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**BEFORE SCHENGEN –
READY FOR SCHENGEN
Euroregional Organisations and New
Interregional Formations at the Eastern
Borders of Hungary**

**by
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1 Introduction

It's more than fifteen years that European regional policy and regional sciences have shifted towards political borders, the issues of borderland and transboundary co-operation. Borderland issues, the research on the dividing and connective functions of borders has vital importance in the transitional countries of East Central Europe too. The political changes of the turn of the 1980s and 1990s opened new prospects in the Carpathian Basin as well. As the 'iron-curtain' disappeared the strict dividing role of state borders seemed to decrease and the prospect of cross-border relations seemed to broaden in the Carpathian Basin. But with new perspectives, the old problems of co-operation have also been preserved.

For a long time the unlimited expansion of economic space was halted by state borders, even in the countries of the European Union. This hindered and partly slowed down the dynamism of co-operation. But this phenomenon was much more felt in the countries of central and Eastern Europe. Even with the opening of the European horizon, state borders have been preserved and with the emergence of new states the dividing role of borders, splitting internal macro-regions, country-parts and districts has become more realistic. The spatial structure of several East-European countries has become fragmented, natural relationships have been broken up, and the difficulties in making new contacts have hindered the integration of the European spatial structure. In several cases much bigger disparities have been formed among frontier regions, which is partly the result of core-periphery relations, changes in spatial structure, of differences in the socio-economic features of the areas intercepting on the border, partly of inherited and new differences. It is not accidental that the 1990s with bringing new chances for the *integration of frontier regions separated them at the same time*. These changing tendencies resulted *a mixture of disadvantageous with favourable tendencies* for cross-border co-operations (Ruttkay, É. 1995, Rechnitzer, J. 1997, 2000, Nemes Nagy, J. 1998, Horváth, Gy. 1998).

It's also true that the change of regime even if revealed some earlier problems, contradictions, fears and suspicions, has created more favourable conditions for regional co-operation in the Carpathian Basin. However, on the one hand, '...it is evident that the Pan-European integration model has no alternatives, but on the other hand, European integration is a hard, painful and very long process. Everything that may facilitate and shorten the integration process is very important for all the parties. This explains why the importance of regional co-operation has increased in East Central Europe and in the Carpathian Basin as well'. (Tóth, J. 1996).

The study of the questions, the role and importance of transboundary co-operations, the redefinition of the functions of state borders has been recognised not only by regional scientists but also by European regional policymakers, with

special regard to the current *European integration processes*. The *spatial-ethnic problems of the past* make the *European co-operation and integration* more difficult *along the borders of East Central Europe*. The *borders* where unsettled socio-economic-ethnic problems accumulate and still exist *mean considerable obstacles to globalisation and integration tendencies*. The borderlands and settlements of *Eastern Hungary* – the *'peripheries of periphery'* can be considered as such a problematic territory. As the most important mid-term objective of Hungary is *the accession to the EU*, it is of special importance that the resolutions, measures taken to reduce the current problems and tensions regarding the East Hungarian border, should contribute to the fulfilment of accession requirements. Regional sciences should assess the improvement chances of border regions from socio-economic aspects, they *should prepare for the challenges of European integration* and for the *management of the Schengen 'border syndrome'*.

Hungary's coming European accession may offer an optimistic perspective for the future but the moving of Schengen borders to East Hungary may 'drop a black shadow' on improving Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Ukrainian relations and worsen the situation of Hungarian ethnic minorities as well as inter-ethnic relations. All these verify *the special scientific and national importance of preparation for the situation following the European accession*.

2 Cross-border relations in peripheral situation

Due to Hungary's Euro-Atlantic accession, the importance of questions regarding the state and opportunities of cross-border relations, especially to their relevance to the East-Hungarian border, has significantly increased nowadays. As a future result of Hungary's accession to the European Union, the *Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border sections will be the external borderline of the EU* in the near future. The chances for neighbour countries to join to the EU in the same round with Hungary are minimal today. Thus, the *dividing role* of the border is likely to *become temporarily stronger*, because the strict stipulations of Schengen should be kept on those frontier stations that belong to the currently examined territory. The free movement of people and goods will rather be hindered than facilitated. The chance for the borderlands to improve and become strong enough in the near future to play an integrating role before the accession like *Burgenland in Austria* and *Vas and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties in Hungary* is also minimal.

The situation on the state borders of East-Hungary is worsened by the fact that very poor and underdeveloped areas are met on the two sides of border. This means that *peripheries intercept with peripheries*. (Hardi, T. 2000). By periphery we mean frontier zones situated on the 'edge' of underdeveloped rural regions under-

going through a process of double marginalisation (turning into the periphery of periphery). The East-Slovak, the Ukrainian and the Romanian frontier regions are such peripheral areas (*Rechnitzer, J. 2000*). There is a clear sign that a new large underdeveloped region is shaping up comprising the frontier zones of five East-European countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine) facing persistent problems of peripheral situation (*Gorzalak, G. 1998*). The *whole territory of the* (Carpathian Euroregion) *area is a periphery* in all countries both from sociological and economic aspects.

Due to the intensified *socio-economic deconcentration processes* after the changes in 1989 *a significant part of the Great Hungarian Plain still remained peripheral*. Certain territories within the region, borderlands at the first place became the *'peripheries of periphery'* – according to the proper expression of József Tóth and partly Ferenc Erdősi (*Erdősi, F. 1988, Erdősi, F.–Tóth, J. ed. 1988, Tóth, J. 1988*). A complex survey comprising interviews carried out within the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* and the *Hungarian–Romanian* frontier zones in 199 settlements of the North-Eastern Hungarian Plain (Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties) have verified this opinion. (*Baranyi B. ed. 2001, Baranyi, B.–Balcsók, I.–Dancs, L.–Mező, B. 1999*). The results of the survey also show that the whole 137 km Hungarian–Ukrainian and the 448 km Hungarian–Romanian border section have the same features of their hinterland, the Great Hungarian Plain. However, the urbanised areas on the north-eastern Hungarian border bear all the marks of a peripheral region, with far lower development indicators than the national average or their adjoining internal core areas. (*Ruttkay, É. 1995*).

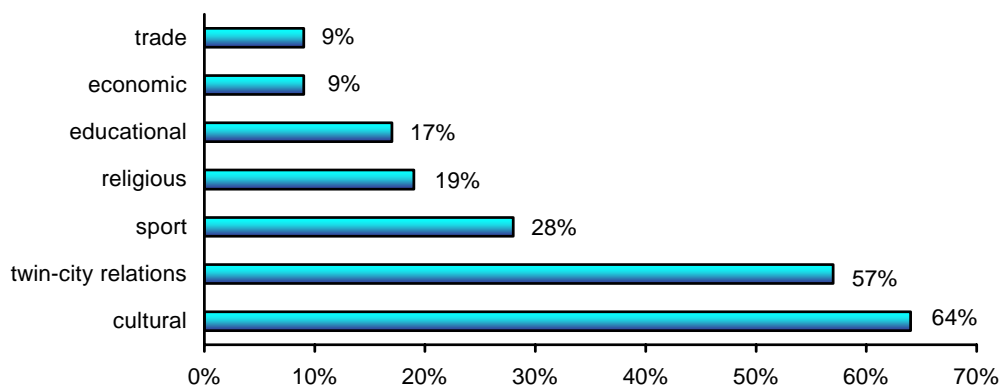
Thus, the majority of border regions on the *East-Hungarian* border are *still underdeveloped*, especially on the Ukrainian and Romanian sectors of North-Eastern Hungary. Due to *historic and other previously formed unfavourable macro- and micro-economic factors*, (one-sided economic structure, low incomes, heavy shortages of venture capital, deep unemployment crisis) the absence of viable economic programmes, poor infrastructure and transport system, and the very slow development of cross-border co-operation, the opening up of state borders has crucial importance for Hungary and its neighbours. Today *borderland situation, rural character, acute shortages of foreign capital and unemployment crisis* are all crying for the development of marginal peripheral areas and settlements. *The dissolving of the rigid separating role of borders* and the spiritualization of the East Central European borders are basic *national interests* of Hungary, and its neighbours. This is particularly true for those problem regions that are separated by the Hungarian–Ukrainian and the Hungarian–Romanian borders (*Baranyi, B. 1999*).

Regarding the EU integration, the development of peripheral areas, micro-regions, districts, settlement-groups and settlements will be of crucial importance in the near future. However, in the *Hungarian–Slovakian, Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Ukrainian* frontier regions the necessity of establishing cross-

border relations is rather more a recognition than a result of live transboundary co-operation projects. This statement is verified by the quantity and quality of co-operation projects: *while the ratio of economic, commercial and educational programmes is low, the dominance of cultural, twin-settlement, sport and other less important relations can be observed (Figure 1).*

Figure 1

The characteristics of cross-border relations of the borderland settlements



Source: Data from a questionnaire survey. Debrecen Group of the Alföld Research Institute CRS HAS.

