

DEVELOPING POSSIBILITIES OF THE EUROREGION BIHOR –HAJDU BIHAR

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Abstract

This paper proposes to show some features of the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu Bihar, afterwards yielding from them, but also from the existing situation in the two districts, Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar to make a SWOT analysis of all the elements that can influence the development of the euro-region and of the zones that compose it. At the same time I hadn't omitted the possible impediments which, if they would not be removed or reduced finally they could lead to the slowness of the developing process or even to the below development of the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu Bihar.

1 Short historic

The euro-region Bihor-Hajdu Bihar is the newest euro-regional structure of trans-frontier cooperation, situated in the north-west part of Romania, in the Romanian-Hungarian trans-frontier area. Consequently, in this chapter we will show the most interesting dates concerning this euro-region. The inhabitants that are living here are very interested of them. Unfortunately, a problem with which we confronted in collecting information was the lack of different materials published on the theme of historic of the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu Bihar, many dates being in Hungarian language. We decided to stop at two authors, whom in their works were preoccupied of this subject, is about the teachers Alexandru Ilieș from the University of Oradea and Suli Zakar Istvan from the University of Debrecen. In their books, we found dates about the appearance of this euro-region, about the elements which stood at the basis of this association between the districts Bihor and Hajdu Bihar and about a description of the two districts starting from the settlement and ending with the economic features.

Therefore, the paragraphs that follow represent a synthesis of the studied materials of the two teachers, with the mention that the paper of the teacher Suli Zakar Istvan was translated from Hungarian language, the author having the duty of remaking the initial translation from its gross form, being understood by the readers.

The first association between the two frontier districts had place in 1997 as part of another structure of trans-frontier cooperation, of much bigger dimensions, which is The Euro-region Carpatica and which includes administrative-territorial unites from the five countries.

The big territorial extension of Euro-region Carpatica, the inclusion in its area of a population which overtakes the entire population of some associated countries (Hungary, Slovakia), situation that can have major implications in the organization of a coherent functional system is an argument, which is at the basis of the constitution of some new trans-frontier Euro-regions which are smaller, with an increasing functionality, resulted from the bilateral association of some territorial-administrative structures belonging to some countries.[4]

The idea of the disappearance of the Romano-Hungarian frontier and the adhesion of Romania to the U.E. in 2007 had constituted two important factors that stood on the basis of the realization of this euro-region. As a result, the point from which had started when it was decided the association of the two districts, Bihor and Hajdu Bihar into an organization of trans-frontier cooperation was the desire of the local authorities to reinforce the economic connections from one side and from the other one of the frontier and in the same time was intended the introduction of the two district residences, Oradea and Debrecen, in a common program of development.[4]

At the basis of constitution of the euro-region were many factors, some of them being positives and others negatives (the negative factors are the different elements that make more difficult the vicinity between the two areas). The elements that bring nearer the two districts and that had a decisive role in the realization of trans-frontier cooperation would be the next ones:[1]

- the human part is characterized by numerical equilibrium and in what concerns the ethnical part, we have a dominant Romano-Hungarian structure which is characterized by living together on a long length the local majorities and minorities;
- natural resources and anthropologic edifices are numerous;
- complement natural environment determine a large diversity of landscapes;
- a significant number of human resources, determined by the presence of universities of Oradea and Debrecen, confers to the personnel a high degree of specialization;
- in the trans-frontier development is preserved the local element;
- the existence of transport corridors and European communication lines;
- a large number of frontier crossing points;
- the position of frontier crossing points in international system on important European road corridors (E 60), which wander through the two countries on the way east-west;
- three frontier crossing points on the railway;
- the presence of airports from Oradea and Debrecen, both assuring links on international routes.

