

III RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL WORK IN THE HUNGARIAN–ROMANIAN AND THE HUNGARIAN–UKRAINIAN BORDER REGIONS

1 Results of the questionnaire survey carried out in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region

1.1 Short description of the research

In 2004/2005 within the framework of the EXLINEA research project the Debrecen Department of the Centre for Regional Studies of HAS carried out a questionnaire survey along the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border. Our interviewees were leaders of institutions, administrative bodies, NGOs and enterprises which are involved in cross-border cooperation and have considerable experience in this field. The final sample consisted of 105 persons, 41 persons from Romania, 35 persons from Hungary and 29 persons from the Ukraine. We sorted the respondents on the Hungarian side into two groups, according to the geographical field of activity, as the Hungarian border region consists of 2 sections, the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian part. From the Romanian section 24 actors were asked and 11 from the significantly shorter Ukrainian section.

1.2 Types and levels of economic interaction

According to our investigation in the field of cross-border exports in the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region it is clearly identifiable that the respondents from the Romanian side take the level of exports from their side to the Hungarian side for higher than the exports to the opposite direction. The dissimilarity between the two mean values differs conditionally on the territory where the export is directed (larger regional city, other regional market etc.). The difference is relatively slight if our question referred to the nearest city on the other side or the larger regional city: the respondents considered the export into these areas relatively high.

The disparity between the estimations in the two sides was much bigger if we asked for the exports into the capital city of the neighbouring country: the inter-

viewees in Hungary said that there is actually no export into Bucharest from the Hungarian border region, while the Romanian respondents reported relatively high level of exports to the Hungarian capital city. Probable reasons of this difference can be the relative closeness of Budapest to the eastern borders of Hungary. Its good accessibility and the fact that on the Romanian side of the border – as further results of this questionnaire will show – the rate of direct investments from Hungary is high and the majority of the products manufactured in Romania are transported to Budapest or to the other destinations through Budapest.

The export to other countries is considered as more significant than the export to the other side of the border in both Hungary and Romania, which shows that according to the opinions the neighbouring border regions are not the most important partners for the local firms. The answers, especially on the Hungarian side reflect the peripheral situation of the border region, the economic problems and the low level of direct investments, since the results show that the respondents absolutely do not consider the actual level of export as satisfying. The more optimistic estimation of the Romanian side is presumably ascribable to the significant foreign (mostly Italian) investments in the southern areas of the Hungarian–Romanian border region, in Timis and Arad counties, but export from this area is directed to Western-Europe for the most part, and not to Hungary.

The answers in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region concerning the cross-border exports are very similar to the answers already presented in connection with the Hungarian–Romanian border. In this area the Ukrainian respondents assumed that the level of exports from the Ukraine is higher than the export from the Hungarian side, and the difference between the results in the two countries is bigger than in the Romanian case. The level of export to the larger regional city on the Hungarian side is considered prominently high, but the other, more distant regions are target areas for the export as well.

Another point where the answers significantly differ is the role of the capital cities in cross-border export. It results from the geographic position of Kiev, this city cannot become an essential element of cross-border economic relations, but Budapest seems to be an important target for the Ukrainian export. Finally it can be told in this border region too that according to the respondents the level of exports into other countries exceeds the level of exports to the neighbouring country both in the Ukraine and in Hungary.

Our results based on the questionnaire survey in relation to the cross-border import were very similar to the results of the previous group of questions on cross-border export *in both border regions*. It is noticeable in this case as well that the respondents from the Romanian and Ukrainian side take the level of cross-border imports for larger than the respondents from Hungary. The most significant difference can be observed between the questions concerning the role of the capital cities

again, Budapest has a considerable role according to the respondents, while the role of Bucharest and Kiev is considered as insignificant in cross-border imports.

In relation to cross-border investments by local firms sharp contrast can be observed between the *Hungarian and Romanian* sides of the border. The interviewees on both sides realised the different activity of the investors of the two countries, and they totally agreed that Hungarian firms are much more active in this field. It is also noticeable that in reference to capital exports the larger regional city on the other side are considered as the most important target of investments on both sides and they are followed by other nearby regional markets. As regards capital imports, the difference between the two border regions is even more conspicuous, while respondents from Romania think that investments from Hungary reach a satisfactory level, the respondents from Hungary submitted that there are no investments from the Romanian side at all. On the other hand, all respondents agreed that the level of investments in the local economy by firms originating in other countries is much higher than by firms of the neighbouring country, although Hungary is the 12th largest investor in Romania. It is interesting that on the Romanian side the level of foreign investments in general was considered higher than on the Hungarian side – if we take the earlier mentioned investments in Timis and Arad counties into consideration, this opinion seems to be rather realistic than unreasonably optimistic.

In this group of questions it is observable that Bucharest is clearly not among the most popular targets of the Hungarian investors, they preferably choose the border region and other regions with ethnic Hungarian population for their investments. The position of Budapest is not as bad; the respondents think that for the Romanian investors – even if there are not many of them – the Hungarian capital city is almost as attracting as the border region. As regards the capital imports, the results are alike, Budapest has an essential target for the investors from Romania, but Bucharest has an absolutely insignificant role in this respect.

In the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region the answers in reference to cross-border investments were slightly different. Remarkably the respondents in the Ukraine consider the level of investments by local firms in the neighbouring country almost as high as the Hungarian respondents, moreover in the larger regional cities on the other side and in the more distant markets they take the firms from their side more active than the Hungarians. The role of the capital cities seems to be very similar to the other case study region, only Budapest can be considered as a target area for the investors from the Ukraine, the local firms in the Hungarian border region do not esteem Kiev as a possible target for investments. Even more similarities with the Hungarian–Romanian border can be observed in the case of investments in the local economy by firms originating on the other side. In this case the Ukrainian respondents unequivocally submitted that the level of invest-

ment by Hungarian firms is relatively high, while the Hungarian respondents did not consider the investments from the Ukraine for significant.

Neither in the Hungarian–Romanian nor in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region was the de-localisation of activities considered as a typical characteristic of the last 15 years, most respondents assured that no de-localisation activities could be observed. The simplest and probably feasible explanation for this result is the peripheral situation of the border region – there were no considerable investments in these regions before 1989, so they did not have the industrial capacity which could have been de-localised to the other side.

1.3 Immigration and social interaction

If we analyse the answers concerning the immigration either in the *Hungarian–Romanian*, or the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region, we will find that the means are significantly different between the Hungarian and the other side. According to the opinions of the respondents in Hungary a large number of immigrants arrive from the neighbouring countries, especially from the nearby regions, but from other, farther regions as well. The main reason of this phenomenon is the existence of the Hungarian minority in the Romanian and Ukrainian side of the border; for the most part they leave their countries to settle down in Hungary. Migration in the opposite direction is rare; it is reflected by the results of our research project too. The number of immigrants from other countries to Romania and the Ukraine is slightly higher, primarily from Moldavia to Romania and from the east to the Ukraine.

Only in Hungary is it worth-while to analyse the answers concerning the occupational composition of immigrants, as the number of immigrants in the other two countries is too low. According to the respondents' opinion the majority of the immigrants work in the fields. These opinions may be influenced by the fact that during the most important field works a large number of guest workers arrive at this region from the other sides, who are welcomed by the Hungarian farmers since they are ready to perform the same work for significantly lower wages. The image of these guest workers from Romania and the Ukraine can be confused with the immigrants although the two groups are naturally not identical. The respondents take those who work in the services for the second biggest group of the immigrants. One possible explanation for this view is that the rate of intellectuals among immigrants is very high, a large number of them conclude to settle down in Hungary. Finally we can refer to the peripheral situation of these border regions and the lack of industrial estates again, when we try to explain why the rate of those immigrants who work in the industry is so low. The questions concerning

emigration reflect the same trends from the other side, the respondents in Hungary think that there is no emigration at all to the two neighbouring countries and the emigration to other countries is also insignificant in comparison with the same rates in Romania and the Ukraine.

The means of the answers concerning labour commuting clearly show that both in the *Hungarian–Romanian* and the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border regions the target area is the Hungarian side. Not only the respondents from the Hungarian but from both other countries agreed that the flow of commuters is unidirectional at the moment, in the direction of Hungary. If we compare the situation in the labour markets and the rate of wages in Romania and Transcarpathia, it is understandable that for many people it is worth engaging themselves to work in Hungary even for a short period and even if it is illegal. However, a significant dissimilarity can be found between the situation in Romania and the Ukraine as well, since the results in Transcarpathia show that the level of commuting is much higher there than in Romania, although this level is rather high too. In view of the economic situation and the living standards in the Ukraine it is not surprising. If we compare the result of the questionnaire from another point of view, it is perceivable that from permanent and occasional commuting the latter is considered to be more typical in all three countries, simply because this form of commuting usually means short term illegal employment in the other country.

In connection with the questions concerning the one-day trade, respondents from the Hungarian side considered this form of trade very typical, more typical than either the Romanian or the Ukrainian respondents. After comparing the two case study regions it is clear that this form of cross-border cooperation has the most significant role in Transcarpathia. This may be led back to the extremely difficult economic situation of the border region, where in many instances one-day trade is the only source of income. On the other hand the difference between the price levels in Hungary and the Ukraine is significantly higher than in the case of Hungary and Romania, and this difference keeps cross-border trade going.

The questions concerning social interaction showed that interviewees on both sides of the *Hungarian–Romanian* and the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* borders consider the level of personal connections of local inhabitants as really high, they frequently visit friends and relatives or do the shopping etc. on the other side. Most inhabitants of the Hungarian border region have relatives on the other side; this is one of the main reasons of the high level of social interactions in this area. Another reason can be the shopping tourism, in the last few years Hungarians who live near the border “discovered” this opportunity. While earlier mostly Romanian and Ukrainian citizens travelled to Hungary to do some shopping, by now the situation changed radically. Clearly in most of the cases cities near the border and the nearby regions are affected by this process; it is rare that these people visit farther areas.

Similarly to other questions analyzed earlier, the most significant differences between the three countries can be observed in case of cross-border visits of local residents to the capital of the other side, and the explanation is very similar too: the role of Budapest for the inhabitants of the border regions (partly because of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the Ukraine) is much more significant than the role of Bucharest and Kiev.

1.4 Identifying barriers to interaction and cross-border co-operation

Along the *Hungarian–Romanian* border, Romanian respondents were more satisfied with the infrastructural conditions of creating cross-border connections than Hungarian respondents. We can highlight telecommunication, which is – according to the answers from both sides – not a severe barrier of cross-border cooperation any more. The condition of railways and roads is a more significant, but still not insuperable barrier in the way of connection-building – although large scale investments are needed in the field of infrastructure, this is not the main barrier of cooperation between the two border regions. On the Hungarian side the respondents were a bit more critical; the only exception is the already mentioned telecommunication. Much more problems were caused by the condition of railways and the roads, although they are not severe barriers either.

The answers in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region were slightly different. As regards the train service, Hungarian respondents mentioned fewer problems than Ukrainian respondents, which is presumably caused by the fact that railways play a relatively limited role in transport of passengers between Hungary and Ukraine and the capacity of the transfer station in Záhony is more than enough to fulfil all demands that comes up in the field of transport of goods. In case of public roads respondents were more displeased, while the Ukrainian respondents – and that can be a bit surprising – did not take the condition of the roads as a serious problem, at least not in terms of cross-border cooperation. Another significant difference between the two case study regions is that in the Ukrainian border region the existence of a satisfactory telecommunication network is not self-evident, that is why the improvement of it is considered as one of the most important goals on both sides.

In the eyes of the respondents crossing the *Hungarian–Romanian* border is not a severe barrier of the cooperation any more, but there are several problems which should be solved as soon as possible to reach a higher level of cooperation. The most serious of these problems is the behaviour of border guards and customs officers, which is the weak point of border control in most respondents' opinion. Even so this problem was not considered as a severe barrier either, according to our re-

search result the harassment of the travellers is not as frequent as it was before 1989, when the representatives of the authorities permanently humiliated those who crossed the border.

