

## SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE HUNGARIAN AREAS OF THE DRÁVA REGION

### SPECIFIČNI PROBLEMI RAZVOJA TURIZMA NA PODRUČJIMA RIJEKE DRAVE U MAĐARSKOJ

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#### ABSTRACT

*The Dráva Region is one of the poorest areas in Hungary, which, on the other hand, is also one of the richest as regards its natural endowments and boasts of heritage and ethnographic values as well. Also, the cooperation with the neighbouring Croatia can give new development impetus to the region (it is a possibility far underutilised and in some cases quite mishandled to date). Despite the huge amounts of financial support, it is only excursionists that have been attracted to the region in relatively considerable numbers, whereas the number of tourists and guest nights spent by them still remain very low. The potential of tourism in rural development has been recognised for long in Hungary as well, and it is*

seen especially important tool in regions handicapped from socio-economic aspects where the chances or other economic activities are few. Border regions, coming from their isolation, are often in handicapped situation, and this allowed them to preserve those natural and cultural values that may be the foundations of special sorts of non-mass tourism (ecotourism and other green tourism activities). The Dráva Region, including one of the most infamous and impoverished micro-regions of Hungary, the Ormánság, is a good example of such a region. The paper analyses the problems and gives recommendations for the improvement of tourism cooperations.

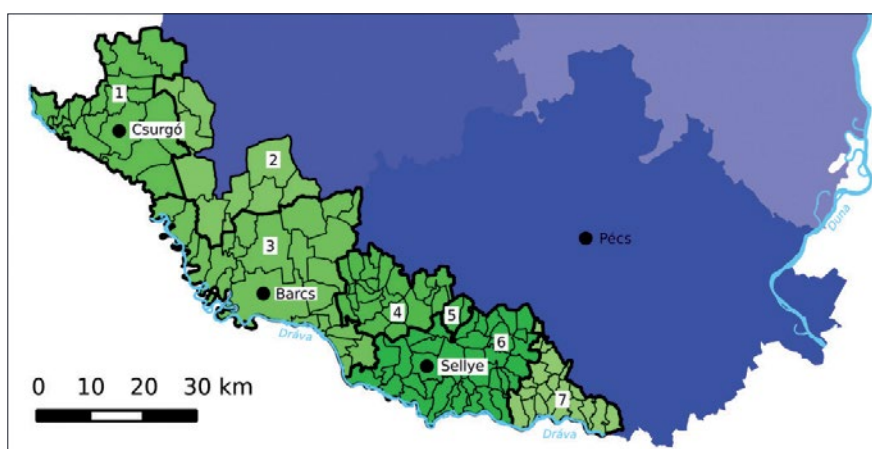
**Ključne riječi:** Ormánság, područje Drave, razvoj turizma, ruralni razvoj

**Keywords:** Ormánság, Dráva region, tourism development, rural development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Dráva Region, a territory involving the riparian areas of the Dráva River, a border river between Hungary and Croatia, is one of Hungary's border regions that have outstanding natural values. The designation of the region is a challenge in itself: on the one hand, in the lack of consensus on the exact delineation of the area, on the other hand, each case the region is analysed from some (project-based, natural, ethnographical or social) aspect, a new designation is made that meets the current requirements. For this paper, the territory of the Dráva Region involves those settlements, on the basis of local experts' opinions, that have a direct relation to the river, supplemented with those settlements that are closely linked or related to the core area (*Figure 1*). According to this approach, the Dráva Region covers, on the basis of the current administrative division of Hungary, 7 districts – 3 in their entirety and 4 partially – and a total of 136, mostly small or very small, settlements.

The examination of the region was inspired by several similar surveys concerning relatively extended, quasi natural border areas. The complex development and utilisation of the Dráva Region has been an issue for decades, since the regime change in Hungary in the late 1980s: since then, almost each major development targeting the region has involved some direct or indirect tourism investments.



**Figure 1.** Designation of the Dráva Region

**Legend:** District of ... 1 – Csurgó, 2 – Nagyatád, 3 – Barcs, 4 – Szigetvár, 5 – Szentlőrinc, 6 – Sellye, 7 – Siklós

**Source:** Edited by the authors

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH PRELIMINARIES

The paper attempts to give an overall picture of the tourism developments that have been implemented in the last two decades in the Dráva Region, and to summarise their impacts. Although this area is one of the most unique regions in Hungary as regards natural values, one of the regions endowed with the most precious natural assets, its inclusion and use in tourism is still a problematic issue, despite the relatively large amounts of money invested in the tourism of the area. The methodology of the survey was complex, involving both primary and secondary methods. the examination of the respective region has of course preliminaries: issues that have already been covered include the necessity of the creation

of destination management organisation, still missing here (PÁLFI, A. – AUBERT, A. 2019; MEHRING-TÓTH, Sz. 2017), local development possibilities of different tourism products (GONDA, T. et al. 2016), as well as the possible utilisation of tourism in rural development (MARTON, G. et al. 2016). In the last decade cross-border tourism projects have also been in the focus of examinations in some analytical papers (CSAPÓ, J. et al. 2015; ČELAN, T. J. 2016). According to the author of a very recent paper (ČELAN, T. J. 2021) there is still a lot to be done and developed in cross-border tourism cooperations in the region.

