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Diferrent territorial levels of Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border cooperation

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DIFFERENT TERRITORIAL LEVELS OF ROMANIAN – HUNGARIAN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

*Constantin-Vasile ȚOCA**

Abstract: *The Romanian-Hungarian border has evolved in time from a closed, guarded border to an open one after 1989, a period when the success of cross-border cooperation models in Europe were taken on by the two nations, either as an Eurometropolis, or as Euroregion, operating with a series of instruments and institutions that facilitated cooperation within various areas of cross-border interest; these instruments have been gradually adapted until the present days when new ones replaced the old ones, the latest instrument being the EGTC.*

Keywords: *NUTS, CBC, Euroregion, Eurometropolis, EGTC*

The change of political regime within the former socialist countries, even if not abruptly, but in time has given us the status of EU Member State, Hungary (HU) in 2004 and Romania (RO) in 2007.

Our hypothesis asserts that the political changes opened and supported the possibility of a structural development, multilevel – territorial, for the cross-border cooperation on the HU – RO border.

We can note that these positive European models had effects on our region only in the period after December 1989, when the cross-border relations were diversified in conformity to the European model.

The focus of our research is the communities of Debrecen and Oradea, two centres situated on both parts of the Romanian-Hungarian border, at the confluence of various NUTS levels. In order to join the European Union, Romania had to join the European system of the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) in 2002.

We will debate on the Euroregional level as well, although it does not officially belong to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics.

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Regional dimension

In Europe, the idea of a continent of regions was first issued in the 1960s, when the Swiss essayist Denis de Rougemont criticised the nation-state as it blocked the affirmation of internal entities. The first collaboration between neighbouring regions (at the border between France, Switzerland, and Germany) dates back to the same time.

In the process of defining regions, the territorial element is the central point, while the social, economic and political content of regionalism varies according to the results of political processes.

Our research has identified several authors who gave definitions of the region, each one using a specific criterion:

- a) an economic definition of a region considers some core criteria such as¹: common manufacturing models, interdependence, commercial connections, labour market, etc.;
- b) aiming at delimiting regions based on the economic criteria, C. Engel distinguishes between three main types of regions²;
- c) in 1882, the Paris Geographical Society promotes the survey on natural regions. The region is considered as belonging to an area differing from the neighbouring areas³;
- d) in order to have a functional definition, we have to consider models of social interaction, such as leisure, recreation and trip models;
- e) from the point of view of region identification criteria, we can notice the following two main criteria⁴: NUTS statistic identification criterion, geographical and sociologic identification criterion with other four sub-criteria;
- f) another type is political region⁵ lying at the crossroads of two distinct yet representative processes: regionalisation and regionalism;
- g) when speaking about vertical relations, P. Schmitt – Egner distinguishes between three types of regions⁶: national region, international region, transnational region.

Table 1. Classification of the regions

Management and central institutional regions	Administrative regions			
Study regions	Regions as physical areas	Natural region	Geographical regions	Space
	Living regions	Cultural region Social region Historical region		Territory
	Functional regions	Key region Agricultural region Industrial region Economic region Functional region Urban region Metropolitan region		System

Source: Barna R.C., p. 15

¹Keating Michael, *Noul Regionalism În Europa Occidentală*, Institutul European, Iași, 2008, p. 21

²Barna Radu Cristian, *Economie regională*, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Euroregionale, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 25

³*Ibidem*, p. 13

⁴Sauron Jean – Luc, *Le Puzzle des institutions europeennes*, 4e rdition, Gualino Editeur, Paris 2010, p. 36-37

⁵Committee of the Regions, *Committee Of The Regions 1996-2003*, European Communities, 2004, p. 116

⁶Barna Radu Cristian, *op. cit.*, p. 23

We will tackle only certain definitions, which we believe to be representative for the concept of mainstream European institutions, definitions given by specialised researchers.

Passi points out that regions are social construct that are created in political, economic, cultural and administrative practice and discourse, regions are territorially shaped by clearly recognizable borders, they are shaped symbolically by a name, they are shaped institutionally by administrative bodies, and they are shaped by a regional identity and recognized by the shared opinions of their inhabitants⁷.