On the other hand the closeness of check points and the number of check points does not raise a problem for the respondents in Romania. In Hungary the approach of both questions was more critical, but since in the last years, as a result of different development programmes several border crossing points were opened in the border section, most of the respondents do not regard this problem as a severe handicap for transboundary cooperation.

Along the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border the closeness and the number of check points are the least significant difficulties, but the situation in this field seems to be less problematic only in comparison with the other problems. Especially the number of border crossing points was considered as a barrier by the Hungarian respondents, even if a number of new check points were established in the last few years, and as a result of this the confinement of the border region – which was the main characteristic of this area – remarkably decreased. Probably because of these measures, which brought a number of positive changes for the local inhabitants, the respondents on the Ukrainian side did not consider border crossing as a barrier.

Nevertheless visa procedures were mentioned by the respondents as a restrictive factor, but it is surprising that interviewees from the Hungarian side, who do not need a visa for border crossing considered the visa regime a bigger problem than the Ukrainian respondents who need the visa, although the difference is not significant. The attitude of the passport officers and the customs officers was considered as a restrictive factor to the same extent, so it is – in comparison with the results in the Hungarian–Romanian border region – a considerable barrier of the cooperation.

As we analysed the trade conditions and their barriers in the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region, we received very similar answers. The respondents from both countries denied that tariffs or duties imposed by the other side on exports or quotas on exports would detain trade between Hungary and Romania. The CEFTA agreements and since May 1st 2004 the agreements between the EU and Romania regulate trade connections between the two countries and all these agreements are based on the principle of free trade and intend to strengthen this principle. Further results prove that in this border region the technical requirements concerning exports and imports are taken to be satisfying. The only barrier worth mentioning is bureaucracy; especially the respondents from Hungary mentioned that administration is still more complicated than it should be.

Respondents from the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region considered the barriers of commercial connections as serious problems. The immoderately bureaucratic attitude of the administration is the most serious problem in this case study region as well, but the insufficient technical equipments cause almost as many problems. Tariffs and quotas are not taken for really considerable barriers on the

Hungarian side any longer, but on the Ukrainian side they are considered almost as serious problem as bureaucracy.

The role of different levels of administration, business associations and agencies in cross-border cooperation was estimated differently by the respondents in *Hungary* and *Romania*. The respondents from the Hungarian side were more satisfied with the work of these establishments in every respect than the Romanian respondents. If we compare the judgements concerning the local, regional and national levels we can learn that in case of every type of the above mentioned institutions the local level was considered as the most effective level, which encumbers the cooperation the least, although significant differences can be observed in case of the administrative bodies. The estimation of local governments is definitely positive, in Hungary local governments were – in addition to the above mentioned establishments – the most reputable in reference to their assistance for cross-border cooperation. This is not surprising if we take the fact into consideration that the most active forms of cooperation with the longest tradition are managed by the local authorities and the network of twin settlements connect a number of villages and towns in the border region.

The respondents from Hungary were far less satisfied with the effectiveness of the assistance of the business associations, although we cannot say that they are seen as severe barriers. The most appropriate explanation is that many of the respondents take these associations among others for responsible for the insufficient level of economic cooperation between the two countries.

The answers from Romania show that in this country the respondents encountered more problems as they tried to work together with these institutions, but the difference between the estimation of the institutions was insignificant. We could only point out that the local administration was the most acknowledged actor and the national government was considered as the least helpful partner in the course of cross-border cooperation projects.

The answers from the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region almost totally coincide with the answers from the other case study. Hungarian respondents perceptibly trusted these institutions more than the Ukrainians in every account. The results were very similar here to those in the Hungarian–Romanian border region in reference to the estimation of the government assistance: the local level is usually not considered as a barrier but as we approach the national level the level of confidence is decreasing.

We can choose several factors from the general conditions listed in the questionnaire which do not hinder cross-border cooperation at all, and others where essential changes should be made to enhance cooperation. Respondents on both sides of the *Hungarian–Romanian* border agreed that different languages do not delay the common work significantly. This result reflects the special characteristic of these case study regions again, namely that a significant part of cross-border

cooperation in these areas means cooperation between Hungarian communities on both sides of the border, and in this case the intermediary language is certainly Hungarian. But interethnic Hungarian–Romanian cooperation is encouraged by the fact that ethnic minorities live on both sides of the border and language problems can be solved relative easily by the help of these people.

In the respondents' opinion different cultures do not hinder the cooperation either; the explanation is similar to the interpretation presented in case of language problems. As regards the religion in this area, there is a sharp borderline between Hungarians and Romanians, but in spite of the different religions, religion was not considered as severe barriers. To sum it up we can say that for Hungarian and Romanian communities which live together in this area for centuries, different cultures, religions and other elements connected to ethnicity do not discourage cooperation perceptibly.

On the other hand, some other answers of the questionnaire survey seem to be inconsistent with these results, as Hungarian respondents think that historical events considerably hinder cooperation. We should refer here to the Trianon Peace Treaty after World War I and the events of the last few decades, when the relations between the two countries were usually hostile (sometimes openly, but in most cases impliedly) mostly because of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

Nevertheless the impedimental effect of the historical events is clearly not as important as the consequences of some present-day phenomena, like corruption that was mentioned among the most severe barriers of successful economic cooperation on both sides. Some other elements are also connected to the economic interaction: the frequent changing of the rules in business, the instability of the exchange rates and the inflation were considered as barriers by the Romanian respondents. The latter was a serious problem for both countries for years, but in the last years successful steps were taken to decrease inflation.

The questions concerning general conditions as barriers of CBC generated significantly different results in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region. Hungarian respondents for example considered political instability in the Ukraine as a severe barrier. This judgement may have been affected by the events of December 2004 in the Ukraine, the so called "Orange Revolution", when political instability reached such a high level that it endangered not only cross-border cooperation but the operation of the state itself. Similarly to the Romanian border section corruption was taken for the most dangerous hindering factor, but the level and the dangerousness of it far exceeds the mean values measured in Romania.

It can be stated in reference to this border region as well that different religions, cultures and languages are not considered as barriers on either side of the border. Although the religious borderline between the Hungarians and Ukrainians is just as sharp as in the other case study area, this borderline lost its importance during the

century-long living together and it does not endanger cross-border connections. The fact that in spite of the Hungarian–Romanian border region in this region historical events were not considered as threats for the cooperation proves that the coexistence was peaceful here in the last centuries.

As regards economic geography, the respondents in the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region agreed that the geographical conditions do not affect negatively the connections between the two sides of the border, as it cannot be stated either that distance of large cities from the border would have a negative effect on cooperation. On the other hand, the respondents criticised the productivity of local firms and the quality of their products as well as the limited product differentiation of local economy. All these factors especially delay greater economic interaction just as low purchasing power of the nearby markets on the other side. Stressing of the latter factor was naturally more characteristic of respondents on the Hungarian side.

In the *Ukraine* insufficient size of the market cannot be a problem, rather the low purchasing power, which is a barrier that almost cannot be overcome in the respondents' opinion. In Hungary the situation is reverse; the relatively small market has a relatively high purchasing power (especially in comparison with the Ukraine). Geographical factors are not considered as a severe barrier in any side, but the low productivity and the limited product differentiation was mentioned by most of the respondents as a problem.

1.5 Perceptions and images of the others

With reference to the images of the others we were eager to see which conditions and traditions are considered as an advantage or disadvantage by the actors of cross-border cooperation in course of their activity. On the Hungarian side of the *Hungarian–Romanian* border the effect of the historical events was regarded as a hindering factor again. On the contrary, on the Romanian side history does not seem to play a significant role in the cooperation, the respondents did not take it for an advantage, but it was surely not a serious problem either. The answers of the Hungarian respondents show that besides history only linguistic differences were considered as a problem, although not an insolvable problem. The other elements listed in this group of questions were regarded as an asset rather than a problem in CBC.

The positive effect of the existence of an ethnic minority on the other side was particularly emphasised by the Hungarian and Romanian respondents as well. The judgement on the current relations among local and regional authorities was also positive; especially the respondents in Romania considered these connections as

very useful. The role of current relations between governments in CBC was not regarded as positive as local connections, but it was still rather an asset than a problem.

Respondents in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region also emphasised the essential role of national minorities in encouraging cross-border cooperation. The Current relations between the Hungarian and Ukrainian governments may have a positive effect on transboundary connections as well, but joining local forces have the most important role. Respondents in this region do not think that cultural and religious differences have positive or negative effect on cross-border connections. Conversely linguistic differences were considered as problem, especially on the Hungarian side. Interviewees from the Ukrainian side take historical events between the two countries rather for an asset than a problem, while Hungarian respondents considered it neither an asset nor a problem.

As regards the image of the others, the answers received from the respondents in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border regions were rather similar, most of them agreed with the mostly positive statements listed in this group of questions. There were a few questions where the respondents did not differ in opinion, the results were alike on both sides of the border, e.g. in case of the statements that people on the other side are honest, peaceful, open minded, have “European” culture and have good feelings towards us. It is to be remarked that last of the statements, which refers to the feelings of the other side, was accepted by the respondents the least. If we take the history of the Hungary and Romania and the centuries-old mistrust into consideration, this finding cannot surprise us.

In case of the other questions of point 4.2 the answers were significantly different. Respondents from Hungary agreed upon the statements that people on the other side are hard working, friendly and similar to them much more than the Romanian and Ukrainian respondents. On the other hand, the judgement of the respondents from these two countries was more positive when they were asked about some characteristics of the Hungarians in connection with labour and their economic situation. Thus a relatively great number of the respondents agreed that the Hungarians were wealthy, productive and disciplined.

As the respondents from the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region expressed their opinion on the impacts of greater interaction, their estimations were surprisingly similar. According to the answers, collaboration among universities, research institutes and more active cultural interaction may have positive impact on local economy and society. This is probably a reflection of the conception according to which most respondents think that at present cultural interaction is the most effective and viable part of cross-border cooperations, as it is also verified by other parts of our research. Besides the totally open borders within a wider Europe, encour-

agement of cross-border investment and local exports to the other side of the borders could have positive impact as well.

In the respondents' eye the increasing number of immigrants from the other side working in the local economy and emigrants from this side working on the other side of the borders would not be a really positive effect of greater interaction, although these effects are not considered as a problem either. Most respondents would not take it for a positive result either if the number of mixed marriages with immigrants or local imports from the other side of the borders grew.

The results in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region are similar; the growing number of cultural and scientific cooperation project would have the most positive effects on local economy and society considered. The increasing number of immigrants from the other side who would like to find a job and mixed marriages are not welcomed by the respondents. In some cases the difference between the two sides of the border was bigger, for example the concept of totally open borders within a wider Europe was more popular on the Ukrainian side than in Hungary, and the emigration in order to find a job on the other side was considered as a positive outcome for their own community preferably on the Ukrainian side.

1.6 Evaluation of policies of cross-border co-operation

The implementation of cross-border cooperation policies was estimated positively by most of the respondents in the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region; in their opinion in the fields listed in the questionnaire, policies of cross-border cooperation were implemented frequently to strengthen transboundary connection. It is clear at first sight that more respondents in Hungary assume that these policies were implemented purposefully than in Romania. For example interviewees on the Hungarian side think that trust building policies are used very often by the Hungarian partners, whereas on the other side of the border only a few respondents recognised the signs of the implementation or even the existence of a deliberate trust building policy. The difference was similarly significant in the field of education, research and culture. The active role of the Hungarian side is understandable as for the Hungarian minority in Romania the aid coming from the “mother country” for educational and cultural institutions is essential. On the other hand, respondents on both sides had very similar opinions in connection with the local policies of cross-border cooperation. Here respondents from Hungary and Romania clearly stated again that local connections have a determinant role in cross-border cooperation.

