

ASPECTS REGARDING CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAM ROMANIA HUNGARY

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Abstract - Aspects regarding cross-border cooperation program Romania Hungary

Between 2007 and 2013, Romania and Hungary participates in the conduct of some programs related to European Territorial Cooperation objective. CBC (Cross Border Cooperation) programs funds accessibility projects environment and risk prevention, economic and social development and "people to people" actions. The eligible area covers the south-eastern border of Hungary and north-western part of Romania. The number of people exceeds 4 million, half of Romania's territory and half in Hungary. It is obvious that the border area has a multiethnic population, and therefore rich multicultural traditions. This is reflected by regular cross-border interaction of local communities, providing a solid foundation for strengthening relations and promoting integrated development of border area. On the other hand, however, the existence of state borders limits the possible areas of cooperation.

Keywords: social cohesion, common sustainable development, local economy

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this paper we analysed the official documents released by Romania, Hungary and by the European Union, regarding the CBC programs in this area. In order to simplify the information so this is useful as a general information for the reader, we selected and processed the data in order to obtain a short, easy to understand package of informations about CBC Program Romania-Hungary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The eligible border area covers the South-Eastern and Eastern part of Hungary and the North-Western and Western part of Romania. It consists of **four neighbouring counties** in Hungary and in Romania, respectively. Counties covered in Hungary: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád; counties covered in Romania Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timis.

These 8 counties (NUTS III level) belong to 4 regions (NUTS II level), as follows:

- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-Bihar counties belong to the North Great Plain Region (Hungary)
- Békés and Csongrád counties belong to the South Great Plain Region (Hungary)
- Arad and Timis counties are part of the Western Region (Romania)
- Satu Mare and Bihor counties are part of the North-Western Region (Romania).



Figure 1. The programme area

Source: Megakom Consulting

The overall level of economic development of the co-operation area is very low comparing to the EU25 average. The **GDP per capita** of the programme area is very low; moreover, there is some difference between the Hungarian and Romanian parts. In the more developed, Hungarian part of the area this indicator is about 23%, while in the Romanian part it is about 13% of the EU25 average.

The border area is characterised by modest to high level of unemployment, with significant intraregional differences. With Romania's accession to the European Union, however, part of the response to the unemployment problems may lay in a more integrated approach to the labour market in the area. Such an approach would help to tackle structural issues and bring closer the demand and the supply side. This would certainly require more coordinated actions and regular share of information of labour market institutions.

Regarding the health system, the differences in the national regulations, funding mechanisms and rates hinder a more active co-operation in this field. Given that the potential exists, it would be useful to implement small scale projects of pilot nature, which then could be mainstreamed and applied on a much wider basis.

The **higher education infrastructure is well developed** in the eligible border area, and the scientific and research human resources potential is also significant. On both sides of the border one of the major strengths is the extensive network of various higher education institutions, characterised by high quality, traditional education and academic activities. Major, famous universities are located here, such as University of Szeged, University of Debrecen, Western University of Timișoara, Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Timișoara, University of Oradea, Aurel Vlaicu University in Arad and Timișoara Polytechnic University. Besides, in the other county-cities operate colleges that play an important role and possess significant capacities in the teaching of some professions. For example: the College of Nyíregyháza or Tessedik Sámuel College in Békéscsaba; furthermore Western University "Vasile Goldis" in Arad and its branch in Satu Mare, or the College of Local Public Administration of the "Babes-Bolyai" University Cluj also in Satu Mare.

National parks and the **landscape protection areas (LPA)** in Hungary account for nearly 9% of the total co-operation area. There are two national parks: the Hortobágyi National Park (which is also part of the World Heritage), and Körös-Maros National Park; and 6

landscape protection areas, including the Bihari-Sík LPA, the Hajdúsági LPA, the Közép-Tiszai LPA, the Szatmár-Beregi LPA, the Mártélyi LPA and the Pusztaszeri LPA. In Romania, the total surface covered by Natural Parks (13) and Biosphere Reserves (“Danube Delta”) is 1.687.512 ha (121.780 ha maritime surface), which represents 7% of the total terrestrial country surface. In the programme area, there are parts of Natural Park Apuseni (Bihar county), the Natural Park of the Low Meadow of Mures (Arad county) and more than 40 small areas indentified under the Natura 2000 Programme.

