counties	Counties (RO), federal province (YU)	77,243	5.9 million
Danube–Drava–Sava Euroregional Cooperation	1998	county, town, chamber	county, town, chamber (CRO), canton, town, chamber (BIH)	20,000	1.5 million
West/Nyugat Pannónia Euroregion	1995	county	province	15,168	1.2 million
Vag–Danube–Ipel Euroregion	1999	counties	district	24,000	2.8 million
Ipel Euroregion	1999	municipalities	municipalities, NGOs	N/A	440,000
Neogradiensis Euroregion	2000	county	districts and counties (SK)	20,521	1.7 million
Miskolc–Kosice Euroregion	2000	county, town	district, town	14,000	1.47 million
Drava–Mura Euroregion	2000	towns	towns	X	120,000
Sajó–Rima Euroregion	2000	micro-regions	districts	6,000	1 million
Zemplén Euroregion	2000	micro-regions	districts		
Interregio	2000	counties	county (RO and UK)	23,142	2.25 million
Triple-Danube-area Euroregion	2001	county	districts	7,500	780,000
Hajdú-Bihar–Bihor Euroregion	2002	county	county		
Bihar-Bihor Euroregion	2003	municipalities	municipalities	2,000	197,000
Danube Euroregion	2003	municipalities	municipalities		
Ister-Granum Euroregion	2003	municipalities	municipalities		
Mura-Drava Euroregion	2004	counties	counties		

Tab. 1: Major characteristics of euroregional cooperation along the borders of Hungary

Source: Own work

Development and typology of the Euroregions

As one can see from the above table, euroregional organisations are rather heterogeneous in terms of both structure and surface area. In fact, there are only a few definitive euroregions among them, but, if we consider how freely the basic concept of a “euroregion” is interpreted, then we must accept the fact that any institution founded with the purpose of cross-border cooperation is termed a “euroregion” by its founding organisations.

In any case, in Hungary we have deviated from the traditional concept of euroregion, and perhaps this is the result of the special features of our borders. There are ever more and more successful small organisations in operation which have been established to satisfy local needs, whilst the operation of several large, more conventional organisations is difficult. In typifying the organisations, we should take two factors into account.

In one respect, the main founding members are important. In most cases these are meso-level territorial units (counties, districts, provinces), although ridings and micro-regions equivalent to NUTS 4 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics 4) level also participate – and in increasing numbers. The efforts of the settlements to establish euroregions are the latest development. Earlier they represented themselves either as a member-unit of a micro-region or, alternatively, such organisations were only formed by larger towns (of county rank) together with the county itself. Chambers and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) with some degree of local competence are, in many cases, involved with local authorities at that level.

Another important factor distinguishing the euroregions from one another is a basic purpose of their establishment. Here, we can observe two major groups:

a) Organisations formed with a political purpose; these were established as a result of diplomatic efforts by local meso- or lower levels;

b) Organisations created in spatial structural units due to their basic mutual dependence; these have come to accept the pressures to cooperate, which were earlier fragmented or even non-existent, but which are nowadays inevitable.

We propose to group those organisations operating with the Hungarian participation according to the local level of participant, but let us first note, that the two major founding principles described above exist in all cases, although they may vary in terms of their importance.

Consulting organisations covering a large area

The main characteristic of the first generation of euroregions in Hungary was that meso-level organisations established institutional relationships with one another (Fig.1). Their formation was accompanied by a considerable enthusiasm, and so it was difficult to control their expansion. It could, therefore, happen that areas far distant from one another became members of a joint organisation (e.g. the Carpathian Euroregion, the Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregion). In this way, these organisations are coming to resemble a trans-national area.



Fig.1.: Large euroregions with Hungarian participants in 2006

I.: Carpathian Euroregion; II.: Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Regional Cooperation; III.: Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregional Cooperation; IV.: West/Nyugat Pannónia Euroregion; V.: Vag-Danube-Ipel Euroregion.

Source: Own work. Map: GFK Macon

1 – Podkarpackie; 2 – Prešovský kraj; 3 – Košický kraj; 4 – Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén; 5 – Heves; 6 – Hajdu-Bihar; 7 – Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok; 8 – Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg; 9 – Botosani; 10 – Suceava; 11 – Bihor; 12 – Maramures; 13 – Satu Mare; 14 – Salaj; 15 – Harghita; 16 – Zakarpatskaja o.; 17 – Ivano-Frankovskaja o.; 18 – L'vovskaja o.; 19 – Chernovitskaja o.; 20 – Bacs-Kiskun; 21 – Bekes; 22 – Csongrad; 23 – Arad; 24 – Caras-Severin; 25 – Hunedoara; 26 – Timis; 27 – Vojvodina; 28 – Tuzlanski; 29 – Koprivnicko-krizevacka zupanija; 30 – Viroviticko-podravska zupanija; 31 – Osjecko-baranjska zupanija; 32 – Brodsko-posavska zupanija; 33 – Pozesko-slavonska zupanija; 34 – Baranya; 35 – Somogy; 36 – Posavski; 37 – Brcko District; 38 – Szekszard; 39 – Győr-Moson-Sopron; 40 – Vas; 41 – Zala; 42 – Burgenland; 43 – Pest; 44 – Fejér; 45 – Komárom-Esztergom; 46 – Veszprem; 47 – Nitriansky kraj

Basically, after a long period of centralised socialism, these organisations created a “meso-level” diplomacy whose participants are county and provincial politicians. From time to time, however, the state may also join in as an equal partner. Their establishment was possible

even in the era in which lower level territorial units were banned from undertaking cross-border activities, and so, even if incidentally, these organisations were active primarily during the nationalist government era of the 1990s and kept cross-border relationships alive. In this

way, formal relations with Romanian counties which officially could not exist in the Carpathian Euroregion in the first part of the 1990s survived. Similarly, the “Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa” Euroregion could maintain its relationship with the Voivodina’s provincial government during the wartime blockade of Serbia.

In addition to the para-diplomatic function, macro-regional planning is also an important responsibility of these organisations. Due to their spatial dimensions, they form cross-border planning frame-works which can shape or reshape the macro-regional scale of cross-border networks and infrastructural lines, and they have a strong linkage to the development programmes (Phare, Interreg, Neighbourhood Programmes) along the borders of the European Union. However, it is only possible to harmonise the development concept of the euroregions and the development objectives of the Union programmes to a limited extent, since their territory far exceeds that qualifying for project support from the European Union. In addition, they impinge upon the territory of several EU programmes, and, in this way, parts of their programmes which relate to several border-regions are difficult to adjust to the objectives of Interreg and Neighbourhood Programmes.

For this reason the national governments and the Union trans-national programmes (e.g. CADSES – Central, Adriatic, Danubian and South-Eastern European Space Community Initiative Interreg III B) may play a significant role in achieving their purpose.

In terms of borders, the DKMT (Danube–Kris–Mures–Tisa Regional Cooperation) and West-Pannonia are in a fortunate situation. Although the participants are counties (since they are the entities of municipal level) their territories comply with the NUTS 2 regions not only in Hungary, but also in Romania and Austria. Where the Carpathian Euroregion and the Vag-Danube-Ipel Euroregion are concerned, it is true only to a certain extent, whilst the DDS cooperation (Danube–Drava–Sava Euroregional Cooperation) has set up a totally different territorial structure – all of which suggests different possibilities for both territorial planning and participation in Union programmes.

The earliest of these initiative is the *Carpathian Euroregion*. The area in which it is situated may be referred to as one of major “losers” of the 20th century. It had come under the rule of several different sovereign powers both in terms of time and space. This leaves its mark also on the organisation of the Euroregion, since it is very difficult to draw the lines of a functional district in which the organisation could operate successfully. Due to this partition, the cross-border organisation started at the beginning of the 1990s. An antecedent of the Euroregion was the establishment of economic relations

- the Cooperation of Carpathian Chambers which was formed in 1993 and in which the heads of the Ukrainian, Slovak, Romanian and Hungarian Chambers of Industry and Commerce expressed their willingness to co-operate. The Carpathian Border Region Economic Development Association, founded in 1994, became the most important forum of economic relationships. It gathered the economic and enterprise development organisations which were active alongside the three- and four-border areas. From the outset the association expanded in Slovakia: the district office heads and the heads of the Kosice Chamber of Industry and Commerce also became members of the Council of the Association, and on the heels of the economic organisations, the administrative levels also joined the cooperation. As a result, the Carpathian Euroregion was formed in 1993. Its organisational structure is characterised by the euroregional system: this comprises a Regional Council, made up of the President, Managing Director and Secretary of this body and of working committees (Baranyi (ed.), 2005). During the ‘90s its territory continuously expanded. Regions remote from the borders also became members (e.g. Harghita County in Romania). However, the huge size of the Euroregion (its territory is significantly larger than that of Hungary) hinders its daily operation. This region can be characterised by weak economy and, at the same time, by extremely tight borders which make movement difficult even today, due to the existing visa systems (between the Ukraine and Slovakia) and due to the low capacity border-crossings. Life will be even more difficult since the external Schengen borders will soon split the Euroregion into several segments, which will entail further visa complications.

The *Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion* was formed in the Romanian-Serbian-Hungarian tri-border area in 1997 and includes four Hungarian, four Romanian counties, and the autonomous district of Voivodina (Nagy, Todorovich, Tosih, 2005). Its establishment was preceded by bilateral cooperation. Difficulties similar to those of the Carpathian Euroregion emerged there at the beginning due to the centralised character of Romanian local government, but sanctions imposed against Yugoslavia also hindered an effective cooperation. However, during recent years the operation of the Euroregion has been revived, and it has been able to elaborate own regional development concept and programme. The spatial expansion of the Euroregion is also, in this case, significantly larger than that of a narrowly defined border region, but the functional relationships are much stronger than those of the Carpathian Euroregion, primarily in terms of transportation, food industry and agriculture. One has to see that the area of the organisation is a key gateway area between Western Europe and the Balkan. Promoting this geographical advantage is only possible through joint efforts, and, if we study the participating regions within the countries, we

will see that Romanian and Serbian regions considered to be developed can work together with Hungarian counties which are regarded as being of average development. In other words, motivation and interest which promote cooperation already exist.