The results in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region also show that Hungarian partners implement most of the various cross-border cooperation policies more often, although the difference between the two sides is not as big as in the other

case study region. On the Hungarian side an accentuated role was attributed to local authorities, but the opinions on the Ukrainian side are not as unambiguous – here we can refer to the centralised characteristic of the Ukrainian administrative system, which does not ensure as large scope for action for the local authorities as in Hungary. Besides cultural and educational cooperation, cooperations in the case of natural disasters are the fields where CBC policies can have an important role and these policies are implemented frequently in the respondents' opinion. On the other hand, most respondent on both sides think that implementation of cross-border policies of cooperation in migration issues and in development of infrastructure is not frequent enough. In contrast with the Hungarian–Romanian border, significant differences can be observed here in reference to the implementation of European Union policies of cross-border cooperation and the application of European financial resources, which is clearly a consequence of the Ukraine's situation, since this country can count on much less support from the Union than Hungary or Romania.

As we tried to examine the effectiveness of the policies listed in the questionnaire, we discovered that for the most part the opinions were very similar to the results found in case of the previous group of questions. Regarding to the effectiveness of cooperation, the local level was considered as the most successful field of cross-border cooperation by the *Hungarian* and *Romanian* respondents as well. Another prominently effective field of cooperation is culture and Hungarian interviewees also took trust building policies and the implementation of policies of scientific cooperation for an extraordinarily flourishing area of connections. It can be also mentioned that the respondents seem to be remarkably unsatisfied with two issues: in the field of cooperation towards organised crime and the development of infrastructure Hungarian respondents deem it necessary to elaborate policies of greater interaction.

Respondents in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region expect more effective implementation of policies in the field of fight against organised crime and coordinated development of infrastructure, but a more effective migration policy and environmental policy are among the requirements as well, especially on the Hungarian side. It can be stated as a general principle that the respondents in Hungary are less satisfied with the effectiveness of policies than in Transcarpathia, there are only a few exceptions, like the local policies of cross-border cooperation and the allocation of financial resources from the European Union.

As we analysed the group of local actors active in cross-border interaction, we received fundamentally similar results in both case study regions. A group of actors was outlined which was considered to play an essential role in cross-border cooperation by respondents in all three countries. First of all the ethnic minorities must be mentioned, respondents in the Romanian and Ukrainian side of the border also think that the role of this group is all-important. Local authorities are among the

most important actors again just as NGOs, universities and research institutes. At the other end of the scale there are the Labour Unions and the political parties, most of the respondents agreed that the role of these organisations is negligible in cross-border interaction, only in the Ukraine were there a few people who submitted that Labour Unions show some activity in this field.

There is a group of possible participants of interaction about which only Hungarian respondents said that they were especially active. Principally cultural organisations belong to this group as they play a very important role in the preservation of national identity of ethnic Hungarians in Romania and the Ukraine as well. But also local and regional chambers just as private citizens, development agencies and partly private firms are included in this group.

1.7 Expected effects of greater cross-border interaction and co-operation

As regards the benefits of cross-border cooperation, respondents in *Hungary* and *Romania* equally designated the national level as the greatest winner of interaction. The national level is followed by the border regions and then (slightly lagging behind) rural areas and the capital cities. Respondents in both countries agreed that the rich and wealthy are the real winners of cross-border interaction, not the poor.

Nevertheless in a few cases remarkably large differences can be observed between the answers in Hungary and Romania. We can highlight the fight against organised crime, where respondents in Hungary were very pessimistic in reference to the possible success of more active cross-border cooperation, while respondents on the Romanian side were rather optimistic. On the other hand the situation is just the opposite in case of the large cities near the border, the respondents in Hungary saw great opportunities for making the best of the cooperation, while the judgement of interviewees in Romania was much more restrained.

The findings described above are mainly relevant for the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region as well, only one difference must be pointed out. In this case study area Ukrainian respondents did not consider it as self-evident that the rich benefit more from greater cross-border interaction, or to be more precise they think that the poor have almost as much chance to utilise the opportunities.

In the *Hungarian–Romanian* border region the respondents almost fully agreed on the statement that both countries gain from greater interaction. On the other hand, respondents on the Hungarian side were certain that the other country and not Hungary would gain more as a result of more intense interaction. Answers to this question on the Romanian side were more balanced, which shows that opinions

were more divided there. The questionnaire survey showed the same results in case of the border zones as well.

Both sides were of the same mind that the concerned border regions gain considerably more from greater interaction than the countries, although this opinion was outlined more definitely in Hungary. The centralised character of the Romanian administrative system may have a determinant role in this respect. Finally the majority of the respondents in both countries agreed that the expectable benefit of greater interaction is much bigger than the possible losses, although the respondents in the Romanian border region tended to take these possible losses into consideration much more than the Hungarians.

Respondents in the *Ukraine* and *Hungary* also agreed that both countries and both border regions may benefit from more active interaction and that gains could be greater than losses. On the Hungarian side, just like in the other case study area, the other side of the border was considered as the real winner of greater interaction. On the other hand, the standpoint of the Ukrainian respondents is not absolutely clear since almost as many respondents said that their country/border region gained more as many stated that the benefits in the other country/border region are greater.

1.8 Expected effects of EU enlargement on the region

The answers in the Hungarian–Romanian border region to the questions related to the impacts of the EU enlargement were very similar to the answers received in the previous group of questions. Everyone considered the EU itself, the countries and the border regions as winners. Respondents from Hungary said again that the other country and the other border region would benefit more from the accession than their own country or region. When they had to make a choice between the country and the region, they chose the region as the main winner, while in Romania respondents took the country and the border region for winners of the enlargement almost in the same measure.

The picture outlined in the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border region is largely similar to the description of the other case study area, so the border regions and both countries were placed among the sure winners. Although most respondents acknowledged that EU enlargement causes both winners and losers, the benefits were considered greater than the losses, especially in Transcarpathia.

The last group of questions in the questionnaire tried to find an answer to the question what impacts the EU enlargement will have on cross-border cooperation. In no other group of questions can be observed such a unity of answers in the *Hungarian–Romanian* and the *Hungarian–Ukrainian* border regions as in this case, and the dominance of positive answers is convincing. We can highlight only a few

questions where the answers from the Hungarian side were not as optimistic as from the other two sides. In conformity with several previous questions, respondents in Hungary expect less positive changes in the field of migration issues, the fight against organised crime and cooperation in the case of natural disasters than the respondents in Romania. Hungarian interviewees in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region were similarly restrained when they answered the questions in reference to the migration policy and the fight against organised crime, while the Ukrainian respondents' opinion was more pessimistic when they were asked about the impacts of the enlargement on the national policies of cross-border cooperation.

1.9 Summary

We can highlight a few special characteristics from the results of the questionnaire survey carried out in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border regions. One of these characteristics is that the existence of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries has a significant influence on the cross-border connections of Hungary and on several aspects of cross-border interaction in this region in general. As regards cross-border migration, the fact that they do not arrive at an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment if they leave their land of birth may have an encouraging effect on those ethnic Hungarians who live in Romania or the Ukraine. The large number of ethnic Hungarians may also be an explanation for the great importance of cultural and educational cooperation on behalf of Hungary, since the aid coming from the “mother country” is essential for the Hungarian national minority in Romania and the Ukraine. On the other hand, the questionnaire results also showed that the Hungarian, Romanian and Ukrainian ethnic minorities in the neighbouring countries are considered as one of the main connecting links between the three countries.

The development of more active cross-border cooperation is hindered by different factors in case of the two case study regions, in the Ukraine for example the role of the visa regime and the slowness of border crossing. On the other hand there are factors which raise problems in all three countries. The differences of self-governmental system, primarily the limited scope for action of the Romanian and Ukrainian local governments and the centralised character of the administrative system in these countries make cooperation more difficult. Bureaucratic procedures and frequent and unforeseeable changing of the laws also hinder the development of deeper connections. Finally the behaviour of passport and customs officers must be mentioned as a barrier of cooperation.

2 Cross-border relations - perceptions of the border and the cross-border co-operations

In accordance with the preliminary research plan of the EXLINEA programme, interviews were made with prominent persons playing an active role in and having a good overview of the cross-border relations (the number of interviews made was 25 on the Hungarian, 25 on the Romanian and 21 of the Ukrainian side). Due to the experiences, local skills, personal contacts and special skills (reaching beyond the statistical data) of the questioned persons, these talks were a source of information unavailable elsewhere; also, the information give us a clear picture of the situation and problems of the area in question and of the opportunities of cross-border co-operations.

The interviewees were selected from a preliminarily defined target group in each country, including a wide range of local government leaders skilled and competent in cross-border relations, dominant persons of higher education institutions and research places, and also economic, ethnic minority and non-governmental organisations. Their common feature is that they are all active in cross-border co-operations, and all of them have a sound knowledge of both the local and the national level problems.

2.1 Present situation, internal and external factors determining co-operations

2.1.1 Local problems

During the interviews we first wanted to know where the interviewees saw the biggest problems and the future prospects of the respective border section. Most of the *Hungarian* answerers referred to the peripheral situation of the region, emphasising the presence of significant unemployment and serious outmigration. The agricultural character of the region was also often mentioned, together with the formerly missing industrialisation which has resulted in an almost hopeless situation by now, as many respondents said. This is accompanied by the fear often mentioned in connection with foreign direct investment, i.e. that foreign capital can easily skip this region and locate on the other side of the border, because of the much lower wage costs in the neighbour countries. In this respect the selected role of the cross-border co-operations was mentioned, as these investments mean jobs not only for one side of the border; both sides can profit from the investments, as the separating role of the border weakens and the historically existing relations between the centres and

the hinterlands can be utilised again. However, investments are often blocked by the underdeveloped and backward infrastructure (an example that was raised: the county seat at a distance of only 60 kilometres is accessible within the same time from the Ukrainian–Hungarian border region as Budapest from the county seat – 270 kilometres away).

Especially the representatives of the institutions working at regional level mentioned the ad-hoc character and occasionally the total lack of the co-operations among the institution operating on the Hungarian side of the border; e.g. the internal cohesion among the counties making the NUTS 2 level regions is completely absent. Any kind of resource has to be divided equally among the counties, so the principle of concentration, supported by the European Union, cannot be realised. Problems related to innovation were also raised – the innovation potential of the North Great Plain regions is among the worst ones in Hungary, which is exacerbated by circumstances such as the already mentioned rivalry among the counties.

In *Romania* almost each of the interviewees mentioned the underdeveloped nature of infrastructure, as one of the most serious problems of the border region. Without the development of transport infrastructure it is impossible to reach a long term and well-established development of the economy. It is a general opinion that if the condition of the roads and the railways is significantly improved, the quantity of the invested capital can considerably increase, new jobs can be created and this process can lead to the alleviation of several other problems (unemployment in the first place). It is not only the deficiencies of transport infrastructure that cause a problem: canalisation is also missing, as is tap water and sometimes even electricity. This is not only detrimental for the local inhabitants but also puts off investors.

Another problem very often mentioned was the bureaucratic, centralised administration system, leaving very little independence for the lower levels of administration. One consequence of the centralising policy is the lopsided realisation of the NUTS 2 level regions. The interviewees often mentioned as a problem the excessively influential bureaucracy, which is a natural consequence of strong centralisation; the negligence of the act on local administration; but first of all the lack of the decentralisation of the state budget. Based on the interviews we can see that the problems arising in connection with centralisation are especially serious in the border regions. The respondents often complained about their peripheral situation and the fact that their share from the central supports is far from being proportionate either to their population or their needs. In many cases the suboptimal efficiency of the economic management and legislation was mentioned as a problem, together with the not transparent enough and excessive tax and excise regulations. A factor that makes the picture described above even worse is that many respondents said it was possible to reach everything in Romania for a certain amount of money, i.e. the fact corruption is present at each level of the power.

The social problems were connected by many to the bad economic situation of Romania – in the lack of adequate financial resources, social protection network is an almost unknown phenomenon. Many said that the quality of the health services was unacceptable. The low purchasing power of the pensions is another source of serious social tensions.

Fewer respondents mentioned the deficiencies of making applications and of project management, but they think it is a very serious problem of cross-border co-operations. They consider their lagging behind considerable, even compared to Hungary; the reasons for this are the lack of information, i.e. the fact that the information channels that could transfer the important news for those interested have not been created yet. Also, even in the presence of good information flow, the skills necessary for the preparation and management of tenders are often missing. Presently the special trainings of this type are not efficient enough.

