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The Romanian – Hungarian Cross–border Cooperation in the Regional Press of Bihor County

Luminița Șoproni

Abstract

The cross-border cooperation is a basic part of the European integration process; it is considerably present in the regional newspapers, although there is neither a constant reference to the European context nor a strategy for people's information which should translate the substance of cooperation in a language as simple as possible.

The actions of cooperation between Romania and Hungary are widely reflected in the regional press of Bihor County, and the articles cover subjects like: the agreements concerning the activity of the frontier area between Romania and Hungary, as new internal border of the European Union, financing programs for the cross-border cooperation and regional development, cooperation between the local authorities of the counties adjacent to the two countries... All these subjects are reflecting the cross-border values of the neighbouring regions from Romania and Hungary.

Key words: cross-border, regional, press, European, cooperation

1. A new European Union, with new frontiers

The local and regional authorities are responsible for the implementation of the most laws of the European Union. They are also able to make European Union membership a reality, bringing Europe closer to citizens. The regions had a major role in the expansion process and now they are the main factors which make sure that the new members regards their accession to the European Union as a success.

The expansion of the European Union brought about the building up of new internal and external borders that means new opportunities but also new challenges. In order to struggle against the danger of a new separating line inside Europe, the European Commission has developed a new "Neighbourhood Policy" which wants to ensure a stable and secure area on this continent. Thus, the European Commission acknowledges the important role of the regions for the implementation of this policy.

The "Institutional Affairs" Commission has also founded a new Working Group which has in view the consolidation of the cooperation between the regional authorities in order to promote the real, efficient and democratic regional self-administration.

2. Cooperation fields as shown in the newspapers

When we prepared this paper we analyzed the main newspapers from Bihor County in 2006, the last year when this border still represents the external limit of the European Union. We have analyzed the following newspapers:

- **Crișana** (audience: 50.000 readers / each issue – the leader of the written press in Bihor county and in the North-West Transylvania and, in the same time, being among the first six local newspapers from Romania – according to the Focus National Study of Audience, imposed by the Romanian Bureau of Audit of Circulation (BRAT) for the member publications)
- **Realitatea Bihoreană**
- **Jurnalul Bihorean** (audience: 43.000 readers / each issue)

As a result of this analysis we have noticed that the press has focused on the following fields:

- the cross-border values of the neighbouring regions from Romania and Hungary;
- the settlements and the agreements concerning the activity of the frontier area between Romania and Hungary, as new internal border of the European Union;
- financing programs for the cross-border cooperation and regional development;
- the agreements and the partnerships from the education and research field;
- cultural cooperation;
- cooperation between the local authorities of the counties adjacent to the two countries;
- projects from the cross-border tourism field;
- projects for the rural development in the Romanian – Hungarian frontier area;
- cooperation in the business field, cross-border acquisitions and fusions;
- common projects for the evaluation of the quality of environment;
- Romanian-Hungarian cooperation for the consumers' protection.

2.1. Cross-border values – manifestation of the common European spirit

The Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion has been created in 2002 by the County Council and Self-governing Hajdu-Bihar; the city of Oradea and Self-Administration Debrecen also adhered to the Foundation Agreement.

The general objectives of the Euroregion are to maintain and develop the relations of good neighbourhood; to identify the possible fields for cross-border cooperation; to organize and coordinate those activities that promote members' socially, economically, culturally, educationally cooperation, to preserve their health, environment and tourism; to implement some precise programmes in the fields of common interest; to promote cooperation relations between the inhabitants and the specialists who work in different activity fields of common interest; to promote the cooperation of the Euroregion with other international organizations; to prepare together some projects in order to obtain financial funds from the European Union.

The cooperation inside the euroregions represents the creation of some direct connections between the regions and communities from the both sides of the state frontiers on the strength of the local authorities' jurisdiction.