Following the above, the *West-Pannonia Euroregion* was formed in 1998. It is true that, specifically as a euroregion, it was formed only in 1998, but cooperation is traditionally good in this region. There were conciliation forums even before the regime changes, and the Regional Council of the Hungarian-Austrian Borderland region was formed in 1992, its members being the Burgenland province (Land), the counties of Vas and Győr-Moson-Sopron and the cities of Szombathely, Győr and Sopron, all of county rank. After a long preparatory phase, members of the Regional Council formed the West-Pannonia Euroregion in the autumn of 1998. Initially, the Euroregion consisted of the Burgenland and Vas and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties; later, Zala County joined the region, since the spatial coverage of the Euroregion was, in this way, brought into line with the NUTS 2 regions formed in 1996 in Hungary (Kampschulte, 1999; Nárai, Rechnitzer, 1999; Hardi, Nárai, 2000). This Hungarian region is regarded as the second most-developed region in the country (following the Central Region) whilst the Burgenland is the least developed province of Austria.

The two sides of the border are closely linked by several factors. A significant number of workers commute from Hungary to Austria, whilst many people come from Austria to purchase services, real estates etc. It is very interesting that, in terms of spatial structure, the Burgenland province (Land) was formed from the territory awarded to Austria after World War I which was carved out of the counties which today make up the Hungarian side of the Euroregion. Urban centres (Sopron, Kőszeg and Szombathely) remained in Hungary, whilst no major town became a part of Burgenland. The institutional cooperation was further reinforced by the fact that, among our border regions, this region has received most Union funds at the earliest stage. Phare CBC funds, which were introduced after the accession of Austria to the EU, were substantially larger than those along other borders. Through the spatial coverage of the Euroregion, through its personal and organisational relations to the region and the counties, it has a strong voice in the planning phase of the Union programmes.

The *Danube-Drava-Sava Euroregional Cooperation* was the fourth large-scale unit to be formed among the euroregions, being established in the autumn of 1998. The cooperation covers three countries: Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It was established by signing the Articles of Association on the 28th of November, 1998. The founding members were, from

Hungary: the City Council of Pécs (with its county rank), the General Assembly of Baranya County, the Pécs-Baranya Chamber of Industry and Commerce; from Croatia: the City of Osijek, Osijek-Baranjska County, the Croatian Economic Chamber of Osijek, and the Osijek Economic Chamber, and, from Bosnia-Herzegovina: the Tuzla-Drina Canton, the Chamber of Commerce of Tuzla and the Tuzla region. In 1999 the Croatian counties along the Hungarian border, together with their centres and Chambers of Commerce, joined the cooperation. From the Hungarian side, Somogy County, together with Barcs and Szekszárd (towns of county rank) also became members. The fact that the area of the Euroregion is not contiguous presented a problem for a long time, although today, with the accession of the missing Croatian county and of the Brcko district from Bosnia-Herzegovina, this problem has been solved. Due to politico-geographical, ethnic and historical features, the area covered by the Euroregion is very colourful, but, at the same time, it is burdened with many difficulties. Hungarian, Croatian and Bosnian nationals live in all three countries and in all of the smaller regions. The ethnic conflicts which led to the wars of the nineties still persist. The economy of the region is weak and a unifying common interest is rarely found. Member regions in each country are prejudged as peripheral; they were condemned to a future with little hope by the wars, by international governments, by the borders which were long closed – and even mined – during the nineties. In this way, the operation of the Euroregion was hindered by many factors and for a long time it could be thought of as no more than a formality. As a matter of fact, the two central initiative cities (Pécs and Osijek) with their mutual relationships were the prime movers in the cooperation. In addition, however, there is a significant connecting link – the North-South (Vc) Trans-European traffic corridor. Its current economic significance is negligible, but it is becoming increasingly important in terms of tourism.

The *Vag-Danube-Ipel Euroregion* in the Hungarian-Slovak borderland region was the last large-scale euroregion to be formed. It is made up of one Hungarian county and a Slovak district which signed the euroregional cooperation in the summer of 1999.

An interesting factor relating to its establishment is that the governments of both countries took a major part in it. In Hungary the establishment of the Euroregion was supported by the County Administrative Office, the Prime Minister's Office, and by the Ministry of Interior. At that time, there was no such institution as a "county municipality", but only districts with appointed (unelected) representatives. In this way the Dzurinda-government gave its blessing to the euroregional cooperation by a single prime ministerial decision.

The operations centre of the Euroregion is located in Tatabánya, Hungary and has the title of the Vag-Danube-Ipel Development Kht (public-interest company) registered as an autonomous legal entity. Its duty is to achieve the objectives of the Euroregion, and this is to be realized through tenders since the Euroregion has no other resources at its disposal. There are two secretaries active in the Euroregion, one in Tatabánya and the other in Nitra, and the core activities of the Euroregion are mostly concerned with cultural and tourism projects.

Euroregional cooperation of counties in the borderland region

The institutional cooperation between the counties in the border region (Fig. 2 – see cover p. 3) started at the end of the 1990s. Their establishment was motivated by many factors. In one respect, the county regional development councils which understood the need of cross-border relationships started to operate and began their planning work. This was strengthened by the fact that the first Phare CBC programmes were launched, no longer exclusively involving the Austrian-Hungarian border region, but also the border regions between the other countries awaiting Accession. In addition, operating problems of large-scale Euroregions became visible by that time, and smaller cooperations were therefore formed in their area. However, in contrast to the large-scale Euroregions, external forces (foreign investments and government favour) motivating the establishment of Euroregions were no longer evident. Due to this, and taking into account future available funds, the counties established independent contacts with territorial administrative units on the other side of the border. This was easy when the public administration in the neighbouring country was similar – that is, when it was possible to find co-operating partners at similar levels and with similar competences.

The need to restore relationships of earlier historical counties emerged when establishing several organisations of the kind. It was necessary namely because those parts of the former, divided counties which lie in the border regions have become peripheries, and, in general, impoverished. This is especially so in the North- and North-Eastern Hungary. The aim, therefore, was to attempt to extricate oneself from this “periphery of the periphery” situation and to repair the severed connections (e.g. the transport infrastructure).

In Romanian-Hungarian relations the *Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion* was formed in 2002, linking the regions of the former Bihar County and establishing a new type of relationship between the Oradea-centred Romanian regions and the Debrecen-centred Hungarian county. In 2000, Interregio was formed in the Romanian-Ukrainian-Hungarian tri-border region with the participation of the Hungarian Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County,

the Romanian Satu Mare County and the Ukrainian Zakarpatska oblast. Its aim is to promote alliances in these poor regions and to initiate the development of a cross-border infrastructure. A similar kind of Euroregion was formed in 2004 between the Zala County and the Croatian Medimurska županija (county), named the *Mura-Drava Euroregion*. Its establishment was rather delayed in comparison with the earlier examples, and the reason for this is that the strongly centralised system of Croatian counties (županijas) has only recently begun to loosen, whilst earlier they were not empowered to participate in such cooperations. Cooperation can be difficult, however, since the Hungarian counties are substantially larger in terms of both surface area and population.

On the Slovak-Hungarian border the establishment of direct county contacts was hindered by the fact that, in terms of area size and competences, the local Slovak meso-level did not comply with the Hungarian counties – even after their transformation into local authorities. In this case, therefore, the Hungarian counties formed euroregions with the Slovak districts by supporting the given Slovak regions. The Neogradiensis Euroregion and the Triple-Danube-area Euroregion are each made up of one Hungarian county and three Slovak districts. This kind of territorial and administrative combination has generated a large number of practical problems in operation, and, in the case of the Triple-Danube-area Euroregion, it led to total inoperability.

The first organisation of this scale is the *Neogradiensis Euroregion*, formed in Spring 2000, after a long preparatory phase and on the basis of will expressions. The Hungarian Nógrád County established the Euroregion together with the Slovak partner organisation in order to be able to utilize the support available under the Small Project Fund of the Phare CBC programme. The notion of the name was derived from the fact that the old Latin name of the county does not hurt the national sensitivity of either party.

The Nógrád County and the three Slovak districts involved are all situated in the peripheral areas of their countries. Their economic situation is unfavourable and the unemployment rate is rather high, often reaching 30-35% on the Slovak side. The Euroregion deliberately strives to reshape the relationships of the historical Nógrád County, a unified historical-geographical category. The centre of the former county, which was divided by a new border after World War I, was Balassagyarmat, whilst the other highly developed city, Lučenec, found itself on the Czechoslovak side of the border. These days, the Euroregion deliberately strives for revival and dynamics along the former development axes and aspires to make possible some division of function between the cities. Despite the existing borders, therefore, the region

is making efforts to extricate itself from the peripheral isolation, and so we may conclude that, from the very beginning, central issues of the cooperation have been regional organisation and regional development.

In the mirror organisation, the Neogradiensis Region Association became a partner organisation to the Slovak Neogradiensis Euroregion (in what is termed an Association of Legal Entities), since the Euroregion can be operated in this legal form. According to the Articles of Association, the supreme body of the Euroregion is the General Assembly, whose structure consists of the elected president, a supervisory committee and working committees. Secretarial responsibilities (day-to-day management) are performed by the Nógrád County Regional Development Agency Kht.