In *Transcarpathia* the biggest problems seen by the interviewees are the *heritage of the Soviet system*. The problems are of *political* nature, on the one hand, following the very strongly centralised system: the local levels do not have adequate independence and resources that could promote among other things the development of cross-border relations and projects. In addition, the halos of the different political parties have emerged in Transcarpathia too, and the different non-governmental organisations and economic actors have to manoeuvre among them in order to get better opportunities. As a matter of fact, the economic and social backwardness is a consequence of this.

Many said that in Transcarpathia the biggest problem was the lack of intellectuals and young experts with adequate skills. Using the easement that started in 1985 after Gorbachev's "Perestroika", the outmigration of the intellectuals unable to make ends meet in Transcarpathia started and this process is still going on. However, the "beheading" of the local intellectuals has much longer historical traditions. The peace treaty signed in Trianon cut in two several counties that had made economic, cultural and political units for centuries (Ung, Bereg, Ugocsa and Máramaros). As a consequence of the peace treaty, not only cities lost their hinterlands but also a number of state formations succeeded each other in Transcarpathia in a relatively short time (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Soviet Union and the Ukraine). Each new state brought their new public administration, the region lost the former public administration and also the intellectual elite (either because they did not know the new language or they were considered as politically untrustworthy, or they did not find adequate conditions for living in the changing circumstances). We can say that *Transcarpathia has been practically continuously suffering from a loss of intellectuals since 1920*. The problems of the local Hungarian intellectuals are even worse, as they, together with other ethnic minorities, had lost practically all that they had after the Soviet nationalisation, but they were not able to participate in the creation of the new

Ukrainian state, where privatisation did occur but not re-privatisation; or even if re-privatisation took place, the Hungarians could not take part in it. The winners of the privatisation were those people in high positions that had worked many years in the Soviet system, and such positions were unavailable for the Hungarians, because in the Stalinist era the Hungarian intellectuals and men were taken to the Gulag where they either died or were released as political prisoners. Consequently they and their children could not be party members, they could not study in higher education institutions and have high positions (as they were politically untrustworthy). As a consequence of this, in the last 15 years many of them have emigrated to Hungary.

The majority of the problems in Transcarpathia are related to *economic difficulties*. The economy, after its deep crisis in the 1990s (the major part of the factories were closed down, resulting in mass unemployment) is now developing, but the respondents said it was important to shape the economic policy of the country and the region, together with its too often bureaucratic and not transparent regulatory mechanisms, in a way that growth should be sustainable. It would be good to introduce as many as possible of the European norms, as it would attract investors. Another problem is the *general lack of resources* at each budgetary institution (especially in the sector of health and social care). The non-governmental organisations practically do not get any state support. *Agriculture too struggles with serious problems*, as large-scale farming has ceased to exist, the lands have been privatised, but the private farmers cultivating small pieces of land cannot make a living from agriculture, because they have no access to modern machinery, technologies, chemicals, fertilisers and above all expertise. A sort of consulting system is just being created, with Hungarian assistance (following the patterns of the Hungarian network of village managers), also, rural tourism offers possibilities, but the chances of this activity are seriously limited by the infrastructure deficiencies.

Partly because of the economic problems, a huge burden is carried by the *social care system* that is very outdated, seriously underfinanced and not effective at all (either from infrastructure or professional aspect). The international aid organisations and the churches try to alleviate these problems, but they do not get support from the state for their activity, despite the fact that they have state responsibilities. In fact, the state blocks their work. Another serious problem is the *low quality level of education*, including the technical and infrastructure conditions of education, but the biggest problem is the lack of up-to-date methods and competitive professions. In the opinion of the prominent persons asked, it is especially vocational training that is unable to keep up with the expectations of the time.

Transcarpathia is not free either from *corruption* present all over the country and *in every field* of life. In practice it means that practically anything can be achieved with good connections and financial background, or anything can be bought – from university degree to driving licence and different permissions etc.

A serious problem is the *underdeveloped infrastructure*, including not only transport infrastructure but also the communal provision, mainly healthy drinking water supply (or any kind of supply in some villages), health care system, gas pipes, telecommunication, and also waste and sewage treatment. The latter results in the *pollution of rivers* (mostly by communal but to a smaller extent also industrial waste water), which is accompanied by *serious floods* occurring in the catchment area of the Upper Tisza River more and more often as a consequence of the deforestations accelerating over the last 15 years. The latter problem is not only a local but also international problem, due to the fact that the catchment area of the Tisza River belongs to several different countries.

2.1.2 National level problems

The problems of the national level in *Hungary* were by and large the same as the problems mentioned in connection with the local communities and the regions. They include unemployment, impoverishment, the ageing of the population. Less often a few concrete problems were mentioned, such as the issue of centralisation and decentralisation: although there are decentralisation efforts in Hungary, the devolution of the powers and the resources from the ministries to the regions and the counties is not fast enough. The building out of the institutional system necessary for this is a very slow process too; meanwhile the respective elements of the existing administrative structure try to keep their positions.

The replies to questions relating to the national level problems were very similar to this in *Romania*, too. The deficiencies of infrastructure were among the most frequently mentioned difficulties, but the problem of the centralised public administration and the unfair distribution of the resources are problems too, not only in the border region. The shortcomings of the legal system, the labyrinth of laws and decrees leads to instability all over Romania, as does corruption. Probably the only new element in the answers given to this question was the unfinished privatisation. The privatisation of the former large state-owned companies has not even started in many cases, although it would be an indispensable condition for the acceleration of the economic development.

The respondents said that the national level problems in the *Ukraine* were partly similar to the ones in Transcarpathia. These include the *low level of the efficiency of the economy*, and the concomitant problems of living that is the main reason for the *outmigration of the intellectual elite*: the state is not able to offer them acceptable conditions of living. These problems are very important for the future of the Ukraine, because they have other induced effects, as does the decrease of the number of population (lack of resources, social, educational and health care system etc.), which can significantly set back the development of the economy.

Another problem of the national level is the already mentioned *corruption* and the fact that the mafia-type habits have become integral parts of state administration, which affects all fields of the economic and civil life. We also have to mention the *low level of the efficiency of legislation*, which definitely has to be changed and the laws should be harmonised with those of the European countries. Parallel to this, the security and transparency of the *bank and taxation system* should be improved, because the present regulations are not clear and comprehensible even for the local companies, let alone the foreign investors. Another very serious problem at state level that affects all other fields is *bureaucracy and political instability*. The other problems listed by the interviewees (outdated and underdeveloped infrastructure, the deficiencies of education, worrying conditions of the human resources) are practically the same as the problems mentioned in connection with Transcarpathia.

2.1.3 Judgement of foreign policy

While the answers given to the questions concerning the local and national level problems were very similar in many cases on the two sides of the border, the responses given to the question in connection with foreign policy were significantly different. When evaluating the *Hungarian foreign policy*, several complaints were stated by the respondents, especially regarding the most topical issue, the accession to the European Union. According to the respondents' view, Hungarian foreign policy was much more characterised by a *subduing behaviour* than by interest representation, so the Union considered Hungary as an inferior partner. In addition, Hungarian foreign policy and the Hungarian representatives of the Union have a lot to learn about the decision-making mechanisms of Brussels, and the importance of continuous negotiations. Many compared the Hungarian diplomacy to the foreign policy of the neighbouring states, almost always saying that the *Hungarian interest representation is not effective enough*, especially when compared to the Romanian foreign policy that is considered as especially efficient.

As opposed to the Hungarian respondents, almost all the *Romanian* answerers agreed that the *foreign policy* of the country is *one of the most successful sectors*; some said Romania had the most successful foreign policy in the whole of East-Central Europe. One of the biggest virtues of the Romanian foreign policy is that it subordinates all political issues to the priorities defined – the most important of which is the accession to the European Union – and sometimes they can be surprisingly effective and determined in order to reach their goals. The *other key to success that the respondents stated was the unity* that Romania was able to reach – as opposed to Hungary –, in issues of national interest. This unity that the different political parties are able to demonstrate to the world outside helps a lot to achieve

the political objectives, even if the unity is only a seeming one in many cases. Last but not least an ability was emphasised that is considered as a traditional virtue of Romanian foreign policy: the leaders of Romania are able to manoeuvre among the different national interest groups. Although the primary objective of Romania, as we have already mentioned, is the EU accession, they do not neglect the other goals, either, so they can successfully meet the expectations of the United States, the NATO and Russia as well.

The majority of the interviewees divided the *Ukrainian foreign policy* into two parts: the period hallmarked by the name of Leonid Kuchma and the period following the adventurous election victory of Victor Yuschenko.

The *former foreign policy* of the Ukraine was characterised by a duality: on the surface it wanted to meet both the right wing and the left wing expectations, tried to appeal to the West (especially when it expected money) but *in reality it was the lengthened arm of Moscow*. The relations to the neighbouring countries were only superficial, at least as regards the national and regional level.

The *new foreign policy* has made a turn since the “Orange revolution”; Yuschenko’s new leadership has made definite declarations of *accepting the European norms*. It is too early at this point to evaluate the new foreign policy, but it seems certain that the *Ukraine cannot be isolated from Russia in the future, either*, so the duality probably remains, albeit the western orientation will be much stronger than before.

An opinion was stated that *in the foreign policy of the Ukraine the neighbour states have a special position* between the Western countries and Russia. The policy towards the Central European states, who are especially important for the cross-border relations, can be divided into three parts. The first group contains those countries with whom the *economic and other relations are dynamically developing* (Hungary and Poland are in this group). The Ukraine has not hostile but compared to the previous years definitely *passive* foreign policy towards Slovakia. The economic relations are not developing at a high speed, and the personal and cultural co-operations were practically eliminated by the visa regime. We have to remark, on the other hand, that the Ukraine has introduced visa free entry for the EU member states for the summer of 2005, and this can be extended if the travels of the Ukrainian citizens to Europe are also made easier. This places the relationship to the neighbour states on new grounds. The relationship between the Ukraine and Romania is *very cold*, not even a treaty has been signed by the two states so far, the economic co-operations are very scarce, in fact, some territorial disputes have remained unsettled below the surface.

2.2 Cross-border co-operations and regional correlations

2.2.1 *The role of the border and the cross-border relations in the everyday lives of the interviewees*

As the interviewees have links to the border coming from their work, it is not surprising that the *border and cross-border co-operations play an important role in the life and work of all respondents*. The leaders at the different tiers of public administration (region, county, district and municipality) have their official and personal relationships to their counterparts, the organisations and local governments on the other side of the border. In Romania and the Ukraine it is especially the municipalities with Hungarian majority that are active in foreign connections, a twin settlement system is working that is reaching beyond the protocol level now (not only local governmental leaders meet and exchange their experiences, like formerly; local entrepreneurs, experts, non-governmental organisations are also contacting each other).

For the actors of the economy, the proximity of the border and the co-operation are already factors basically influencing business opportunities. This is field where the strengthening of the relationship has been going on for years and where the opportunities offered by the border are more and more appreciated. A similarly practical approach to the issue of cross-border relation is used by the non-governmental organisations, several of whom have already established relationships on the other side of the border and are actively trying to utilise the tender possibilities lying in this field.

On the *Hungarian side* of the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, especially in Záhony, the town with the biggest border crossing station, many interviewees said that the border had been the most important source for living of the respective settlement for decades, and it still is. Formerly the freight transport crossing the border here, now it is more and more shopping tourism that plays a dominant role in the everyday life of the local population.

For the *Romanian interviewees* too the border and the cross-border relations are organic part of the everyday life, during their work they have regular contacts with the population on the other side of the border. They continuously feel the disadvantages and in some cases also the advantages of this. The border has a huge importance for the population living here, as on the Romanian side they are just a few kilometres away from an EU member state, and this gateway role between the European Union and Romania is an enormous opportunity both in economic, political and social sense. Accordingly, several forms of co-operation have already been established among the representatives of public administration, the economic sector or the non-governmental organisations, although the intensity of the relationships varies across the different sectors.