The relevant data of the Hungarian central statistical office and the population census are the foundations of the examination in this paper (as regards the latter, it was a serious hindrance that data at settlement level were last published in the year 2010). The indices of commercial accommodations are taken as feedbacks regarding the success of investments. During the research several in-depth interviews were made with the experts contacted, by which the authors had an opportunity to survey the volume of excursionists in the region, as there is no data collection concerning this activity in Hungary. The qualitative impacts of investments were also assessed this way, through the in-depth interviews made with experts.

### 3. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DRÁVA REGION

Rural areas have had to face very serious challenges in the recent decades both in Europe and Hungary. With the wide-spread penetration of intensive cultivation methods in agriculture and the parallel decline in traditional, extensive or small-scale, homestead-based farming methods, rural areas started to lose their traditional functions, the number of agricultural employment fell and biodiversity also suffered a great loss. The same processes were observed in the Dráva Region as well.

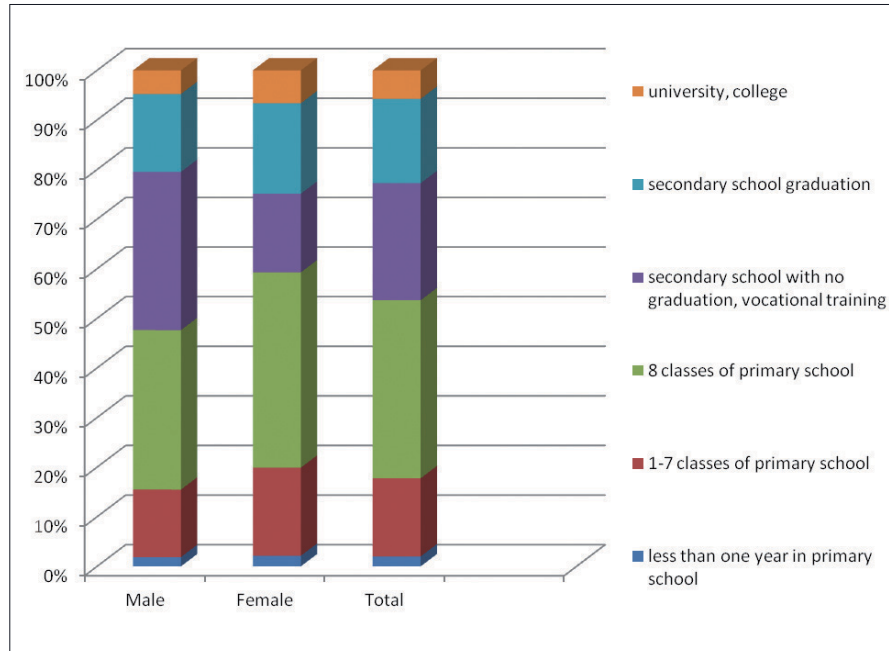
Rural development has many decades of past in the European Union and in Hungary. In the 1960s the very first common policy of the then European Economic Community was Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In the beginning this common policy, as its name implied, was primarily focused on the development of agriculture, the creation of food security for the community, but was subsequently gradually extended to complex rural development as well, including the development of rural tourism as an alternative source of income in rural areas.

The significance of tourism is now unquestionable in the world, and it is just as obvious that tourism must no longer be seen simply as an economic phenomenon but as a process with considerable socio-cultural impacts as well. Although traditional mass (4S) tourism is expected to remain the motivation of the largest part of travels, there are alternative forms and new destinations in tourism that are becoming more and more popular. Among these alternative forms of tourism, ecotourism and new destinations not visited, or not so intensively visited before are getting more and more attention and gaining significance – which may be a development chance for the Dráva Region.

The Dráva Region can be divided into two parts on the basis of its physical geographical endowment or on the basis of regional geography: its western part called the Central Dráva Valley belongs to the macro-region of the South Transdanubian Hill Ridge, within that to the Inner Somogy meso-region, while the eastern territories of the Dráva Region, the Dráva Plain areas are parts of three physical geographical micro-regions within the macro-region of the Great Hungarian Plain (Dráva Plain; Plain of the Fekete Stream; Nyárád–Harkány Plain) (MAROSI, S. 1990).

The present image of the landscape has been shaped by the Dráva River itself and its branches, and also by the backwaters created by natural processes or anthropogeneous impacts, the regulation of the Dráva River: the area is spotted by a number of backwaters from the former riverbed. In addition, memories of the archaic flood plain management can also still be seen in some places, reminiscent of the ancient way of living of the population that used to co-exist with the processes of nature (BOGNÁR, A. – MARTON, G. 2010; ZSIBORACS, H. et al. 2014).