The founding members of the *Triple-Danube-area Euroregion* are the General Assembly of Győr-Moson-Sopron County and the Csallóköz–Mátyusföldi Regional Association. The Articles of Association were signed on the 25th of January, 2001. Its registered office is located in Győr, in the office of the County General Assembly, while the organisational duties are undertaken in Dunahelyen by the Office of the Regional Development Agency. The Euroregion itself is not, in fact, a legal entity; and representation rights are vested in the organisation in which the chairman is based.

The area of the Euroregion covers the Győr-Moson-Sopron County, and three districts in Slovakia, although the Euroregion has not operated in fact since it was established. The Slovak partner did, in fact, elaborate a development plan concerning its own territory, but common planning and development has never been realised, and the common organisation does not even operate formally.

This is especially interesting since the day-to-day relations between the Hungarian county seat (Győr) and the Slovak districts (whose population is largely of Hungarian nationality) are extremely active. Labour and economic cooperation, etc. is significant. However, the institutionalised relationship simply does not work, presumably due to organisational problems.

Organisations of municipalities and micro-regions

Municipalities, or association of municipalities, participate in euroregions organised at a municipality level (Fig. 3 – see cover p. 3). Their establishment was instigated by the fact that the borders had split numerous municipality – relations in the Carpathian-Basin. The national similarity of both sides of the border is a further incentive, which is to say that the formation of euroregions rests on territorial, structural, functional and national foundations. There are numerous examples

for municipality cooperations alongside our border lines, but only six organisations were formed which embrace a larger area and call themselves euroregions. Five of these are to be found in the Slovak-Hungarian borderland region.

It was evident that these cooperations were established at the beginning with the traditional purpose visible also in other euroregions - to set up goals of cultural cooperation, regional development etc. Later, however, initiatives emerged which focused on the division of urban functions, performing duties appropriate to agglomerations, and on the joint organisation of public services (Košice-Miskolc and Ister-Granum Euroregion).

The very first organisation established at a municipality level was the *Ipel Euroregion*, which was formed in 1999. Its ancestor was an NGO cooperation (non-governmental organisations) dealing with cultural and environmental issues. The Cooperation Agreement names two organizations: the Ipel Euroregion in Hungary (its seat being Balassagyarmat), and the Ipelsky Euroregion in Slovakia (its seat being Šahy). Chairmen of these regions were the signatory parties, and the organisation operates with two centres - one in Balassagyarmat and the other in Šahy. The document declares the established organisation to be an Association, the purposes of which are: preparing for European integration processes, promoting sustainable development in the region, overcoming backwardness, preserving the existing (mainly environmental) values and elaborating regional development programmes. In Hungary the cooperation affects 105 local authorities, 230 thousand inhabitants and, in Slovakia, 232 local authorities and 210 thousand inhabitants.

The *Zemplén Euroregion*, formed in 2004, is a cross-border organisation established at a micro-region level. The Euroregion's Articles of Association were signed in Sátoraljaújhely, in the former Zemplén County Hall by 9 Slovak and 5 Hungarian micro-regions in the Zemplén, by the regional organisations of both countries and by other 17 co-operating partners. The Euroregion basically covers the territory of the former *historical* Zemplén Comitatus, and, according to the draft of the strategic programme, the aim of the Association is the elaboration and realisation of the common, concerted development programme of the region.

The *Sajó-Rima* (Slaná–Rimava) *Euroregion* is a similar organisation and 336 settlements belong in this Euroregion, 211 and 125 of them being situated in the Slovak and Hungarian territory, resp. Nearly 1 million inhabitants live in the area whose size is 6,000 km². It basically exists as a vehicle for the cooperation of two organisations: the Hungarian Sajó–Rima Euroregion Association and the Slaná–Rimava Euroregion.

Their objectives are focused on practical work and development, and they represent a course of development. At initial stages they were characterised by methods of operation similar to those of their larger counterparts, but functional relations, the organisation of public services and tourism etc. have recently come into prominence.

The *Drava-Mura Euroregion* is also an organisation of micro-regions and towns. In respect of its objectives, it was wished to become an organisation of the Croatian-Slovenian-Hungarian tri-border region, but the Croatian participation has never been realized. The Drava-Mura Euroregional outline agreement was signed by the Hungarian parties and by the representative of the town of Lendava on the 14th September, and the events organised to celebrate the signing ceremony were attended by representatives from several Croatian border-region counties and towns and by representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, but finally the Euroregion remained bilateral.

However, the *Ister-Granum Euroregion* represents a significantly different model compared to those described above. It was formed in the central region of the Slovak-Hungarian border in 2003, and the organisation was basically established to restore the historical agglomeration of the Hungarian city of Esztergom. From both the Hungarian and Slovak sides of the border, the surrounding villages, a total of 133 settlements, joined the Euroregion. The common feature of these settlements is that their new centres are far remote, and so it is practical to use the institutions of the historical regional centre. The fact that the Danube R. and the Ipel R. divide the city and its suburbs into three sections is another feature. In addition, the state border also separates the settlements located in Hungary but on the eastern side of the Danube R. and of the Ipel R. from Esztergom. The rebuilding of the Maria Valeria Bridge in 2002 - blown up during World War II - gave a great momentum to Slovakia and to the eastern sector of the Euroregion. The aim is to realize the rational organisation of public services, e.g. to shorten the routes of fire-fighters, ambulances etc. Esztergom is already an important centre of the Slovak part of the Euroregion in that the number of commuting workers and students is significant, and their number has increased since the reopening of the bridge and EU Accession. This region has, in fact, created a precedent for the common usage of a city hospital.

The Danube Euroregion is linked in spatial terms, and it is no accident that this relationship established a contiguous industrial agglomeration north of Esztergom along the Danube, whose environmental, tourist and employment influences are visible on both sides of the border river. Even though this is

only a minor aspect of the cooperation, and, due to its micro-settlement participants, one which does not really correspond to the concept of a euroregion, there can be no doubt about the cross-border region-shaping role of the organisation. This is shown by the fact that, since its establishment in 2003, a common tourism development concept has been drawn up.

4. Experiences and problems

Unfortunately, it has to be said that the activities of these organisations are subject to much controversy. Few operate in accordance with their declared aims, and, instead, a slowing down of activity in most cases follows the initial enthusiasm, and, more often than not, beyond signatures and initial meetings, no real progress has been made. However, as already indicated, these organisations are far too young to be judged too swiftly, and, in fact, our task is to highlight causes of the setbacks. This can also stimulate ideas and thoughts regarding the prospects of further development.

It is important to note that promoting cross-border interaction is not a mandatory task for any local authority or actor, and, in fact, most participants work on a voluntary basis. Accordingly, participating in a euroregion is a different kind of mission than working as a member of a similar committee of, say, a County Council, and so the existence of shared interests is the key to the success of such organisations.

Many organisations are established by political fiat when politicians (at county or local government level) often decide on the territorial scope and influence of such organisations, and, consequently, it is not the rationale or logic of geographical space but simply a chance that determines the circle of participants.

Particularly in the early years, a priority was given to the size. For instance, both the surface area and the population of the Carpathian Euroregion exceed the figures for Hungary. This Euroregion resembles an Alpine-Adriatic type of macro-region rather than a proper euroregion. The disproportionate dimensions produced two main problems. First of all, it is hard to find interests common to the members. Two counties several hundred kilometres apart are unlikely to find common issues which can be handled appropriately within their own competence. In addition, in these large euroregions the organisation of a meeting, even of smaller committees, entails an enormous effort in terms of time, money, and organisation skills - which clearly hinders their operation. There can be no doubt that the simple territorial expansion does not lead to a corresponding expansion of competence levels, and

synergies among the opportunities of members are not sufficient to provide an adequate solution to the problems of such large territorial units. Therefore, it would be optimal to adjust the size of an organisation to the competence levels of members. The question is not whether municipalities, micro-regions, counties or rather regions should establish the institutional cooperation; since they all have stakes in cross-border relationships. However, a territorial expansion needs to be in harmony with the real potential in order to protect mutual interests of the participants.

The lack of common interest among the parties is due not only to the unsatisfactory territorial scale: it also has to do with insufficient attention paid to the question: do the participants (larger and smaller organisations) invited to constitutive sessions really need to cooperate?

There has been a growing recognition of these deficiencies, with the result that organisers have begun to prefer smaller, functionally interrelated areas. Unfortunately, however, further pitfalls have become visible in addition to the problem of territorial scale. Firstly, the competencies of participants are often noticeably different, and the powers enjoyed by decision-makers of Hungarian, Romanian, Croatian, etc. municipalities or counties are also often quite different. This problem is usually beyond the influence of such organisations as it depends on the national legislation. Progress has been made, however, with the harmonisation of competencies, a prerequisite for the accession in the European Union.

Another source of collision for competencies is when the levels of participants on the two sides of the border, joining the organisation, do not correspond. For instance, in the case of the "Triple-Danube Euroregion", the entity representing Hungary is a county, whilst the Slovak party is represented by districts – and there are, of

course, more examples. It goes without saying that it is difficult to manage a bilateral committee in which one of the parties is represented by a Secretary of the State, while the other party is led by a special committee member from a village council.

It is also political cycles that leave their mark on bilateral or multilateral organisations. As there are elections at some level almost every year in at least one represented country, there is a backlog of considerable time during which the whole organisation must sit and wait for results, since any activity to follow will, of course, depend on them.