From the perspective of the European Regions Association, region is an entity under central government with a representative political power rooted in an elected council or a group or association representing the authority on a regional level⁸.

The European Commission considers the region as an instrument for structural promotion focused on regional economy and Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, NUTS.

From the point of view of the financial aspect envisaged for the 2007-2013 programme, the budget for regional policy is 3478 billion euro as compared to the 2000-2006 period, when it only provided 213 billion euro⁹.

Table 2. European Regional Policy

2000-2006		2007-2013	
Objective	Instrument	Objective	Instrument
Cohesion Fund	Cohesion fund		
Objective 1	FERER, FSE, FEOGA, IFOP	Convergence	FEDER, FSE, Cohesion Fund
Objective 2	FEDER, FSE	Regional competitiveness and employment	FEDER, FSE
Objective 3	FSE	European territorial cooperation	FEDER
Interreg	FEDER		
Urban	FEDER		
Equal	FSE		
Leader	FEOGA		
Rural development and restructuration of fishing outside objective 1	FEOGA-IFOP		

Source: Renaud Dehousse, *Politiques Europeennes*, Presse des Sciences Po, Paris, 2009, p. 272

From the point of view of the regional level, the two development regions to which the two centres belong, North-Western Development Region and Eszak-Alfold Development Region, are representative.

Consequently, after Romania's harmonisation to the European requirements, we can speak of the following NUTS levels¹⁰: Level NUTS I – Romania, Level NUTS II – 8 development regions, Level NTUS III – 41 counties and the municipality of Bucharest,

⁷Wichmann Matthiessen Christian, *The Oresund Area: Pre – and post bridge cross-border functional integration: the bi-national regional question*, in *GeoJournal* 61, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherland, 2004, p. 31

⁸www.a-e-r.org

⁹Tourian Jouno, *Questions europeennes. Les droit et les politiques de l Union*, Press Universitaire de France, Paris, 2009, p. 570

¹⁰Ilieş Alexandru, *România între milenii. Frontiere, areale frontaliere și cooperare transfrontalieră*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea, 2003, p. 96

Level NUTS IV – not applicable, Level NUTS V - 265 municipalities and towns; 2,686 communes made up of 13,902 villages.

On the level of NTUS II, the eight development regions in Romania are the following: North-Western Development Region, North-Eastern Development Region, South-Eastern Development Region, Southern Development Region, South-Western Development Region, Western Development Region, Central Development Region, București and the Ilfov County.

Map1. Romania - NUTS II and NUTS III (own elaboration)