However there were found also a series of differentials between the two areas, which are:[1]

- on the politico-administrative part, we can mention: the fiscal, settlements in the social domain, prices, wages, social contributions, technical standards, coins;
- in the cultural and social domain: aspects concerning the language, traditional holidays;
- in the economic domain is about the creation of subsidiaries, jobs, unemployment, services;]
- also, on commercial aspect there are some differentials, exactly we refer at the high tide of merchandises on the one way;
- the absence of an informational background which could approach the potential of cooperation between the Romanian and Hungarian partners;
- the existence of an experience in what concerns the trans-frontier cooperation which is more reduced in the Romanian part than in the Hungarian one, because the Hungarian part unrolls a relation like this one with the Austrian part, for a long period of time;
- the process of demographic ageing of the rural population both in Bihor and in Hajdu Bihar.

The two residence towns, Oradea and Debrecen are also characterized by common elements and distinct features.

Thus, Oradea is known as being one of the biggest cities of Romania, but however, important cities from Ardeal, like Cluj, Târgu Mureş are in front of it in what concerns the development. On the other side, Debrecen with a population of 210.000 of inhabitants after the last census is the most populated city of province, being one of the seven regional centers from Hungary.

Another problem that occurred in the two cities after 1990 was the decreasing town-planning. The teacher Suli Zakar mentioned in this sense that for Oradea, passing to the market economy was slowly, because were stopped the constructions of new headquarters and the process of industrialization. The process of industrialization meant the migration of the population from the cities to rural zones, villages and communes. As a consequence of reducing the labor market, a part of the youth leaved the city and because of this fact, the population had diminished with about 20.000 of inhabitants in the period 1992-2002.[4]

Almost in the same situation is also Debrecen which after 1990 had registered a diminish of the population, but not in the proportion of that registered in Oradea. The diminish of birth rate can be explained also by the diminish of the number of jobs, a part of the unemployed workers choosing to migrate to other places. However, the appearance of unemployment was better administrated in Debrecen than in Oradea, because only 1.200 persons leaved the city in the period 1991-2002, on the other side 20.000 of persons leaved from Oradea in the same time. Another factor of decreasing town-planning was the desire of some people to retreat in limitrophe localities of the two cities, because of the lower price of the buildings and even for the silence from these zones.[4]

The teacher Alexandru Ilieş, in the part of his work named *Romania. Euro-regions* dedicated to the appearance of this form of cooperation, mentions the fact that the act of establishment of Euro-region Bihor-Hajdu Bihar was signed on the 11th of October 2002 in Oradea by the presidents of District Council Bihor from Oradea and of Local Self-governing of Hajdu- Bihar district from Hungary. It is an euro-regional structure of trans-frontier cooperation made up by the association of administrative-territorial unities of different ranks, like are the districts and the inferior structures as towns, cities, communes and localities. In the category of the founding members with the public institutions (councils and town halls) are associated the nongovernmental organizations.[1]

Also, in what concerns the juridical base of this association, we have to mention that the basic element is *The Treaty of agreement, cooperation and good vicinity between Romania and Hungary* which was signed by the two countries on the 16th of September 1996 in Timișoara at which are added other documents with national character or U.E. settlements.[1]

2 Strategies for the next development of the euro-region

After we talked about the historic part, now we will debate some of the elements that we consider important for obtaining balanced and quick development of this euro-region

The first key element is the economic clusters. We decided to talk about this subject because in other countries the support of the concept by the local authorities had special results. Before we will define and explain this concept of cluster, term recently introduced in the specialized literature from our country.

If we traduce the word, than we have to say that cluster in economic sense is traduced as a group of associated companies and institutions which are working in a

common domain, situated closely from the geographic point of view being made up of producers, manufacturers, service workers, etc.[5]

In other words, we can say that these clusters are a form of economic activity which is limited in the related fields, them being formed in a period of time, therefore their appearance represented one of the significant provocations for the realization of economic development in one region.[5] If we return back in history, we can't omit the fact that the evolution of the concept cluster is related to the currents and academic schools of thinking, starting from the period of Alfred Marshall. Even Marshall in his studies mentions about the industrial regions of England from the XIX century, where these associations between the companies that shared the same activity domain were frequent. In the '80s in Italy, the term was developed through links that formed between small, but competitive affairs from this country.[5]