Finally, there are problems concerning the funding of such organisations. Relative to the goals, areas and the size of the population affected by these cooperations, the resources available are generally scarce. Among the neighbouring countries, only Slovakia has a special reserve fund accessible to Slovak partners for relevant undertakings in international cooperative organisations, and these funds are sufficient for minor objectives such as the preparation of strategy blueprints. In general, however, the funding comes from the participants themselves. The amounts can at best cover the operating expenses, but they rarely permit for instance the preparation of a joint development plan. In any case, several development plans have been already completed on both sides of the Euroregion depending on who happened to have access to the required resources. This is unfortunate since the general requirement of joint regional management calls for the joint planning and for the subsequent realisation of a single common plan. However, most euroregions do not have independent, self-sustaining organisations. It is only in cases where such an organisation was in place together with people in charge who can be held accountable for its operation that significant achievements in recent years could be observed.

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SOME ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN EUROREGIONS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC ON EXAMPLE OF THE ŠUMAVA REGION

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Abstract

The complexity of the issues of cross-border cooperation in the Czech Republic is explained in this study, and it makes use of the Šumava region as an example. At the outset, a brief description of some major milestones in a relatively complicated (and sometimes not idyllic) historical development is presented: these milestones had an essential influence on the formation of the initial situation in this region in 1989. A detailed description and analysis of the subsequent (from 1989 to present) types of cooperation within the Šumava Euroregion is then presented. In the third section, the focus is turned to those functional arrangements in which mechanisms of cross-border cooperation have not been fully implemented, yet which might constitute some potential for future cross-border cooperation. The final section of the paper outlines, in a tentative fashion, possible conclusions and recommendations resulting from the case study.

Shrnutí

Některé aspekty přeshraniční spolupráce v euroregionech České republiky na příkladu území Šumavy

Předkládaný příspěvek přibližuje složitost problematiky přeshraniční spolupráce v České republice na příkladu území Šumavy. Nejprve jsou zde stručně popsány některé základní milníky poměrně komplikovaného a někdy nepřilíš idylického historického vývoje, které však měly ve studované oblasti podstatný vliv na formování výchozí situace v roce 1989. Poté následuje detailní rozbor a analýza dosavadních podob spolupráce v rámci euroregionu Šumava. V následující části je pozornost zaměřena na oblasti, ve kterých se mechanismy přeshraniční spolupráce dosud plně neprosadily, a které mohou být pro budoucí přeshraniční spolupráci perspektivní. Závěrečná část nastiňuje možné závěry a doporučení, jež vyplynuly ze studované problematiky.

Key words: euroregions, cross-border cooperation, Šumava, Czech Republic, regional development, environment protection

Motto:

„Bridges among people with no regard of state boundaries can be built only by people themselves, from below and despite of language barriers. Bridges among nations can never be built by an official resolution....“ (Sedlářová, 2006)

1. Introduction

Before 1989, many border regions in the territory of today's Czech Republic experienced an impact of either non-existing cross-border cooperation (in border regions neighbouring with Austria and West Germany) or the cooperation was poorly developed (in border regions neighbouring with Poland and former East Germany). The state border with Slovakia did not exist yet at that time. The situation dramatically changed with the fall of iron curtain, and the 1990s witnessed—partly also thanks to generous financial aid from the

European Union—a gradual development of cross-border cooperation which began to be understood in the general awareness of professional and general public as a useful instrument for the improvement of situation in the so far deprived peripheral regions. Due to these revolutionary changes the cross-border cooperation and the related issue of euroregions became relatively often discussed topics studied at present by a range of scientific disciplines. Cross-border cooperation was in post-socialist countries tackled within the framework of geographical research for example by E. Eckart and H. Kowalke (1997), V. Drgoňa (1999, 2001), I. Zemko

and J. Buček (2000), P. Spišiak (2001), M. Halás and V. Slavík (2001), M. Bufon (2002), P. Jurzcek and B. Köppen (2001), M. Halás (2005), in the Czech Republic by e.g. J. Dokoupil (1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005), M. Jeřábek (1999, 2002, 2004), M. Novotná (1993, 2001, 2002a, 2002b), J. Zapletalová (2003), J. Zapletalová et al. (2005) and P. Klusáček (2004). The region of Šumava did not belong in the past several tens of years in the group of territories rising a concentrated attention of scientific and research institutions. The situation changed after 1989. Since the beginning of the 1990s the Šumava region has been paid attention by research teams from universities in Plzeň and České Budějovice (e.g. Dokoupil, 1991, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005; Novotná, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002). The issue is also studied at the Institute of System Biology and Ecology ASCR in České Budějovice (e.g. Bartoš et al., 2004, Cudlínová et al., 1999, Kušová et al., 1999a, 2001; Těšitel et al., 2003, 2005).

The objective of the presented contribution is to elucidate on example of the Šumava region the complexity of the issue of cross-border cooperation in the Czech Republic.

The area of Šumava was chosen intentionally due to following reasons:

- The territory constitutes – namely from the physico-geographical point of view – a relatively homogeneous complex with us maintaining that the homogeneity could be the best prerequisite for applying similar principles on different border sides. It is to be added in this connexion that the high homogeneity relates to the Šumava region as a whole and can be in no case related to the Šumava Euroregion which conversely exhibits relatively considerable territorial heterogeneity. This territorial disparateness of the Šumava Euroregion is especially given by the fact that the Euroregion is a voluntary association of municipalities, towns and other legal entities with the Euroregion's membership dynamically developing in time (in case that a municipality does not pay the membership fee for a period of time, it would cease to be a member). Taking into account the above described variability of Šumava Euroregion members namely at the municipality level the authors had to somewhat simplify the studied issue. The below text will therefore concern the level of districts with the Šumava region of interest including the districts listed in Tab. 1. It should be pointed out that not all municipalities of these districts are members of the Šumava Euroregion.
- The trilateral Šumava Euroregion has been acting in the studied area since 20 September 1993 with other trilateral euroregions in the Czech Republic

(Nisa, South Moravia and Beskids) having been established on 21 December 1991, 23 June 1999 and 9 June 2000, respectively.

- The Šumava Euroregion is situated in territory that was more than 40 years hermetically partitioned by iron curtain which practically eliminated any contacts between populations on the two sides of the border. It can be therefore assumed that the development of cross-border cooperation in the Šumava territory had a more difficult starting position than for example in the Nisa or Elbe Euroregions.
- The Šumava Euroregion is situated in territory where relations between populations may be still stigmatized by certain conflicts of political nature. A certain tension on the Czecho-Bavarian border may stem from the fact that a greater part of German population displaced after World War II from the then Czechoslovakia found their homes in the federal land of Bavaria in which the association of deportees has a relatively greatest influence on local politicians. Similarly, the Czecho-Austrian border was affected after 1989 by conflicts concerning construction of the nuclear power plant in Temelín (e.g. blockades of the border crossings given a great publicity by media) whose accomplishment and putting into operation rised considerably negative feelings in a greater part of general public in Upper Austria. In this situation the Euroregion's activity naturally acquired an even greater degree of importance as all cross-border cooperation activities such as mutual meetings, joint projects etc. may efficiently help in smoothing down the conflicting edges on the Czech, German and Austrian sides of the border.
- The Šumava Euroregion area was subject to a relatively extensive field inquiry carried out by the research team from the Institute of Geonics ASCR within the project of Euroregions and their relation to territorial administration and self-government in the Czech Republic, concerned not only with the Czech part of the area under study but also with the remaining two parts in Austria and Germany.

The paper is divided into several organically interconnected and linked sections. The opening introduction into the issue is followed by a second part with a brief description of some cardinal milestones of a rather complicated and not at all idyllic historical development, which nevertheless had an essential influence in the area of interest on the formation of initial situation in 1989. The third part of the paper brings a brief analysis of landscape changes occurring in the area of interest during the 2nd half of the 20th century. The fourth section deals with the hitherto forms of cooperation within the Šumava Euroregion. The fifth section shows on example of nature conservation

issue that the mechanisms of cross-border cooperation have not been unfortunately fully asserted yet in some spheres of life. (This is why the spheres may be very

prospective with respect to the future development of various forms of cross-border cooperation).

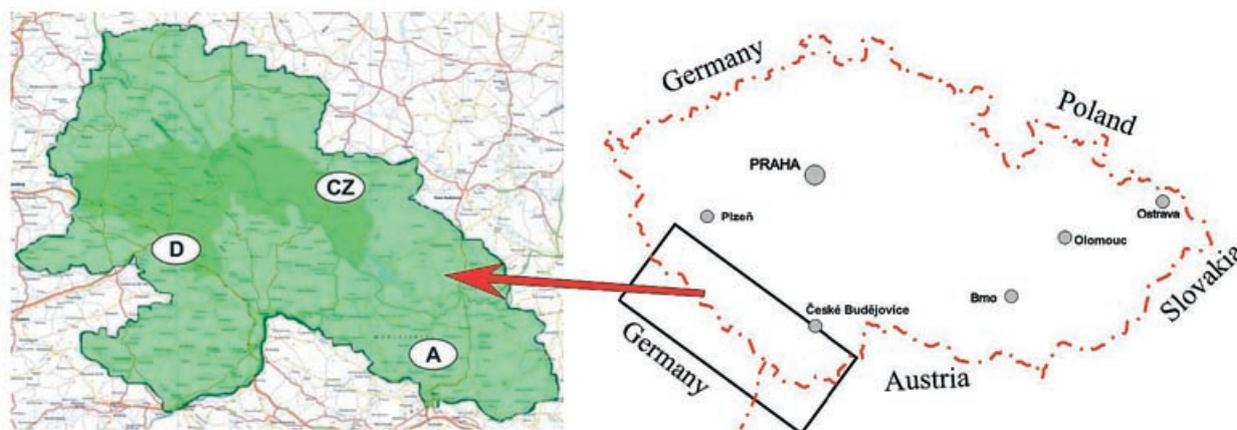


Fig. 1: Area under study

Source: <http://www.euregio.cz>

2. The influence of historical events on the current shape of investigated territory

Two main historical events in the 20th century that had a major impact on the current appearance of the investigated area were undoubtedly the evacuation of Germans and the subsequent existence of the iron curtain. The displacement of German population showed in a dramatic population decrease on the Czech side of the border. This is why the Czech part of the Šumava Euroregion has only an approximately half population density as compared with the German and Austrian parts (Tab. 1). The fact that the autochthonous German population has never been replenished despite several additional waves of resettlement is clearly demonstrated in Tab. 2 (while the districts of Český Krumlov, Prachatice, Klatovy and Domažlice had a total population of 418,404 residents in 1930, the same territory had only 257,647 inhabitants in 2001, i.e. only 61.6% of the original population in 1930).