All in all, the results of the survey verified our former presumption that the cross-border relations of the *local authorities in the North-Eastern Great Plain are not significant today either in quantity or in quality.* The small amount of official relations that exist are usually formal and protocol *twin-city, cultural and sport relations.* However, the improvement would be important especially in the field of business and trade, even if the peripheral situation and the handicapped position of the territory makes it more difficult for both partners to build new relations. *The weak intensity of cross-border relations is explained by the minor role of the economic sector in cross-border co-operations.* (Baranyi, B.–Dancs, L. 2001).

Hungary is one of the countries in East Central Europe with the most open economy. The central position it holds in the Carpathian Basin and the national economic targets demand general openness of border. In spite of this, the borders around the north-eastern Great Plain – unlike the Austrian and Slovenian ‘open border’ – are absolutely not open. (Rechnitzer, J. 1990, Hardi, T. 2000). Despite

their borderland situation the peripheral north-eastern borders of Hungary hardly ever get in contact with the international economy. The opening of north-eastern borders is Hungary's basic interest considering its NATO-membership and the forthcoming EU membership.

It also should be noted that the efforts for opening up borders require active co-operation on both sides of border. Unfortunately, the large number of *Hungarian minorities in the territories annexed to the neighbouring countries by the border corrections of Trianon* arises problems for the solution of this issue. Some of the political leaders of Hungary's neighbouring countries regard closer co-operation between Hungary and the Hungarians beyond the borders as minorities dangerous and so they try to hinder the process of border opening. Since the political changes in 1989 the expectations of the countries in the Carpathian Basin for the intensification of cross-border relations have several times failed even on the eastern borders of Hungary. In fact the permeability of borders did not improve significantly and very often this question arises several problems, difficulties and conflicts. The number of cross-points especially for international and freight transport is still too few. (Dancs, L. 2001).

3 Euroregional organisations – macro-regions

What possibilities do *euroregional organisations* offer for the development of transboundary relations and co-operations? It's a great advantage that regional organisations are not limited to past and present borders, so they may integrate several regions across countries. As the development and closing-up of backward frontier regions enjoy priority within the EU, co-operation is a must for cross-border organisations to take collective actions. Within the East-European EU candidate countries international euroregional co-operation is of great importance (this is also recognised by the launch of PHARE CBC Programme) as it may influence the tendencies of international political relations significantly and may strengthen the cohesion of frontier regions involved in regional co-operation through their co-ordination activities.

The institutional framework of cross-border co-operation, regarding all the Hungarian border sections, has already been established. Since the signature of the *Madrid Agreement (1980)* a kind of co-operation fever has been swept along the borders of Hungary. The spontaneous feature and the great number of new formations are reflected by the large number of problems they must face during their efforts for a successful partnership. The excessive size of corporate structure, the oversized number of actors, the too schematic and too general objectives and the low level of funding are such problems. For all that, it is the only euroregional or-

ganisation scheme (not bordered by the EU but authorised for the utilisation to use this term) that has so far become the major umbrella organisations within the official institutional system of cross-border co-operation in East Central Europe. On the basis of size, territorial organisation, spatial structure and external relations two major euroregion models can be distinguished. One is the so-called *macro-regional model* the other is the *micro-regional model*. The first may be referred as provincial or county model, which is based on extensive euroregional organisations integrating medium-level spatial organisations, provinces, regions (NUTS 2 level) and counties (NUTS 3 level) of two or more neighbouring states (the Carpathian Euroregion is such an example). The second may be referred as *urban agglomeration model*, is much more based on direct, bilateral *micro regional* (NUTS 4 level) or inter-urban, inter-settlement (NUTS 5 level) relations, establishing stronger correlations within the spatial units of region but preserving the majority of the strategic elements of the micro regional model (The Interregio, Bihar-Bihor Euroregion are such examples) (Rechnitzer, J. 1997).

Euroregions, the fundamental institutional frameworks of cross-border co-operation, look back to a long-time tradition in Western Europe but in East Central Europe the political changes and the intensification of the Euro-Atlantic accession process have also intensified cross-border relations. The government of an integrating continent is much easier through an integrated spatial economic unit structure and *euroregions are special geographical frameworks of cross-border co-operation*. At the same time euroregions are the *highest-level institutions of cross-border co-operation* with the widest authority scope and functions. According James Scott (1996) the main objective of euroregions is their recognition as international organisations managing their region's economic, environmental, social, cultural and other institutional problems. It is hoped that the concentration of these activities on euroregional level would grow to such a critical mass (in economic sense), which will strengthen the cohesion among frontier regions, which will attract private and institutional investors into the region (Rechnitzer, J. 1999).

Thus, *euroregions* may be defined as traditional and the most effective institutional frameworks of cross-border co-operation working on the *geographical area of two or more countries* which have made an agreement to *co-ordinate the development of their frontier regions*. The term *euroregion* covers such a *geographic area* (region) on which interregional cross-border co-operations have been established between governments or local authorities in a wide range of areas. Shortly after the Second World War, with the establishment of the Common Market (1957) euroregions and interregional organisations as *regional-spatial formations of the European integration process* emerged and quickly spread over West Europe. The same process is going on in the eastern part of Europe, mostly within the transitional countries of East Central Europe. Interregional formations reinforce the vision of the *euroregional space*. By this model Europe may be seen not only as a

Europe of Nations, but also as a 'Europe of Regions' involving regions (frontier regions) that represent the participants' mutual interests (*Süli-Zakar, I. 1998, Éger, Gy. 2000*).

The quick spread of euroregions and other formations of interregional co-operation may be illustrated by the fact that *more than 100 of regional integration agreements have been made so far*. This is even true, even if – with the exception of only one case – they are regarded as only *free trade agreements* or *preferential customs zones*. Although, the majority of regional co-operation initiatives are directed at the enhancement of trading relations but everyday economic co-operation is not mentioned in integration agreements even as a long term objective. Practically, only less than a third of regional integration agreements are based on practical issues. The European Union – the integration of the developed European countries – is the only exception from these tendencies (*Berneke, Á.–Süli-Zakar, I. 1997*).

Apart from the large number interregional organisations, and the fact that many of them work without any real programmes, *the territorial extension of the emerging new euroregions raises another series of problems*. The spatial extension of frontier regions rarely coincides with the functionality of border areas. Although we can see some positive examples for the opposite trend (*Košice–Miskolc Euroregion*), but in most cases, since the establishment of large euroregions (*Carpathian Euroregion, Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Euroregion*), new co-operative organisations are established that cover only small territories. This is true for the spatial connections on the eastern borders of Hungary as well (*Interregio, Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion, Hajdú-Bihar–Bihar Euroregion*) (*Figures 2, 3*). These generally positive trends are explained not only by the recognition of mutual interests on both sides of the border but also by the benefits offered by physical geography, spatial structure and ethnic interdependence of areas having been separated from Hungary by the Trianon Peace Treaty. The emphasis is on local co-operation, putting aside the barriers resulted from nation-state opposition, because state borders have broken up the traditionally homogenous economic space. (*Golobics, P.–Tóth, J. 1999, Hardi, T. 2001*).

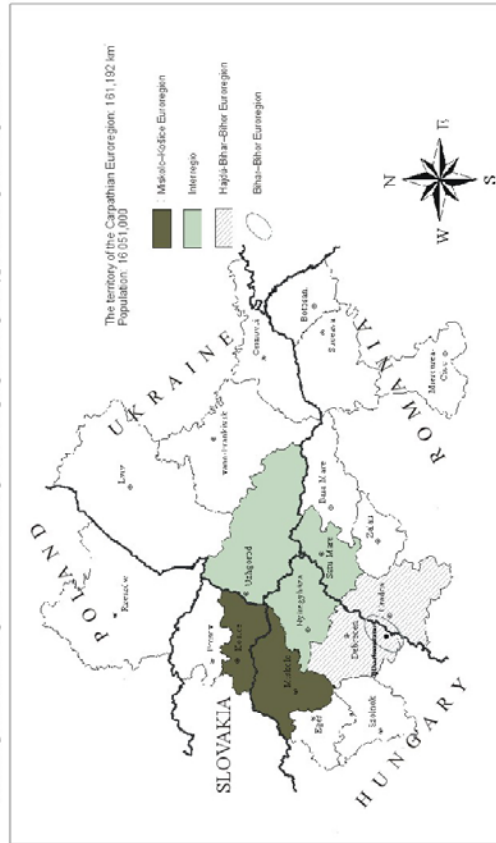
Several eurorregional organisations, *euroregions (macro-regions)* and other *micro-regions* or *quasi euroregion-type formations* or *euroregion-based structures* have been established along the Hungarian borders. With the establishment of the Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Euroregion in 1997 the number of euroregional co-operations, serving as umbrella organisations for cross-border co-operation, increased to three in Hungary. Many more further euroregion-based co-operation systems are under development. *Two of the three Hungarian initiated euroregional co-operations work on the East-Hungarian borders*, in the northeastern, eastern and southeastern sections. Two of the macro-regions – the Carpathian Euroregion International Association (Carpathian Euroregion) having been established on 14 February 1993, and the *Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Regional Co-operation Sys-*

tem having been established in Szeged on November 1997 – cover the eastern frontier zones and borderlands of Hungary (Figure 2).