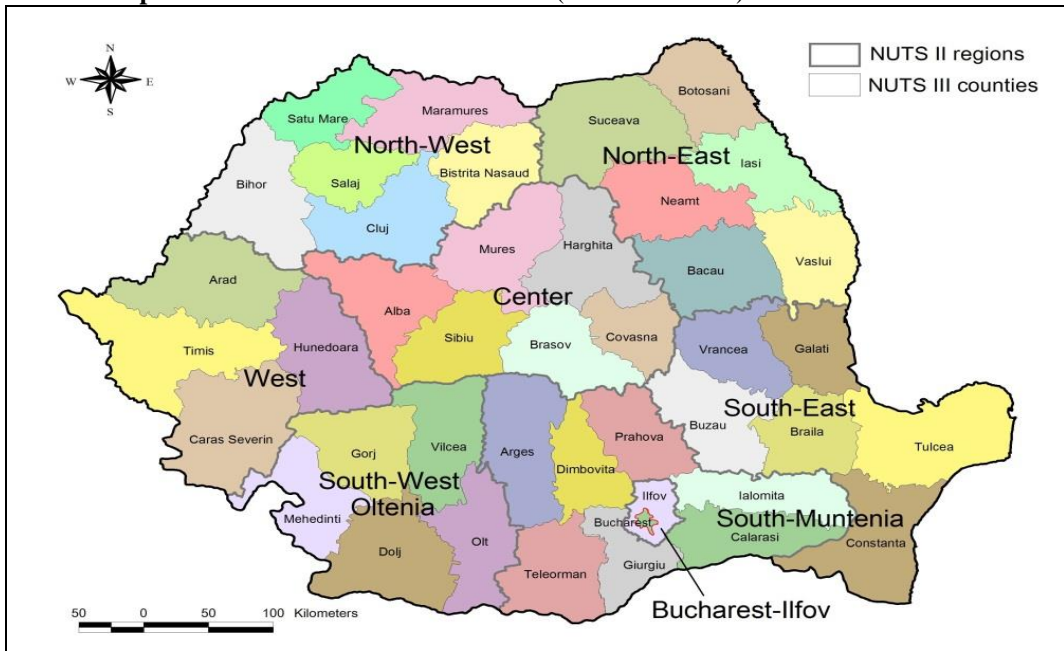


Table 3. Demography in North-Western Development Region in 2004

Counties of the North-Western Development Region	Inhabitants	Percentage
Cluj	686,825	25.07%
Bihor	596,961	21.8%
Maramureș	516,562	18.86%
Satu Mare	371,759	13.58%
Bistrița Năsăud	318,558	11.62%
Sălaj	247,796	9.06%
Total Region	2,738,461	100%

Source: <http://www.nord-vest.ro/genpage.aspx?pc=prezentarepdr.aspx,pp 60-61>

North-Western Development Region has partnerships with similar regions like: cooperation agreements with Veneto, Sicilia, and Lazio Regions in Italy, Northern Stateline (Illinois, USA), Auvergne Region (France).

The cooperation protocol between the counties of Bihor, Bistrița – Năsăud, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu – Mare, Sălaj making up the North-Western Development Region (Romania) and the Northern Great Plain Region (Észak-Alföldi Régió), Hungary, aims at supporting political, economic, social and cultural cooperation between the North-Western Region in Romania and Northern Great Plain Region in Hungary.

The protocol shows the commitment of both parties to promote partnership and understanding for mutual benefits. The parties have undertaken to develop a joint contact and cooperation area focusing on tourism, environmental protection, agriculture, rural development, human resource development, economy, business development, research – development – innovation, access and infrastructure, culture and sports, institutional cooperation, structural funds and project management¹¹.

In Hungary, there are seven regions¹²: Észak Alföld, Dél Alföld, Dél Dunántul, Nyugat Dunántul, Közép Dunántul, Közép Magyarország, Észak Magyarország.

Map 2. Hungary - NUTS II and NUTS III (own elaboration)

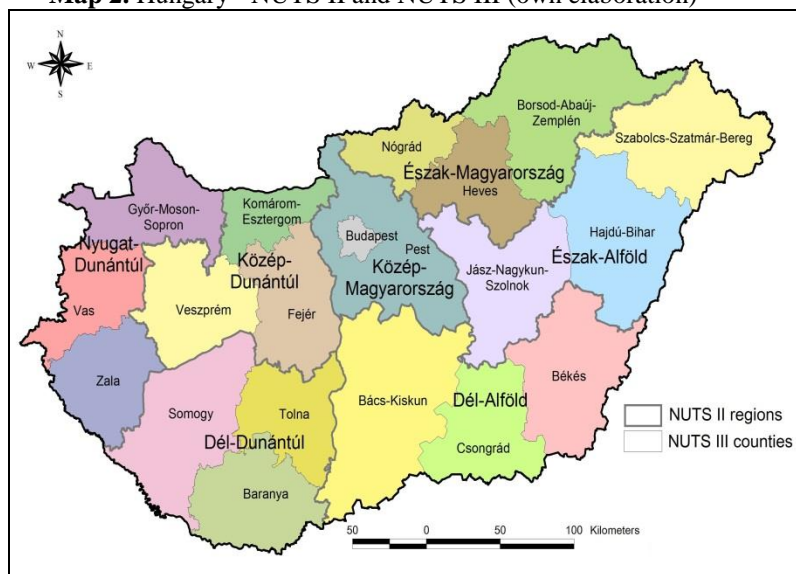


Table 4. *Statistic data for the Észak Alföld Region, Hungary*

Észak-Alföld Regio	Inhabitants	%
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	415,917	27%
Hajdú-Bihar	552,998	36%
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	582,256	37%
Total Region	1,551,171	100%