The above historical events undoubtedly affected also the intensity and quality of the cross-border cooperation after 1989. Here we have to realize that the Czech part of the investigated area was after 1945 resettled by new settlers who could not develop contacts with their neighbours on the other side of the border due to the existence of the iron curtain (1948-1989). After 1989, mutual cooperation was undoubtedly impacted also by the language barrier (poor knowledge of German language on the Czech side of the border).

It may be added that the displacement of German population and the subsequent existence of the iron curtain had also some positive effects, most likely not intended by the then ruling regime. J. Chum (2003)

maintains that ... „the period from 1946-1989 was immensely beneficial for nature of the Czech Šumava because the displacement radically reduced inhabitants, enforcing only extensive forestry and farming, with the borderline zone and military training grounds in Prášily and Boletice closing a greater part of Šumava to civilization. Apart from this, nature protection was also contributed to by the declaration of the Šumava Protected Landscape Area in 1963, later also the Šumava National Park (1991), the UNESCO biosphere reserve (1990) and the Protected Area of Natural Water Accumulation (1978). Intensive tourism in the region developed practically only near Železná Ruda and on the northern bank of the Lipno dam lake. The introduction of lynx in Šumava dates back to 1988. The intention of introducing bear was made impossible due to the lack of interest on the part of Bavaria and Austria (a stable bear population would need a possibility of free movement across the entire Šumava territory with no respect of state borders and also a consistent protection). Thus, although being relatively little affected in 1989, the nature of Šumava was however highly vulnerable“ ...

3. Changes in the Šumava landscape in the 2nd half of the 20th century

The rapid population loss on the Czech side of Šumava (see Tab. 2) necessarily had to reflect in land use structure development. Although the enclosure of Šumava borderline zone in the period of totality could have had a beneficial effect on the nature (liquidation of villages, afforestation ...), it represented with respect to the cultural landscape originally similar on both sides of the border an undeniable hindrance to a potential cross-border cooperation.

Districts	Population in 2001	Surface area (km ²)	Population density (inhabitants/km ²)
Czech part			
Český Krumlov	59,500	1,615	37
Prachatice	51,380	1,375	37
Klatovy	87,991	1,939	45
Domažlice	58,776	1,140	52
Czech part - Total	257,647	6,070	42
German part			
Freyung-Grafenau	75,096	894	84
Passau	186,660	1,530	122
Cham	131,544	1,512	87
Regen	82,875	975	85
Deggendorf	116,235	861	135
Straubing-Bogen	96,160	1,202	80
German part - Total	688,570	6,974	99
Austrian part			
Freistadt	64,008	994	64
Perg	63,955	614	104
Rohrbach	57,909	828	70
Urfahr-Umgebung	77,742	649	120
Austrian part - Total	263,614	3,085	85
Euroregion by districts - total	1,209,831	16,128	75

Tab. 1: Population of the Šumava Euroregion

Source: Statistik Austria. Die Informationsmanager (www.statistik.at). Bayerisches Landesamt für Statistik und Datenverarbeitung (www.statistik.bayern.de). Czech Statistical Office (www.czso.cz).

Surface area	Population						
	1930	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991	2001
ČR	10,673,491	8,896,102	9,571,531	9,807,696	10,291,927	10,302,215	10,230,060
Český Krumlov	93,979	46,830	48,620	49,940	55,395	57,388	59,500
Prachatice	86,301	47,785	48,239	47,925	50,119	50,985	51,380
Klatovy	143,210	100,098	99,219	94,133	92,327	89,767	87,991
Domažlice	95,003	60,613	59,745	58,925	60,043	58,729	58,776
Czech part - Total	418,404	255,326	255,823	250,923	257,884	256,869	257,647

Tab. 2: Population development in the Czech part of the Šumava Euroregion in 1930-2001

Source: Retrospective lexicon of municipalities in CSSR 1850-1970. Statistical lexicon of municipalities in CSSR 1982. Statistical lexicon of municipalities in CSFR 1992. Statistical lexicon of municipalities in the Czech Republic 2005.

A comparison was made of data for 1959, 1994 and 2005. Being aware of the fact that the starting year for the comparison (1959) does not correspond with the period of German population displacement and that the initial data have to be therefore discounted, the authors maintain that land use changes do not occur instantly but rather at an offset. For example that the high share of farmland in the Šumava landscape in the 1960s was a reminiscence of the long-term colonization by farming population. This is why the period can be used as a starting one. A more prosaic

reason for using the period is however availability of data converted according to the new territorial administrative division in 1960 and hence their comparability¹. Another time point for the comparison is the period after the fall of the iron curtain with the year 1994² chosen for similar reasons as the year 1959. Actual data apply to year 2005³. Data included in the comparison concern the share of farmland in surface area of the districts, the share of arable land in farmland, forest land in total surface area, and the

¹ Land use data originate from the publication: Survey of the most important selected indices for regions and districts according to the new territorial administrative division. Československá statistika, skupina B, sv. 41, Státní úřad statistický, Praha, 1960, 107 pp.

² Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 1994. Český úřad katastrální a zeměměřičský, Praha, 1994, 32 pp.

³ Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 2005. Český úřad katastrální a zeměměřičský, Praha, 2006, 48 pp.

share of permanent grasslands in farmland (with the last characteristic only for years 1994 and 2005).

The first period under study (1959-1994, see Tab. 3) clearly shows trend to massive reduction of cultivated farmland in the Šumava region during the communist totality, which apparently relates to the above mentioned population loss in the region. The greatest losses of farmland are recorded in the districts of Český Krumlov and Prachatice, i.e. in areas with most difficult natural conditions for farming (over 7%). Neither new settlers from inland nor state farms organized from the centre were able to link up with the tradition of mountain agriculture (Klapka, Martinát, 2005). The farmland

structure experienced some changes, too. Although the surface area of arable land was logically decreasing, its relative share increased thus suggesting a focus of agricultural activities on growing crops (esp. cereals even at higher altitudes) at the cost of the traditional extensive rearing of farm animals (pasturage). The intensive use of piedmont areas for agricultural purposes with no respect of natural conditions was intrinsic to the then agricultural policy and the piedmont of Šumava was no exception. A somewhat different solution was found in the Prachatice district where the period witnessed a profound afforestation (from 45% to 63% of total district surface area in 1994).

District	Farmland/Total area	Arable land/Farmland	Forest land/Total area
Český Krumlov	-7.22	+7.89	-1.98
Prachatice	-7.89	+1.70	+12.68
Klatovy	-4.46	+2.53	-1.30
Domažlice	-2.31	+2.08	+2.84
Total	-5.56	+4.00	+2.46

Tab. 3: Changes in land use shares in districts of the Czech part of the Šumava Euroregion in the period 1959-1994 (in per cent)

Source: Survey of the most important selected indices for regions and districts according to the new territorial administrative division 1960. Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 1994.

After the fall of the iron curtain the land use in Šumava returns at least partly to its more natural structure. Arable land is in unfavourable natural conditions replaced by permanent grasslands. An extreme case is the district of Český Krumlov with nearly a fifth of arable land reduction in 1994-2005 (see Tab. 4). The extensive husbandry of farm animals comes back to Šumava, too

(Fig. 2 – see cover p. 2). The traces of socialist agriculture are nevertheless felt until today in the Šumava landscape – apart from the above mentioned arable land occurring at higher elevations and farmland consolidated into large complexes this also applies to the large-scale facilities of partly unused and devastated state farms and related environmental risks.

District	Farmland/Total area	Arable land/Farmland	Permanent grassland/ Farmlands	Forest land/Total area
Český Krumlov	+0.04	-18.20	+18.23	+0.74
Prachatice	-0.03	-8.20	+8.12	+0.22
Klatovy	-0.09	-5.22	+5.13	+0.18
Domažlice	-0.29	-2.67	+2.65	+0.28
Total	-0.08	+8.10	+8.05	+0.36

Tab. 4: Changes in land use shares in districts of the Czech part of the Šumava Euroregion in the period 1994-2005 (in per cent)

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 1994. Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 2005.

General view of land use changes in the period under study is presented in Tab. 5. The relatively least profound changes can be seen in the northern section of Klatovy district and in the district of Domažlice with relatively most favourable natural conditions for farming. Conversely, the most profound changes in the 2nd half of the 20th century are recorded in the mountain part of Šumava. Farming land area was reduced and the share of forest land markedly increased in a part of the territory.

An interesting view is offered in Figs 3 and 4 with aerial photographs (2003 – see cover p. 4) of landscapes on the Czech side of the border and in Bavaria where the settlement continuity remained preserved (in spite of a relatively significant population loss due to natural reduction but mainly by migration in the German and Austrian parts of the region in the 2nd half of the 20th century).