The Carpathian Euroregion – covering the north-eastern areas of Hungary – is the oldest euroregional organisation (Figure 3). This giant region is a special organisation of cross-border co-operation and some of its features are very different from the other two euroregional formations: the *West Pannonian Euroregion* in West-Hungary and the latest *Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza* (DMKT) *Euroregion* on the southeast border of Hungary. *First of all*, its multilateral pre-integrative character differs from the traditional bilateral relationships of the two other euroregions. This means, that that the five member states co-operate in the management of the common problems of their medium-level spatial units and border counties, instead of building bilateral cross-border relations. On the basis of regional co-operations the Carpathian Euroregion may be defined as a *multiregional co-operation* system, a similar organisation to the *West European Alps–Adria Team*. *The second difference* is that *all its members are former socialist countries and they are all East Central European countries as well*. The Carpathian Euroregion was established as an integration that may set up direct connection with EU member states. The fact that it was exclusively formed on the external borders of the EU aroused the interest of the West-European countries. *The third difference* – as it has been mentioned – that *the whole territory of the Carpathian Euroregion is peripheral*, not only on European level but some of its units within the member states themselves (Illés, I. 1997, Gorzelak G. 1998, Rechnitzer, J. 1999, Süli-Zakar, I. 1997).

The second large euroregional organisation, which covers the territory of East and South-Eastern Hungary, is the *DMKT Euroregion*, integrating interregional co-operation initiatives in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Yugoslavian frontier zones (Figure 2). The DMKT Euroregion comprises the administrative units of three states (nine counties). (Table 2). The DMKT Euroregion occupying two-thirds of Hungary's total territory and including several other spatial units may be regarded as a similar *multiregional organisation to the Alps Adria Team* and the Carpathian Euroregion. As its objectives require more concrete and tighter co-operation this organisation is more similar to *the classic trilateral cross-border co-operation model*. This euroregion has no physical connection with any member states of the EU, co-operations take place on the Hungarian–Romanian–Yugoslavian border, a politically rather risky place. All these increase the importance of this initiative. (Rechnitzer, J. 1999).

Figure 3
The Carpathian Euroregion with its existing and emerging euroregion-type interregional organisations



Source: The author's edition.

Considering the Yugoslavian political crisis, the DMKT Euroregion must have learnt from the mistakes of the Carpathian Euroregion. By avoiding the traps of everyday international politics it can really concentrate on local regional co-operations and development. This is clearly marked in the Foundation Document (Minutes of Meeting) as follows: 'the regional co-operation of the DMKT Euroregion aims at the developing and enlarging co-operation between local communities in the areas of economy, culture, science and sports as well as bolstering co-operation leading to integration into larger European processes'.

The evaluation of the activities of the two large euroregional organisations working on the eastern borders of Hungary is rather ambiguous. Due to its *multiregional character* and *vast extension*, the majority of problems are associated with the Carpathian Euroregion. Several papers have been written on the operation and malfunctioning of the Carpathian Euroregion (*Illés, I. 1993*). Concluding the various views and opinions on the activity of Hungarian euroregions, we can remark that they are under a constant pressure *of two opposite trends*: one the one hand, they often face *political conflicts on inter-governmental level*, but on the other hand, there is a growing demand *for positive local initiatives and local co-operation* (*Éger, Gy. 2000*).

The *large territorial extension* and the large diversity of co-operation fields are another set of problems that may *hinder the intensification of cross-border co-operation*. This is true not only in case of the *DMKT Euroregion* which is based on local initiatives and co-operation programmes but also for the Carpathian Euroregion working in extensive spatial dimensions (territory of 161,000 km², population of 16 million). These are of a size of an average country. Having more than 24 administrative units (some of them are not bordered by the neighbour countries) the Carpathian Euroregion is not fit for proper functioning. Although the DMKT Euroregion is also covering a relatively large territory (77,000 km², with a population of 6 million) but this is much more of an adequate size than the dimensions of the Carpathian Euroregion. (*Table 1–2*). Nevertheless, the DMKT Euroregion comprised of four Hungarian counties (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Csongrád, Bács-Kiskun, Békés), four Romanian counties (Karas-Severin, Timis, Arad, Hunedoara) and the Yugoslavian Vojvodina, offers more intensive and concrete forms of co-operation on an area of more homogenous physical geographic and socio-economic features. Several historic reasons have also contributed to the higher development level of this euroregion than the Carpathian Euroregion (The modernisation having been carried out by the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy is such an example).

Table 1

*The territory, population and population density of the Carpathian Euroregion
in year 2000*

Country	The Carpathian Euroregion member country's			
	Municipality	Territory (km ²)	Population (thousand)	Population density (person/km ²)
Poland	Podkarpatskoje Regio	17,926	2,112	117.8
Hungary	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	28,639	2,616	91.3
	Hajdú-Bihar			
	Heves			
	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg			
Romania	Bihar	42,281	3,007	71.1
	Botoşani			
	Harghita			
	Maramureş			
	Satu Mare Sălaj Suceava			
Slovakia	Košice	15,746	1,543	98.0
	Prešov			
Ukraine	Transcarpathia	56,660	6,430	113.5
	Tshernivtsi			
	Ivano-Frankivsk			
	Lviv			
<i>Carpathian Euroregion</i>		<i>161,192</i>	<i>16,051</i>	<i>99.6</i>

Source: Data service from International Secretariat of Carpathian Euroregion, Nyíregyháza, 2001.

Table 2

*The territory, population and population density of the
Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Euroregion in year 1999*

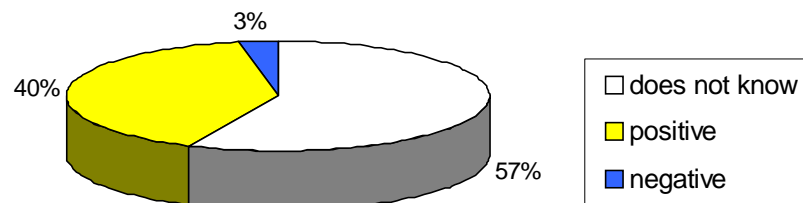
Country	County	Territory (km ²)	Population (thousand)	Population density (person/km ²)	County Seat
Hungary	Bács-Kiskun County	8,362	542	64.8	Kecskemét
	Békés County	5,631	407	72.3	Békéscsaba
	Csongrád County	4,263	438	102.7	Szeged
	Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County	5,607	423	75.4	Szolnok
Romania	Arad County	7,652	507	66.2	Arad
	Hunedora County	7,016	547	78.0	Deva
	Karas-Severin County	8,514	376	44.2	Resita
	Timis County	8,692	715	82.3	Timișoara
Yugoslavia	Voyvodina	21,506	2,013	93.6	Novi Sad
<i>Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Euroregion</i>		<i>77,243</i>	<i>5,968</i>	<i>77.3</i>	–

Source: Data provided by Koncz, J., Rechnitzer, J. 1999.

