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## **Cross-borders cooperation inside the euroregions. Case of DKMT Romanian Euroregion**

### INTRODUCTION

The enlargement of the European Union, especially to Central and Eastern Europe, included as part of his draft harmonization of building contiguous border areas by promoting and supporting cooperation projects border on all plans and in a wide variety of forms. In this respect, in recent 20 years, there was established and promoted the term *euro cross-border cooperation*, with a strong spatial extension, which generally suggests the desire of states of to take part in this process irreversible of the contemporary period.

Initially there was a wide variety of meanings for this term or a multitude of attempts to name these structures of territorial cross-border cooperation. From a wide range filtered to accept in recent years and applied through the year, and the extent and depth of understanding the mechanisms of formation, operation and extension of these trends to promote cultural identity and stability and economic development, mainly in Europe and Central East will attempt to summarize some of the most suggestive and identifiable territorial possible definition of these systems.

From the beginning it is essential to underline that the form in which they were designed and created, the euroregions or cross-border cooperation and other forms of this type are not aiming at the establishment of regional governance structures through a voluntary association of various structures natural and administrative border.

Once we made this statement it is much easier to understand the objectives that are close and of course the prospects of these territorial structures, possible territorial systems, in the process of enlargement of the European Union and

more than elimination by applying optimal solution accepted by all partners, border dispute by trying to transform areas of divergence in the areas of convergence [Prisecaru, 2004].

Analyzing the definitions accepted in the scientific literature, we can appreciate that the differences depend on the area of application. The degree of favorability or restrictively differ between EU Member States and the states from Eastern Europe, and to some extent for each country in particular, on the other hand.

Conceptual base is definitively the same – to promote cross-border cooperation and the gradual elimination of restrictions imposed by political boundaries. Thus, the Association of European Border Regions (AERF) states that: "within the geographic scope of cooperation, cross-border structures are commitments to cooperation between local governance structures and regional situated along the border in line with promoting the common interest and to raise living standards for border populations.

In another definition states that euroregions may be identified as local structures enhance cross-border and interregional cooperation, through a coherent area of economic development, scientific, social and cultural. We noted that the basic objective is to create a border running on different integrated fields. *Euroregions also shown that particular forms of over-frontiers cooperation of local authorities. They involve local authorities' association of two or more neighbors, forming a unit area, characterized by certain features or common interests* [Ilies, 2004].

Underlining those presented, we can appreciate that: Euro cross-border cooperation is a voluntary association, in compliance with national and international laws, of administrative-territorial structures of the state entities of various levels, in view to eliminate the territorial isolationism, the creation of a cultural approach framework or reconstruction of systems of this type, and last but not least, establishing a core of economic development in order to achieve a balance between center and periphery and in a more advanced stage of territorial functional systems. It is a preparatory and pre-integration phase of these countries in the European Union and try to promote good neighborhood policy with contiguous areas of operation of this process.

By this summary-definition we have tried to emphasize the conceptual and applied framework to what is charged inside the Central and Eastern Europe area at the turn of the millennia, through the Euro-border cooperation.

Given the dynamics of this process and the existence of some differences between the implementation and the functionality of this euroregions inside the European political framework, we do not exclude the possibility that within a relatively short term, the theoretical announce synthesized and stated previously to become insufficient or too far in terms of practical applicability in different areas of Europe.

## STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROREGIONS

Beside the role in promoting mutual trust and cooperation, euroregions have contributed for economic development and cooperation in Western Europe. This experience is translated as a background with high speed towards Central and Eastern Europe, but here the main problem is to perceptual great diversity of instruments and means of implementation.

In Europe there is a wide variety of such euroregional structures, caused by a wide range of criteria.

The first Euroregion – Reggio Basiliensis, now renamed TriRhena – occurred at the border between Switzerland, Germany and France in 1963, followed by others in the border area between Benelux, Germany and France, after which it expanded at a pace fast, so currently, there are a hundred such structures for cross-border cooperation extended from the Atlantic Ocean until to the West part of the ex-soviet space.

It is very important to underline that the model of collaboration in the euroregions is broad supported from the European Union; it can be considered an exercise preceding accession to the organization of the participating countries or as a micro-experiment for the implementation of community relations between the candidate states' regions.