A new and unambiguously positive element in the landscape of mountain and piedmont regions is in the

District	Farmland/Total area	Arable land/Farmland	Forest land/Total area
Český Krumlov	-7.19	-10.32	-1.23
Prachatice	-7.92	-6.51	+12.90
Klatovy	-4.54	-2.70	-1.12
Domažlice	-2.60	-0.60	+3.12
Total	-5.65	-4.10	+2.82

Tab. 5: Changes in land use shares in districts of the Czech part of the Šumava Euroregion in the period 1959-2005 (in per cent)

Source: Survey of the most important selected indices for regions and districts according to the new territorial administrative division 1960. Statistical Yearbook of Land Resources of the Czech Republic 2005.

period after 1990 the phenomenon of organic farming (Klapka, Martinát, 2005). Environment-friendly methods of farming are applied in Šumava on approximately 13% of farmland (2003) with the greatest share (up to a third) in the eastern section of the studied region⁴. It is particularly in these activities combined with the soft forms of tourism where a future can be seen for the Šumava cultural landscape. Spread of knowledge, innovations, experience and awareness of land use opportunities and limitations on the Czech side of Šumava should be paid more attention in Euroregion's activities.

4. Development of cross-border cooperation within the Šumava Euroregion

According to the proclamation of its representatives the Šumava Euroregion aims at gradually becoming a guarantor for the preservation and enhancement of living conditions in the entire region, development of economy, strengthening of mutual cooperation and coordination of activities with other regions, building of infrastructure reaching beyond the region boundaries and integration of the region into activities of the European Union (Statute of the Šumava Euroregion). Activities of the Šumava Euroregion association is to lead to the enforcement of opinions and concerns of municipalities and towns in the region and to facilitate developmental trends in the region. They are focused on cross-border cooperation in the field of economy, agriculture and forestry, labour and social affairs, tourism, environment protection and infrastructure development.

Active cross-border cooperation between Czech communes situated within the Šumava Euroregion with partner entities in Austria and Germany began to develop in 1993 immediately after the establishment of the euroregional association, and was further intensified after the establishment of the Šumava Regional Development Agency (Regionální rozvojová agentura RRA) in 1996.

Cross-border cooperation follows out from the partner cooperation of individual Czech municipalities, regional

associations and other legal entities with partners on the Austrian or German side of the border. Development of this cooperation is considerably supported by possibilities of withdrawing resources for individual projects that can be submitted not only by municipalities and towns but also by other actors of legal subjectivity (microregional associations of municipalities, schools, sports organizations and a range of other entities). It does not matter whether the individual actors are members of the Šumava Euroregion or whether they have the cross-border cooperation based on agreements outside the euroregional association.

This paper does not aim at a detailed analysis of the cross-border cooperation of individual actors. It is rather to present a general view of the different groups of cross-border cooperation projects. (A detailed picture of cross-border cooperation among municipalities in the Šumava Euroregion was studied in the Vimperk microregion within the grant project resolved by the Department of Geography at the West-Bohemian University in Pilsen – see Novotná, 2001).

During the Euroregion's existence it was possible to withdraw resources for cross-border cooperation projects from the PHARE CBC fund⁵ and later from funds of the Interreg IIIA programme.

The structure of subsidy withdrawals by individual types of PHARE CBC projects is shown in Fig. 5.

There were both large and small projects implemented within the PHARE CBC programmes such as the Common fund of small projects, small infrastructural projects, projects to support tourism, enhancement of environment quality, etc. Projects within the so called small projects are focused on the preparation of publicity brochures to advertise the Šumava Euroregion or its individual parts, on the construction of cycling tracks, nature trails, border crossings for hikers. There are also some projects focused on environment improvement.

Large projects aided from the resources of PHARE CBC to be mentioned for example are projects focused on environment enhancement (e.g. sewage water treatment plants in Bělá pod Radbuzou-Železná and for 16

⁴ Data provided by Kontrola ekologického zemědělství, o.p.s. (www.kez.cz).

⁵ PHARE CBC – PHARE Cross Border Cooperation

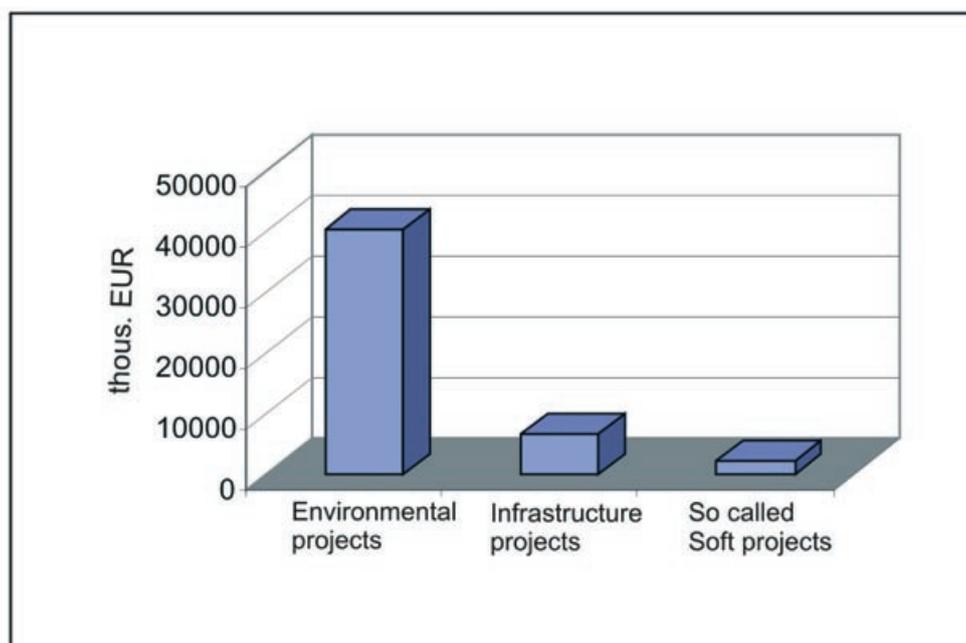


Fig. 5: Withdrawal of subsidies from the PHARE programmes in the Šumava Euroregion in the period 1996-2003
Source: RRA Šumava

municipalities forming the Chodská League association, or a cross-border project for the reconstruction of railway station in Železná Ruda⁶). Another of large projects funded from PHARE CBC was in the field of tourism the project „Šumava – Promotion of tourism“ within the framework of which a Eurocamp was constructed in Běšiny (CR) in 2001. Funded from the SAPARD programme, one of the most modern educational, training and information centres in Šumava was established on the Eurocamp premises. Other projects to be mentioned are the construction of backbone cycling track in the area of Lipno dam lake, the refurbishment of infrastructure in the village of Borová Lada, the construction of the Schwarzenberg floating channel museum in the village of Chvalšiny, etc. An example of international cooperation in building civic (tourist) infrastructure (this time without any support from EU) can be the reconstruction of indoor swimming pool in the German town of Bayerisch Eisenstein (next to the state border) which was contributed to by the Pilsen Region at 50 thousand EUR and by the town of Železná Ruda at 10 thousand EUR. Unfortunately, the swimming pool did not serve the public long and was sold by the owner (town Bayerisch Eisenstein) due to its unprofitable operation and later closed by the new owner. Thus, the investment was in vain and it may be expected that the example will reflect adversely in the interest of both Czech and German parties to invest into joint projects of common infrastructure.

The whole territory of the Euroregion has the best prerequisites for tourism, which can be documented by the fact that there are several important tourist

centres there of supra-regional character (Fig. 6 – see cover p. 2).

Individual legal entities can apply at present for a financial support of cross-border cooperation grants from the Iterreg IIIa Disposition Fund. Fund administrator for Czech-Bavarian and Czech-Austrian borderlands is the Šumava Regional Development Agency. In the period (2004-2006) of possible withdrawals from this fund there were more than 200 projects aided by more than 600 thousand EUR. The structure of withdrawals is illustrated in Fig. 7.

Most projects financed from the Disposition Fund are focused on culture and sports (for all for example various meetings of natives in Chrastavice, Nezdice na Šumavě, Borová Lada, etc.), cooperation of partner towns (e.g. Dobřany and Obertraubling in cultural events and Běšiny and Lalling in sports events). These projects are very important for the mutual learning of people „on the other side of the border“. An important group consists of projects concerned with activities focused on the development of tourism and its advertising. For all e.g. the Topographic Guide in Šumava and Bavarian border landscapes (project implemented by Šumava Regional Association), the map of cycling tracks in the Klatovy-Cham borderland area (published by the town of Klatovy), preparation and publicity of travel trade fair (organized by the town of Plzeň) or projects focused on young people (e.g. Cooperation of young generation for a Border-Free Europe – with grant holder being the primary school in Prachatice). Beneficial after the accession of Czech Republic in the European

⁶ The building of railway station in Železná Ruda is cut through by the state border with one portion of the building standing in the German territory and the other in the Czech Republic (Opravil 2006).

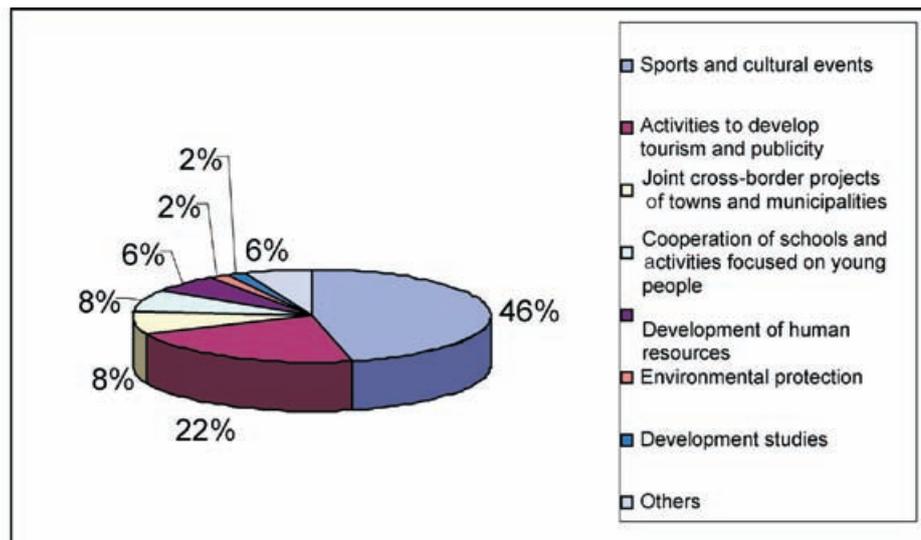


Fig. 7: Projects in the Šumava Euroregion aided from the Disposition Fund in 2005-2006
Source: RRA Šumava

Union are also projects focused on the development of human resources (educational projects – e.g. Border-Free Accounting organized by the Šumava Euroregion, Development of education for health workers – project organized by the Klatovy Hospital).