The motives, why the Carpathian Euroregion is rather a formal institutional-administrative organisation than a viable project producing practical results are explained partly by past partly by recent ethnic and socio-economic reasons. *The Carpathian Euroregion has rather political, international, formal and cultural characteristics, its formal elements are much more dominative than the results.* This hypothesis is verified the results of the earlier-mentioned complex survey having been made in 119 settlements along the Hungarian–Ukrainian and the Hungarian–Romanian borders. The responses given to the two questions of survey referring to the euroregional organisation (*What is your settlement's opinion of the Carpathian Euroregion initiative? How much are the municipality and the population familiar with the aims and function of the Carpathian Euroregion?*) reflect a very low level of awareness. According to the answers to the questionnaire sent to 119 settlements, *57% does not even know the Carpathian Euroregion, 40% reckons the initiative as positive*, whereas three settlements – because its activity is not visible in the region – *think as negative*. To the question how much the leaders of the settlements are familiar with the aims Carpathian Euroregion *only 15% answered good, and only 2% answered perfectly*. The situation is even worse if the population is examined, as – according to the opinion of mayors – *60% does not know about the aims of the Carpathian Euroregion (Figures 4, 5).*

Figure 4

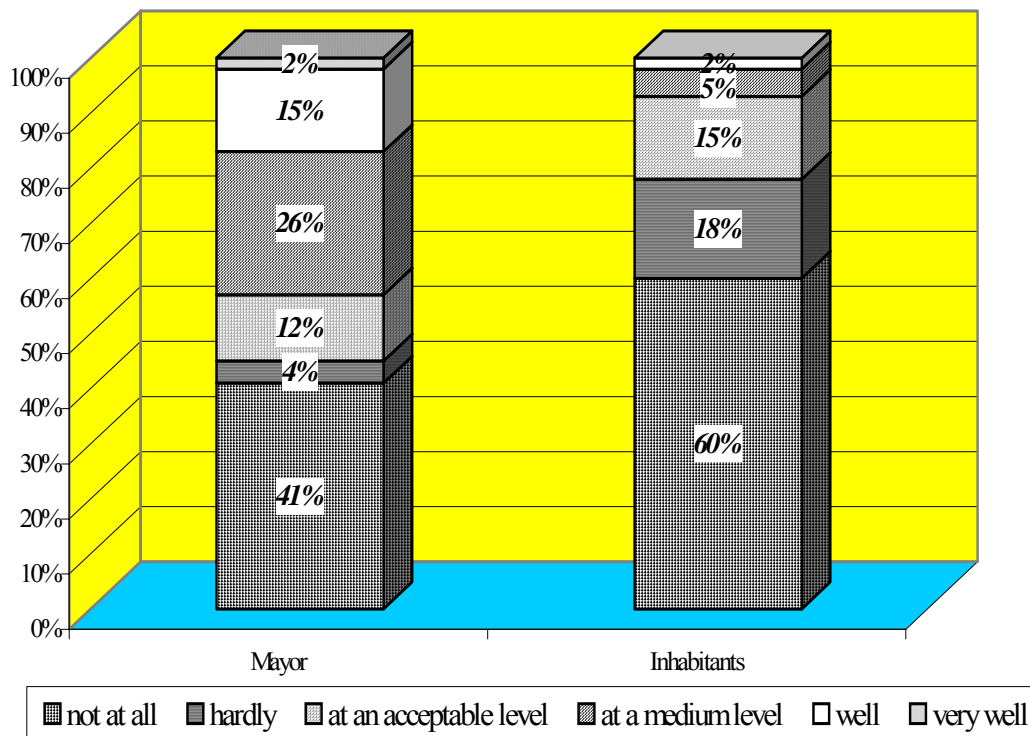
The opinion of frontier settlements in the Carpathian Euroregion



Source: Data from a questionnaire survey. Debrecen Group of the Alföld Research Institute CRS HAS, 1999.

Figure 5

How much are the borderland settlements familiar with the objectives of the Carpathian Euroregion?



Source: Data from a questionnaire survey. Debrecen Group of the Alföld Research Institute CRS HAS, 1999.

The results of survey have verified our assumption that the borderland population of the Carpathian Euroregion is not informed enough about this organisation. Many even do not know that it exists, and those who do know are not familiar with its aims and functions. If the Carpathian Euroregion wants to be a successful international organisation, it has to go beyond the formal frames of its activities and has to facilitate the issue of interregional co-operation by giving content to it. It also has to let people know about its aims, opportunities, results, management and organisational scheme (councils, secretariat, committees).

Despite the arising problems, the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion – if it succeeds to draw co-operation interests nearer and overcome the hindering difficulties of normal co-operation – can secure an outbreak opportunity for the economy of the area, it can also help to solve minority problems and facilitate the improvement of cross-border relations. In the meantime, co-operations of borderland areas at different levels mean the most important form of cross-border initiatives.

With the support of the *Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*, the *Foundation for the Development of Carpathian Euroregion* was established in 1994. The aim of this foundation – separated from the aims of the Euroregion – is to provide financial and technical support for programmes assisted by local authorities and civil organisations in order to improve the quality of life for people living in the villages of the Carpathians. *The Foundation for the Development of Carpathian Euroregion* facilitates programmes in connection with economic growth and cross-border activities above all (e.g. trainings for local government representatives and leaders of civil organisations, exchange programmes for twin cities and inter-ethnic cultural events, etc.). Among the grants – which are available to non-profit organisations only – those are privileged which promote co-operation among sectors and motivate co-operation between borderland regions (Hudak, V. 1997).

The development of cross-border relations regarding the North-Eastern Great Plain cannot be promoted by means of the PHARE and the Carpathian Euroregion exclusively. The government, county and municipal governments and civil organisations should also take the responsibility. *With holding borderland regions together at different levels*, and with the recognition of common interests, *a much higher integration than the present levels of co-operation can be achieved*. This is an inevitable condition of good relations with our neighbours and a successful and efficient participation in the *'Europe of Regions'*.

4 New euroregional formations – micro-regions

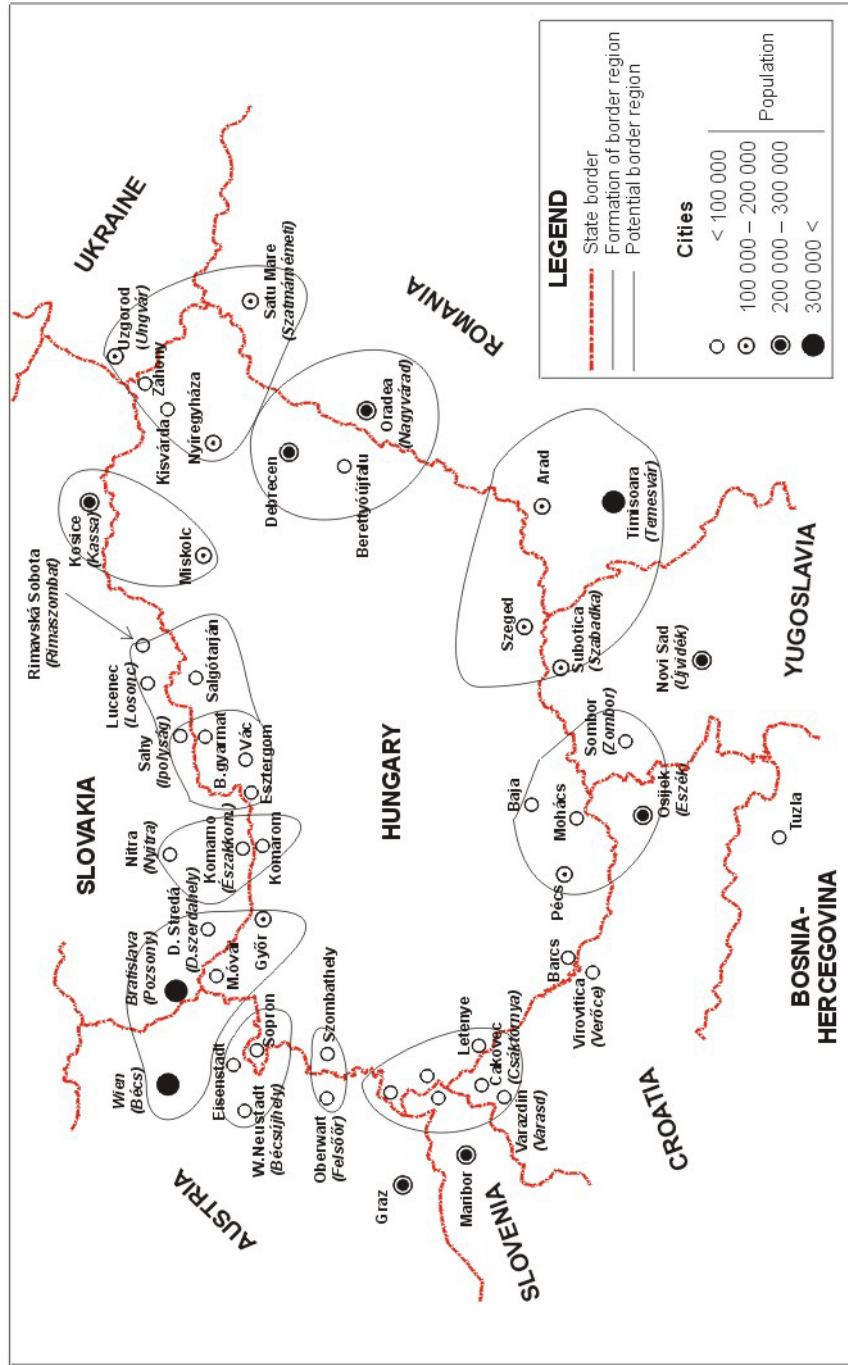
Economic, social and cultural co-operation between border areas, regions and especially frontier cities have vital importance during their progress towards the European integration. In the late 1980s the *Single European Market* gave another push for the opening up of borders and a series of co-operations were established between European regions, cities and settlements. The spread of the ideas of ‘Single European Market’, ‘Europe without Frontiers’ or of the multiethnic, multicultural and federative ‘Regions of Europe’ predetermine the success of the co-operation of frontier regions. The development of cross-border socio-economic relations between the inhabitants of borderland – as it is seen, for example by changes in the German-French relationship – may turn traditional inter-ethnic conflicts into a positive direction and the increasing freedom in the flow of persons, goods and capital will facilitate market economy and the rise of a bourgeois society. Following Hungary’s accession to the European Union the value of its border regions and its eastern neighbours will increase, and these countries will win good chances for a breakout from their peripheral position. They can serve as gates in trading with East European countries and as mediators for socio-economic and technical innovation. All these require that Hungary’s eastern borders were opened so that they could fulfil a bridgehead role between Western Europe, Ukraine and Romania. (*Baranyi, B. 2000, Tóth, J. 1996, Rechnitzer, J. 1999*).