Source: <http://www.nepszamlalas.hu/hun/kotetek/04/tabhun/maptoc09000.html>

Partnerships of the Észak-Alföld Region: Valencia Régió - Spain, Szász-Anhalt Régió – Germany, Centre Régió – France, Champagne-Ardenne Régió France, Flevoland- Holland, Észak-Nyugat Régió- Romania

Euroregional dimensions. Definitions, functions and types of Euroregions

The idea of Euroregion occurs at the same time with the evolving process of local autonomy and regionalisation. The aim is to set direct connections between regions and

¹¹<http://www.nord-vest.ro/GenPage.aspx?pc=regiunipartenere.aspx>

¹²www.nfu.hu

communities on both sides of state borders by virtue of local authorities' competences as they are defined in national and European law. The conditions for optimal development of a Euroregion are minimal economic balance, cultural similarities despite ethnic diversity, geographical proximity and common historical heritage. Cooperation develops mainly in these fields.

The cross-border cooperation Euroregion is a voluntary association respecting national and international law, territorial and administrative structures of the countries at different levels with the aim to eliminate territorial isolation and to settle the framework for cultural connection or to rebuild typical groups, and to set up economic development nuclei to achieve a balance between the centre and the periphery at an advanced stage of functional territorial systems.

The cross-border cooperation region aims at facilitating dialogue between state governmental structures and local or regional interstate structures. The aim is to achieve a coherent development area and an international partnership to develop border people's standard of living. In fact, they are competing structures in one or several states belonging to the cross-border cooperation region¹³.

The basic elements of a cross-border region are as follows: territory, inhabitants and cross-border institutions¹⁴.

The association of European Border Regions states that "within the limits of the geographical aim of cooperation, cross-border structures are cooperation arrangements for cooperation between local or regional governmental structures lying along the border in agreement with the promotion of common interest to increase the standard of living of border populations"¹⁵.

A successful Euroregion has to meet certain prerequisites, such as: the interest of inhabitants is vital and has to be considered; institutions and organisations that are involved on both sides of the border; the representatives of political life have to be involved at all levels; establishing bodies that efficiently carry out their tasks.

Euroregions can also be categorised from the point of view of cross-border cooperation as follows: cooperation along internal borders, cooperation along external borders.

In order to have an efficient cooperation and communication on the regional and Euroregional levels, we have to consider a wide range of aspects¹⁶: space, time, technology, rules, policies, power exercise, economy, communication: language, symbols, culture, identity, human resources, social aspect.

The Euroregional dimension locating in its central part the two neighbouring regions, namely Oradea, Bihor County (România) and Debrecen, Hajdu Bihar County (Hungary), is represented by the participation of the two municipalities in the two Euroregions: Bihor - Hajdu Bihar and Carpatica.

There are two directions for cooperation in Bihor Hajdu Bihar Euroregion and they are coordinated by commissions designated for this particular purpose:

¹³Vasile Simileanu, "Regiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră", in *Geopolitica, Regiunile de Cooperare transfrontalieră. Surse de conflict sau de stabilitate?*, Editura TOP FORM, București, 2006, p. 5-6

¹⁴Boar Nicolae, *Regiunea transfrontalieră româno - ucraineană a Maramureșului*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj - Napoca, 2005, p. 25

¹⁵Ilieș A., *România. Euroregiuni*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea, 2004, p. 23-24

¹⁶Lunden Thomas, *On the Boundary. About humans at the end of territory*, Elanders Gotab, Stockholm, 2004, p. 25-125

- a. Commission for international cooperation: is in charge with the international cooperation of the Euroregion;
- b. Commission for Cooperation and Sustainable Development: pursues and tracks funding opportunities and other financial resources based on annual strategic priorities settled by the Council of the Euroregion; expresses opinions on individual projects and fund allowance forwarding them to the Board. Considering the structure of the Bihor – Hajdú - Bihar Euroregion, we will review some characteristics of the administrative units making up the Euroregion in the BihorCounty and the Hajdú-BiharCounty.

The Carpathian Euroregion's main aims and tasks are defined in the basic documents (The Founder Agreement and the Joint Declaration) as follows¹⁷:

- a) To organize and coordinate those activities which promote economic, ecological, cultural, scientific and educational co-operation between the members;
- b) To promote between the members of the association the elaboration of concrete plans regarding the matters of joint concernment;
- c) To promote and facilitate the relations between people, including relations between experts in various fields;
- d) To promote good neighbourly relations between the members;
- e) To promote regional development;
- f) To determine the multilateral collaboration's potential fields among the members;
- g) To connect and facilitate co-operation between the members and other international organizations, institutions and agencies.