The local cultural institutions and the business environment from both sides of the Romanian – Hungarian border must be prepared for the European integration, as they have a decisive role in the formation and the development of the common European identity. The regional press periodically shows the preoccupation of the cultural institutes and centers from both countries in training the officials and the managers of different institutions important for the cultural and economical life of the two counties. Among these actions we mention the seminar entitled "Cross-border values in Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion", which took place simultaneously in Romania (Oradea) and Hungary (Hajduszoboszlo), and which brought about an exchange of opinions and recommendations for a more efficient communication in order to better inform the professional society and to form "the new relational manager"¹.

¹ Loredana Nicoară, "Valori transfrontaliere în Euroregiunea Bihor - Hajdu-Bihar", in *Crișana*, 12 September 2006

2.2. The regulations and the agreements that aim at the functioning of the frontier area between Romania and Hungary as a new internal border of the European Union

The new internal border of the European Union, starting with 2007, implies the modification of some regulations and procedures used until now in the border crossing points. The customs on the west border of our country, between Romania and Hungary might provisionally function until the half of 2007. Until now, the Romanian Government made no decision regarding the customs reorganization from 1 January 2007, when Romania will become member of the European Union.

The flow chart was not finished, and the suggestion of the National Customs Authority is based on the model of the ten countries that recently accessed to the European Union. The reorganization of the customs is imposed by the new rules for the Romanian borders after integration, when the volume of the goods that must pass the customs formalities clearance will be reduced with 70%. Consequently, the Romanian customs will be the first institution which becomes European institution on 1 January 2007.

After the accession the customs will work more for the European Commission than for the Romanian country. About 75% of the customs duties will go to the EU budget and 25% will be used for the management expenses². In present, 43% of the state budget incomes are cashed by the custom-agents; the most significant are the incomes from the value added tax (VAT). By the information exchange the states from the European Union may supervise the circulation inside the common territory of the goods that will be not checked anymore when passing through the customs.

The local press of Bihor County also treats in detail the settlements regarding the “duty-free” shops which must align the Romanian legislation with the legislation of the European Union. Consequently, starting with 2007, when Romania becomes member of the EU, the duty-free shops from the terrestrial and naval customs will disappear as well as those from the Romanian-Hungarian customs.

The duty-free system implies the exemption from customs duties or any other taxes, its effect being equivalent with the customs duties for import, as well as with any other amount that reverts to the state from the import of goods that are to be sold under these conditions. The sale of goods in duty-free conditions is made with passport, where the customs police put the visa for passing out from the country, and with the shipping note, for the shops from the international airports and from the airplanes. Starting from the publication date of the law in the Official Journal until the day when Romania becomes member of EU no license for commercializing goods in duty-free conditions will be issued.

According to the newspaper *Crișana*, the prefect of Bihor announced that he was taking the necessary steps for closing the duty-free shops from the regional customs earlier than scheduled. He affirmed that these shops should be closed earlier than the end of 2006 in order to make efficient the fight against illegal trade with cigarettes, coffee and alcohol; he also said that, for now, the only way of reducing the sale of contraband goods would be the intensification of customs checks³. The newspaper *Realitatea Bihoreană* also publishes an interview with the executive manager of Oradea Regional Customs who declared that the duty-free shops at the Hungarian border are watched and in three months they will finish their goods in stock and will be closed. The activity of checking these shops is also the task of the inspectors from the Finance Department of Bihor⁴.

² Florin Alexandru, „Vameșii vor lucra mai mult pentru Comisia Europeană”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 5 October 2006

³ Ioana Mateaș, „Demersuri pentru închiderea duty-free-urilor”, in *Crișana*, 28 March 2006

⁴ Florin Alexandru, „Duty-free-urile, verificate la sânge”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 12 July 2006

In what regards the movement of persons, there will be, at the internal borders of the Union, check points common with the neighbor countries; customs police will use the principle of "One Stop Control", that is Romanians will be checked only once, when entering the neighbor country⁵. The so-called "border disappearance" will not bring about reorganization or personnel restriction; the customs police will also have well-established tasks from 1 January 2007. European Union and Schengen countries are two different entities; thus, the fact that Romania will become member of the EU does not mean that it will automatically become a Schengen country. That is why, from 1 January 2007, only the goods will be allowed to pass from one country to another without documents and not the persons. The citizens will not need the medical assurance, the book at the hotel and they will neither have to justify the purpose of their visit and nor show money. That is because Romanians will pay for medical assurance in a European country and all documents issued by the Romanian authorities will be valid in the European Union.