The similarity of geographic features, the common historic past and the demands for maintaining relations with Hungarian minorities also call for strengthening cross-border relations. The institutional framework of co-operation, *the euroregion-type formations* having been and being established in great number over East Central Europe, *have good chances to work successfully* on the eastern borders of Hungary as well. *Their larger mobility, closer interrelations and stronger cohesion* can manage the issues of cross-border co-operation more efficiently than large and extensive euroregional organisations, like the Carpathian and the DMKT Euroregion (*Figure 6*).

At present, three border regions are shaping on the eastern border of Hungary. They serve as *geographical frameworks for the interregional (micro regional-level) co-operation of major cities*. Concrete inter-urban co-operations have been established between the *Nyíregyháza–Užhorod* and the *Debrecen–Berettyóújfalu–Oradea* connections. New institutional co-operations are being formed among *Szeged, Arad, Timișoara, Subotica* and their agglomeration (*Golobics, P. 1996*). During the formation of potential euroregions on the eastern borders of Hungary urban micro regional or county-level projects enjoy higher priority than regional-level initiatives (*Rechnitzer, J. 1999*).

Figure 6

Potential and emerging interregional co-operation between frontier regions



Source: Edited by Tamás Hardi, West Hungarian Research Institute, CRS HAS.

Several concrete euroregion-type organisations are being organised on the territory of the Carpathian Euroregion. (The Miskolc-Košice Euroregion, which is based on the twin-city relation of the Hungarian Miskolc and the Slovakian Košice, has recently been established. However, its territory on the north-eastern Hungarian border is still belonging to the Carpathian Euroregion.) As it is seen by the earlier mentioned survey results and other researches, several factors prevent the Carpathian Euroregion to act as a catalyst for cross-border relations: the objectives of the euroregion are not widely familiar, it has weak contacts with municipalities and no significant results are visible in its rural settlements. The organisational scheme of the Carpathian Euroregion encompasses too large areas to work efficiently. Although the Carpathian Euroregion has an important role in the management of cross-border co-operations, several hints and practical experiences show that the emerging new bilateral and trilateral institutional initiatives are working more efficiently.

This assumption is proved by the fact that *INTERREGIO*, a new trilateral euro-regional formation breaking out from the old institutional system of the Carpathian Euroregion (*Figure 3*) comprising the Hungarian Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, the Romanian Satu Mare and the Ukrainian Subcarpathia counties, established on 6th October 2000 is following the micro-regional model. This new formation is a program region working in the framework of the Carpathian Euroregion for the enhancement of co-operation between the areas involved in this organisation. The agreement of Interregio on trilateral co-operation is targeted at *the establishment and development of cross-border co-operation, the elaboration and management of concrete cross-border co-operation projects on local level*. The foundation document also declares that the agreement targeted at the realisation of relevant tasks has been outlined in the Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Ukrainian bilateral intergovernmental agreements.

The euroregional organisation is targeted at the completion of comprehensive development projects in the areas of infrastructure, nature conservation, environment and water protection, economy, tourism, education, training and at the preservation of interethnic relations and cultural heritage in borderland regions. Interregio is an organisation to promote, co-ordinate and manage several cross-border projects and programmes and to support local projects that are in accordance with the organisation's general aims and objectives. The bilateral programmes having been prepared within the framework of agreement – (the development of economy, tourism, border cross-points, nature conservation, environment and water protection, the preservation of cultural heritage, education and training etc.) – have been approved by all Interregio members. The members of co-operation mutually support the realisation of development projects funded by the financial assistance of partners and other resources as agreed by partners. *Currently the program region is*

being developed into a real euroregion-type organisation on the basis of the inter-urban co-operation of Nyíregyháza–Uzshorod–Satu Mare.

Among the new interregional formations the *Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar and the Bihar-Bihar euroregional organisations* may be regarded as active euroregional corporations. Their foundation document was approved by the county governments and mayors of municipalities of the areas involved in April of year 2001 (Figure 2, 3). Although these *micro-regional, cross-border co-operation-based* formations bring regional coherences into a closer structure but also maintain several elements of the ‘macro regional model.’ This more ‘mobile’, more flexible and more co-operative model which preserves at the same time the historic and administrative traditions of the past, can be *the most efficient institutional and corporate scheme for the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar and the Bihar-Bihar euroregional systems* (Baranyi B. 2000).

When drawing the outlines of the functional region, the internal agglomeration zone of *core cities* (Debrecen–Oradea) and the area’s historic, economic and social features were taken into account. These made up a territory of 14 thousand km² with a population of 1.2 million. The basic structure of co-operation comprises those areas and municipalities that used to be the administrative units of Hungary before Trianon. 31 municipalities of the Berettyóújfalu Statistical District or in wider sense 38 settlements of the *Bihar County Municipal Association* form a statistical micro region. 17 frontier settlements have established the *Regional Development Association of the Borderland Settlements of Bihar County*, which works partly within, partly outside the framework of Bihar County Municipal Association. This organisation, seated in Biharkeresztes, has recently established interregional co-operation with frontier settlements, settlement groups – de facto micro regions – on the Romanian side of border. (The term micro region does not exist in Romanian regional development terminology).

The Trianon Peace Treaty had serious outcomes for Berettyóújfalu. The Peace Agreement made in 1920 – just as in case of other frontier settlements – had tragic consequences on the development of Berettyóújfalu and its hinterland. This is essential information to understand the further development trends of Bihar County. The new state border cut Berettyóújfalu with 60 other settlements from the Nagyvárad (Oradea) their natural county seat and changed them from core areas into disadvantaged peripheral places. Today this area is named as ‘Crippled-Bihar’ or in other words ‘Remainder of Bihar County’ (Figure 7).

The implications of Trianon were serious for Bihar County too, as only one quarter of its territory and one-third of its former population remained within the new borders of Hungary. Not only the county seat but also all the major cities of Bihar County were separated from their hinterland, peripheral areas lost their centres. Thus, peripheries, having been left without centres were unable for development. From the Nagyvárad (Oradea)-seated large historic county *those parts that remained on the Hungarian side became peripheral in double sense.* They turned

into a frontier zone and at the same time they lost their economic, market, administrative and infrastructure centres. Bihar County has also lost its major cities (Debrecen, Békéscsaba). The county's transport system became fragmented and the spatial connections on sub-regional level are very weak. As hopes for the success of the Hungarian government's border revision policy were high between the First and the Second World Wars, no steps were taken for catching up these territories on the Hungarian side. The area was left alone with a curtailed transport system and markets. Later on Berettyóújfalu was turned into the county seat of 'Crippled Bihar County' but its position was characterised by the words of *Tibor Mendöl*, an outstanding Hungarian geographer, as 'a city seed implanted into a village' (*Mendöl, T. 1938*).