The Dráva Region is one of those peripheral rural regions in the border areas of Hungary that still suffers from all the societal problems typical of most such spatial units along the national borders. These markedly negative social processes have become a tendency despite all those reform initiatives aiming at the catching up of the region following the regime change in Hungary on the turn of the 1980s and



**Figure 2:** Educational attainment of the population living in the Dráva Region, 2011 (%)

**Source:** Edited by the authors, using HCSO data

1990s. The number of population – both of permanent and temporary residents – fell by more than 30% in less than half a century, which is an astonishing index in itself. Of course this is also the consequence of the ageing of the Hungarian society as a whole. Out-migration is an especially serious problem in the Dráva Region and in all other spatial units in similar situation, as indicated by the paper of Rudl (2009) – it was written on only one of the micro-regions of the Dráva Region, the part called Ormánság, but the processes and tendencies can be generalised to the whole area. There are several factors that make people migrate from the area, the most pressing issues being the general economic hardships typical of the whole area, the concomitant labour market problems (high levels of unemployment), and the limited possibilities for participation in higher quality education and for having higher living standards. The processes presented above have one more rather serious consequence that can be seen in the average level of schooling of the population now living in the Dráva Region (*Figure 2*).

The index that almost 50% of the approximately 80 thousand population of the region has no more than basic, primary school education is simply frustrating in the 21st century – this means that they lack any specialised skills and so economic development in the classic sense is also impossible in the region, simply because of the lack of skilled labour force. (It is to be mentioned that no recent data are available, but the local experts contacted and questioned all said that these data had only become even worse in the recent decade). More recent data could be provided by the population census scheduled for May and June 2021, but the data of this will not be available before the end of this year. The micro-census conducted in 2016 did not provide data broken down to the territorial level required by this paper.

#### 4. TOURISM IN THE DRÁVA REGION – SUPPLY

The tourism supply of the Dráva Region is diverse, and is basically linked to nature-based attractions and leisure time activities. The common feature of the tourism products is that they are all based on some natural endowment, the only exception from this being cultural tourism. A further striking feature is the omnipresence of by and large the same products in the region, without any harmonisation, differentiation or cooperation among them (CSAPÓ, J. – MARTON, G. – AUBERT, A. 2011).

Health tourism started to develop in the region in the 20th century, of course in accordance with the demand factors of the time: in the central settlements now classic beaches, with one pool or two, were established. Modernisation was brought about by the developments of the support scheme called Széchenyi Plan I; during this development phase it was not only the central settlements of health tourism

with outstanding potential that were awarded development resources but so were other smaller villages as well (Csapó, J. – Aubert, A. – Marton, G. 2011).

There are two tourism products that are linked directly and exclusively to the Dráva River: these are water sports and pleasure cruising on the river. They have common characteristics: both are attractive for a wider audience, typically targeting not one special segment of the demand, only; also, both are very rigorously regulated, as the physical space where they are pursued is a protected area supervised by the directorate of the Danube-Dráva National Park. As regards water sports, only the non-motorised versions can be pursued in the region, which practically means that kayaking and canoeing is allowed on the river. According to the regulations concerning these activities, elaborated by the Danube-Dráva National Park, the volume of this tourism product is limited, in order to avoid excessive environmental stress, and these activities are only allowed with the participation of trained guides. Pleasure boating on the Dráva River is done by two private companies that present the natural values of the region to their guests by the cruises with their ships. The programmes involve various routes that concern the total of the Hungarian reach of the Dráva River, with the exception of places that cannot be accessed or not allowed to approach, being protected areas where access is prohibited.

A lead product in the region is hunting tourism, the foundations of which are the Big Game Reserve of Somogy and the Big Game Reserve of South Baranya, and also the fact that overhunting is an unknown phenomenon in the Dráva Region, due to the strict protection measures – in fact, it is now mentioned as a problem by local hunters and hunting societies that the populations of certain animals (e.g. red deer, wild boar) now exceed the carrying capacity of the region in some places. Hunting tourism is a product extremely popular both with Hungarian and international hunters, but for the time being it is only hunting societies (that divide the whole of the national park area among themselves for this specific purpose) that manage and coordinate this activity, and so the present weight of hunting tourism in the tourism of the region is rather limited.

Of course angling tourism is also done in the region, the venues of which are the Dráva River and its backwaters, as well as other lakes. Tranquil natural environment and the quality of the waters meet the basic requirements by far, but the establishment of the tourism infrastructure related to this tourism product is very underdeveloped, with a few exceptions (e.g. Gyékényes, Barcs or Somogyudvarhely). The coordination and cooperation of the development of this tourism product is still to be done – a difficulty in this respect is caused by the mixed ownership of waters: some are state-owned and some are in private hands –, the foundations of the competitiveness of this product nevertheless do exist even without the basic infrastructure.