In the '90s, the clusters had an important role also in Holland in the region Eindhoven. Therefore, because the region was in a powerful economic decline in that period, the local authorities decided to develop a program named STIMULUS who was based on clusters, through which groups of small and medium firms had received funds for the development and for the realization of new products. The idea that stood behind these clusters was that the economy could be sustained if the regional firms would invest in innovation, in development and promotion of new products, in this way it was wanted the reinforcement of the region. From 1994 to 2005 in the region Eindhoven were formed almost 100 clusters, and from the results of these forms of collaboration we can mention:[3]

- $\frac{3}{4}$ from all the clusters had developed a new product and they introduced it successfully on the market
- About three parts from the participating companies had registered an increasing with 20% of the affair number or of the profit obtained from the new product
- Almost 80% from the companies maintain relationships with one or more partners from the cluster.

Another important thing that we want to emphasize is that the majority of companies that participated at clusters in the zone Eindhoven come from the industry of metals and electronics, in other words domains in which the region is recognized at international level for the quality of products that they offer on the market. Coming from the same region and the same industry, the firms knew about one another being members of trade. In the same time we can say that innovation is a thing that the firms prefer to make it common than on the free way, because it is expensive, its gain is uncertain and can affect the competition between the companies.

As a result, we sustain the idea that in this region, the local authorities have to take into account the support of forming clusters between the firms from the two districts and between firms from the same field, but situated on the one side and the other of the frontier. In addition, it should take in consideration the specialization of each district and to make a cooperation between firms where exists required resources for having superior economic results. If we start from the experience of the countries mentioned above, an important point is the investment in research and innovation for having value to the level of regional economy.

The clusters can be formed in many domains, so we consider that the factors involved, that are the firms, local public authorities would have to identify the fields that are in difficulty in the present and to come with measures by which to encourage such associations.

All these measures have to have at the basis some strategies of sustaining the development of local economy on the basis of the clusters through:[5]

- Identification programs of the zones with potential of firms' agglomeration in the future and of sustaining the acceleration of this process to high technologies
- Programs which give assistance to the relationship between academic and research fields and the firms from one zone
- Programs of assisting the IMMs
- Programs of regional marketing, because in the present through these agglomerations there are competitions not only between firms but also between regions
- The branch or regional Marketing as aggressive as possible.

At all the measures mentioned above, we can also add another measures of encouraging the development of local economy, namely:[5]

- No repayment finances in big number
- Subsidized loans usually used for the present producers
- Fiscal facilities
- Affair incubators
- Consulting and training for the small and medium enterprises
- Ethnic support offered to the companies
- Support for the establishment of new companies
- Investments in new technologies
- The development of one complete strategy oriented on the increasing of local firms
- The assurance of a competitive local environment for the investments
- They sustain and encourage the creation of communication lines
- The encouragement of the labor development
- The improvement sustaining of the level of living.

The two districts that compose the euro-region Bihor- Hajdu Bihar are each one characterized by important points, that have to be exploited for obtaining the wanted results in what concerns the balanced development of the zone. Thus, the district Bihor presents the next positive elements:[6]

- The public transport is characterized by a good covering, having connectivity to the European networks
- The existence of a national airport with real possibilities of extension
- The organization of fairs and ethnographic manifestations
- The living together in the metropolitan area of the citizens of different nationalities
- The infrastructure of the mineral and thermic waters is relatively well developed
- The water resources, both of surface and of underground, are at a satisfying volume
- The activity in the tourism domain is well developed with places for accommodation and enough touristic agencies.

On the other side, the district Hajdu-Bihar is characterized by:

- Very well developed infrastructure in permanent extension
- High level of foreign investments
- The touristic resources are very well valorized
- A developed educational system, especially the superior one.

