

PREPARATIONS FOR RECEIVING THE EU FUNDS, OR THE DAWN OF THE CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN CROSS-BORDER PLANNING, WITH A SPECIAL VIEW ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS ON RIVER CONSERVATION

PRIPREME ZA PRIMANJE EU FONDOVA ILI POČETAK PLANIRANJA HRVATSKO-MAĐARSKE PREKOGRANIČNE SURADNJE SA POSEBNIM OSVRTOM NA PROJEKTE KOJI OSIGURAVAJU OKOLIŠNU ODRŽIVOST U POGLEDU ZAŠTITE RIJEKA

Lóránt Bali
László Gulyás
 University of Pannonia
 Georgikon Keszthely
 8360 Keszthely Georgikon utca 20
 Mađarska
 balilori@georgikon.hu

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Summary

After the regime change, the Yugoslav civil war significantly slowed the building of official relations of the Croatian-Hungarian border and local municipal. Only after the turn of the millennium was the possibility created for a common design for laying the foundations. On the 25th of August 2000 was the first meeting held, which was later followed by more. The main objective was the preparation for drawing down the resources of the Croatian-Hungarian Pilot Small Projects Fund. The first joint program proved to be successful. Correlating with the deepening of EU's relations between Croatia and our country the amount of available financial tools have increased, offering many new opportunities for the convergence of border areas, as evidenced by the number and diversity of the winning projects. In the Phare Hungary-Croatia Pilot Small Projects Fund we could find numerous winning projects, which attend to introduce the environmental characteristics of the Drava and Mura. Some of them encourage environmental education and the cooperation for environmental protection. By doing this, the region has taken the first steps to restore the common ecological space in the Mura-Drava area!

Key words: system change, joint planning, building formal links, Mura-Drava

Ključne riječi: promjena režima, zajedničko planiranje, izgradnja službenih veza, Mura-Drava

After the regime change, the Yugoslav civil war significantly slowed the building of official relations of the Croatian-Hungarian border and local municipal. Only after the turn of the millennium was the possibility created for a common design for laying the foundations. On the 25th of August 2000 was the first meeting held, which was later followed by more. The main objective was the preparation for drawing down the resources of the Croatian-Hungarian Pilot Small Projects Fund. The first joint program proved to be successful. Correlating with the deepening of EU's relations between Croatia and our country the amount of available financial tools have increased,

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CROATIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PRE-ACCESSION PROGRAMS

The need for the EU accession has been formulated in the Croatian political and economic elite right after the conclusion of the Dayton Accords. According to Ivo Sanader: We have to put the EU- scepticism aside, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, after the termination of the bipolar world Croatia is required, even by giving up his independence partially, to join the European Union. In similar sized countries (Ireland, Finland, Portugal, Greece) the EU accession brought significant economic development.¹

The EU could act more effectively only after the coming into force of the Maastricht agreement for the South Eastern Europe's security and integration, and was willing to support only the strong democracies on the road to the union. The Croatian governments in office acted according to this principle from 2000 until today. With the amendment of the constitution, a »semi-presidential« system was established, strengthening the role of the parliament. They redefined the neighbourhood politics with the former Yugoslav Member States. A major driving force for this was that the prerequisite of the integration was the peaceful cooperation efforts of former belligerents. Against all foreign policy issues and ideologies, the accession of Croatia became important for the EU. It seems that the current Croatian leadership recognized this, and tries to develop policies to approximately appreciate the Union's interests and requirements.

The accession of Croatia to the European Union is a strategic goal, because it provides substantial security for the medium-term stabilization of the Western Balkans. Croatia's future EU membership will affect as a »geopolitical stabilizer« in the region. Serbia shows partial political instability, nationalist forces interested in territorial revision and aggressive neighbourhood politics were participants on several occasions in the forming democratic governments of Serbia. The country faces difficulties because of continuous territory losses, and therefore a major public and social deficit can be felt. Bosnia and Herzegovina's internal unity and borders are unstable, only the main responsible institution ensures the operation in the state. These processes have significant political pressure on the internal political and ethnic political events of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can be regarded as a single country in the geographical sense. Thus, the presence of an EU member in the neighbourhood is important, which could enhance the stability of the Balkan Peninsula. Together with Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia can put the Bosnia and Herzegovina in the »wise« of democratic states and stimulates Serbia's intention of rapprochement.