Hiking in nature, nature-based walking tours as a lead product of ecotourism can hardly be found, unfortunately, along the Dráva River. The developments of hiking trails have been abandoned, despite the investments made for the utilisation of the natural assets of the region in the last ten years. The present supply is limited to the study paths and visitor centres of the nature protection areas, managed by the Danube-Dráva National Park, and this supply does not meet the demands of the visitors by far. This product was aptly described by the opinion of one local expert: »Hiking? Well, those arriving here would definitely hike – if they had a place to do so!«.

The Ancient Dráva Programme (in its full name: »Vízvisszatartás és tájhasználat-váltás tervezése az Ős-Dráva Programban«, i.e. »Retention of water and design of the change of land use in the Ancient Dráva Programme«) involves the administrative territories of a total of 45 settlements from four districts – the Barcs, Sellye, Siklós and Szigetvár ones –, concerning 572.14 km<sup>2</sup>, i.e. its regional impacts could be significant. The use of conditional is justified, unfortunately: the programme launched with high hopes and great expectations in 2003, aiming at the creation of the conditions of a sustainable use of waters, the provision of the ecological water demand of wetland habitats, and the restoration of traditional farming and land use methods built on the retention and storage of water with all its concomitant positive environmental and socio-economic impacts, has almost completely failed to meet the expectation so far. Priorities of the programme included economic development (agriculture, irrigated horticulture, food industry), the change of land use (re-forestation, creation of waters and pastures) and tourism development: angling, river kayaking and canoeing, hunting, horseback riding, cycling, built

heritage, study paths, gastronomy etc. (Lóczy, D. et al., 2016). No academic examinations identifying exact, quantifiable tourism impacts have been made so far, but the tangible impacts of the programme have been very limited so far. Achievements made include the presently rather underutilised cycling paths (in a total length of 125 kilometres) and the Ancient Dráva Visitor Centre, a much more successful development, in a village called Szaporca.

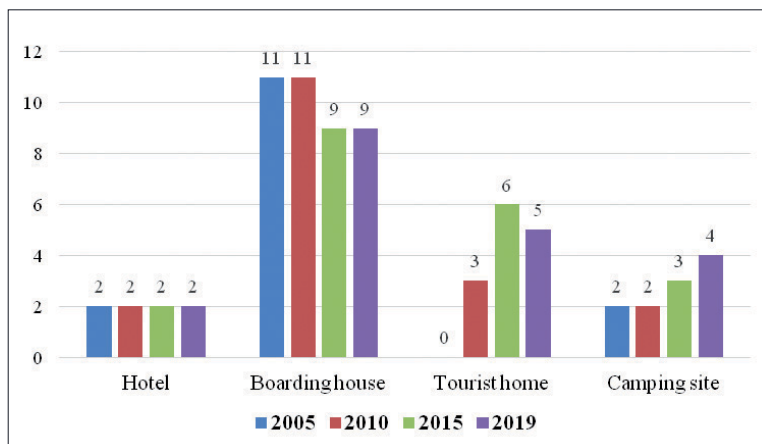
The Ancient Dráva Visitor Centre, opened in May 2015, was awarded the title »Ecotourism Facility of the Year« in the respective year. In 2020 the facility was enlarged with a new attraction, a 50-bed commercial accommodation called Hotel Kolokán. (It could hardly receive any guests since then, unfortunately, due to the pandemic situation and the visitor centre was actually closed, together with all such amenities, on 11 November 2020 – nevertheless in less than five months after the opening on 19 June 2020, a total of 672 guests spent 1 150 guest nights here, i.e. the start was promising.) The programme range (which, according to visitors, consists of half-day programmes, only) involves guided tours, special school classes and lectures, bird ringing programmes, night tours and canoe- and kayak tours of different duration. The main building accommodates a permanent interactive exhibition demonstrating the natural habitats typical in the region, their rich wildlife, flora and fauna, and the ethnographic and cultural history values of the area. The farm next to the main building presents the domestic animals that used to be kept and typical of the Dráva Region. The Ancient Dráva Visitor Centre also has three study paths of different lengths where visitors can discover the natural values of the Dráva Region, the world of traditional farming methods and also the Ancient Dráva project itself.

Cycling tourism is one of those leisure time tourism products that have been given significant development resources in the recent past. The Dráva Region joined international cycling tourism by the construction of the relevant sections of the »Three Rivers Cycling Route« connecting the areas along the Mur, the Dráva and the Danube Rivers. The project also led to the establishment of several auxiliary services along, and in addition, to the route, and they can find the future of this tourism product ([www.kerekparut.com](http://www.kerekparut.com)). It must not be forgotten that the development of this product is in the promotional phase after its renewal, and feedbacks have only been given by a smaller part of the segments targeted, which does not allow the drawing of far-reaching conclusions about the success and achievements of these developments.