In addition to the above-mentioned, on the *Ukrainian* side the non-governmental organisations have to be emphasised, some of which (e.g. charity organisations, Hungarian ethnic minority organisations) have very intensive relationships to Hungary, as the majority of them do not expect any resource from the Ukrainian state even if they are responsible for tasks (e.g. orphanages, education) that are state tasks anyway. The cross-border co-operations and resources are especially important for the Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian College, as the college does not get any state support, despite the fact that they play an outstanding role in the region with their constantly expanding number of graduate trainings and - growing number of students. They can only rely on Hungarian and tender resources, practically, so both in the field of training and supports the college has relationships with several Hungarian higher educations and municipalities (e.g. Hungarian towns renovate or equip rooms in the buildings – of bad conditions – given to the college).

2.2.2 Common tasks, problems that require cross-border co-operation

In *Hungary* the well functioning cultural relationships that are especially successful at the local level were mentioned by several respondents, as a dominant element in the cross-border relations. These relations were rated as especially important because they play a traditionally significant role in preserving the identity of the Hungarians living on the Romanian and Ukrainian side of the border. As regards *regional development issues*, a co-operation much more effective than today would be welcome by the interviewees, although the conditions for that are still to be created, as there are significant differences between Hungary and the two neighbour states in matters of the administrative system, regional development policy and living standards. Many interviewees said that those living on the Romanian and especially the Ukrainian side of the border have to get to know a few issues of regional development policy in more depth, and if they want to become EU members, they have to apply these regulations in course of time.

The *development of infrastructure* was mentioned in the first place by those living on the Hungarian side of the Ukrainian borders, where even the technical conditions of smooth border crossing are absent. Even the existing border crossing stations are inadequately built out, e.g. at the border crossing station of Beregsurány there are four lanes on each side of the border, but the two sides are connected by one single lane, as nobody bothered to build the other lanes on “no man’s land” – this is a good example for the lack of joint action and adequate communication. The importance of *environmental co-operation* was mentioned both at the Romanian and the Ukrainian border, but it is considered as a very im-

portant objective especially in Romania, after the cyanide poisoning that occurred a few years ago.

On the *Romanian side* of the border, the almost equivocal opinion of the interviewees was that *economic co-operations* should be developed in the first place. The reason for this is that Romania means a huge market, and the opportunities in this field are not utilised yet, on the one hand; on the other, the demand was stated that the Romanian party should learn as much as possible from the Hungarians, as Hungary has much more experiences in this respect. Several people mentioned the results of the Hungarian–Austrian cross-border co-operation, and it seems from the interviews that the respondents think that the transfer of these experiences could be one of the most important achievements of the cross-border relations. The need for *infrastructure developments* is partly connected to the issue of economic development, and the Romanian respondents said the cross-border relations might play a significant role in this. Among the possible joint projects, the acceleration of motorway constructions was mentioned on both sides, the restoration of the railway connections that were eliminated by the Trianon treaty, including the re-opening of the Debrecen–Oradea (Nagyvárad) line. The tender resources can play an important role in the future in increasing the number of border crossing stations, too.

A special field of economic development ideas can be the *development of tourism*, because the Romanian side has excellent endowments, but the capital is missing there in an adequate amount. According to the ideas, the Hungarian side can contribute to the boom of tourism by investments, on the one hand; on the other hand, the natural assets of the two sides can well complement each other, which offers a good opportunity to organise joint programmes. One prerequisite for successful tourism is the preservation of the natural landscape, so the *environmental projects* have a high priority among the plans. Finally, for the realisation of all these objectives it is necessary to *include tender resources from the European Union*, in which cross-border co-operations can play a selected role. The already mentioned, missing information on the tenders and the experiences of project management are things that some of the Romanian interviewees wish to gain from the Hungarian partners.

On the basis of the opinions stated on the *Ukrainian side*, the cross-border relations are in their initial phase and need to be developed in each sector. Nevertheless, similarly to the Romanian interviewees, the respondents mentioned the need to intensively develop the *economic relations* in the first place, as this has the biggest effect on the other sectors. In addition, *training and education* would be very important (transfer of up-to-date curricula, educational tools and methods), but the co-operations in the field of *agriculture* (mainly import of expertise and trainings), *flood prevention and sewage treatment*, and *waste management* should also be made more intensive.

2.2.3 The dominant actors of cross-border relations

In addition to the potential objectives of cross-border co-operations, the identification of the possible actors was also our research aim. The most important partners are different, according to the *Hungarian respondents*, in the case of the different co-operation forms, e.g. municipal relations are the most active in the field of cultural co-operations, but the activity has considerably increased in the Hungarian–Romanian relation in infrastructure investments, too. Besides these, in Phare CBC the universities and higher education, municipal governments, and the institutions dealing with EU resources play a dominant role. What is really missing is the establishment of social relations; social embeddedness is extremely weak on both sides of the border, the participation of NGOs in decision-making or even the mere expression of their opinion is very casual.

During the interviews, in *Romania* each respondent defined the different levels of public administration as the presently most active levels of co-operation. Within this, the cross-border relations of the local and county self-governments deserve a special attention, because in most respondents' views they can create the frameworks for the economic and non-governmental organisations, and a part of the necessary financial resources is also expected from the local governments by the interviewees. The national level was only mentioned in a few cases, as the national politics is responsible for the legal regulation and sets the budgetary frameworks for cross-border co-operations.

Although the respondents said that in cross-border co-operations it is still politics that has the dominant role, the relations of the economic actors are continuously strengthening. Today the co-operation among the different chambers can be a starting point. We cannot forget, however, that in the everyday life it is the personal relations that make the biggest share of the cross-border relations. The role of shopping tourism has not decreased in the recent years, but its direction has turned round: a few years ago mostly the Romanian citizens crossed the border with shopping intentions, now it is usually the Hungarians who travel to Romania with the same purposes.

In accordance with the responses we got in *Transcarpathia*, in the cross-border relations of the region *it is still personal relations that prevail* (in addition to keeping in touch with relatives and friends, making a living is dominant here, as they said, they “live from the border”). The most typical activity and source of income is *fuel tourism* (not only for own consumption but also for sale in Hungary), *shopping* (the direction of which turned round after 2000, now the Hungarian citizens cross the border with shopping purposes more often, to buy cheap and recently good quality Ukrainian goods) and different *illegal activities* (smuggling of tobacco, spirits and humans, illegal employment). A positive change of the last few years is that economic actors and joint ventures play a more and more important

role in cross-border relations, together with the increasing activity of municipal governments and non-governmental organisations.

2.2.4 The motivations of the relations

Finally we tried to discover what motivates the actors of the co-operations, what are the driving forces in the establishment and development of the relationships. We can see that the motivations depend on the activity of the actors of the co-operations, but the motivations also vary across the different countries. Least dependant on the border and the place of residence of the individuals are the motivations of the cross-border co-operation of citizens. The interviewees reinforced that the most active level of the relations was the personal level. In this case, in addition to maintaining relatives relations and friendships, the already mentioned factors (fuel tourism, shopping, different illegal activities) are the main driving forces. As regards the economic actors, it is relationship building and of course the profit that can be realised that are on the top of the list of motivations.

The researches of the cross-border relations had already demonstrated before that the traditionally most common and still most functioning types of contacts are the different cultural co-operations. This kind of co-operation is especially alive where a population very keen on their traditions live on both sides of the border. The Hungarian ethnic respondents in Romania and the Ukraine, and the respondents in Hungary very often mentioned the common historical past, the common historical roots, as in many cases relatives live on the two sides of the border and the need to keep in touch is natural.

The respondents on the *Hungarian side* of the border often said that money, the acquisition of supports is often dominant in cross-border relations, but this is not necessarily negative, as money is an indispensable element for these programmes. If no EU or national resource is available, usually there is no co-operation, either. The main objective of the cross-border co-operations should be job creation, given the rapidly worsening conditions after the systemic change, and the prevention of outmigration, in close relation with job creation. An important benefit of the establishment of the relations could be the creation of regional cohesion. As regards developments, the restoration of the formerly disintegrated settlement development correlations and regional hinterlands should be achieved – thinking in a way as if the border were not even there. The interviews often mentioned the Hungarian to Hungarian relationship as a motivation of the co-operations, which is very important for co-operations especially for the Hungarians living on the Romanian and Ukrainian side of the border.

In *Romania* and *Transcarpathia*, the acquisition of the resources of the European Union is not among the main motivations yet, but its importance is definitely

increasing. The interviewees in Romania and Transcarpathia are aware of the fact that significant amounts of money will be available for such purposes in the future and several respondents also said they would happily use for the acquisition and effective use of these resources the help of the Hungarian partners who have some experiences in this respect.

2.3 Perceptions

2.3.1 Associations relating to the border and the border region

When making the interviews we tried to find out what image the respondents had of the border and those who live on the other side. The *Hungarian* responses revealed that everybody knows: theoretically the border does not separate but connects, but we cannot forget the fact that it is a Schengen border, a border that definitely separates now. *This is not a serious obstacle of personal relations any more*; there is a network of personal contacts that is a good framework of the relations. On the other hand, *in cross-border relations, in regional development and spatial planning the separating functions are still much stronger*, but this is due not so much to the border itself, rather to the completely different administration systems, the altering administrative practices on the two sides of the border. The synchronisation of these is a significant task; today it is often difficult to find co-operating partners and get the necessary licences.

In *Romania*, the responses were divided, the interviews stated *three very much different opinions*. For the first group, the border is still an obstacle in the first place. The customs control, the concomitant bureaucracy and the humiliating behaviour of the customs officers and frontier guards to the passengers is a kind of “historical heritage”, a remnant mostly from the Ceausescu era that unfortunately still lives on. On the other hand, the border is a possibility for the economic actors questioned, a possibility for trade, although it is still an obstacle for them too, because of the occasionally several hours of waiting in freight traffic. Finally there were respondents who said the Hungarian–Romanian border had always been a bridge and the situation had improved a lot since 1989, today the presence of the border is not a serious obstacle.

In *Transcarpathia* the associations relating the border are definitely negative, the border reminds everyone of being kept waiting, corruption and humiliation in the first place. Many respondents said that people are treated in a rude and humiliating way at the border, and the sad thing is that the Hungarian side had taken over this style; in the early 1990s the Hungarian side was typically polite. It was also mentioned that it is not the physical permeability of the border crossing stations that causes a problem; it is much more the attitude (bad work ethics and corrup-

tion). In many people the border evoked a thought of lagging behind, they are especially afraid of the Schengen “wall” that separates them from the more advanced world, from which Transcarpathia is pushed farther again. Others see an opportunity in the border, due to the Hungarian EU membership and the available resources in accordance with this.

2.3.2 The border region as a separate region?

Another important element of the cross-border relations can be how much the citizens can identify themselves with the idea of a region reaching beyond the national boundaries and whether there is such a regional identity in the people – or if such an identity can be born in the future. The equivocal opinion of the respondents in Hungary, Romania and Transcarpathia was that the *border region can already definitely be seen as a separate region*; some elements of the common identity can be seen, mostly due to the common historical past, but also because of the common problems – and now because of the intensity of the cross-border co-operations. From the economic perspective, however, the relationships should be strengthened, so that this territory can be treated as a really single region. A sort of common identity of the people living here can be created by the formerly mentioned peripheral situation, as the difficulties are the same, as are the attempts for the solution of these problems. Outside the border region it is difficult to imagine anywhere else shopping tourism and fuel smuggling as a source of living for many. This also strengthens the birth of a common mentality, world view on the two sides of the border, even if the roles occasionally change: formerly those living on the Romanian and Ukrainian side of the border came to Hungary for shopping; now the direction of shopping tourism is just the opposite.

The issue of the identity of the inhabitants with their region, regional identity was more difficult to measure, as there is no sense of identity whatsoever with the development regions created in Hungary so far. On both sides of the Hungarian–Romanian border, it is much more the spatial units of the historical past, i.e. with the counties that people identify themselves with (e.g. there is a Szatmár identity, and even more so a Bihar identity), as are the respective settlements. At the same time, the people are much more capable of the reception and creation of such an identity in issues related to their everyday lives and problems: the people living here are mostly interested in whether they can cross the border to visit their relatives and friends or to do some shopping; if these relationships are established, the people can identify themselves with the notion of a cross-border region. Such a region would resemble in many respects initiatives started in Hungary where some especially important tourism areas are identified as separate regions, such as the Lake Balaton and the Tisza Lake region. People usually know the physical bounda-

ries of such regions, this is by and large the area where their personal relationships are, let them be family or friendly relationships or even economic co-operations.