County dimension

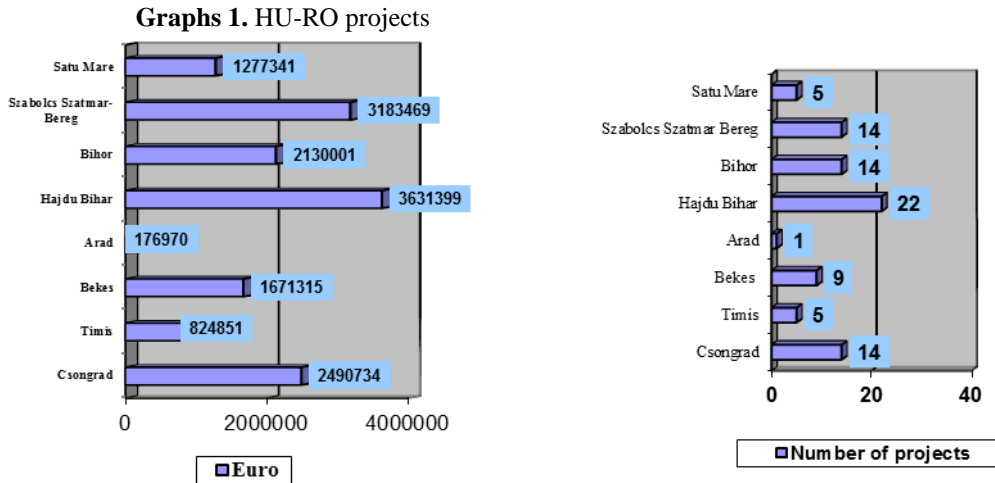
The NUTS represented in the two counties on both sides of the Romanian-Hungarian border is identified by the Counties of Bihor (România) and Hajdu - Bihar (Hungary).

From the perspective of Romanian - Hungarian border cooperation, with the two target communities of Debrecen and Oradea, counties of Bihor, Hajdú - Bihar, we notice the development of cooperation and in this sense we provide a number of data confirming the interrelationship areas subject to our study, focusing mainly on the period in which the Hungary and Romania are Member State of the European Union; the research directions that we turned to are the initiatives of Debrecen and Oradea municipalities through the common project entitled "Window to Europe" and through the cross-border cooperation programme part of the Hungary-Romania Cross Border Cooperation Programmes 2007-2013 CBC implemented in the past within the region (Interreg IIIA in Hungary and Phare CBC in Romania) in order to stimulate cross-border cooperation in 2007-2013, through the European Regional Development Fund and the contribution of the two Member States.

The analysed dimension is the cross-border projects, based on the published statistical data about Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation with a target on 4 Romanian counties (Satu-Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timișoara) and 4 Hungarian counties

¹⁷Süli Zakar István, *A Karpatok Euroregio Interregionalis Szovetseg Tiz Eve*, Debreceni Egyetem Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadoja, Debrecen, 2003, p. 111

(Szabolcs-Szatmar-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Bekes, Csongrad). We noted that the counties of Bihar (Ro) and Hajdú-Bihar (HU) are the most active on the Romanian and Hungarian sides, with a total of 36 implemented projects on the two financing priorities; the amount of implemented projects is 5761400 Euro, which is 37% of the European funding attracted for the Romanian-Hungarian border.



Source : http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects

Cities' dimension

In terms of the annual joint project of the two communities of Debrecen and Oradea, where the main attraction is the pageant exhibition, organizing a conference with a very wide array of topics that relate primarily to an effective cooperation with results such as: support for joint projects for a joint development of the communities of Debrecen and Oradea, the regional and Euro Dimensions of the two communities are part of joint development strategies and identify common points of cooperation between the two cities.