In order to restore and maintain the stability of the Western Balkans, the European Commission launched in December 2000 the CARDS program, which clearly demonstrated that funds are not limiting the preservation of peace and security in the region. Its purpose is to solve the Western Balkan countries' regional problems and their economic and political system reforms. The measure is intended to assist states in the region in the re-develop and deepen the socio-economic cooperation. This objective is laid in the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The SAP is practically a strategy in which the EU is working with countries in the region to open a way for accession by meeting the conditions imposed. Within this framework Stabilisation and Association agreements were made with the states of the Western Balkan region, which create

¹ Sanader, Ivo (2000): Hrvatska u međunarodnim odnosima 1990-2000. Golden Marketing. Zagreb. 284. old.

the political cooperation between the EU and the states. The operational formulation created the CARDS, which provides an opportunity to help these countries achieve their goals. In the donors' conference on 29th of March 2000 in Brussels 8.1 billion EUR in grants were awarded for the region.²

Before Croatia could join the waiting group, only the Cards stood available. They received full access rights on the 27th of March 2002, after the birth of a framework agreement about their participation in the program. Over the period 2002-2004 a total of 260 million euros have been used. After June 2004, when they joined the group of accession, they entitled to use three pre-accession funds according to the European Commission's decision on the 6th of October that year which were: PHARE, ISPA, SAPARD (Fig. 1). The development was, however, an essential condition to the use of strategic planning. The Croatian government made the expected financial plan of the operational steps necessary to start accession negotiations, and began to put at the disposal of pre-accession funds. In the year 2005 to almost 80 million EUR was paid through the PHARE, and with the support of ISPA 25 million EUR. In the year 2006, the pre-accession assistance funds have increased, from 25 million in the PHARE, 35 million in the ISPA, and from the actually opening SAPARD 25 million was used.³

In the period 2005-2006 Croatia have called up the following funds: 160 million EUR from PHARE, 60 million EUR from ISPA, 25 million EUR from SAPARD. In the budget period 2007-2013, a total of 920 million euros IPA funds are available in the country to all borders, which could and can still be used for reducing regional differences, for cross-border co-operation, human resources and tourism development, and redevelopment of rural areas.⁴

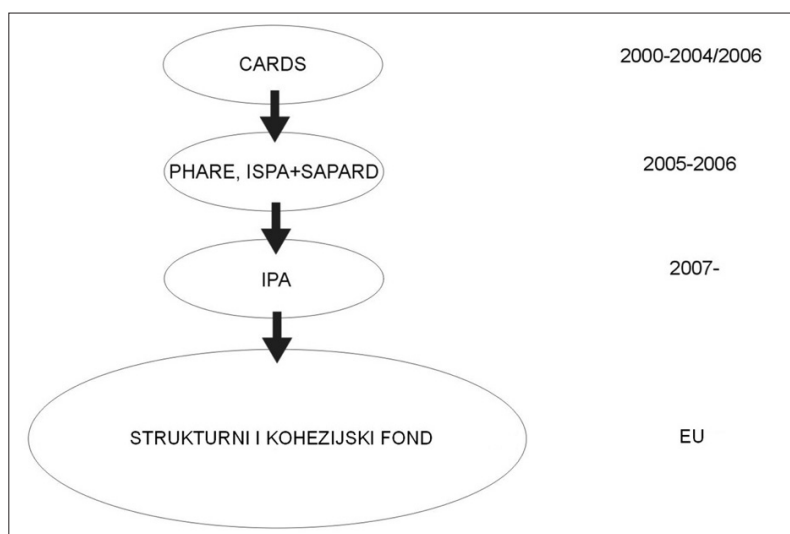


Figure 1.: *The availability of EU funds for Croatia*

Forrás: Novota S. - VLAŠIĆ I. - Velinova R. - Geratilev K. - Borissova O. (2009): *Europski fondovi za hrvatske projekte. Priručnik o finansijskoj suradnji i programima koji u Hrvatskoj podupire Europska unija. Središnji državni ured za razvoju strategiju i kordinaciju fondova Europske unije.* Zagreb. 217 p.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE JOINT PLANNING

The Croatian elections in January 2000 had a beneficial effect on the opinion of the European Union about our southern neighbour. The integration process could have been started only in 2005 because of the long pre- screening of accession negotiations. However, in 2003 some funds were

² Kerim, Srđan (2007): *Balkan, Europa i UN. Mostovi prema budućnosti.* Prometej, Zagreb. 271. old.

³ Balaković, Andreja (2005): *Hrvatska u prepristupnim programima Europske unije.* In. Vukadinović, Radovan (szerk.) *Međunarodne studije.* 2005/5. szám. 33-47.old.