Because of the several hundred years of common history and Hungarian public administration, in Transcarpathia too there is a kind of regional (Bereg or Ung) identity connected to some historical counties, but the *border that has been there for 85 years now also created a special “us” identity*, which was further strengthened by politics (e.g. the recent referendum on the Hungarian citizenship of the Hungarians living in the neighbour countries), separating the formerly single sense of identity of the Hungarian ethnic group. This statement, however, is not only valid for the Hungarians but also for the other nations living in Transcarpathia, from the Rusins registered as Ukrainians to the Slovaks (e.g. many people in Transcarpathia set their clocks according to the Central European time that they call local time – “our time” –, although the official time is the Kiev time zone, one hour ahead).

2.3.3 “Us” and “others” – similarities and differences between those on the two sides of the border

In Hungary most interviewees emphasised that the *people on the other side of the border are “just like us”*. A basic factor from this aspect is the fact that both sides of the border are peripheries, which bears a socio-economic backwardness; in addition, the mentality of the people, their responses to the challenges of the world are similar, so we cannot really differentiate between the two sides. Of course, when asking opinions about the economic situation, in connection with the Ukrainian side everybody said that the huge poverty was the biggest difference, whereas this was less typical in connection with Romania. Cultural differences were only mentioned in a few interviews, especially because the people on the other sides usually meant the Hungarians living in the neighbour countries for most answerers. As regards the Ukraine, the major part of the answerers emphasised the political differences, too.

According to the findings of the survey, the image of the people on the side of the border is not single in the Romanian respondents. *The majority said that the people on the Hungarian side of the border were just like them*. They (and not only the Hungarians) usually referred to the formerly mentioned common historical roots, the difference, according to the respondents, is more among the individual people, whichever country they live in. A smaller part of the interviewees said that there were *tangible differences between the inhabitants of the two countries*. They too admitted that there were many similarities, but they saw differences in a few aspects. It was usually the better financial situation of those living on the Hungarian side of the border that was mentioned, but some respondent considered the

Hungarians more disciplined, more open, referring in the first place to the differences between the two socialist systems before 1989.

Given the fact that the regions had been deeply integrated for centuries, the majority of the respondents in *Transcarpathia* thought that *from cultural and mental aspect there was no real difference between the people on the two sides of the border*, they live from each other and they depend on each other. Nevertheless it was stated that the Transcarpathian people are more hospitable and less material than those living in Hungary. The rejection of the issue raised at the referendum of 5 December 2000 (whether the Hungarians living outside the borders should be given a Hungarian citizenship) – especially by the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg inhabitants, many of whom “live from Transcarpathia” – was a great shock for the Transcarpathians, they feel now that they are not welcome on the other side, consequently the *judgement of the Hungarians of the mother country worsened*.

2.3.4 Assessment of the economic situation on the other side of the border

An important element of the image of the other nation is how the economic situation of the neighbouring country is seen. As we have already seen, this affects cross-border relations as well; the price level in the neighbour country influences the personal relation in the first place, and shopping tourism. The *Hungarian* respondents, not surprisingly, *consider the economic situation on the other side of the border much worse than in their own country*. As regards the Ukraine, many respondents not only saw the present situation depressing but could not be optimistic about the future prospects, either. The reasons for the bad economic situation, as most respondents said, were the deteriorated infrastructure and the inadequate production structure. As regards Romania, the interviewees were much less pessimistic. Although they did not consider the present situation in Romania as comparable with the circumstances in Hungary, either, many said that the catching up period had already started by which Romania could go through a spectacular development in the middle or even the short run. The assessment of the situation is not the same, however, along the whole border section. On the southern part of the border section, in the Romanian West region a much more striking development was emphasised, palpable in Hungary as well – in harmony with the responses we got in Hungary –, while in the northern part of the border region the Romanian respondents thought that the changes were much slower and the amount of capital invested much more modest.

The major part of the *Romanian interviewees definitely considered Hungary and the Hungarian side more developed*, although the development differences are not the same in each area. The responses in the Northwest region revealed that the differences are seen much bigger here than in the West region. In the latter, over the

last few years a significant amount of foreign direct investment has been realised, the spectacular results of which made the respondents see the differences in the development level much smaller. Among the reasons for the differences, in the first place the better economic management and policy was mentioned, but the Romanian economy was really set back by the Ceausescu regime, as the shift to the market economy started in Romania with a significant delay.

The assessment of the mode developed side of the border is varied in *Transcarpathia*, it cannot always be clearly seen where people have a better living. We can say that *in matters of infrastructure the Hungarian side is in a much better position* than Transcarpathia, but if we look at the pace of the development of the economy right next to the border, the situation is different. Usually people live better on the Hungarian side, but not everywhere: while Nyíregyháza definitely offers better possibilities for its area, the small Hungarian villages in the direct vicinity of the border struggle with a host of problems. As the historical centres were in Transcarpathia, the living standards are higher in the villages in their neighbourhood than in the small villages of their hinterlands now in Hungary (although the Soviet Union deteriorated to a large extent the conditions of living, some people in Transcarpathia nevertheless have the notion in their minds that their settlements used to be richer).

2.3.5 Visa-free border traffic and open borders

One possible effect of the open borders, in the view of the *Hungarian* respondents, can be of migration character, the immigration to the otherwise gradually depopulating villages from the other side of the border is already frequent. The open borders have an effect on the labour market in the first place; when employing people from the other side of the border, the employers can always calculate lower wage costs. This potential source of danger was raised in a few interviews, but the majority of the respondents said it would not be a real danger in the foreseeable future.

Apart from this, practically no interviewee had bad feelings about the more open borders. If they had some reservations, this was usually the consequence of the fact that they did not consider the guarding of the border adequate even in the present regulation. Most respondents mentioned the potential growth of crime in connection with the Ukraine, but the general opinion was that anybody wishing to enter Hungary can do so now, despite the visa regime, so the visa-free border traffic would not worsen the situation. In some cases the opinion was stressed – also in connection of the Hungarian–Ukrainian border section in the first place – that Hungary has the obligation to assist the Hungarians on the other side of the border. A Hungarian passport or other possibilities could help them cross the border more easily, work abroad and keep their family this way.

As regards the more open borders and visa-free border crossing, the *Romanian* and the *Ukrainian* respondents had no bad feelings, either. This is due on the one hand to the fact that the visa regime is not valid for the Romanian citizens travelling to Hungary; on the other hand, the majority of the interviewees favoured visa-free travel on theoretical grounds too, they said the visa-free travel would be very important at other borders too, being the basis of the deepening of cross-border co-operations, but also leading to the acceptance of the regions along the border. There are no fears in connection with the more open borders, this would cause some difficulties (e.g. stronger competition in the field of the economy and services), but on the whole it is good for the market, the positive effects will dominate. In some cases we found that the respondent usually thought this way about the western borders (of Romania and the Ukraine), they do not welcome the opening of their eastern borders; in fact, they would like to strengthen their protection, afraid of the emigrants from there. In Transcarpathia it was said that the small-scale cross-border traffic should be re-introduced, because in addition to visa exemption, it would provide much cheaper travel possibilities to Hungary, because international passport is very expensive in the Ukraine (more than a monthly wage for many people) and its preparation is very bureaucratic.

2.4 Cross-border co-operations in practice

2.4.1 Ongoing and finished projects, the financial grounds of co-operations

During the interviews made in *Hungary*, the respondents mentioned *many projects*. When classifying these, we find that the programmes with concrete economic objectives are very few. On the other hand, there are a significant number of *further trainings* and *workshops* organised for the partners on the other side, including trainings of tendering skills for the preparation of the EU accession. There are also a large number of *environmental projects*, mostly with support from the Union, and cultural programmes. The planned projects are of similar character to the ones already implemented. In the future plans the INTERREG programmes have a more significant role than before, the larger-scale plans include infrastructure investments and projects simplifying border crossing and improving traffic conditions.

In *Romania* each respondent had information on some PHARE CBC project; the majority even had personal experiences about such co-operations. Most frequently mentioned were the *environmental and river regulation developments* and *cultural co-operations* (especially in the Hungarian to Hungarian relation: Day of Hungarian Culture, Day of Hungarian Science), the ones considered as most important were the opening of *new road border crossing stations*. As regards the

economy, the training of small and medium sized enterprises and the preparation of tourism manuals were mentioned. Among the planned projects, tourism and environmental protection were the main fields of co-operation. It was mentioned several times that a strategic co-operation had been established between Debrecen and Oradea (e.g. among the development priorities of Oradea, the investments in connection with the potential award of the title “European Capital of Culture” to Debrecen for the year 2010 have an outstanding significance).

The majority of the interviewees in *Transcarpathia* have no information about major county level projects; if the newspapers mention some successful applications, there is no information on the implementation of the projects. Some say that the county level projects are only operational on the paper; they have no practical use, apart from the mutual visits. Most people mentioned the project aiming at the establishment and operation of a *flood and water quality monitoring network* on the Tisza River and its tributaries. In addition, the *building out of a network of village managers* in Transcarpathia is underway, with the assistance of the agriculture department of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county government; also, in the co-operation of the two counties trainings are organised and implemented for local governments and non-governmental organisations (the latter is part of the TACIS).

The organisations interviewed were able to mention several projects, but these rarely involved EU resources, because they (TACIS) only support the democratic transition in the region for the time being and there are few fields where they can be applied. Today it is usually the Hungarian resources that can be applied (Apáczai and Illyés Foundation, ministerial resources), the Ukrainian resources are rather few, and there is no information for their acquisition, the tender system is not open enough. Such a project is the maintenance of the Hungarian college in Beregovo (Beregszász) that does not receive Ukrainian support at all; its operation is almost exclusively financed from Hungarian resources. In addition, e.g. the Dorcas Transcarpathia support organisation operates significant, self-financed programmes (e.g. orphanages, the renovation and support of medical surgeries, training of computer skills, leper mission, drinking water programme with the inclusion of Hungarian resources), which can also be seen as cross-border programmes, as the majority of the money is collected by the organisation in Hungary and Western Europe.

2.4.2 Partnership, conflicts, and communication strategies

It is of basic importance for the efficiency of cross-border relations what partners the respective organisation or institution has relationships with and how they communicate to each other. The *Hungarian* interviewees naturally have contacts with similar organisations on the other side, so the partners of local governments are

usually local governments, whereas the chambers establish contacts with the chambers, and the non-governmental organisations also make contacts with their counterparts on the other side of the border. Along the Hungarian–Romanian border, each respondent had a positive opinion about their own partners, but it is a factor supporting understanding that a significant part of the partners abroad are Hungarians living in Romania, which alleviates keeping in touch – among other things from the language aspect. The situation is slightly different along the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, but the complaints here about the lack of co-operation willingness did not concern the partners outside Hungary, much more the official organs that often blocked co-operations.

Most of the concerned *Romanian* and *Ukrainian* organisations have their counterparts on the Hungarian side of the border – county governments, local governments of town with county rank, universities, research institutes, non-governmental organisations, economic organisations, professional organisations and institutions. The technical conditions of communication are usually given (e-mail, telephone, fax) and utilised (maybe Transcarpathia is an exception where the use of internet and e-mail is not so widespread yet). During personal talks, the language used in communication is usually Hungarian, as the majority of the negotiating partners speak Hungarian, otherwise English is also frequently used (in Transcarpathia occasionally Russian too). Romanian and Ukrainian language is less typical, because very few speak these languages on the Hungarian side. At meetings at higher level, hiring translators is no problem, either. Conflicts of interest, as we have seen, can appear only among the economic actors (competition), who try to handle their conflicting interests in different ways, using their personal relations (but they were reluctant to talk about exactly how). Some neighbouring towns are also competitors for each other (e.g. Záhony and Csap compete with each other for railway reloads and freight traffic). They try to hide the conflicts of interests (at least on the surface); they strive for co-operation and consensus rather than open confrontation.