We also have to take into account also the wick points that we see in the two areas, points that in a certain moment can stop the development of the trans-frontier relations. The district Bihor confronts with the next problems:

- The roads network has a doubtful quality, fact that doesn't correspond to the domain standards

- Deficiencies in organizing the common transport, here we refer at endowment and the observation of a regularity, both in Oradea and in limitroph zones
- The uncaring railways; airport of reduced capacity
- Problems in what concerns the pollution, especially the norms of polluting the water, the ground, the air are frequently outrun
- Differences in the organization of the phenomenon of warehouse and the reusing of the menagerie and industrial wastes
- The lack of some functional affair incubators, that can permit the development of the contractor spirit in the zone and also the lack of some firm settlements for the firms
- The wick administration and maintenance of the historic monuments
- Traditions, trades and representative customs being about to disappear
- The adverse quality of services, sometimes occurs a lack of professionalism.

Therefore our district will have to establish some action directions for obtaining in a certain period of time a level of development which is superior to the present level. In conclusion, it will have in view the next things:[6]

- The exploitation of the active instruments of banking sustaining from the U.E. for projects;
- The realization of programs at local level which stipulates the professional reconvention of the persons who have problems, who at a certain point are in danger of losing their job;
- The accentuation of the territorial cooperation at European level;
- The exploitation of the vicinity with Hungary and the closeness of the market zone face to the other countries that are members of U.E.;
- The elaboration by the district and central authorities of programs for the development of the rural environment;
- The realization in the future of a section of highway Budapesta-Bucharest, that will pass through the district Bihor;
- The realization of partnerships between the local institutions, businessmen both from the district and from the euro-region.

Having also the experience of other countries from U.E. like: Spain, Ireland, Italy, we hope that it will be obtained the wanted results if the persons that are directly involved in the administration of the cities and of the district, namely: the city halls, the district council, the decentralised institutions will support through precise measures all the actions of the economic agents, that endorse the development of urban and rural places.

In the end, we consider that the process of development of the euro-region and also of the district Bihor will unroll at favorable parameters, if the skilled ones, that are the authorities and local institutions will elaborate a strategy on a medium term from which doesn't have to miss the next measures:

- ✓ The offering of fiscal facilities on a period of 5 years for the firms that want to invest in region
- ✓ The attraction of funds from the central budget
- ✓ The sustaining of the research and innovation activity by offering scholarships to the ones with good marks
- ✓ The firms encouragement for employ young researchers that could bring value to their activities
- ✓ The encouragement of the youth contractor spirit by making affair incubators, where they can practice their ideas with smaller expenses

- ✓ The realization of projects common with the authorities from Hajdu-Bihar which should endorse the realization of a quick way Oradea-Debrecen and also a regional airport which should serve the two districts and the limitroph localities
- ✓ The settlement of a local authority of tourism which should occupy of promoting the district tourism and the attraction of many tourists
- ✓ The increasing of direct foreign investments in the zone by the realization of as many industrial parks as possible, where to be located important firms from Europe and from the other parts
- ✓ The realization of economic clusters with the direct participation of as many companies as possible from the district Bihor and from the district Hajdu-Bihar

3 Impediments in the way of the euro-region development

If until now we presented the elements that characterize the euro-region, but also the two districts that compose this form of trans-frontier cooperation, in this part of our research we will occupy on the obstacles that can appear in the way of collaboration in the interior of the euro-region.

We want to mention these aspects, because it is very important that once identified, the ones implicated to take the necessary measures for removing them and for determining a normal and balanced development of that entity, the euro-region.

As the forms of cooperation are based on different domains, also the barriers in the way of cooperation are of different types.

First of all we will refer to the barriers from the business domain, more exactly of collaboration between the companies localized in the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar.