The Romanian customs police officers will have the duty to watch the internal border of the European Union, for instance the borders between Romania and Hungary as well as the external border of the Union, like the border between Romania and The Republic of Moldova, which is not a member of the European Union. The Romanian customs police officers will work together with the Hungarian customs police officers, both in Bors (Romania) and in Artand (Hungary).

In order to struggle against cross-border criminality the Romanian and Hungarian customs police officers have been working together, in the Common Contact Point between Romanian and Hungarian borders (Bors-Artand area); their mission is to exchange information about the cross-border criminality in the benefit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs from the two countries⁶.

2.3. Cross-border cooperation and regional development

▪ PHARE CBC Projects

The cooperation inside the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion allows gaining access of Phare funds by organisms and institutions from Bihor County together with their Hungarian partners, by using PHARE CBC cross-border cooperation programmes.

With the help of the PHARE CBC programmes they promote the cooperation between the regions, communities and the authorities from Romania and Hungary in order to work out some common problems, to develop the local communities, to promote a good neighborhood and social stability.

On the 1st of January 2005 the Programme PHARE CBC Romania-Hungary has been launched; it brought about new financing possibilities for the Romanian border counties Arad, Bihor, Satu-Mare, Timiș, with European and governmental funds. Within the PHARE CBC programmes Romania gets a total amount of 34 millions of Euro, out of which 5 millions are for the Hungarian border⁷. In this field of the cross-border cooperation and regional development the financing through the PHARE CBC Romania-Hungary Programm is focused mainly on projects about the infrastructure in the road-transport field, about the environment protection, including here the floods, the promotion of initiatives that facilitates the integration of the private economical field, and the cooperation and research.

⁵ Alina Ungur, „Controlul la frontieră: portbagajul nu, pașaportul, da! Românii mai au de așteptat până vor călători în UE doar cu... buletinul”, in *Crișana*, 19 October 2006

⁶ Sebastian Kovacs, „Acoperiș comun cu maghiarii”, in *Jurnal Bihorean*, 14 October 2005

⁷ *Crișana*, 7 January 2006

The press mirrors the cross-border cooperation programmes and thus we can see that these programmes are a guarantor and an important pillar of the regional development inside the new European Union, which assures the competitiveness and the force of a region – the Bihor-Hajdu Bihar region in this paper. In front of great regions from the powerful countries of EU, the unique affirmation chance is represented by cooperation and creation of the team-spirit between the regions with similar potentialities from the two neighbour countries, Romania and Hungary. In 2006 the economics page of the local press of Bihor County was more than 50% about the cross-border cooperation programmes, gaining access to European funds, conditions of eligibility, terms and places for the projects, statistics of the projects, and interviews with the officials of The Regional Bureau of Cross-border Cooperation of Oradea and with the local authorities.

Although the programme has been launched in 2005, the funds assigned for the year 2004 were of 6,333,000 Euro, to which the beneficiaries contribute with their own financing of minimum 10%. The usage of funds is possible only if projects are presented to The Regional Bureau of Cross-border Cooperation from Oradea; four counties belong to this bureau. At the end of November 2005 there were 112 financing requests accompanied by projects: 25 were from Timis County, 26 from Arad County, 26 from Satu-Mare County and the most financing requests were from Bihor County – 35. These financing requests accompanied by the necessary documents are also for small projects (of values between 10,000 and 50,000 euro) as well as for great projects (of values between 50,000 and 600,000 euro)⁸.