The 'Remainder of Bihar' was still large enough to be treated as an administrative unit. Its territory of 2,771 km² is still larger than the neighbour Hajdú County (2,386 km²). The 60 settlements of Bihar county on the Hungarian side (with a population of 176 thousand) were united into six then seven districts, one of which was the Berettyóújfalu District. However, Berettyóújfalu was not prepared for functioning as county seat, many of its citizens did not agree with this transitional but at the same time the only possible way of solution. The new situation and the general opinion of the public are well reflected by the words of *Tibor Mendöl* written in 1938. All the roads and railways '...go towards Várad (Oradea) from the plains. Várad is dominating all the road and railway nodes, only its role has changed. It collects raw material from the hills and plains transforms them into industrial products, distributing and retailing them back in both directions. In the Old Bihar County one cannot find such a place as Várad. The others having similar role are secondary or tertiary sub-centres. This city brings unity for Bihar County, this place is the focal point of the material and spiritual welfare of Bihar County. The shadow of Várad, like a dead corpse, is floating over the history of Crippled Bihar County. The dissected roads and railways, like bleeding fingers, show the way to Várad. They may also be seen as dissected aorta close to the heart. The heart is close but still far. (*Mendöl, T. 1938*).

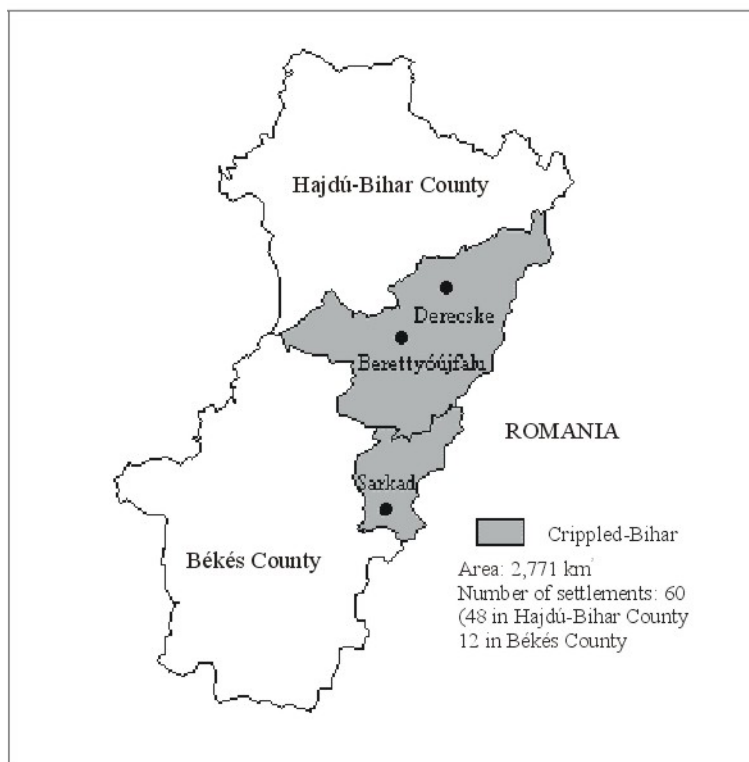
Crippled Bihar County, with Berettyóújfalu as county seat, was still functioning between the two world wars and between 1944–50. It was terminated in an administrative way in 1950. 12 settlements (Sarkad and its hinterland) on the southern part merged into Békés County and 48 joined to Hajdú County. At the same time Polgár and some settlements of Southern Nyírség also joined to Hajdú County. The new enlarged Debrecen-seated county preserved the geographical name of 'Bihar', as it was renamed as 'Hajdú-Bihar' (*Figure 7*) but Berettyóújfalu lost its county seat rank again and was degraded to a peripheral district centre.

However, the establishment of Hajdú-Bihar County did not solve the problems of 'Remainder Bihar' area. During the past fifty years county leaders could not manage the problems arising from differences in the settlement structure of Bihar

area from that of Hajdú County. It also should be noted that *Berettyóújfalu*, the centre of Bihar, since being awarded by city rank has undergone a dynamic development and turned into a catalyst of development within its surroundings. After a long, suffering process, the European integration may raise new hopes for the development of the area, for the renewal of economic and transport relations with the other side of borderland, i.e. for the long-expected rebirth of the area.

Figure 7

The historic Bihar County after the 1949/50 administrative reforms



Source: The Author's edition. Debrecen Group of the Alföld Research Institute CRS HAS.

The necessity for the various forms of co-operation between the 'Remainder Bihar County' and Bihar County on the Romanian side is certified by Oradea's central role in the region's economy for several centuries. The majority of problems related to agglomeration, urbanisation and underdevelopment issues are the consequences of Trianon. *The new borders separated the southern and southeastern parts of the present Hajdú-Bihar County from Oradea their former county seat, and at the same time, the area, having been left without urban centres, turned into a peripheral borderland.* Berettyóújfalu, the quickly chosen county seat shortly after Trianon in 1920, was neither suitable to perform regional functions nor to serve as a centre for its hinterland. *Hajdú-Bihar-Bihor and Bihar-Bihor Euroregions* offer a way out from this crisis together with *Bihar Enterprise Zone (BEZ)* an area closely linked to their activities. The BEZ is interested in strong economic co-operation and dissolving the dividing role of border between the Hungarian Bihar and the Romanian Bihar Counties (*Baranyi, B. 1998*).

Since the administrative reform in 1950 Hungary's largest size disadvantaged area has been composed from the rural settlements of Bihar County. From this recognition, right after the passing of the Local Government Act in the early 1990s, the *Municipal Association of Bihar* was established, as one of the first organisations in this category in Hungary. This agglomeration area, based on historical administrative traditions on one hand, and on bottom-up micro regional initiatives on the other hand is not only seeking for a way out from its unfavourable position but also trying to restore co-operation within the framework of the historic county formation. This is verified by signing the Declaration of Will for the Establishment of *Hajdú-Bihar-Bihor Euroregional Organisation* in the April of year 2001.

The importance and current awareness of co-operation intentions are well illustrated by the fact that plans have been prepared for the establishment of two new euroregional organisations – instead of one – and steps have already been made for the preparation of concrete projects. The Decree of Hajdú-Bihar County Government having been passed on 23 November establishes two euroregions: one between the county governments of Hungarian Hajdú-Bihar and the Romanian Bihar counties and another between their micro regions and settlement groups. This latter – smaller in size – euroregional formation – a *work team-type* co-operation – is aimed at stronger economic co-operation with frontier settlements in the areas of economy, culture and tourism.

The Debrecen-seated Hajdú-Bihar-Bihor Euroregion has the same objectives as its micro regions but their realisation is planned for medium-level spatial units. The Decree of County Government approved the basic rules of both euroregions. Thus the two formations may coexist and mutually support cross-border in Hajdú-Bihar County and local municipalities will have chances to represent their economic interests both on micro regional and medium levels. Practical examples verify the

opinion that the Bihar-Bihor Euroregion may stand as a prototype for other euroregions. Some micro regions have declared their intention to co-operate.

Both *Interregio* and the new *Bihar-Bihor Euroregion* have developed from *enterprise zones*. The *Záhony District Enterprise Zone* was the first organisation of this type. It was established by the 195/1996 (XII. 19.) Government Decree for the development of the Hungarian–Ukrainian frontier region and for the promotion of capital investments. As a *special economic zone*, the *Záhony District Enterprise Zone* is located in north-eastern Hungary, around the Záhony–Dombrád–Kisvárdá–Vásárosnamény–Beregsurány axis, and comprises 50 of the total 229 settlements and 17% of the total population of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County.

To promote the and assist to the development of the Enterprise Zone the Hungarian Investment and Development Bank has established the *Záhony District Business Ltd* with a base capital of 50 million HUF. The company is responsible for the co-ordination of the development steps within the Zone, for the preparation, management, promotion and PR activities of investments, for rendering business service for potential investors, for the operation of the *Záhony Logistic and Trade Centre*, and for the enhancement of the *Tuzsér Industrial Park*. In 1996 the Ministry of Environment and Regional Development increased the company's capital by 200 million HUF and the Hungarian Railroad Company (MÁV) provided a building for the Ltd. raising the original sum to 285 million HUF in this way. The Ltd's ownership structure is optimal now, because proprietors are those national-level organisations that are the most interested and most active in the development of the area. Tax exemption is granted to the eligible legal entities and individuals in the enterprise zone between 1 January 1996 and 31 December 2006. The truck terminal and the transit loading station having built on both sides of the border make Záhony the biggest and the most advanced 'terrestrial port' of Central Europe, with an annual freight load capacity of 21 million tons, playing a vital role in the improvement of Ukrainian–Hungarian economic and commercial relations. (Baranyi, B. 2001).