The Euroregion makes use of possibilities to withdraw resources also from other EU funds such as the fund of transport infrastructure, the fund of environment, the fund for the development of rural areas, etc. Decisions on the financial support for individual projects of this type have to be however issued by respective state departments (e.g. Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Local Development, etc.).

It may be concluded that cross-border cooperation in the Šumava Euroregion has been gaining on intensity. It should be realized however that cross-border cooperation in the Šumava Euroregion started to develop later than for example in the Egrensis, Elbe or Nisa Euroregions. Cross-border activities of the Šumava Euroregion are at present comparable with the intensity of cross-border cooperation of the above mentioned euroregions. The Euroregion participates in publicizing an internet periodical named Messenger to present crucial events held within the Euroregion. In 2007, the Šumava Euroregion will actively participate in the preparation of the Bavarian Regional Exhibition 2007 to be held in the town of Zwiesel. One of current activities of the Euroregional association is intermediation between the German health insurance company AOK and the Czech health insurance company VZP about possibilities of cross-border cooperation in health services.

5. Cooperation in the field of nature protection

With respect to the marginality of the Euroregion under study and the high degree of forestation there are relatively valuable nature areas to be found there

of which most profound is a system of national parks with adjacent protected landscape areas (PLA) Šumava-Bayerischer Wald. The Czech part of the Euroregion is also reached by the PLA Blanský les Forest. Proposed has been also the PLA Novohradské hory Mts. The Naturpark Nordwald-Großpertholz has been decreed on the Austrian side of the Novohradské hory Mts.

As far back as 31 August 1999 a so called Memorandum was ceremonially signed at ministerial level on mutual cooperation of the Šumava National Park and the Bayerischer Wald National Park putting both signatory powers under obligation of joint implementation of the target mission of the two national parks consisting in the establishment of monitoring plots to study the natural development of unmanaged forest, the spontaneous evolution of unaffected nature, in the introduction of autochthonous plant and animal species, and enhanced communication with local population. The Memorandum was in fact realized only at a limited extent. A reason being the fact that nature protection opinions and views were entirely different on the two sides of the border. The administration of the neighbouring park considered the Bayerischer Wald National Park a place where concerns of nature should be preferred while the Šumava National Park administration enforced a so called active forest protection. Contacts between the two parks were therefore often only formal. A breaking point in the mutual cooperation was year 2004 when the management of the Šumava NP experienced personal changes. The German and Czech parties appointed a new steering group (gremium) for cooperation and agreed that the goal of efforts for both partners should be a gradual harmonization of management on both sides of the border and perhaps even the establishment of a cross-border biosphere reserve in the future. According to the press spokesman of the Šumava NP Administration the „main sense of the cross-border

cooperation should become wildlife protection in both parks, scientific research and creation of qualitative infrastructure for visitors such as nature trails, tourist guides or information centres“. The main source of finance for joint projects should be EU funds combined with the budgets of the two parks.

Unfortunately it is not always that a cooperation in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection functions well. The main reason is likely to be seen in different views of regional development in relation to nature conservation. While the German and Austrian parties of the Euroregion have a relatively strong



Fig. 8: Cableway to the highest peak of Šumava – the Gross Arber (1,457 m a.s.l.) is a frequently used argument for the construction of similar facilities on the Czech side of the border (Photo: S. Martinát)

„green feeling“ of local politicians and a further regional development is subordinated to the concerns of nature conservation, the Czech party often struggles with a quite opposite attitude (when regional development is given preference at the cost of nature conservation). Reasons to the situation should be sought in the past. Any development was blocked at the time of iron curtain and a logical consequence after the opening of state borders and border regions from the Czech side was a start of turbulent economic development, namely in tourism, which was considerably slowed down by decreeing the Šumava National Park. The German and Austrian parties went through natural development with a lot of projects coming to existence, criticized today such as cableway to the highest Šumava mountain peak– the Gross Arber etc. Later on the development of tourism built rather on the saving principles and it can be hardly expected that projects of that kind could find assertion

in valuable parts of the national park today. The Czech party however did not pass through the development and a number of local politicians call for a reduction of the national park area size in order to facilitate intensive commercial use of forests and a „mass“ development of tourism (construction of ski slopes, lifts, hotels and roads, parking lots etc.). The main argument is creation of new jobs for local people and hence prevention to the outflow of young people from the region. On the one hand it is necessary to provide for economic development and sufficient supply of jobs for the local community, and on the other hand it is essential that valuable natural localities are preserved for future generations. Economic growth is needed and desirable but development plans or projects appearing economically favourable at first sight are not always profitable. Therefore, a basic prerequisite for sustainable development in the region is to assure a so called internalization of external costs and benefits

(Primack, Kindlman, Jersáková, 2001). Although a new sawmill may bring increased logging activities and a new ski area may bring instant profit to stake holders, the costs do not include additional expenditure incurred by the destruction of environment. This is why all larger interventions in the landscape should be subject to a cost/benefit analysis, i.e. to a complex comparison of values to be created by the project and values to be lost due to the project implementation (Perrings, 1995). And it should be exactly the Euroregion that should play the role of intermediary in the mutual exchange of experience for sustainable cross-border cooperation in nature conservation and landscape protection.

6. Conclusion

The Šumava Euroregion is one of euroregions in which considerable effort and good will are needed for mutual understanding between people living on the opposite sides of the border. The displacement of German population from Czechoslovakia after World War II, the additional settlement of border landscape from the inland of the former Czechoslovakia and often also by Czech expellees from various corners of Eastern and Southern Europe, the centrally planned economy in Czechoslovakia with no possibility of developing private businesses, collectivization of agriculture, creation of iron curtain and irreconcilable political propaganda were the cause of practically absolute discontinuation of social and economic contacts between the local worlds before and behind the iron curtain.

It follows that due to the above reasons there were hardly any previous contacts to link with after 1990 and cross-border partner contacts had to be built once again from the very beginning. Natural conditions being very similar in the Czech, German and Austrian parts of the Euroregion, standard of living and business experience are considerably different until now. While economic conditions are relatively stable for a long time in the Austrian and German parts of the Euroregion, the population of the Czech part of the Euroregion has to learn how to do business, how to face unemployment, bankruptcies of some industrial enterprises, changes in the character and intensity of agricultural and

forest production. Remoteness of the Czech part of the Euroregion from the main traffic arteries, poor accessibility of centres, various restrictions of economic activities due to the existence of the Šumava National Park and the Šumava Protected Landscape Area undoubtedly represent certain objective hindrances standing in the way to some other developmental plans and activities. These objective factors are likely to be overcome with the assistance of developmental strategies at all levels (Czech Republic, cohesion regions NUTS II, local authorities – namely municipalities and business entities) and the rational use of financial funds and subsidised from the European Union, in order to find a certain compromise between the needs of regional development (regional sustainability) on the one hand and the environment protection on the other hand.

From this point of view, the existence of the Euroregion and the Euroregion's activities focused on the cooperation with partners on the other side of the border (nature conservation, contacts of institutional, business and social character) and the building of functioning work contacts (starting from the level of local self-government authorities and public administration up to the level of central government authorities of the Czech Republic) are crucial for its further development. The activities help to do away with the long-time handicap of non-existing local cross-border cooperation in 1948-1989, similarly as with the language and mental barriers. Interviews made in the Euroregion show that a concrete cross-border cooperation of communes, schools, cultural and sports organizations has been bringing first results in the mutual breaking of animosities accumulated in the course of history. Forms of cooperation and their intensity will always depend on a „personal commitment“ of individual actors. A great emphasis is put on the cooperation of schools (exchange of students, lectures, scholarships, joint research projects etc.) and on joint cultural and sports activities. It should be admitted that not all promising plans have been successfully realized. Nevertheless, good neighbourly relations are to be supported not only by local actors but also by the general economic and political strategy of country in which the cross-border cooperation is implemented.

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EDITORIAL

Dear reader,

the editorial board of the Moravian Geographical Reports would like to inform you that the legal and economic form of the Institute of Geonics was in January 2007 transformed from allowance organisation engaged in research to Public Research Institution (in Czech: veřejná výzkumná instituce – v. v. i.) pursuant to Act of the Czech Republic no. 341 of 28 July 2005 on public research institutions.

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Fig. 2: Euroregional cooperation of the counties

I.: Interregio; II. The Hajdú-Bihar–Bihor Euroregion; III. The Miskolc–Kosice Euroregion; IV.: The Mura–Drava Euroregion; V.: The Triple-Danube-area Euroregion; VI.: The Neogradiensis Euroregion.