Being the great diversity of acceptance regarding the content and skills of cross-borders cooperation of euroregions, with the aim of clear structural demarcations of them, the Association of European Border Regions (AEFR) applies the following criteria to identify the contents and default euroregions skills, identifying with:

- Associations of local or regional authorities located on the both sides of border state, in some cases having the structure of the General Assembly like leadership structure;
- Cross-border associations with permanent secretariat, administrative and technical team with own resources;
- Under private law, associations of non-profit organizations or foundations located in a part or the other of the border, in agreement with the national in force laws;
- Associations, based on public law, based on inter-state agreements, with implications on other issues, involving local authorities.

Particularly interesting is a good *algorithm of good euroregion* proposed by Andre Louis, inside which one can find a very explicit logical schema and a mechanism for implementation, operation and development of such structures for cross-border cooperation.

## THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF EUROREGIONS

Euroregions goals and objectives can be characterized by a variety of typological determined content, actors and actions, all of them sitting on the results of their activities. In general, the euroregions basic aims are promoting understanding and cooperation at all levels and forms of culture and also of the economic cooperation.

Each euroregion establish its own objectives, which for the most part are closely related to the objectives established by the European regional policy to date. All goals and objectives of euroregions take a number of factors among which the most important are the geographical, cultural, economic, etc.

**Tabel 1. Some general characteristics of euroregions**

No.	Motivation	Characteristics
1	Geographical area	In a border area that could become a center for economic development
2	When such approach will take place	There is a tradition of collaboration, but without implementation of euroregional institutions Identifying the type of institutions that generate euroregional tradition of collaboration
3	Extension	Not very extensive, the optimum dimension being between 3,000 and 10,000 kilometers
4	Population	Moderate number, the optimal value being between 500,000 and 1 million inhabitants
5	Internal and external networks	Depending on the external extension of their territory and density, the euroregions can be adjacent and more continuous
6	Euroregional institutions	a) On short-term objective: development, mobilization and organization for transformation in a functional institution in euroregion's area b). Use of internal and external resources c). General perspective for readjustment
7	Functions	Creating the sense of indispensability for cooperation, that will be urgently followed by the safety feeling of euroregion concept.
8	The functions' stage and the institutions	The existence of 5 chronological sequences: active mutual knowledge, the indispensability of cross-border cooperation, tangible cooperation, cultural actions, euroregional sense of safety.
	Territorial coverage	Able to reaction in the local, national and European context.

## THE CASE OF DKMT EUROREGION

Cooperation in this format has its origins in the bilateral cooperation between Timiș (Romania) and Csongrád (Hungary), Regional Cooperation Protocol Danube – Mures – Tisa, signed in 1997.

DKMT's objective is the development and broadening of relations between local communities and local representatives in environmental, economic, education, culture, health, science and sport fields, and cooperation in perspective of European integration.

DKMT's partners: are [*Geopolitica Border...*, 2006]:

- Romania: counties Timis, Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara;
- Hungary: counties Csongrád, Békés, Bács-Kiskun, Jacz Nagykun Szolnok
- Serbia: Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

The DKMT's population is 5, 4 million and the DKMT's area is 77.600 km<sup>2</sup>

General Assembly represents the deliberative organism of cooperation. The President in office is elected by the General Assembly forming by heads of regional authorities, for a period of one year, according to the principle of rotation between countries. Currently, the president is Mrs. Anna Magyar, president of CJ Csongrad (Hungary).

DKMT's Secretariat is composed by 3 persons delegated, each one from the Romanian, Hungarian and Serbian parts, based on internal agreements between the regional leaders of the three countries.

Working groups study and draw up programs and projects, make proposals and draw up reports on activities from the General Assembly. Steering Committee – 3 presidents of regional authorities, one from each country.

Agency for Cooperation Development DKMT realises activities conducted by both public and economic utility, for ensuring funds needed for the development of regional DKMT cooperation.

Regarding the projects being implemented, we must underline the followings [*Geopolitica European...*, 2005]:

- opening of new border crossing points: rail (to Berliste – Iam)– important for the restoration of the oldest railway lines in Romania: Oravita – Iam (Ro) – Bela Crkva / White Russian / Weisskirchen (Serbia) – Socol – Bazias (ro), road and rail (at Socol)-out of isolation to the Danube enters the country and improves the natural riches offered by the National Park Iron Gates, road and rail to Gradinari (CS / RO) – Markov ( VS / Serbia) which will support a project and cultural tourism in the Caras-Severin and the Vrsac. The project aims the promotion of cultural tourism, wine-growing area of Vrsac – Markov – Gradinari and natural heritage, tourism and industrial zone Anina – Oravita – Iam.
- modernization and development of road infrastructure in the area Naidas – Socol – Bazias, with funding from the Neighborhood PHARE Program 2004–2006 Romania – Serbia.