On 9 December 1998 the *Sub-Carpathian Special Economic Zone* was established with the assistance of the *Záhony District Development Ltd*. The Zone is granting significant tax exemptions for investors, offering in this way a new dimension in the cross-border relations of Hungary and Ukraine. The Zone, located within the Uzshorod–Mukacseve–Beregovo triangle consists of the following elements: the railway loading zone, the truck terminal and 'green field' around the Uzshorod–Ĉop–Batuevo area, the railway loading zone and airport in Mukacseve, the 'apple garden area' near Beregovo and other objects located at all the three sites. The Sub-Carpathian Special Economic Zone combines all the features of industrial park, customs-free area and free commerce zone just to attract foreign capital. The Investment Act enables investors to be eligible for tax and customs exemption for 15 years. Considering the present Ukrainian situation, the agreement

with local authorities on the realisation of ‘business plans’ – according to Ukrainian standards – may be considered to be a guarantee. This may accelerate and secure the establishment of new businesses.

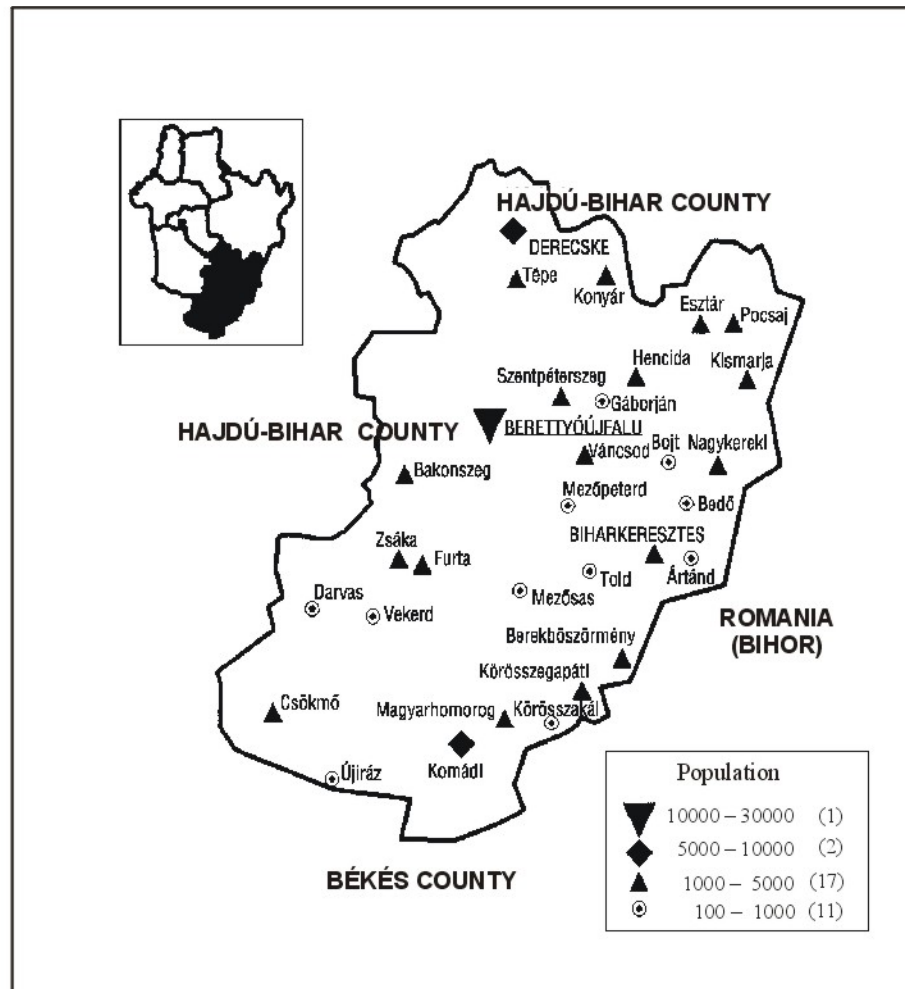
Situated along the geographical axis of *Berettyóújfalu–Biharkeresztes–Oradea*, the Bihar Enterprise Zone (BEZ) was established by the 19 March 1998 Government Decree, second after the Záhony District enterprise zone. The *peripheral borderland situation* of the Berettyóújfalu micro region (NUTS 4 level) is rather disadvantageous but *improving Hungarian–Romanian relations tend to change it in a positive way*. The establishment and the development of Hungarian–Romanian economic relations formed *a new cross-border co-operation area. (just in the centre of the historic Bihar region)*. Hungary’s European integration and changes in Romania may shift attention to the surrounding Hungarian areas too. *The BEZ can provide an effective institutional framework for the exploration and utilisation of the potential chances of co-operation*. The events of the past have hindered Hungarian–Romanian co-operation so far but changes in the political system of both countries may encourage hopes that cross-border co-operation will facilitate economic development for both *countries (Figure 8)*.

Since large multinational companies before making investment into Romania are likely to set up a bridgehead somewhere in the neighbourhood, in a politically and economically stable zone to use it as service area, BEZ with its potential facilities may attract and promote new investments into the region’s economy. Cross-border co-operation areas (on both sides of border) with their profit-oriented economic interrelations may also initiate regional economic development.

The implications of BEZ on rural development are already seen on both sides of the border. Rural development results provide a basis for the overall development of the Berettyóújfalu micro region and contribute to the find a way out from the backwardness of the rural areas of Bihar County. The preliminary meetings of the *Hungarian and Romanian municipalities, local authorities and specialists* revealed that the Romanian party agrees with the objectives of BEZ, they support Hungarian initiatives and ready to establish a common information system for the two countries, which is essential for later co-operation. Economic actors, partner organisations and chambers have already taken steps for further co-operation. BEZ is a very promising Hungarian–Romanian co-operation framework especially in the field of food processing.

Figure 8

The statistical district of Berettyóújfalu (BEZ) with settlements and population



Source: The author's edition. Debrecen Group of the Alföld Research Institute CRS HAS.

The opening up of a new area in Hungarian–Romanian transboundary co-operation and the regional or rural development initiatives of BEZ may have several socio-economic implications. BEZ may increase the capital attractive force of Bihar region by creating a very promising economic and investment background for businesses coming into the region. It may also have a multiplier effect by spreading economic development from core areas into peripheries or even into transboundary areas. The BEZ with its industrial park, with its co-operation with Romanian partners, with its specialisation, with the distribution of labour between the Hungarian and Romanian border regions may promote a quick development progress. Co-operations established on euroregional level may expect support from the European Union's regional development funds (PHARE CBC, ISPA, SAPARD) because they grant priorities to cross-border co-operation projects. The Structural Funds of the EU provide significant financial assistance to rural development as well.

The existence of BEZ and the intensification of cross-border relations are the proofs that Euro-Atlantic integration will bring success not only for Hungary but also for Romania, even if the Schengen borders will temporarily preserve the preserve their dividing functions. But maybe not in the distant future the permeability of borders will grant the 'integration' of the socio-economic, cultural and infrastructural functions of the separated parts of Bihar County and will promote rural development in frontier regions on both sides of the border. According to current tendencies, this process will attract capital for regional development, will terminate the area's structural disadvantages and will ensure a complex rehabilitation for areas with Hungarian population (*Baranyi, B. 2001*).

As it is seen, cross-border co-operation within the existing three-euroregional and enterprise zone systems are progressing well in East Hungary. The Záhony railroad complex dominates the Hungarian–Ukrainian border and the two other enterprise zones each including an industrial park are also very important frameworks of cross-border co-operation. Although their future perspectives seem very promising, the new euroregional organisations and the Záhony District Enterprise Zone cannot yet be regarded as a 'critical mass' in the system of cross-border co-operations with neighbour countries. The Ukrainian and Romanian investors have relatively small capital to invest, so they purchase small retail shops, restaurants only at border cross-points, and try to make their revenues on border traffic, shopping and rucksack tourism. Enterprise zones cannot make a miracle within a short time, they are rather catalysators, which promote economic development and facilitate cross-border co-operation within the region.

5 Other possible levels of transboundary co-operation

In the mid-90s there were already some regional scientists who recognised the key role of borderland cities, regional centres and sub-centres in international and regional co-operation and in the formation of potential euroregions (*Golobics, P. 1996*). Later on, on the basis of researches having been carried out on the Austro-Hungarian cross-border co-operation between West-Pannonia and Burgenland new ideas and theories were formulated on *the integration levels of potential euroregions*, some of which may be applied to the East Hungarian cross-border co-operations as well. We absolutely agree with the initiatives urging for a network of ‘mini euroregions’ along state borders to establish bilateral co-operation on local and micro regional levels. A more stable system of euroregions may stand on the basis of micro level and at the same more flexible co-operations, because existing or forming (potential) euroregions may generate regional development only in case, the co-operating parties realise their own particular and common interests within the co-operation system. In this way, both local and regional borderland municipalities with other medium-level spatial organisations and bodies may represent concrete spatial interests with maximum efficiency (*Rechnitzer, J. 1999*).