Table 5. Debrecen – Oradea Project: Window Open to Europe

Year	Conference	Themes	Personalities
2005	Introducing the "Debrecen 2010 - Cultural Capital of Europe"	Project presentation by the community of Oradea	Deputy Mayor of Debrecen, Gabor Turi, Project Manager, Zoltan Korosy, Mayor of Oradea, Petru Filip, Deputy Mayor Biro Rozalia
2006	Future cooperation between the towns of Oradea and Debrecen	Think a Common Future - Oradea-Debrecen 2020	Centre of Excellence "Jean Monnet" in universities in Debrecen and Oradea, Oradea Vice Biro Rozalia
2007	Pageant exhibition	Cultural and educational activities	Reprezentanți ai mediului universitar, administrativ și societatea civilă
2008	Euroregional conference "The role of public administration in the Euroregions"	Presentation of Bihar – Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	Prof. Ioan Horga PhD.
		Regionalism in Europa	Prof. Istvan Suli-Zakar PhD.

		Eligible regions in Europe	MEP Iuliu Winkler
		Regional Development Agency-Alföld Észak	Laszlo Buzas, director of Department of Regional Development Agency-Alföld Észak
2009	Debrecen and Oradea in the European Union - developing strategies	Debrecen and Oradea in the European Union - developing strategies	Marcel Bolos, Executive Director of the Division for Sustainable Development and External Financing and Bak Ferenc Oradea City Hall, Financial Director at the Society of Commercial Management Debrecen Patrimony
2010	The development potential for the Euro-region Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar	Identification of common collaboration points between the two regions	Prof. Ioan Horga PhD. Prof. Istvan Suli-Zakar PhD.
2011	The fortress of Oradea as tourists objective of major importance with Bihor- Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	Identification if efficient promotion means for the Fortress of Oradea, and issuance of a municipal strategy of marketing for the Fortress	Prof. Ioan Horga PhD, Prof. Istvan Suli-Zakar PhD, MEP Iuliu Winkler, Ilosvai Péter, Executiv Manager IT Services Hungary, Búzás László, Department Manager Eszak-Alfold Regio

Source: www.bihon.ro and www.crisana.ro

In conclusion, the initial hypothesis postulating that the Romanian-Hungarian border was closed before 1989 and then opened after the fall of communism checks out: the European models for territorial cooperation have evolved, following examples of good practice the European models for cross-border or territorial cooperation with the new instrument called EGTC regulating the operation of the Eurometropolises.

EGTC Regulation refers to a legal instrument, although the validity is not limited to the 2007-2013 programming period it is meant to be used for: should be able to act, either for the purpose of implementing territorial cooperation programs or projects co-financed by the Community, notably under the Structural Funds in conformity with Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund, or for the purpose of carrying out actions of territorial cooperation which are at the sole initiative of the Member States and their regional and local authorities with or without a financial contribution from the Community¹⁸. Another reason for creating this common mechanism for integrated management refers to the principle of non-cooperation that should not be more difficult between two partners from different Member States, only between partners in the same MemberState. We have considered the European examples of good practice that accessed this new instrument, i.e. Lille – Kortrijk- Tournai Eurometropolis (which was the first such structure created in Europe), the communities of Debrecen and Oradea based on the cooperation proven by our previous research. We are safe to say that there are premises according to which a new Eurometropolis can be

¹⁸Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu, Constantin-Vasile Țoca, “Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Cooperation Through a Possible EGTC Oradea – Debrecen” in Horga I., Bărbulescu I. Gh., Ivan Adrian, Palinchak Istvan, Suli-Zakar Istvan (eds.), *Regional and Cohesion Policy – Insight Into the Role of the Partnership Principle in the New Policy Design*, University of Oradea Press, Oradea, 2011, p. 241

developed in the near future, namely Debrecen – Oradea Eurometropolis¹⁹, using the EGTC instrument and thus, in the near future we can talk about new forms of cooperation on each side of the Romanian-Hungarian border.

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- <http://www.nfu.hu>;
- <http://www.nord-vest.ro/genpage.aspx?pc=prezentarepdr.aspx>;
- <http://www.nord-vest.ro/GenPage.aspx?pc=regiunipartenere.aspx>;
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¹⁹István Süli-Zakar, “The Role of the Euroregions and Eurimetropolises in the Etheralisation of the Borders in the Eastern Periphery of the European Union” in *Eurolimes*, no.7, Bruylant, 2009, p. 144