⁴ Novota S.-Vlašić I.-Velinova R.-Geratilev K.-Borissova O. (2009): *Europski fondovi za hrvatske projekte. Priručnik o finansijskoj suradnji i programima koji u Hrvatskoj podupire Europska unija. Središnji državni ured za razvoju strategiju i kordinaciju fondova Europske unije.* Zagreb. 217 old.

made available for deepening of cross-border relationships in the framework of »Hungary-Croatia Experimental Small Projects Fund 2003«. To carry out more successful applications from this fund, regular meetings, appointments and joint planning were necessary by the Hungarian and Croatian regional governments. This has been named »Harkány process« by the professional public.

The first meeting was held in Harkány on the 25th of August 2000 and the leaders of Osijek-Baranya Baranya, Verőce-Podravska, Somogy, Koprivnica-Kris, Zala and Muraköz counties were involved. The parties were informed about the existing bilateral border cooperation, their experiences so far and they stated that these are characterized by friendship and the need for improvement. A representative of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Republic of Croatia Ministry of EU Integration appeared on the meeting, who reported the situation of Croatian-Hungarian interstate relations. The participants believed that the border counties involved in relationships are well advanced in preparing for the accession to the EU. The demand grew for the Danube-Drava-Sava Euro Regional Cooperation as the result of positive change and to continue development of the Croatian-Hungarian border counties with combined efforts to exploit the opportunities more successfully. The following areas were kept to be the most important for joint development programs:⁵

- Regional planning.
- Development of technical infrastructure at the border.
- Economic development, with a special view on tourism, technology, research and development.
- Human Resource Development.
- Environment and Nature Protection.

In order to implement the projects to be developed the concerned initiated the opening of a complex program of cooperation (Cross-Border Cooperation) at the governments and the Commission of the European Union as soon as possible. The main purpose of the meeting is practically completed, a strategic planning started which is local government-generated, and tailored to their needs. An agreement was concluded to meet on a quarterly basis, and to make agreements. In order to help developing the joint programs they disposed of their own regional development documents with each other, and proposals were made about activities for the coordination of programs. A preparatory CBC program working group was set up in which the lion's share of the organization was undertaken by the Baranya Municipality.

The next meeting was held in Zagreb on the 3rd of August 2001. On behalf of Croatia the European Integration Ministry Secretary and a colleague, from the Hungarian side the Head of the Prime Minister's Office of Emergency Co-ordination Secretariat, the Head of the West Pannon Regional Development Agency, the Regional Office director of VÁTI non-profit company Western Transdanubia Zalaegerszeg and the Executive Director and Project Manager of the South Transdanubian Regional Development Agency appeared.

The primary issues discussed included the CARDS, the EU aid program of the Western Balkans. It was raised as a significant funding problem that the Union had no intention of CARDS countries running CBC projects. The Croats signaled Brussels that they attribute important role that in the framework of CBC they may co-operate within Slovenia and Hungary. We should mention that in the framework of CARDS program funds were available for developing integrated border sections. In the period 2002-2004 170 million EUR was available, of which approximately 1.7 million EUR could be spent on the border co-operation, as a part objective. It could be spent on the business infrastructure (engineering plans, feasibility studies), human resources (employees-, contractors' skills development), civil society, and agencies operating outside government.

⁵ Pörös Béla (2000): »Határok nélkül«. A horvát-magyar határmenti együttműködés fejlesztésének lehetőségei az európai integrációs felkészülés tükrében. (munkaanyag a Baranya Megyei Közgyűlés számára) 4. old.

The next important milestone in the joint planning was Sellye on the 1st of September 2001. The leader of the gathering, the President Baranya County Assembly, drew attention to financial problems, but apart from this cooperating parties filled the cooperation documents with concrete projects.

Clive Rumbold, a member of the European Commission Delegation to Budapest, gave detailed information on the latest regulations of the INTERREG program. According to the original »rules in 1998, cross-border co-operation financing concerned only countries bordering with the EU and candidate states on the border. The INTERREG program has been extended to the candidates and their neighbours, too...«⁶ The EU and the Hungarian Government also urged the acceleration of the planning and the deepening of relations with the regional development institutions. The South Transdanubian Regional Development Agency prepared the joint programming document on the 31st of October 2001, which contained the following priorities:

- economic cooperation
- co-labour
- cooperation in higher education
- nature and the environment

Before the completion of the programming document, in Sellye gathering a number of projects had already been proposed. I present the ideas the following organizations are grouped according to their proposal:⁷

Proposing: Kris Koprivnica-county

- establishment of road border crossing between Botovo and Gyékényes
- the technical implementation of Legrad-Órtilos and Ferdinandovac-Vízvár-border
- mutual appearance on industrial fairs
- making the Drava River navigable until the estuary at Ždalica
- Regional air ports and development of the DDSZE railway lines
- water and nature conservation, geothermal and alternative energy sources utillage
- IT system to monitor air pollution

Proposing: Kopački Meadow Park

- establishment of a scientific research building in Kopački Meadow National Park
- GIS monitoring system establishment
- exhibition of paintings of Izabella Habsburg
- Kopački meadow monograph-compilation

Proposing: Mohács Municipality

- logistics centre and port development
- creation of a duty-free zone
- development of regional bicycle paths
- marina
- coordinated development of tourism products

Component Proposal: Mayor's Office, Vajszló

- building bridge at Zaláta
- establishment of production and processing systems
- development of rural tourism

Proposal Component: Research and Higher Education Task Force

- creation of databases to support the future joint research

⁶ Kedves Tibor (2001): A harkányi folyamat. Horvátországi Magyarság 2001/ 8-9. szám. 25. old.