The foundation “Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion” and the City Hall of Oradea also had some funds available for the financing of the projects that stimulate the cooperation and the multiple cooperation relationships in the economical, social, cultural, educational field, in arts, tourism, sports, environment protection between the two counties, Bihor (Romania) and Hajdu-Bihar (Hungary)⁹.

There may be financed cross-border events (meetings, exhibitions) which refer to the preservation of traditions and the presentation of the specific features of the Euroregion, focusing on events that stimulate and develop the relations between the two counties.

Among the activities which may be financed are the elaboration of some informative (brochures, catalogues) and marketing materials, as well as multimedia products (CDs, websites, broadcastings) that should promote the economical, touristical objectives and the cultural values of the Euroregion and or of the county. The organization of seminars, training sessions, specialized conferences, aiming to elaborate common projects and programmes for the Euroregion, also belong to those projects that may be financed.

The applicants eligible for financing are the local councils, the associations of the local councils, the institutions subordinated to the local or district council, the non-governamental organizations and the educational institutions.

▪ ***Project for the development of the Romanian – Hungarian border area***

The cross-border projects are also undertaken by smaller cities inside the Bihor – Hajdu Bihar region, and the local press greets and presents these initiatives as examples to other local authorities from the area. Thus, *Realitatea Bihoreană* presents the project of the city hall of Marghita (Bihor County) which aims to develop the border area from the north of Bihor County, which is the area between Marghita and Berettyóújfalú¹⁰, in Hungary. They hope to obtain financing from the European Union for this project, through the PHARE CBC

⁸ Gabriel Georgescu, „Programul PHARE CBC România-Ungaria”, in *Crișana*, 6 January 2006

⁹ Mihaela Alexandru, „Proiecte pentru Euroregiune”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 30 July 2006

¹⁰ Dan Ile, „Proiect de dezvoltare a zonei de frontieră”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 16 February 2006

system. With this money they will found the Chamber of Romanian-Hungarian institutional cooperation and of cross-border duties.

The objective of the project of the administration of Marghita is to intensify and perpetuate the contacts between the citizens, administration, communities and economical agents from the border area in order to create a solid base for the balanced economical and social development of the whole area, bringing benefits for the people from Marghita and Berettyujfalu. Creating a permanent structure of institutional cooperation and services inside the local organisms from the cross-border area, especially in the administration, economical, social and cultural field, would lead to the development and the intensification of the organizational abilities of the organizational structures of the local administration, in order to encourage the cooperation between institutions and communities.

The project aims at the cooperation of institutions by stimulating and supporting the foundation of some permanent structures for information-cooperation and by supporting the common activities and the institutions implied in the local, regional and cross-border development.

- ***AWARE interregional project***

A common border supposes to take into account all the problems, good or bad, that might appear in the neighbour regions. The project Interreg III C „AWARE” (*Attention to Warning and Readiness in Emergencies*) has been developed in this purpose; its objective is the acknowledgement, the communication and the transnational cooperation in the cross-border regions, in case of flood disasters, petrol pollution after a shipwreck, criminality or acts of terrorism.

„AWARE”, as interregional project, consists in the participation of ten partners from seven different countries, as it is cooperation about dealing with situations of crisis between countries that are members of the European Union and countries that don't belong yet to the EU. The budget of this project is of 1 million euro, 50% of the capital coming from the European Union and the other 50% comes from the partners from the seven countries. Two counties on the Romanian border, Arad and Bihor¹¹, are implied in the AWARE project. The Euroregion Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar is represented by the county councils of the two counties.

According to Viek Verdult, the president of the „AWARE” committee, “communication is an essential factor before, during and after any disaster. The authorities must be conscious that their decisions have effect over the borders, and that is why they must provide competent information to their neighbours”¹².