As it has been pointed out, besides *eurometropolitan organisations, micro regions, settlement groups’ frontier cities* – or *core border cities as used in terminology* – have very important role in cross-border co-operation. This explains why the formal institutional system (euroregions) of transboundary co-operation should be extended with *micro regional, twin-settlement, twin-city relations* (*Figure 6*). It is regional core cities and some urban sub-centres that can meet the various criteria of micro regional co-operation. Similar twin-city and twin-settlement systems have been formed on the north-eastern – in some cases on the eastern and southern – border regions of Hungary. Their integration into a wider network can be achieved first by the development of their infrastructure system. This can also give a new boost to their cross-border co-operations (*Golobics, P. 1996, Rechnitzer, J. 1999, 2000*).

The Slovak–Ukrainian–Romanian–Hungarian border regions with twin-settlement or twin-city relations in the majority of cases, *as the strategic link-points* of East-Hungarian *cross-border co-operations*, are integrated into the institutional system of *the Carpathian Euroregion, the DMKT Euroregion* and into the *emerging new system of interregional organisations*. The northern part of the Hungarian borderland is strongly bound to *the multiregional co-operation system between Miskolc–Košice areas*, which is another form of direct cross-border co-operation. However, without durable and various institutional relations among the core cities of the neighbouring countries (*Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Oradea, Satu Mare*) co-operations cannot be integrated into *a homogenous spatial structure*.

While the *Carpathian Euroregion* is making efforts to integrate areas and population of a size of a country, its spatial sub-units have no sufficient resources even for the maintenance of the basic areas of their interrelations. The *DKMT multiregional co-operation* is facing similar problems in the conflict zone of the Hungarian Yugoslavian border. As the experiences of the two giant regions illustrate, interrelations should be established both on *urban and micro-regional level* because their stability may guarantee the success of high-level co-operations (Rechnitzer, J. 2000). Several core cities may successfully co-operate (Szeged, Békéscsaba, the *polycentric Mid-Békés settlement group* on the Hungarian, Arad, Timișoara on the Romanian side). They have good potentials to work within a network system and enter into co-operation either within or outside the DKMT Euroregion system. (Golobics P. 1996).

6 Schengen and future challenges

The study of the issues of borders and borderland has a great importance also from the point of Hungary's NATO membership and forthcoming EU integration. *Hungary's NATO membership* will turn the country into a 'buffer zone' between the NATO, the EU and the post socialist countries of the former Soviet bloc. The implications of the *Schengen borders* on the permeability of Hungarian borders will primarily depend on the terms of Hungary EU accession. The 'moving' of Schengen borders to the East and the possible introduction of compulsory visa *may raise difficulties for Hungarian ethnic minorities in maintaining connections with their mother country*. The new euroregional organisations, such as the *Carpathian Euroregion*, the *DKMT Euroregion* and the emerging interregional formations, such as *Interregio* having been established on 6 October 2000 by the trilateral co-operation agreement of Subcarpathia, (Ukraine), Satu Mare (Romania) and Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg counties, as well as the *Bihar-Bihor* interregional co-operation, which has submitted its declaration of will for its establishment, will have a determining role to ensure Hungary's smooth Euro-Atlantic integration. The new potential euroregions may foster the organisation of new frontier zone co-operations and forming new euroregions on the eastern borders of Hungary. As it has been mentioned, the network of mini euroregions has fundamental importance for countries, local and regional municipalities interested in co-operation and the establishment of cross-border relations.

However, euroregional co-operations are not free of problems. As participant countries will join not join to the European Union at the same time, there are a lot of uncertainties about the future. The Schengen criteria may largely hinder co-

operation not only for the eastern borderland of Hungary but for Ukraine as well. For this reason, maintaining co-operations within the existing Carpathian Euroregion is also necessary, even if it is not functioning perfectly. A fundamental transformation should take place within the organisation scheme of the Carpathian Euroregion. New ways are needed to enhance co-operations, which are rather formal and will operate in more disadvantaged circumstances. These co-operation systems should be transformed into more realistic and live, especially in the field of economy.

If the majority of Hungary's neighbour countries (Slovakia, Ukraine and Romania) do not become members of the EU at the same or not so much after the accession of Hungary, the *division role of borders will become stronger again – at least temporarily* – due to the *Schengen Agreement*, as if the 'iron curtain' was pulled to the East. This would be very harmful for Central Europe and the Hungarians living there. For this reason the objectives should be set to achieve favourable terms with the EU, reducing the negative effects on ethnic Hungarians living beyond of their mother country to the possible minimum. The fact that the importance of Hungary's eastern borders, which will be the external borders of the EU after Hungary's accession, will increase, gives brighter perspectives for the future.

Future researches should provide detailed analyses on the frontier regions of the Great Hungarian Plain, so as to find appropriate management methods for the problems of Schengen borders. The fields of research should cover several issues, regarding the different chances of peripheral areas, the gate and mediator role of borders, the spatial integration, ethnic and social issues of cross-border relations, including the existing euroregional organisations (*Carpathian Euroregion, DKMT Euroregion*), the emerging interregional formations (*Interregio, Bihar-Bihor Euroregion*), enterprise zones (*Bihar Enterprise Zone, Záhony District Enterprise Zone*) with their adjoining industrial parks, the intercepting micro regions and settlements on both sides of the border, *the networking of cities of similar rank into urban associations* and the enhancement of institutional relations among large core cities (*Debrecen, Nyíregyháza, Oradea, Satu Mare*). An increase in the number of contact points would be desirable as well as opening new or increasing the capacity of the existing frontier stations (*Golobics, P. 1996, Golobics, P.–Tóth, J. 1999, Rechnitzer, J. 1999*).

As it has been mentioned, the potentials of borderland and transboundary co-operation are great. Regional development co-operations may not only reveal new development resources on both sides of the border but also may contribute to the restructuring of Hungary's political and economic position within the Carpathian Basin. This is particularly true for Hungary's eastern border regions, which are problem areas for now. For these reasons co-operation should be integrated into national development plans, so as to become primary elements of regional policy and to promote the candidate countries' EU accession. The institutional forms of

cross-border co-operation should include well-prepared common development concepts for the border regions of the neighbour countries, to serve as a basis for the strategic and operative programmes of co-operation that are the pre-requisites of successful co-operation. All these require, that the principal directives of co-operation should stand on the principles of mutual partnership and rights. (*Rehmitzer, J. 1999*).

The tendencies of cross-border economic co-operation within the region (the forthcoming Euro-Atlantic integration, the Schengen border system) will largely depend on Hungary's entry terms into the European Union. The relations Hungary will establish with eastern neighbours (Romania, Ukraine, and Russia) will have crucial importance from the point of transit trade too. It is not enough to look at westward only, 'gates to east' should also be open. If Hungary can adequately utilise the chances of the north-eastern frontier region, the Hungarian-Ukrainian border may turn into the eastern gate of Hungary and the European Union (*Balcsók, I.-Dancs, L. 2001*).

It is not easy to predict the future trends of cross-border co-operation between the two regions, because its actual progress will largely depend on Hungary's EU accession process. The assessment of the future consequences of the Schengen border system is very difficult in the present situation, because nobody knows for sure, which parts of the Hungarian border will be the external border of the EU. Because of Ukraine's uncertain economic situation we can almost take it for granted that the Hungarian-Ukrainian border will be an external EU border for a long time. However, without an extensive investment into the IT system the Schengen system would be unable to receive and process the border traffic data of the new EU members. As the enormous costs of the system make the EU postpone building of system for 4-5 years, the Schengen border check and security measures will not be fully applied at once. However, it is feared that the Schengen borders will freeze the development of cross-border co-operations and will deepen the handicapped position of peripheral border areas. If Hungary were to apply the *rules of Schengen Agreement*, the introduction of mandatory visa would be very harmful for Hungarians living in the neighbour countries. To find a positive solution for these problems would be important for widening co-operation among the border regions (*Balcsók, I.-Dancs, L. 2000, Rehmitzer, J. 2000*).

Concluding the researches on the various forms of regional and inter-regional co-operation, it can be stated that for all of their problems, euroregions are the most effective means of cross-border co-operation and the development of border regions. They are *especially suitable for cutting down regional disparities*. This *harmonisation process* has special importance in East Central Europe, especially in the East Hungarian borderland. Closing up disadvantaged peripheral frontier areas to the development level of core regions is indispensable. (*Éger, Gy. 2000*).

Euroregional organisations and formations have primary importance for the European integration process by their easing of regional differences within and between euroregions. Last, but not least, these organisations may also be regarded as *the workshops of forming regional identity*. However, this workshop requires further researches on West European processes and the utilisation of the experiences of the western world on Hungary's eastern borders, which will be Hungary's Schengen borders, following the country's EU accession.

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