Still from the beginning of the '80s, the interaction between the companies situated in the interior of one euro-region, represented a very important element for the development of that zone.[2]

As a result we think that an important barrier in the evolution of this euro-region would be the lack of a tight and efficient cooperation between the firms from the two districts, fact that will have a negative effect on the markets on which they action. Therefore we will meet negative influences on the purveyor, of the clients, of human, physic and economic resources that are involved in the activity of the companies. In the moment when we will not have common projects developed by the societies from the two countries, in which should be involved more actors on one side and the other of the frontier, the development possibilities of the euro-region will be limited because there exists the risk to assist to an involution of the added value and that of the level of existence.[2]

Secondly, another significant obstacle that could put an impediment in the development of the euro-region is the lack of the access to a modern and in permanent extension infrastructure. We had brought in discussion this subject because in our opinion this euro-region will be capable to evaluate in a quick rhythm and to restrain the discrepancy that separates it from other similar zones from Europe only through a very good infrastructure, which should facilitate the links between all the locations that forms this entity. In the lack of these elements, the level of growth will be very low and on the long term we could confront with the situation that Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar to stop presenting interest for the possible investors, and the ones that are located now to be tempted to relocate their activities elsewhere. In the next chapter we will largely talk about the measures that have to be taken in this sector in order to obtain better and efficient results.

At the same time, other two impediments are those of political and cultural nature. Why did we brought into discussion these two subjects and we saw them as possible barriers that stop the evolution of this euro-region? The answer that we can give is that in

what concerns the political part the things are clear. Being about the public institutions implicated as principal actors to the constitution of the euro-region that are governed by persons implicated in the politic field, it is clear that we must have a cooperation with the partners from the one side and another of the frontier indifferently if they are or not of a political orientation. In other words, the politic regime that is at the governing of the public institutions from Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar, shouldn't be an impediment in the way of realization of common projects that have the purpose to help the local communities from the two districts. In what concerns the socio-cultural barriers, it should be said that the language is the most important problem, including the talking. Therefore the problems in the way of developing could appear as a result of the reduced possibility of communication by recognizing the official language over the frontier.

It couldn't be absent the barriers of economic-institutional nature. Here we refer at the principles of the economic system, at the stability of the monetary system from the two countries, at the legislative and fiscal system etc. all these impediments, if they aren't substantiated and harmonized, they could create problems in what concerns the cooperation between the two districts especially form the institutional point of view.

In conclusion, we can enumerate the impediments that we consider essential in the way of developing in the future the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar:

- ✓ The lack of an adequate infrastructure, exactly is about the lack of safety on the public roads because of the bad situation of them, deficiencies in what concerns the links between the road networks between the two districts
- ✓ Deficiencies in what concerns the language and the vocabulary from the two districts, as well as deficiencies concerning the educational level and that of income from the zones that compose the euro-region
- ✓ Instable economic and monetary systems
- ✓ Instability of the politic systems
- ✓ The precarious level of the communication technology and of logistic management
- ✓ The low level of professional calcification

4. Conclusions

From what we studied in these materials, we had identified more conclusions referring to the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar, conclusions that allowed us to form an opinion in what concerns the potential of this structure, especially that this part of the two countries is enough developed in comparison with others.

The euro-region was created at the initiative of local authorities from the two countries, Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar, who wanted to intensify the cooperation from one side and the other of the frontier, their common interest being the development of the area corresponding to this zone by a balanced way and in the use of its inhabitants.

From the materials of research we emphasized the fact that between the two countries that form the euro-region, exists in the present some differences in what concerns the development and the level of living. The important sectors of the economy that we analyzed, namely: the industry, the labor, the agriculture, the infrastructure, the health, etc, represent directions where should concentrate common investments of the authorities from Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar. Because we want a dynamicity of economic life from the zone, those directly involved have to take into account the new reality and the fact that the significant potential of this euro-region has to be valuable more efficiently. In this sense we end with the fact that the future of the euro-region will depend of the application of some projects which should endorse the sectors analyzed above, in other words that domains in which we can assist to a growth of resources from these zone.

In the same time we can have some important conclusions referring to the way it can value the regional politics in the euro-region Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar. As a result, we could see that the local institutions from the two districts are implicated in many projects from different domains. It is watched the balanced development of the entire euro-region, massive investments, being made in infrastructure, education, environment, tourism, culture, social but also on the business part by creating incubators and industrial parks. Very many projects watch the unrolling of some partnership between the decisive factors from the two parts of the frontier, in this way, their impact being one of the most significant one.

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