The quality and the tourism potential of attractions making the foundation of cultural tourism are rather limited. Although there are cultural tourism and heritage values in significant numbers, their utilisation is not promoted by any kind of management activity, and so they are not presented as tourism products on their own on the market. Their role is now restricted to offering a short programme for visitors travelling to or across the region: a look at some old churches with painted wooden ceiling blocks or a brief stay and look around in the Ormánság Museum in Sellye (Gredičák, T. 2018). The framework conditions for their utilisation in tourism are completely absent: several monuments have been lost or completely transformed that could now function as cultural tourism attractions (e.g. the Draskovits castle, a chateau converted into a youth hostel in Sellye). This way the attractions of the region cannot generate longer and more enjoyable stays that will result in guest nights spent in the Dráva Region.

A sustainable tourism development of the region could have been achieved by a more professional and successful exploration and utilisation of the local resources. This is an area where the lagging behind other, more prosperous tourism areas is considerable. Unfortunately not even the Dráva River bordering the area (which is among the three cleanest rivers in the whole of Europe) has been involved in tourism effectively enough, although tourism developments could also be based on the unique and picturesque beauty of the areas along the river (Karancsi, Z. et al., 2020). The authors are convinced that a reason for this is the too rigorous regulation by the national park. As the total of the Hungarian reach of the Dráva River is a nature protection area, the tourism superstructure meeting the cotemporary demands of guests has not been built out so far.

No mentionable initiative can be seen in the region either in the utilisation of local products in tourism (Gonda, T. 2014) or in the demonstration of the uniqueness of the local gastronomy supply. The region is far away from the developing core tourism areas of the region of South Transdanubia not only



**Figure 3:** Number of commercial accommodation establishment by categories

**Source:** Edited by the authors, using HCSO data

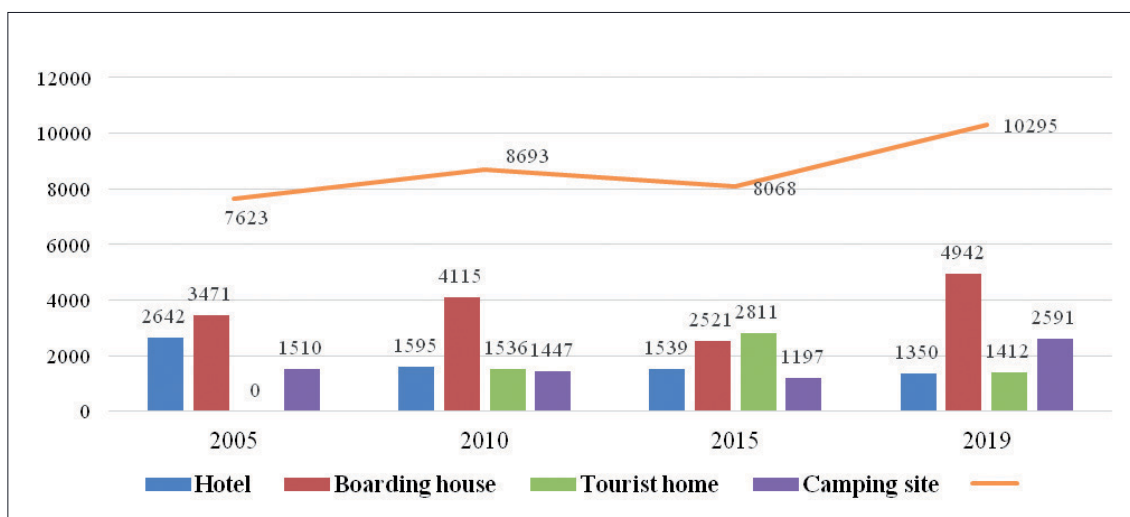
in the physical geographical sense of the word but also in mental sense. There was not one single actor, either, from the respective area to join the activities of tourism clusters established to renew and develop the tourism products important for the Dráva Region (GONDA, T. 2013A). The commercial accommodations in the Dráva Region have not been subjects to significant developments, and so neither their quantitative nor their qualitative indices are up to the requirements by modern tourism. The recent decade

can be seen as the peak of tourism developments ever implemented in the Dráva Region, tourism in the area has been awarded supports from basically each major development programme. Despite these, in the indices of the accommodations practically no development can be observed throughout the years.

On the basis of statistical data of 2019, the total number of commercial accommodations in the whole of the Dráva Region is 20, which is a figure incredibly low for a total of 136 settlements. It must also be mentioned that only 2 of these service facilities are hotels, and so no significant progress can be seen as regards quality, either.