Looking at the **Romanian visitors to Hungary**, the following key features become obvious:

- Romanian visitors represent the highest rate among visitors from all the European countries, with a share of 20,3% out of the total number of visitors. (Followed by Slovakia and Austria.)
- The total number of the visitor-days spent by Romanian tourists in Hungary is the highest, although it is not much higher than that of the German and the Austrian tourists’. The total expenditures of Romanian tourists, however, is only the third highest.
- Motives of travel are diverse. More than 50% of the Romanian visitors are transit passengers. Nearly 25% arrive to Hungary with shopping purposes, and a mere 20% come with touristic purposes.
- Finally, the per capita expenditure / day of the Romanian visitors was 4.600 HUF in 2004, this being the least amount among visitors from European countries.

The proposed strategy is the evolution of the strategy underpinning the Community Initiative Programme Hungary-Romania and Hungary-Serbia&Montenegro, 2004-2006.

The core element of the strategy remained unchanged: to bring the different actors – people, economic actors and communities – closer to each other, in order to better exploit the opportunities offered by the joint development of the border area. The proposed strategy, therefore, is centred around making use of this one-time opportunity, mainly through:

- Improving the key conditions of co-operation through addressing the most important obstacles;
- Supporting the actual co-operation initiatives of various actors.

The Overall strategic goal is to bring the people, communities and economic actors of the border area closer to each other in order to facilitate the joint development of the co-operation area, building upon the key strengths of the border region.

Specific objectives

The overall aim of the programme, with the core elements of the strategy derived from the SWOT analysis, together lead to the formulation of the following specific objectives:

- Specific objective No. 1: **Improved transport infrastructure** to facilitate better access within the border area.
- Specific objective No. 2: **Better flow of information** on joint opportunities within the border area
- Specific objective No. 3: **Common natural resources efficiently used**, natural values protected in the border area.
- Specific objective No. 4: **Economic connections reinforced in the border area** to boost sustainable economic development building on comparative advantages.
- Specific objective No. 5: **Social and cultural coherence** strengthened among people and communities.

The *table 1* shows the allocation of structural funds for the Cross-border cooperation Programme Hungary-Romania, throughout the duration of the program.

Table 1. Financial plan of Program giving the annual commitment of European Regional Development Fund (EUR)

	Structural Funding ERDF (EUR)
2 007	32 524 831
2 008	29 095 155
2 009	29 418 787
2 010	31 318 733
2 011	32 045 938
2 012	34 017 133
2 013	36 054 358
Total	224 474 935

Identification of the priority axis

The proposed strategy is built upon two main pillars. Two priority axis have been identified to implement the proposed strategy presented above; Priority axis 1 relates to the first pillar, while Priority axis 2 relates to the second pillar. A third Priority axis has also been identified, aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation through the provision of technical assistance.

Priority Axis 1: Improve the key conditions of joint, sustainable development of the cooperation area. Funds allocated to this Priority axis will be used to improve the key conditions of joint development in the co-operation area. This includes the **development of the transport and communication infrastructure** as well as public transport facilities of the area, which are instrumental to facilitating cross-border passenger and freight transport and proper flow of information. Besides these, the Priority axis also includes interventions aimed at **prevention and protection of the relative pure natural environment**, as the elemental condition of any kind of human operation.

Interventions proposed under this axis are:

- Improvement of cross-border transport facilities;
- Improvement of cross-border communication;
- Protection of the environment.

Priority Axis 2: Strengthen social and economic cohesion of the border area . Priority axis 2 is aimed at promoting and supporting the actual co-operation initiatives in various key areas in order to jointly develop of the border area and strengthen social and economic cohesion. The overall aim of the Priority axis is to enhance the economical competitiveness of the area by development of the business environment, and improvement of the human resources.

Interventions proposed under this axis are:

- Support for cross-border business cooperation;
- Promotion of cooperation in the field of research, development and innovation;

- Cooperation in the labour market and education – joint development of skills and knowledge;
- Health care and prevention of common threat;
- Cooperation between communities.

Priority Axis 3: Technical Assistance. The Priority axis aims at supporting the implementation of the programme and increase capacity of institutions and beneficiaries in the programme area for cross-border action.

The Priority axis seeks in particular to achieve two specific objectives:

- Secure the core management for the implementation of the programme (Implementation of the programme and contracting, preparation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and inspection);
- Implement accompanying activities to support the generation and implementation of high quality, result oriented cross-border projects and partnerships.