2.4.3 Efficiency or opportunities missed?

In Hungary relatively few interviewees wanted to evaluate the efficiency of the financing possibilities, as the major part of the programmes only aim at supporting the establishment of relations among the institutions on the two sides and the definition of common development ideas. The economic effect of these programmes cannot be felt directly, so their efficiency cannot be measured from this aspect, either. The effects are much more tangible in social relations and in the connections among the institutions, the efficiency of which was considered good by the majority of respondents, remarking of course that the efficiency could be further increased.

In *Romania* the opinions were much more determined, *not one interviewee considered the use of the resources as satisfactory*. In their opinion, only a fragment of the available resources has been used, the reasons for which in their opinion are strong centralisation, and the lack of money and information at local level. The efficiency is not good enough in an international comparison, although significant improvements have been made over the last two years in this respect. In a comparison with other regions in Romania, on the other hand, the Hungarian–Romanian border region has a good position. The practice is insufficient yet, there are too few competent applicants (who, on the other hand, have good results) and in the tenders the objectives set are not always realised. There was a case when the money was used for private purposes. Some groups considered the number of protocol events too high and the tangible results too weak. It is frequent that the cooperating parties look for partners not in the border region but in a farther, Western European country, although they have more interests in common with those living on the other side of the border.

According to what the majority of the interviewees said, in *Transcarpathia* we cannot talk about an efficient use of resources in practically any sector. One important obstacle of the efficient use of the resources in the region is the *lack of information*; the calls for tenders do not reach wide layers of potential users. The EU resources do not play a dominant role in the region yet, but their larger scale use in the future is blocked by the *lack of experts* necessary for the preparation of the tenders and then the management of the projects. Some of the financial resources provided by the Hungarian state gets where it should and is used efficiently (e.g. education in Hungarian language, non-governmental minority organisations, newspapers etc.), but another part simply disappears, as it is practically *impossible to control in Transcarpathia the distribution and use of the resources now*, the money is often embezzled. Organisations not interested in “stealing” the money should be involved in the distribution; these amounts are not so big that they are significant for a larger company, for example. Many respondents stated that the use of resources should take place with assistance from Hungary, in the form of information and expertise transfer, preferably in trainings organised in Transcarpathia.

2.4.4 Relations that can be expanded, actors who can be involved

The interviewees agreed that the range of the actors of cross-border co-operations should be expanded in the future, which could promote the intensification of the relations. The *more intensive co-operation of the economic actors* was raised by almost all respondents in Hungary, they see a big opportunity especially in the strengthening of the relations of small and medium size enterprises. It was often mentioned that the Hungarian investors should use the new opportunities that emerged on the other side of the border, and they should participate in the privati-

sation in Romania. The interviewees said that the Hungarian investors might even be late now in Romania, but in the case of the Ukraine, the investments in the businesses there, that are in a shortage of capital, may offer a high profit. In addition to the economic actors, the *non-governmental organisations should be more intensively involved* in co-operations, as the civil relations are in their infancy now, but they can provide the mainstream of the co-operations in the future.

The respondents in *Romania* thought that the number of participants in cross-border co-operations should be increased in all social groups, although there are groups, such as the aged people, where major results are rather unlikely to achieve. The majority thought that the *inclusion of the younger generations* is very important, as it can establish the more intensive relations of the future. In addition, the youth are the group that seems to be most receptive – in addition to the non-governmental organisations – to such co-operations. Also, *non-Hungarian speaking Romanian partners should be involved in larger numbers*, as the majority of the relations are Hungarian to Hungarian co-operations now.

The majority of the interviewees in *Transcarpathia* agreed that the *economic relations should be strengthened* in the region *in the first place*, as it would have effects radiating to other sectors, as well. Besides the economic actors, the inclusion of *young intellectuals* is of special importance, as they are the ones that can be relied on in the future (e.g. at the use of EU resources). In addition, the role of *cultural relations* is very important, because Hungarians live on both sides of the border. *Education, twin settlement co-operations in the broader sense* (not only local governments but also NGOs, economic and educational actors etc.) need further development too. In order to achieve all these, it would be very important in *Transcarpathia* to strengthen the trust among the ethnic minorities living here, as they too can profit from the Hungarian to Hungarian relations.

2.4.5 Initiators and beneficiaries

The *Hungarian interviewees* made marked difference between Romania and the Ukraine when we asked which party was more initiative in the co-operation projects. In the Romanian-Hungarian relations, the majority said that the *Hungarian party was more active initiating* projects, although the situation is rapidly changing in the recent years, and *the other party is showing an increasing activity*. Nevertheless today it is more typical that the initiative comes from Hungary and the other half would only like to see the document ready for signing in many cases, leaving the preparation to the Hungarian side.

In the Ukrainian-Hungarian relations the situation is even clearer, the *Hungarian side is more initiative*, especially because the Ukraine followed a policy of isolation and was not active in practically any field. Those questioned at a latter stage

of the survey, the ones who already knew the events going on in the Ukraine in late 2004, were more optimistic, although only the possibility was born for more active participation in cross-border co-operations, it is questionable to what extent this opportunity will be used.

According to most of the *Romanian respondents*, the two parties showed by and large the same activity in initiatives. Several interviewees mentioned that formerly the Romanian side had been more active, while the Hungarians are more active now, after the appearance of EU resources, and they seek partners much more consciously. The fact that the Hungarian partners have access to much more financial resources and have more experience in participating in competitions makes the position of the Hungarian side better. That is why in many cases Romanian participants can only assist their Hungarian partners in the achievement of the goals which were determined in Hungary. On the other hand many interviewees said that the poorer partner – in this case Romania – would necessarily profit more. Presently the co-operation is promoted by the fact that the relations are created mainly among the Hungarian communities on the two sides of the border, but this can be an obstacle in the future, so the initiatives should be gradually taken over by the Romanian actors. In the field of economic co-operations, it is the Hungarian party that is more initiative, the reason for this, according to the interviewees, is that the entrepreneurs bring their products from a more saturated market, hoping for better sales prospects in Romania.

The *opinions* stated in *Transcarpathia* were that the *Hungarian party* initiates cross-border projects *more often*, having access to resources available for this purpose in larger amounts. The key of the process is that partners have to be found on the other side, as the resources are only available in this case. Due to the rather limited financial means, it is not typical of the Ukrainian party to initiate projects.

In the view of the majority of the interviewees, the beneficiaries of the project-based cross-border co-operations it is definitely the EU member, i.e. in this case the *Hungarian side* that *profits more*, having access to much larger resources, allowing good investments and the acquisition of markets. The example to be followed can be that of Burgenland and West Hungary – although everybody agrees that is only a theoretical possibility along the eastern borders of Hungary, as this border region is peripheral itself and has limited chances to utilise the opportunities. In course of time, as the Romanian and Ukrainian side can become more and more active in initiating projects, an increasing share of the results will be realised in Romania and the Ukraine. Presently the Romanian and Ukrainian partners only assist the projects generated in Hungary many times, often they are only needed so that the Hungarian party should be eligible for support, the Romanian and Ukrainian partners cannot directly profit much from the relations. The transfer of skills, however, can be of help to the Romanian and Ukrainian partners as well, but the direct financial benefit is not tangible yet. In the case of *Transcarpathia* the situation is “wors-

ened” by the fact that the presently available EU resources do not support investments directly, only assist the democratic transition process.

2.4.6 The limits to co-operation

Among the main obstacles to cross-border relations, in *Hungary* the interviewees mentioned very frequently the *differences of the institutional systems*. The Hungarian respondents consider the Hungarian institutions more flexible than their Romanian counterparts, in Romania it sometimes happens that the deadline of the tender expires by the time all the necessary permissions are given by the authorities at different levels. It also happens on the other side of the border that the authorities deny to give the permission to start a project; it never happens in Hungary.

The Hungarian respondents also attributed an important role in the slow development of the relations to the *special feature of the Romanian self-governance system*. Actually this and not the evident poverty is the main reason; this was a statement often repeated in the interviews. The essence of the problem is that in Romania the local governments have very limited authorities, in all important issues decisions are made at the central government level. This is not necessarily good for cross-border co-operations. Even if there are such initiatives, they usually do not have the chance to get to the Hungarian party, the higher levels of politics and public administration usually prevent this. The signing of the founding document of the Bihar–Bihor Euroregion is a good example for the conditions in Romania. The signing of the document was blocked by the leaders of the municipalities on the Romanian side of the border for a long time; but this is not the main point of this issue. It is much more typical that when Biharkeresztes asked the Hungarian government for help in order to accelerate the process, the Hungarian government did not turn to the Romanian local governments concerned but to the central government of Romania. With the help of the Bucharest politicians it was possible to finally settle this absolutely local issue.

The Hungarian interviewees did not always find the co-operation willingness of the Transcarpathian partners strong enough, either; *on the Ukrainian side the administrative system and the mentality are serious barriers*. According to the Hungarian partners, the co-operation would be assisted to a large extent by the establishment of the system of micro-regions in Romania and the Ukraine, and by the creation of the development agencies, as in many cases there is nobody to initiate projects. This basically determines the possibility to launch joint projects: according to the respondents, if there is no bottom-up initiative, it is difficult to start projects. In addition, on the Ukrainian side the *infrastructure possibilities of border crossing are absent*, the businesses cannot stand waiting for several hours. The elimination of the small-scale border traffic is the consequence of the acquisition of

the Union regulations, which in many places worsened the possibilities of the local population to keep in touch with the other side. Also, there are other, seemingly unimportant measures that prevent the deepening of the relations, as the interviewees said. (E.g. the Hungarian government, parallel to the EU accession, terminated the possibility for entrepreneurs, and those having important positions in the border region – including mayors or academics – to cross the border without queuing up. This possibility was eliminated referring to the fact that it could lead to corruption. The situation now is that practically everybody has to bribe the border guards on both sides of the border.)

Among the factors holding back the co-operations, the special social and economic situation of the border region was often mentioned, as was the *lack of government measures aiming at the alleviation of the problems*. The interviewees felt that the Hungarian government did not pay enough attention to the problems of the eastern part of the country, the people living here feel they are still “stepchildren” of the country. The Hungarian respondents often complained about the not thoroughly worked out and with the other side *not well enough reconciled development concepts*. An example mentioned was that on both sides of the Hungarian–Ukrainian border a huge truck terminal was built, the building of which was promoted by the respective governments, but nobody uses them today, as the Hungarian customs authority decided that the trucks still have to queue up at the border.

Although not typical, there are still fears on the other side of the border, as the interviewees said, especially in Romania, that Hungary wants to regain its former territories now outside the border. This leads to the lack of trust, blocking the cross-border co-operation.

In *Romania*, in addition to the already mentioned many problems, the respondent emphasised *bureaucracy* and *excessive centralisation* again as factors that have already made the launch of joint projects difficult many times. All respondents agreed that the administrative mechanisms have a very slow reaction time, and often its expertise is below the level it should be. The situation of public administration is further worsened by the fact that the Romanian legal regulations do not favour cross-border co-operation. The regulation differs from that typical in the European Union in many respects, and needs serious transformation, which seems to be more and more probably as the EU accession of Romania approaches. Similarly to the previous answers, many mentioned here too the centralisation of the Romanian public administration, remarking that the EU accession might bring a change in this respect too.

In addition to the deficiencies of the administrative system, the participants of the co-operations mentioned the *displeasing features of the Romanian politics*. Many said that the mentality of the Romanian politicians is unsuitable for an effective co-operation in European projects with people from the other side of the border. Also, a well-established and long term strategy is missing that could make the

basis of any co-operation agreement in economic development or the field of infrastructure investments. In this relation many respondents mentioned the responsibility of the professional organisations, which have not been able to take over the working methods usual in the Union, they work slowly and not efficiently enough and thus they do not help the establishment of relations.