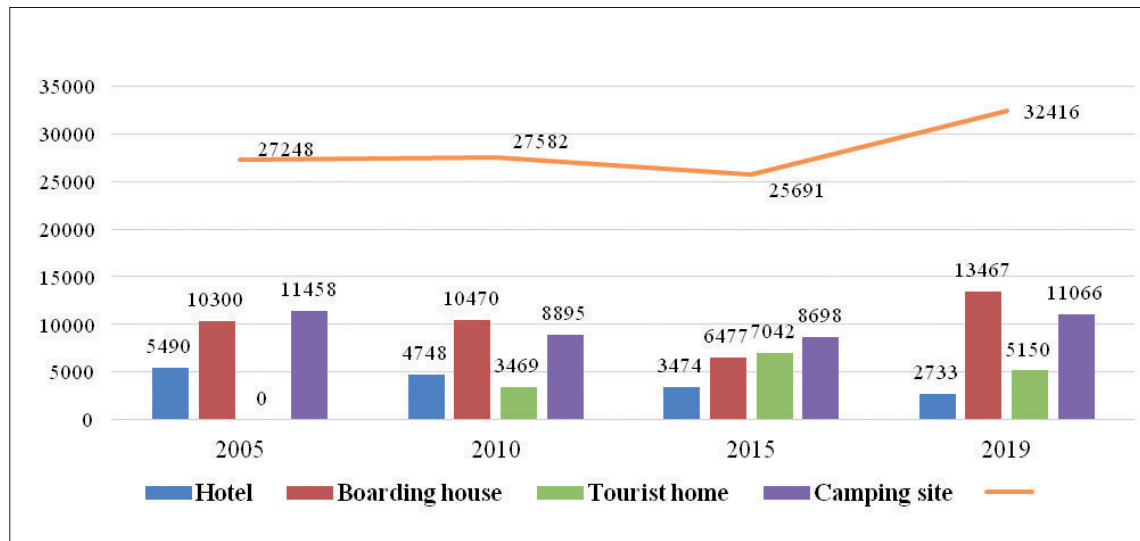
### 5. TOURISM IN THE DRÁVA REGION – SUPPLY

The volume and characteristic features of tourism in the Dráva Region are the consequences of the current situation, the limited amount of commercial accommodations and tourism products. The absolute number of tourists and its changes over the years (Figure 4) reveal that there have been some progress in the region, induced by the developments, and the number of tourists has stabilised at around 10 thousand in recent years.



**Figure 4:** Tourist numbers in the Dráva Region, by categories of commercial accommodations, 2005–2019

**Source:** Edited by the authors, using HCSO data



**Figure 5:** Guest nights spent in the Dráva Region, by categories of commercial accommodations, 2005–2019

**Source:** Edited by the authors, using HCSO data

The number of guest nights shows a similar increase, it has stabilised at a figure of approximately 32 thousand annually (*Figure 5*), which is nevertheless extremely low for a whole Hungarian section of a big river, in an area that involves two counties and seven micro-regions.

The number of excursionists is significantly above that of the tourists, but it cannot be supported by exact data, because, on the one hand, there is no methodology generally accepted for the estimation of the number of excursionists in an area as large as the Dráva Region, and the respective organisations rarely make any assessment like this, on the other hand. This made the authors carry out a data collection on their own, which may not have led to exact data but the information obtained is a good indication of the magnitude of the volume of excursionist in the area.

As regards spas, exact data were obtained from the managers of the establishments. The rounded numbers – without local inhabitants – are as follows: Barcs 100 thousand, Csokonyavisonta 40 thousand, Szulok 3 thousand and Sellye 4 thousand; it is a total of approximately 147 thousand. The number of people participating in kayak and canoe sport tours is estimated by the Danube-Dráva National Park Directorate to be around one thousand, whereas the numbers of passengers in pleasure cruises were received from the two companies; this is approximately 6 thousand people annually.

The number of hunters is approximately 2 thousand in a year; it is an estimation on which there was agreement by the data providers, the staff of the hunting societies and other specialised service providers. The number of anglers visiting the region is approximately 4 thousand a year: the figure is the summation of the data and estimates of the local angling society leaders and the staff of the Baranya County Association of Angling Societies.

**Table 1.** Volume of excursionists in the Dráva Region

Tourism product	Number of excursionists
Spa visitors	100 thousand
Those doing water sports	1 thousand
Participants in leisure cruises	10 thousand
Hunters	2 thousand
Anglers	4 thousand
Hikers in nature	3 thousand
Cyclers	1 thousand
Ancient Dráva Visitor Centre, Szaporca, Danube-Dráva National Park	16 thousand
Dráva Gate Visitor Centre, Drávaszentes, Danube-Dráva National Park	1 thousand
Participants in events	10 thousand
Total	148 thousand

**Source:** Edited by the authors, using own research data



It is rather difficult to estimate the number of hikers/excursionists in nature, due the limited number of hiking trails; national park staff and local experts estimated this figure to be around 3 thousand a year. The methodology used for the estimation of the number of cyclists was similar as in the case of excursionists: there are approximately a thousand people who cycle in the Dráva Region for tourism purposes.

The number of visitors to the national park evens and facilities are approximately 20 thousand by the official statistics and by estimations of the ecotourism experts of the Danube-Dráva National Park.