The fourth meeting of the A.W.A.R.E. project partners took place in Arad and Oradea, in October 2006, where the partners and many specialists have discussed the results of an exercise of virtual management of the cross-border emergency situations, having as example a flood on the Romanian – Hungarian border¹³.

- ***Future plans***

The Regional Bureau of Cross-border Cooperation of Oradea (BRECO) is already working at the elaboration of the territorial cooperation programme Hungary – Romania 2007 – 2013, to be able to present it to the European Union, just after the accession, in order to be approved and to start financing the projects. In October 2006 the representatives of

¹¹ Ovidiu Morcan, „Învață să comunice la dezastre”, in *Jurnal Bihorean*, 27 October 2006

¹² Speech on the Occasion of Opening the Proceedings of the Interreg III C „AWARE” Project, Internet Site Local Council of Arad: <http://www.cjarad.ro>

¹³ Mălina Pop, „Avertizare și pregătire în caz de urgențe – Partenerii proiectului AWARE se reunesc în aceste zile”, 24 October 2006

BRECO and VATI (Hungarian partner) met at Oradea the target-public of Bihor County in order to include all the interest fields and to find out which are the priorities of the eligible beneficiaries.

After Romania's accession into EU only integrated common projects will be financed. Both elaboration and implementation of the projects will be made in common. There will be only one financing and one working team. As novelty, there will be financed through this program activities related to the cross-border public means of transport and to the improvement of the cross-border communications. Also as novelty, some common activities for answering to emergencies, as transport accidents or fires, are introduced in the programme¹⁴.

Hungary is also thinking at the future of the cross-border relationships, as it results from the information from *Crișana*. The article specifies that the Romanian-Hungarian department of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Hungary, together with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Békés have organized in November 2006 at Békéscsaba The Conference of Foreign Economics and Hungarian Partnership entitled "Common Europe – Euroregions – Developments – Cross-border Cooperation".¹⁵ Besides the presentations of different participating institutions, the Programme included open meetings with Hungarian companies.

2.4. Economical cooperation

The regional newspapers don't offer too much information about the business meetings from the border area, although they are an important factor that assures the regional dynamics; they are interested only in the great meetings, where the central authorities take part and which take place in their protection area. Maybe this is due to the fact that there are few initiatives in this field compared to the opportunities offered by the Euroregion they belong to. Thus, *Crișana* was the only written support which has informed its readers about the organization in Oradea of the "Conference of Economical Cooperation Romania-Hungary 2006". The forum has been organized by the Employers' Federation of Bihor County, the County Council of Bihor and BTL Design Bucharest, together with Transilvania Business Associations Confederation¹⁶.

The forum from Oradea represented a communication interface between the Hungarian and the Romanian economical environment and the political factors, in order to discuss aspects and problems that influence the economical relations between the two countries at the cross-border and regional level. The Romanian businessmen had the opportunity to find out, with the help of a Hungarian businessmen delegation, the consequences of the integration into European Union and how they were experienced by the Hungarian business environment. At the same time, the government representatives from the two countries analyzed what it should be done for a more efficient cooperation between the Romanian and the Hungarian business environment after Romania's accession to European Union.

Besides the economical environment there were also representatives of the political – administrative environment. There have been discussed the following issues: the importance of the bilateral economical relations between Romania – Hungary in the framework of the European integration; cross-border cooperation in the economical and administrative field, as premise of the regional development; strategic projects for the

¹⁴ Claudia Curta, „Plan pentru proiecte comune”, in *Jurnal Bihorean*, 3 October 2006

¹⁵ *Crișana*, 2 November 2006

¹⁶ *Crișana*, 18 – 22 September 2006

infrastructure and the environment; solutions for a better cooperation between the local authorities and the investors; financing programmes for the infrastructure projects; identification of cross-border projects; projects with a major impact on the environment; the development of projects in the private public partnership system.