- creating a border industrial park between Caras-Severin and South Banat District (following the model of industrial park creating between the AP Vojvodina and Hungary).
- creating ethnocentre to facilitate the study and preservation of folk customs and traditions, crafts, and folklore.
- a circuit tour on the both side of the Danube border in two natural parks: the Iron Gates Park (South Caras-Severin and Mehedinti) and Park Đerdap (Borski and Braničevski districts).
- creating an joint alert system to prevent disasters (flooding, environmental accident / pollution, etc.) between DCMT's states. It wants a commun system of information management and joint logistics (site, common equipment, communication system for mailing information) to stay in real time all relevant information on flows and water quality.
- "Center for monitoring and coordinating disaster -Caras-Severin". Applicant is Public Service and Rescue Dispatch Disasters in the Directorate of Public Management and Private Domain of Caras-Severin county. Partners: Inspectorate for Emergency Situations "Semenic" Command to prevent the flooding of municipal Vârșeț.
- "Vocational School of Tourism" for preparing the specialists of high level in the tourism field.

## CONCLUSIONS

Between the advantages creating by euroregions, must be remembered:

- The process of European integration involves regional cooperation, such as border regions contribute to the preparation for accession countries to the European Union;
- Euroregions contribute to the diminish of tensions and to maintain the stability in the Balkans area;
- Euroregions represent a necessary stage in the process of transition from the geostrategy to geoeconomy;
- Euroregions engage human and material resources that would otherwise remain unused.

In the same time it is important to mention the disadvantages that could appear:

- Euroregions generate agreements that local authorities could intervene in the policies of countries involved;
- Euroregions create the possibility that some local communities may sign agreements against their own governments;

- Border regions are often isolated from the centres of decision-making and economic activity. Thus, these experience special problems such as lack of transport infrastructure; birth rate much higher than mortality; underdeveloped service sector, inadequate technological infrastructure, but they can be solved through regional economic cooperation;
- There is a lack of cooperation between national authorities and local or regional ones;
- There is the inability of authorities to involve people in processes of cooperation.

Some governments are concerned that euroregions are located at a great distance from the centre trying thus to undermine and diminish, enhancing cross-border relations with its neighbours.

Cross-border cooperation is not of course limited only to those already mentioned, diversification of fields of action and as a consequence of the status of constituent members of these cross-border cooperation. Thus, they said they could add interest to the activities of the populations of border areas: social, health, education, waste management, water resources, conservation and environmental protection, management and organization of space, tourism and recreation, transportation, prevention and combat natural disasters.

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### **Transgraniczna współpraca w ramach euroregionów. Przykład Rumuńskiego Euroregionu DKMT**

#### *Streszczenie*

Artykuł przedstawia zadania i cele działalności euroregionów jako formy współpracy transgranicznej na przykładzie Rumuńskiego Euroregionu DKMT. Podstawowa definicja euroregionu określa go jako związek terytorialny, formalny regionów sąsiadujących krajów, których celem jest organizowanie i koordynowanie wspólnych działań promujących współpracę gospodarczą, edukacyjną, naukową, kulturalną bądź inną.

Euroregiony otrzymują duże wsparcie ze środków unijnych, są swoistym eksperymentem tworzących je państw o dużym znaczeniu dla współpracy transgranicznej wynikającej z inicjatywy władz samorządowych danego szczebla poszczególnych krajów sąsiadujących

### *Summary*

The present article point out some characteristics of the euroregions, their aims and objectives as cross-border cooperation forms. One of the definitions assigned to the euro-regions specifies that they are territorial structures created in order to intensify the inter-regional and cross-border cooperation, by creating a coherent space of economical, scientific, social and cultural development.

The cooperation pattern within the euroregions gets a great support from the EU, this being considered a preceding exercise for the adherence to this organization by the participating countries and as a micro-experiment regarding the implementation of the community relationships among the areas of the candidate states. The aims and the objectives of the euro-regions can be characterized through a great typological diversity determined by content, all of these being the basis for the results of their activities.

The last part of the work paper overlights the characteristics and the evolution of DKMT Euroregion and its importance for the regional development.