The summation of the calculated numbers (*Table 1*) shows that the number of excursionists arriving at the region exceeds by more than tenfold the number of tourists; the Dráva Region is a popular destination but is much more of a recreational space for the time being than a place favoured by tourists who will spend guest nights.

## 6. DEVELOPMENTS

An ambivalent situation has emerged in the Dráva Region as regards tourism product development, a situation that is hard to comprehend, as tourism development resources worth billions of Forints have been spent either directly or indirectly on the region, the results of which are not necessarily visible and obvious. These development projects were meant to promote the tourism of the Dráva Region in a number of ways. This approach has its *raison d'être*, many of the local service providers are convinced that the fragmentation of the tourism development parts of the development programmes (called Dráva Programme I, II and III and Ancient Dráva programme) were the adequate procedure. The opposites of this approach, the other part of the local service providers say, also with acceptable reasons, that investments should be focused on one selected central product or a few of them, dynamising the tourism of the Dráva Region this way (Széchenyi Plan I). Both tourism development methods, actually, can work and are applied in broad circles, the problem was not caused by the method chosen but by the process of the implementation. The concepts mentioned above were not consistently used but in a rotation, on the one hand, and the respective projects were not coordinated, on the other hand; what made it even worse was the total negligence of the constraints of the environment (CSAPÓ, J. – MARTON, G. 2010).

In the first phase of developments, in the framework of the support scheme called Széchenyi Plan I, spas were developed in the health tourism centres of the Dráva Region, which was a significant progress. These were followed by the Dráva projects implemented in the framework of the Hungarian National Development Plan I and Plan II, involving several products, following the principle of complex territorial development, but not one product was developed with a focus on each of the supply elements. The tourism development part of the most recent development scheme, the Ancient Dráva project follows the previous territorial principle. The investments might have been appropriate in themselves, but three programmes in just ten years, with new development foci each time and a minimum overlap with the previous ones could not lead to the breakthrough so much desired. That would have required intensive project coordination. The third problem was the negligence of the elements of the environment – like societal factors or the structural problems of the accommodations that were factors blocking the achievement of the results of the developments. Accommodation developments implemented in the region have been relatively continuous, despite the fact that they have been typically financed from private resources or individual project support schemes. The basic problem was and still is the lack of a single central financial resource available that could dynamise the development of accommodations in the region both in quantitative and qualitative sense, whereas the experiences of the last decade prove that the service providers of the region are unable on their own to create the supply of accommodations that can meet the demand. This is a factor that is a direct bottleneck in the development of tourism in the region. No significant growth can be seen in the number of units, a specific increase can only be observed in their capacity. Financing from own resources was enough for the service providers of the region to keep their existing quality level or to improve that to a limited extent. Another problem is that certain areas are still void of any accommodation, they are white patches on the map, for example some parts of the Sellye and the Siklós District, parallel to the concentration of several service providers in the health tourism centres of the region and their hinterlands. The latter process is natural but the former

should be remedied as soon as possible, and it is only possible with the inclusion of external resources. Quality developments have avoided the commercial accommodations of the Dráva Region so far. No hotel has been established to date, and the majority of boarding houses hardly meet the requirements of their category. Consequently, tourists arriving at the region cannot stay at high quality accommodations even if they want to. It is a natural process than that was mentioned as a complaint by several local service providers: certain segments of the demand spend their time in the region but stay in accommodations outside that, for example in Harkány or Nagyatád.

A new development chance for the region was the accession of Croatia to the European Union, and a new momentum can be given by its joining the Schengen zone that will result in the elimination of the border in the physical sense. In the years prior to the accession there had already been a joint cross-border cooperation programme with the participation of the two countries: it was the IPA Hungary–Croatia CBC programme. Tourism had a significant share from the projects in all there rounds of the tenders:

- for the first project call, 4 ecology-focused projects and a few tourism development projects were submitted (1 in gastronomy tourism, 1 in health tourism, 1 in green tourism, 1 in tourism planning and 1 in cultural heritage), the total allocations to which reached 49.53% of all support demands;
- the respective figures of the 2nd call for tender were as follows: 5 projects on ecology and 7 on tourism (2 ecotourism, 2 cultural heritage, 2 catering and 1 tourism planning) – with 24.18% of all support allocations absorbed by tourism;
- the same figures of the 3rd call for tender are as follows: 1 ecology-focused and 67 tourism projects (including 10 cycling tourism, 7 ecotourism, 2 tourism planning, 2 tourism marketing, 2 cultural heritage, 2 enological tourism, and also gastronomy tourism and the development of tourism infrastructure) – with 88.89% of the total support sum spent on tourism.