⁷ Kedves Tibor (2001): A harkányi folyamat. Horvátországi Magyarság 2001/ 8-9. szám. 26-29. old.

- minority and environmental research
- language training for teachers and business professionals
- staff, students, researchers exchange
- post-graduate training in the Croatian and Hungarian business professionals
- the launch of a cross-border development symposium
- the creation of regular communication links

Proposal for Provider: Nature and Environment Working Group

nature conservation management plans and the coordination of practical initiatives

- negotiation of official, authority works
- joint publications, exhibitions
- development of joint programs on indigenous and endangered species conservation
- creation of educational programs and tourism programs
- development of GIS programs in the treatment of common databases

Proposing: The leaders' meeting of Croatian-Hungarian border counties, suggestions for infrastructure:

- modernization of border crossings
- road network development (Szigetvár-Révfülu-Sopje, extension of the road 67)
- the Vinkovci-Osijek-Pécs railway modernization
- the improvement of air and water transport conditions
- development of health tourism (Harkány, Bizovac)
- wine tourism (white and red wine walking paths with the inclusion of the Bani mountains)
- eco- and ethno tourism
- development of a joint industrial park (in the Belisce-Beremend-Manastir region)

From the proposals it can be seen clearly that the local governments had a significant demand for the development of relations towards Croatia. Most of the ideas were formulated in the topic of transport network, qualitative and quantitative development. However, they can be prescinded from the exclusive problems of border and cross-border relationships, the majority are based on the ideas of a border municipality. It can be explained most likely with the lack of funding that they sought to achieve the necessary investments from these programs. If one observes the schedule of meetings dates, it can be seen that by 2002, when the first small project fund sources became available, the concrete ideas had already been born.

From the project plans only those were realized that required the least amount of co-operation, or just the semi-passive or administrative participation of the neighbour. Only a small tangent share of them affected the border areas, a small amount of cross-border co-operation vision had been realized. These were mostly utilized in human resources, environmental protection and education.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been well outlined at the start of the regional planning, that the sustainability projects would enjoy priorities in joint development funding: water and nature conservation, geothermal and alternative energy source utilage, environmental protection, rural tourism, wine, ecological and ethno-tourism, etc. Currently, both countries have a long-term goal to preserve the environmental condition of the Drava and Mura. The two rivers and its narrow region is to be developed a single ecotourism destination. The process has begun; we hope it will not mislead the direction.

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SAŽETAK

Nakon promjene režima, rat je u velikoj mjeri usporio izgradnju službenih odnosa u uređenju državne hrvatsko-mađarske granice, te lokalnih županijskih granica. Tek nakon milenijske 2000. godine, došlo je do stvaranja prilika da se u tom smjeru postave zajednički temelji budućih odnosa. Na dan 25. kolovoza 2000. održan je prvi sastanak, a kasnije su uslijedili novi. Glavni je cilj bio isplanirati sredstva za pilot program Fonda hrvatsko-mađarskih malih projekata. Prvi se zajednički program pokazao uspješnim. Kako su se produbljivali europski odnosi između Hrvatske i Mađarske, povećavala su se dostupna financijska sredstva, nudeći brojne nove prilike za usklađivanje graničnih područja, što je vidljivo kroz različite uspješne projekte. Samo u PHARE pilot-programu Fonda malih mađarsko-hrvatskih projekata možemo naći brojne uspješne projekte, koji predstavljaju ekološke karakteristike područja Mure i Drave. Neki od njih podstiču ekološku svijest i edukaciju, te zajedničku suradnju u zaštiti okoliša.. Time je ova regija poduzela prve korake u obnavljanju zajedničkog ekološkog područja zaštite Mura-Drava!

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Adresa uredništva / Mailing adresss:

Hrvoje Petrić (urednik)
Odsjek za povijest, Filozofski fakultet
Ivana Lučića 3, HR-10000 Zagreb
e-mail: h.petric@ffzg.hr
ili Vinka Vošickog 5, HR-48000 Koprivnica

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