The newspapers also reports the meeting from Budapest – another central event – between the management of the National Agency for Consumer’s Protection and the general manager of the General Inspectorate for Consumer’s Protection from Hungary, in order to sign the cooperation protocol between the two institutions¹⁷. The protocol signed by the two parties concerns the good cooperation in order to supervise as efficient as possible the market, the products, the services and the consumers’ safety. In the same time, the Romanian delegation has benefited by specialized consultancy regarding the integration into European Union.

Many of the news about the cross-border cooperation actions from the economical field are offered by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce Bihor directly implied in order to support the regional business society. Thus, *Crișana* announces that Chamber of Industry and Commerce Bihor and Chamber of Industry and Commerce Hajdu-Bihar have organized at Debrecen a trilateral business meeting between Hungary-Ukraine-Romania for the companies from the food and agriculture industry field from the three countries. This event, organized on the occasion of the exhibition of agriculture and food industry FARMER EXPO (one of the most significant exhibitions in Hungary, with 300 companies from different countries; the area dedicated to this exhibition was over 15000 sqm¹⁸) shows that there are many business opportunities for the economical agents from the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Region.

On this occasion, there have been different discussions between the management of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce Bihor and the representatives of some companies from Hungary and Ukraine, who were presented the economical potential of the Bihor County, aspects regarding the Romanian legislation, and also the present possibilities regarding the market, the investment and business opportunities in Bihor County. Especially the Hungarian companies, but also the Ukrainian ones, have called on the Chamber of Industry and Commerce Bihor to find business partners in the region, in order to advertise their products and services, being interested in partnerships and cooperations with the businessmen from Bihor County.

All this shows one more time what we have stated: the dynamism of the cross-border regions is provided by the cooperation in different fields.

The regional press also watches the evolution of the cross-border acquisitions after Romania’s integration into European Union, taking over the statements of the representatives of the Romanian Agency for Foreign Investments. As a normal tendency of all developed countries, starting from the first years after their accession to the European Union, in Romania will significantly increase, as importance and value, the cross-border and the international fusions and acquisitions. The accession to the European Union is associated with the most direct foreign investments by the increase of the level of predictability, legislative stability and not in the last place, by the continuous reduction of the financing cost. As the buy-out process is almost at its end, this kind of entrance of the direct foreign investments inside the country will diminish and eventually finish, and the only possibilities of Romania after the accession are Greenfield investments, as well as brownfield investments, in which case the investor buys the enterprise but replaces almost the entire factory, equipments, workers and production line.

¹⁷ Florin Alexandru, „Colaborare româno-ungară pentru protecția consumatorilor”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 19 March 2006

¹⁸ *Crișana*, 7 September 2006

2.5. Cooperation in the education and research field

The Institute for Euroregional Studies (IERS) was founded in Oradea, as a result of the resolution of the European Commission, as European Excellency Center „Jean Monnet”. This project has been realized by the University of Oradea in collaboration with the University of Debrecen (Hungary). IERS proposes to represent an interface for the dissemination of the European information in the neighbourhood, that is the new eastern borders of the European Union, after 2007, and a decisive factor of Romanian research and knowledge in the cross-border field at the Romanian west border.

The local newspapers offered detailed information about the beginning of this Institute. *Crișana* quotes the president of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bihor, who stated that he appreciated that cooperation initiative in the university field that would bring the European values closer to the region. It is important for the businessmen to have the necessary specialists here in Romania; these specialists should be ready to reevaluate all the opportunities and to apply efficiently working systems, to use improved and validated proceedings, they should be able to get through the rivalry from the common market¹⁹. *Jurnal Bihorean* defines the two elements of this structure: formation represented by the Euroregional Studies School and research, represented by the International Centre of Euroregional Research and explains the way of financing the IERS activities which will be carried out during three years by the European Commission, through the Action Jean Monnet and University of Oradea²⁰.