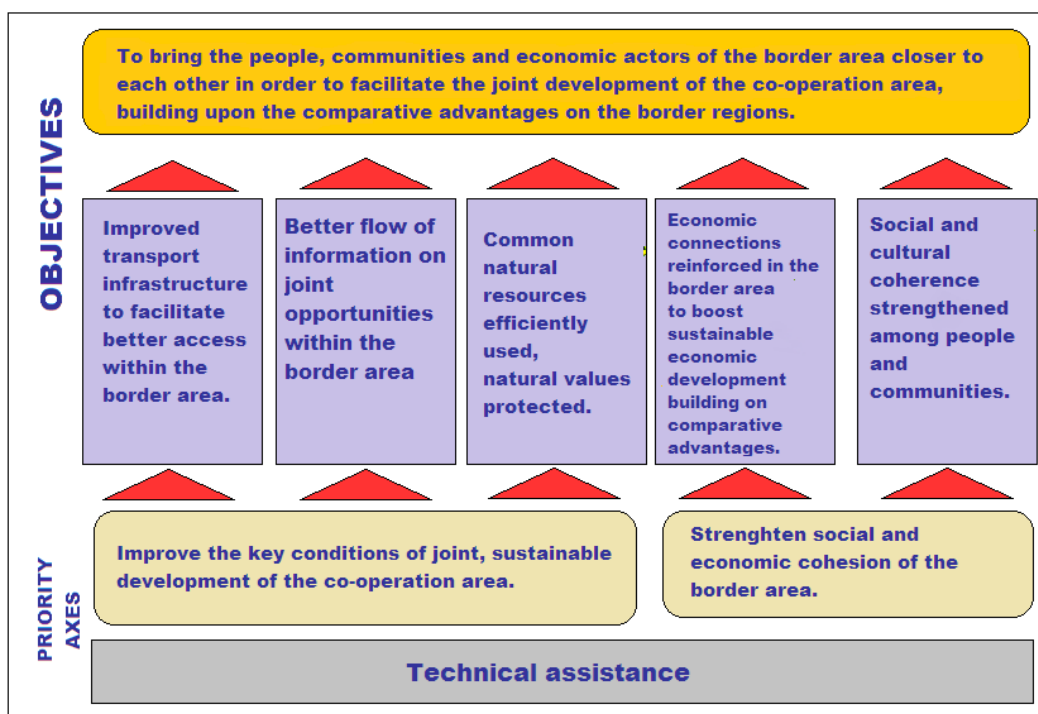


Figure 2. Priority axes and the objectives of the Romania-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme

Cross-border cooperation program is financed by EU funds and national public funds, co-financing rate is 0.85% for Priority Axes 1 and 2, and 0.50% for Priority Axis 3 - Technical Assistance. Most funds are allocated to Priority Axis 1 - Improving the key points shared by the sustained development of the cooperation. The following table set out in detail, the axes, the amounts that make up the funds related to this program, both community and national ones.

Table 3. Financial plan of the operational program (EUR)

	Community Funding (a)	National Public funding (b)	National private funding (c)	Total funding (d) = (a)+(b)+ (c)	Co-financing rate % (e)=(a)/(d)	EIB Contributions	Other funding
Priority Axis 1 Improvement of the key conditions of joint, sustainable development in the co-operation area	114 482 217	20 202 744	0	134 684 961	85	0	0
Priority Axis 2 Strengthen social and economic cohesion of the border area	96 524 222	17 033 686	0	113 557 908	85	0	0
Priority Axis 3 Technical Assistance	13 468 496	13 468 496	0	26 936 992	50	0	0
Total	224 474 935	50 704 926	0	275 179 861		0	0

Source: Hungary - Romania Cross-border Co-operation Programme, 2007-2013

CONCLUSIONS

In the co-operation area, there is a certain disparity between male and female occupational segregation, activity rates and pay. As a consequence, women face greater problems e.g. access to transport, childcare, education and training, start up funds. Equal opportunities are promoted throughout the programme cycle. This principle has been fully respected in the partnership process of the preparation of the Programme.

Socio-economic development and integration of the border regions are to be conducted in such a way that socio-economic and environmental sustainability is ensured. The respective strategic framework, based on the SWOT analysis requires that all measures recognise and appropriately utilise the environmental strengths of the border regions, without harming the environment of the area.

The entire programme promotes the concept of a special form of partnership: cross-border partnership: only joint projects of Romanian and Hungarian partners can be supported. The application of the Lead partner principle also enhances partnership.

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