The next round following Croatia's EU accession, the 2014–2020 Interreg V-A Hungary–Croatia Cooperation Programme received a total of 162 projects submitted, of which 139 were supported, including 17 tourism projects (9 in the category 'tourism attraction development' and 8 in 'theme routes and other tourism products'); municipalities, businesses, associations were among the supported entities. Almost half of the total support sum, 46.6% was awarded to projects in the first tourism topic and another 12.6% in the second one; the third category with significant support share is also indirectly linked to (eco)tourism, as financial support in this category was awarded for the development of the ecological conditions and biodiversity in the border region ([www.huhr-cbc.com](http://www.huhr-cbc.com)).

Tourism development thus remained a selected priority in the development of the region. The impressive numbers, however, have not yet led to a positive situation as regards the development of tourism in the area. ČELAN, T. J. (2021), with substantial personal experience in the issue of cross-border joint tourism development in the respective area, identified the major problems in this respect as follows:

- the region's high potential for developing tourism is set back by the permeability of the border, which is very low (and tourism development programmes are too small in financial terms to influence the problem);
- the majority of the projects have very low real cross-border effect (there is few co-operations that are real cross-border projects);
- many barriers for co-operation exist, from poor permeability of the border to the language barrier;
- co-operation is intense in areas where there are border crossings, only, not much elsewhere; the situation with the concentration of the funding is the same (ČELAN, T. J. 2021).

Despite the significant amounts of financial support sand the cross-border cooperations implemented so far, some regions are now worse off than before the start of implementation of the programme (ČELAN, T. J. 2021). Of course this is not only the consequence of mismanaged tourism development or missing tourism cooperations, but a better management of tourism projects in the Hungarian areas of the respective region or of cross-border tourism projects could/should have resulted in a more advantageous situation.

## 7. SUMMARY

The basic lessons that can be learnt from the development projects of the recent years, decades (or from their outcomes that were failure most of the times), which can also be taken into consideration at tourism developments in cross-border regions in similar situation (e.g. North Hungary–East Slovakia, or North Great Plain–Transcarpathia) are as follows:

- Good intention and decisions are not enough in themselves; they are futile if no adequate, consistent and professional management is there (foundation of the right management organisation, development of the critical elements of the environment, and in the first place the coordination and harmonisation of projects);
- No success is possible without the involvement of the local community, their indifferent or, what is worse, hostile attitude can doom even the most painstakingly and carefully designed project to failure;
- One should develop what the endowments allow and not what may be fashionable or attractive – in the Dráva Region for example it is cycling and ecotourism that should be lead products, complemented by angling, hunting, kayaking/canoeing and traditional hiking in nature;
- The tourism potential offered by the Dráva River with its natural endowments should be more intensively and better utilised. This necessitates the revision of the present practice of nature protection and may be given a new momentum after Croatia's joining to the Schengen zone.

In the authors' opinion, catching up and economic development of the region, and also its population retention capacity can be greatly promoted by the development of tourism. The improvement of the results requires the coordination of the developments at strategic level, projects must be built upon each other and the synergies among the different development projects must be reached, so that tourism should be a connecting and not a disconnecting element in the life and development of the Hungary–Croatia cross-border region.

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## ONLINE SOURCES

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2. Website of the three rivers bicycle route: [www.kerekparut.com](http://www.kerekparut.com)
3. Awarded projects in the Interreg V–A Hungary–Croatia Cross-border Cooperation Programme, 2nd call for tenders: <http://www.huhr-cbc.com/hu/hirek/masodik-palyazati-felhivas---nyertes-projektek/297>

## SAŽETAK

Područje uz rijeku Dravu jedno je od najsiromašnijih područja u Mađarskoj, no ujedno i jedno od najbogatijih s obzirom na svoja prirodna bogatstva, a može se pohvaliti kako baštinom, tako i etnografskim vrijednostima. Također, suradnja sa susjednom Hrvatskom pruža mogućnost za dodatni zamah u razvoju ovoga područja (to je mogućnost koja je do danas nedovoljno iskorištena i u nekim slučajevima prilično loše upotrjebljena). Usprkos ogromnim iznosima financijske potpore, samo su izletnici privučeni u ovo područje u relativno značajnom broju, dok je broj turista i noćenja i dalje vrlo nizak. Potencijal turizma u ruralnom razvoju prepoznat je već prije dosta vremena u Mađarskoj, a smatra se posebno važnim alatom u područjima hendikepiranim sa socijalno-ekonomskog aspekta gdje su prilike ili druge ekonomske aktivnosti male. Granična područja, koja su izolirana, često su na određeni način hendikepirana, što im je omogućilo da sačuvaju one prirodne i kulturne vrijednosti koje bi mogle biti temelj posebnih vrsta nemasovnog turizma (ekoturizam i druge aktivnosti zelenog turizma). Područje uz Dravu, uključujući jednu od najzloglasnijih i najsiromašnijih mikroregija u Mađarskoj, Ormánság, dobar je primjer takvog područja. U radu se analiziraju problemi i daju preporuke za unapređenje turističke suradnje.