Twice a year, under the aegis of the Institute for Euroregional Studies, they organize scientific papers session alternatively in Oradea and Debrecen, the two poles of the institution. The press relates about the semestrial scientific session from Debrecen in June 2006, about “The regional development in the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area – from the regional perspective towards the European one”²¹. At the conference took part professors and personalities from the two neighbour countries, Romania and Hungary, as well as professors from other member states of the European Union, and the discussions were about the cross-border cooperation, the euroregions and their role regarding the European projects, historical realities at the Romanian- Hungarian border.

The euroregional cooperation is not only at the level of the university education. Thus, in February 2006 the press relates that “Arts Gala” is being organized at Oradea; this event implied schools from Bihor county and Hajdu-Bihar and consisted in the organization of some exhibitions, theater plays and other artistic moments presented by the pupils from the Hungarian and Romanian schools. The main organizer was the School Union from Bihor - Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion²².

2.6. Cooperation in the tourism field

Tourism is an essential field in the sustainable development of a euroregion; it entails the development of infrastructure and of the related services. Cooperation in this field aims to promote and develop the cross-border tourism, to promote the investments in tourism, to train specialists in this field.

¹⁹ Lavinia Hebrîștean, „Deschiderea oficială a Institutului de Studii Euroregionale”, in *Crișana*, 20 January 2006

²⁰ *Jurnal Bihorean*, 2 February 2006

²¹ Alina Ungur, „Sesiune de comunicări științifice la Debrețin”, in *Crișana*, 9 June 2006

²² Loredana Nicoară, „Școli din Euroregiunea Bihor - Hajdu-Bihar, la Gala Artelor”, in *Crișana*, 27 February 2006

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bihor and its partner The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Hajdu-Bihar (Hungary) has finished in February 2006 the Project "The centre for promotion and professional training in the field of cross-border tourism Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar" as part of the PHARE CBC Program – Romania-Hungary²³. The general objective of the project was to intensify the relationships of regional cross-border cooperation between Romania and Hungary, between the two counties adjacent to the border, in order to sustain and develop the touristic activities and the activities related to tourism, of the economical and social activities at the local and regional level

Precisely, the financing was used in order to promote the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion in the whole world. The results of the project consist in the achievement of informative materials (in English, Romanian, German and Hungarian) issued in 10000 copies, of 5 folders structured on the habitat of Bihor county, the printing of a presentation brochure of Bihor County and a CD, in 1000 copies, the foundation of a Center for the promotion and professional preparation in tourism, as well as the achievement of a website of the Center.

The direct beneficiaries of this project are the local public authorities, the economical agents from the tourism field and the related activities, the local employers' associations, the educational institutions, the representatives of the civil society, all those interested in the development of the regional touristical field.

This is not the only project that promotes the cross-border cooperation in the touristical field. During the last years, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bihor has realized other European financed projects, which means that there is continuity in this field. For instance, the project "*Frontier Touristic Development in Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion*" was realized in 2003, and one year later the project "*Promotion of Investments in Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion, the new frontier of the European Union*"²⁴. The materials resulted from these projects were given to the economical agents from Bihor county, to the Romanian Embassies, to the Chambers of Commerce and Industry from all over the country and abroad, thus promoting tourism and economical field from the two counties of the Euroregion, as well as the cross-border tourism.

The idea of continuity does not disappear, as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bihor presented to the Regional Bureau of Cross-border Cooperation for the Romanian – Hungarian Border from Oradea a new project PHARE CBC 2004 / INTERREG IIIA – "*Unity and diversity in the Tourism of Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar Euroregion*" (74200 Euro).

2.7. Cooperation in the environment field

"Romania's cooperation with Hungary in the environment field is the best cooperation and in the same time an exercise which must be used for the cooperation with other states too" – states the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Waters Management on the occasion of the session of the Mixt Committee for the achievement of the provisions of the Agreement between Romanian Government and the Hungarian Government regarding the cooperation in the environment field, which took place in October 2006 in Oradea (Romania)²⁵.