Source: Own work. Map: GFK Macon

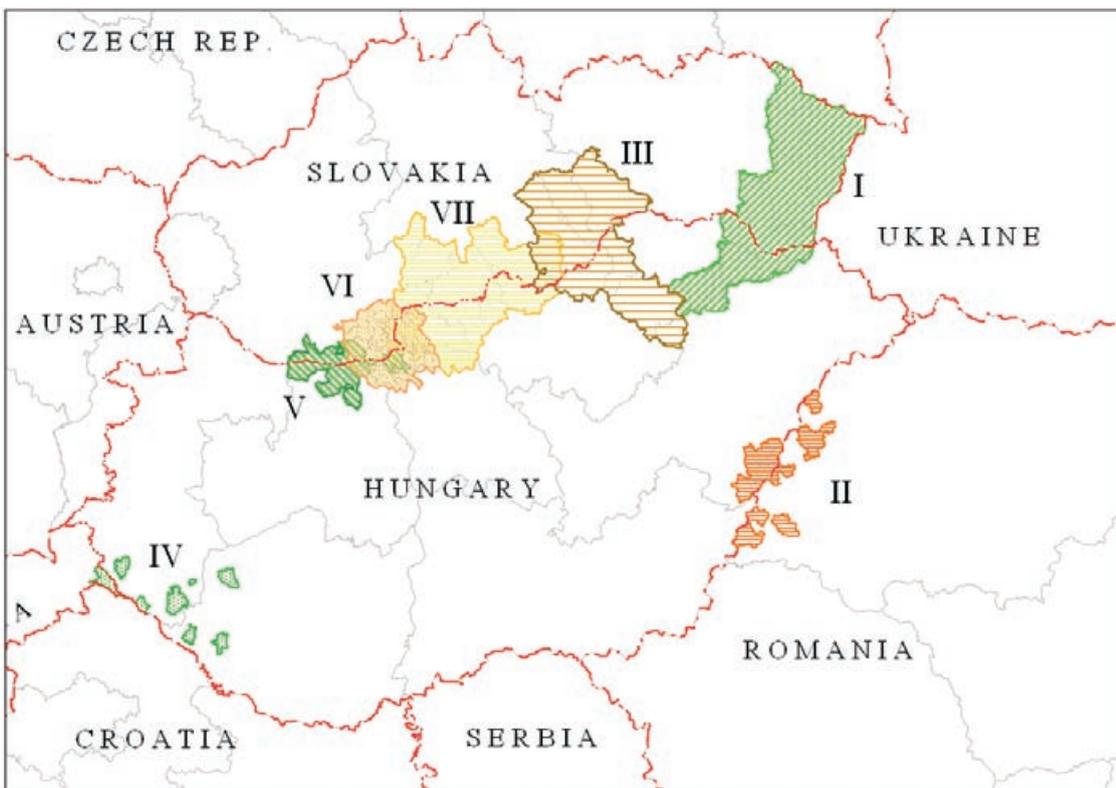


Fig. 3: The organisations of municipalities and micro-regions

I.: The Zemplén Euroregion; II.: Bihar-Bihor; III.: The Sajó–Rima Euroregion; IV.: The Drava–Mura Euroregion; V.: The Danube Euroregion; VI.: The Ister-Granum Euroregion; VII.: The Ipel Euroregion.

Source: Own work. Map: GFK Macon

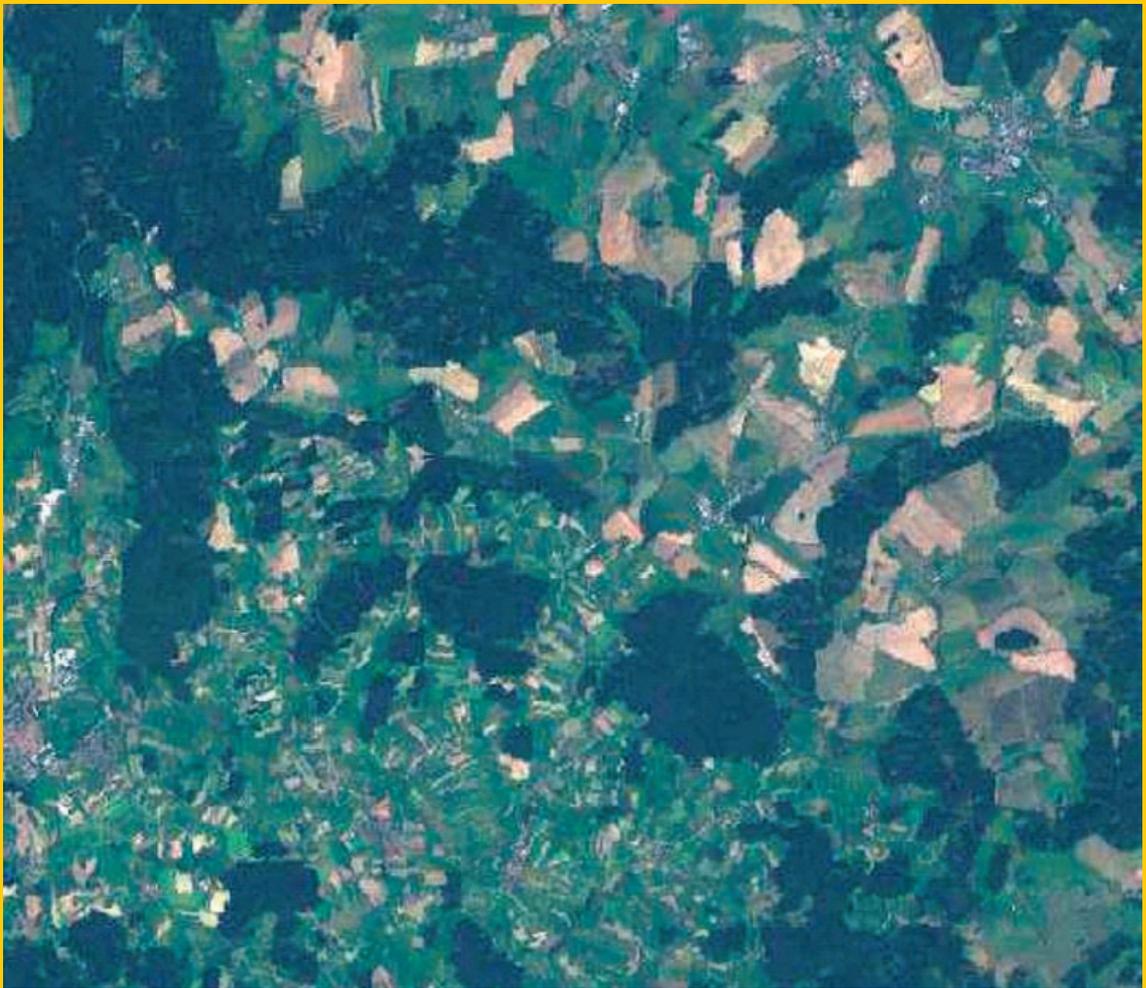


Fig. 3: Czech and Bavarian landscapes of Šumava in the surroundings of the Všerubský mountain pass (orthophoto 2003)

Source: (www.mapy.cz)

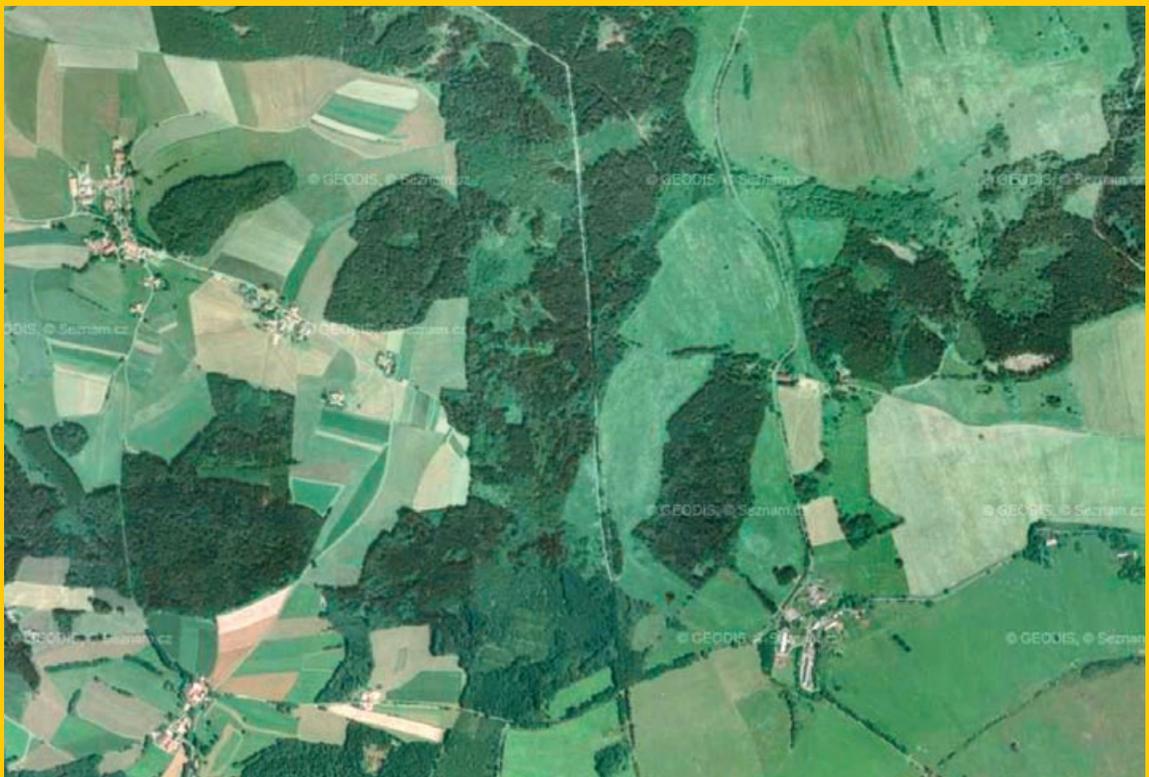


Fig. 4: Czech and Bavarian landscapes of Šumava in the surroundings of border villages Fleky and Hofberg (orthophoto 2003)

Source: (www.mapy.cz)