²³ Claudia Curta, „Turismul transfrontalier, promovat”, in *Jurnal Bihorean*, 2 February 2006

²⁴ Gabriel Georgescu, „Susținere și dezvoltare durabilă în domeniul turismului transfrontalier”, in *Crișana*, 9 February 2006

²⁵ Doina Aronescu-Neagoe, “A patra sesiune de lucru a Comisiei mixte româno-maghiare în domeniul protecției mediului”, in *Crișana*, 7 October 2006

The cooperation between the two countries in the environment field includes aspects of environment, nature protection and the identification and the analysis of the problems related to the foundation, exploitation and the examination of the objectives and activities with possible cross-border effect. In the inter-governmental agreement they stipulate the foundation of a permanent group of specialists for international programs and projects.

A healthy environment means clean waters. That is why they made the Agreement between Romanian Government and the Hungarian Government regarding the cooperation for the protection and the sustainable use of frontier waters. On the basis of this agreement the Romanian-Hungarian Hydrotechnical Committee was founded, which is going to realize a common data basis for the quality of waters. When this databasis is actualized, the parties will send their own databases to eachother in order to bring them into accord.

The XVIIth session of the Romanian-Hungarian Hydrotechnical Committee took place in Băile Felix, in February 2006, and in the end the Protocol of the Romanian-Hungarian Hydrotechnical Committee has been signed²⁶. In the specialists' opinion this document of hydrotechnical cooperation is the most modern protocol that Romania has ever signed with a neighbour country.

All these events testify the importance given by Romania and Hungary to the waters which cross the Romanian-Hungarian border.

The European financing programs are also in this field. The projects which aim to strengthen the infrastructure in the transport, environment and floods prevention field, to promote the initiatives that make easier the integration of the economical field for Bihor, Arad, Satu-Mare and Timiș County, are financed through the PHARE CBC Romania – Hungary programme, which was launched in August 2006. This programme is echeloned over many years and it will function even after 2007 when Romania will become member of the European Union.

2.8. Romanian – Hungarian cross-border cooperation in the struggle against drugs traffic

The Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation is achieved also in the struggle against drugs traffic and consumption. The press periodically brings into its readers' attention information about this subject and presents the results of the Romanian – Hungarian working meetings which take place inside the two countries. At the end of 2005 they have signed at Budapest the Romanian-Hungarian reciprocal protocol for cooperation in order to prevent the drugs abuse and to treat the drug addicted. As a result of this protocol, the anti-drugs specialists from the two countries met in 2006 in Băile Felix (Oradea) in order to debate the cross-border cooperation and the underregional partnerships for the diminution of the drugs request²⁷.

After the meeting the parties have agreed to elaborate a common study regarding the drug consumption in the cross-border areas of the both countries and they have laid the bases for the elaboration of a cooperation strategy with the non-governmental organizations in order to make common projects to obtain EU funds. The bilateral Romanian – Hungarian meeting took place in October 2006 in Nyíregyháza (Hungary)²⁸. The main objective of the meeting was the exchange of experience and good methods for the implementation of the anti-drugs local strategy and the institution of a national system of service provider regarding the consultance and treatment of drugs-addicted, as well as a specialized examination of their

²⁶ *Crișana*, 3 February 2006

²⁷ Dana Iova, „Soluții antidrog româno-ungare”, in *Realitatea Bihoreană*, 25 March 2006

²⁸ Alina Ungur, „Reuniune bilaterală româno-maghiară”, in *Crișana*, 11 October 2006

development. During the meeting the participants have analyzed the practical ways for the reduction of the drugs request by cross-border cooperation in the context of governmental and non-governmental inter-institutional cooperation.

3. Cooperation, a chance for development

Cross-border cooperation represents a chance for development, a possibility for the new members of the Union to distinguish themselves, to show that there are entities which have something important to say in their competition with the old powerful states of Europe. It assures tight relations between the neighbor countries, it reduces the differences of economical and social development between the states, and it ensures people's security, stability and the sustainable development of the regions they live in.

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