In the *Ukraine*, among the major obstacles of cross-border relations, the *difficulties of crossing the border* were mentioned in the first place. This involves the low permeability of the border crossing stations, the visa regime against the EU and Hungary, the customs system, and not last the depressing work ethics typical at the border crossing stations. Another serious obstacle to co-operations is the *omnipresent corruption*. A further problem is the *not efficient and excessively bureaucratic Ukrainian economic management system* (taxation system, banking services, legal regulations, other fiscal tools blocking the flow of capital). A bottleneck concerning regional development is the fact that the Ukrainian public administration is slow and bureaucratic; it is anything but EU conform.

It is not surprising then that all respondents agreed that the *economic relations in the region in question cannot be considered satisfactory* and they can never be; there will always be room for development. The separating role of the border is still a problem, as are excessive bureaucracy, corruption and the lack of central support. The political decisions should have opened the way for the economy, and not economy should have played a pioneer role. Presently there is still a transition process going on, nevertheless the Hungarian investors have achieved significant results for to their economic power both on the Romanian and the Ukrainian side. There are very few really large-scale investments. It means that are still enormous reserves in economic relations, only a small share of the opportunities have been used so far.

2.5 Cross-border co-operation strategies, guidelines

2.5.1 Bottom-up building or central influence, or which level is more active?

There was a consensus of the respondents in the three countries in our survey that the most effectively operating level of the relations is the local level. In most cases these are daily relations, especially where technical obstacles (especially the lack of a nearby border crossing station) do not prevent them. The most spectacular part of the co-operations is connected to this level; the cultural and sports events of the settlements in the vicinity of the border can be mentioned in this place. The respondents often mentioned the municipal associations in the border region that have been successful in the last few years and make one of the most important pil-

lars of cross-border relations now. Many respondents mentioned that the local level is the most interested in the promotion of co-operation, the motivation is the strongest here, as everybody would like to build and develop their own settlement in the first place. Also, several advantages are provided by the physical proximity, either in matters of social or economic problems. Finally, the possibilities are biggest at this level, relationships are the best here, and the existence of personal contacts is an important asset. In the most recent times, in cross-border co-operations not only local governments but also inhabitants, the economic and non-governmental organisations have played an initiating role.

In addition to the local level, the respondents mentioned the county level; in their opinion this is the level of co-operation where a regular personal touch can still be kept. In addition, the traditions of the co-operations have the longest history at this level, some counties kept in touch with their counterparts already in the decades before the systemic change, even if these relations did not go beyond the formal, protocol level. Several counties are trying to build on these existing foundations, in many cases successfully. The interviewees also agreed that the state level has been the least active in this respect so far (especially in Transcarpathia many respondents criticised the Hungarian economic policy for not concentrating on the Ukraine seriously enough, as opposed to Slovakia e.g.).

2.5.2 The organisational background of co-operations – Euroregions and their partners

Most respondents had already heard about the Euroregions working in their territory, but they usually could not inform us about much personal experience. In many cases we heard that the territory these organisations involved was too large, both in the geographical and the professional sense. They are considered as political organisations, operating in territories too large to be integrated. Also, they involve territories that have nothing in common with the other side, which makes practical co-operation impossible. Many respondents accepted that the Euroregions can be useful for political purposes, they can contribute to the strengthening of trust, but no concrete achievement is expected of them.

The majority of the respondents in *Romania* could not inform us about any continuously existing organisation, despite the fact that there are two large Euroregional organisations along the western part of the country, the Carpathians Euroregion and the Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion. These are two organisations that the interviewees almost never mentioned; when they did, they usually emphasised their excessive size, the dominance of the formal elements and the low level of social embeddedness. In addition to those directly involved in the work of the Euroregions, it was only the Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion to which

some Romanian respondents attributed a positive role; the assessment of the Carpathians Euroregion was even more negative. Also rarely were mentioned the smaller- scale, county level co-operation organisations, such as the Hajdú-Bihar-Bihar Euroregion or the Bihar-Bihar Euroregion, but the evaluation of these was much better. Many respondents were optimistic about the future of the county level co-operations; on the basis of the experiences of the recent past they thought it might be a breakout possibility to stimulate the presently not enough effective cross-border co-operations.

In *Transcarpathia* the majority of the interviewees had already heard about the Carpathians Euroregion, in fact, some had even applied to the Carpathians Foundation operating in its territory. Nevertheless, similarly to the Hungarian and Romanian respondents, they too thought that this organisation was too large to be effective; in the future, smaller organisations will become more important. In addition to the Euroregion, several organisations were mentioned that are active in developing cross-border relations: e.g. the Transcarpathian Business Development Centre, The Four Borders Entrepreneurs Association (in Beregovo), the Upper Tisza Business Club, and the Transcarpathian Hungarian Farmers Association. Furthermore, the non-governmental organisations with the mission to promote the development of cross-border relations are just being established, and they wish to have access to EU resources.

The interviews revealed that in all three countries it was the larger-scale organisations, i.e. the Euroregions operating at higher administrative levels where the use of the previous experiences and models was possible, but the interviewees do not attribute great significance even in this case to the following of the patterns. In their opinion it was much more important to have sound local background knowledge, the better information on the special local needs at county level or maybe micro-regional level co-operations. As regards the models taken over, in *Transcarpathia* only those who were directly involved in the Carpathians Euroregion had information. They said that at the creation of the Carpathians Euroregion, Western European patterns had been followed, but many respondents knew it was not a real cross-border initiative; the establishment of the Carpathians Euroregion and the joining of some members were decided by central political will. At local level co-operations the role of the Western models was considered even less important, these co-operations had almost exclusively been built on own initiatives and own experiences, both in Hungary, and in Romania and the Ukraine. It is typical, on the other hand, that in Romania many respondent raised Western European patterns when we asked where these models could be imported from. The experiences of Hungary (e.g. the utilisation of the Hungarian–Austrian cross-border co-operation) were only mentioned by the interviewees of Hungarian nationality.

2.5.3 Local resources, or external assistance?

Despite the deficiencies described above, the *Hungarian respondents usually have a positive view of the attitude of the Hungarian and the European authorities*. They said that according to their experiences their request were usually positively accepted, if they turned to these authorities with well established requests and recommendations. A successful lobbying activity is nevertheless inevitable, but not everybody is capable of this; usually the lower the administrative level, the less opportunities they have for lobbying. In their view especially the EU level could assist much more efficiently the establishment of cross-border relations, but they are far from the everyday practice, so they have a “hunger” for information on the programmes financed by them and place a great emphasis on feedbacks in each case.

In *Romania* the representatives of organisations that do not operate from central state budget had a rather *pessimistic opinion about the assistance they got from the central level*, some said that the Bucharest government definitely held back information or was only willing to assist them in return for little “services”. The local level is much more supportive, although the level of this support is far from the desirable, as the respondents said. The situation is similar in *Transcarpathia*, where *nobody gets state support apart from the municipalities and other budgetary organisations*.

As regards the financial resources of the European Union, the situation in Romania and the Ukraine is significantly different from that of Hungary, already being an EU member. In Romania the EU resources are only partially available; the order of magnitude of the money is too little in the respondents’ view to have a real effect on cross-border co-operations. This statement is even more valid for Transcarpathia. The respondents working for the organisations maintained by the transborder Hungarians usually mentioned the help coming from Hungary, the scale of which is less than desirable; nevertheless it is indispensable in some cases for the maintenance of the organisation.

2.5.4 Principles and procedures to be changed

At the end of the interviews we asked the respondents to briefly summarise what official principles, policies should be changed in order to increase the efficiency of the cross-border co-operations. In *Hungary* – similarly to the other two countries – the *excessive bureaucracy* was mentioned in most cases, many said that the unnecessary paperwork was one of the most serious obstacles to the success of the projects. It is not only the amount of bureaucracy that causes a problem; the interviewees said that the *organisations responsible for the control of application resources*

often had a rather poor performance. An example for that is the INTERREG III/A programme, for which the call for tenders was originally planned by September 2004, but was finally announced no sooner than in the spring of 2005.

In the case of *Romania*, in addition to the *bureaucratic obstacles*, the malfunctions of the *calls for and evaluation of tenders* were criticised by most respondents. According to the general belief, the calls for tenders are not elaborated precisely enough, it would be much more appropriate to define them by special sectors, so that the potential applicants should have a much better chance to find the tenders important for them. The interviewees were not satisfied with the events after the submission of the applications; the criteria system of project evaluation should be fundamentally changed. More objective aspects of evaluation are necessary and the whole process should become more transparent.

Apart from the tenders, the *quality of the already existing development documents* is a serious problem in Romania, both at national or lower levels. These documents usually do not reach the necessary quality; as one respondent said, they are usually made in offices, research institutions, without sound knowledge of the real life. One of the conditions for successful projects would thus be the clear definition of priorities. The majority of the respondents said that among the priorities, economic development should be a selected one, together with the connected fields, e.g. the development of transport infrastructure. Finally, as several times before, the *excessive centralisation* typical of Romania was mentioned several times. Decentralisation is one of the most urgent tasks; in the absence of decentralisation most respondents do not see the point in a change of strategy.

According to the respondents it would be very important in Transcarpathia to *change the system of financial means and the support and distribution systems* (especially in the case of the supports from Hungary), because the major part of the resources is non-refundable and of aid character, of which only a narrow circle has information; also, the distribution of these resources takes place in this narrow circle, which leads to the establishment of a clientele. The *calls for tenders should be given a bigger publicity* and more fair and transparent mechanisms for the distribution, and the use and control of resources should be built into the process, taking the local characteristics in consideration. Instead of aid type support, it is expertise and technology that should be transferred (“give people a fishing net, and not fish”, so that they should be able to get along on their own on the market). It would also be very important to *eliminate corruption, change the bureaucratic economic management administration and increase the financial and investment safety*.

3 Summary of the research findings

3.1 Findings of the preliminary research

The eastern state borders of Hungary were actually created by the Trianon Peace Treaty, tearing apart organically integrated areas coexisting for centuries, and organically developing regional initiatives. This too contributed to the fact that significant differences evolved among the regions on the different sides of the borders in the 20th century, as it was also proved by the findings of the preliminary background study that preceded the empirical surveys conducted in the framework of the EXLINEA programme. One of the most important findings is that the respective area struggles with a number of common problems, despite the evident differences among the Hungarian and Ukrainian, and the Hungarian and Romanian sides of the border (e.g. administrative and legal system, differences in the living standards, different economic performance etc.). Along the states borders we find adjacent regions that are peripheral or semi-peripheral compared to the other regions of their respective countries, with a low level of solvent demand, shortage of capital in the businesses, low capital attracting capacity of the economy, few jobs and a general poverty; the typical demographical processes are outmigration and the increase of the social disparities.

The Hungarian–Ukrainian and the Hungarian–Romanian border regions are *burdened by problems of historical origin*, coming from the distant past; the new state borders designated in 1920 totally disregarded the ethnic relations, consequently there are still large ethnic Hungarian blocks on the Romanian and the Ukrainian sides of the border. This is an advantage for cross-border relations, on the one hand, because of the common language, similar mentality, common traditions and culture; on the other hand, nationalism reviving in the neighbour countries after the systemic changes brought to the surface formerly hidden problems, which naturally crystallised in the strengthening of fears of the amendments of the borders. Although the situation has normalised by now, it is very difficult to annihilate overnight prejudices gathered during several decades.

The Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian relations are regulated by a large number of international agreements at the national level. Most important are the so-called Treaties that basically define the relationship of Hungary, Romania and the Ukraine. Among the bilateral agreements made at national level, the water management and environmental agreements are of special importance. As a consequence of the arbitrary delineation of the border in the Trianon peace treaty, a large part of the catchment area of the Tisza river is now in Romania and the Ukraine, and in want of harmonised actions and due to the large-scale deforestations, floods occur more and more frequently, against which there is an urgent need

for joint action. The cyanide pollution in the Tisza River system not so long ago, resulting in a mass destruction of fish, drew attention to the importance of cross-border environmental co-operations. Nevertheless it was the floods and the environmental disasters of the last decade, together with the EU supports, that deepened the co-operations in the field of protection against and the prevention of risks.

Another consequence of the inconsiderate designation of the borders and the subsequent isolation for decades is the narrowing of the traffic connections between the two sides of the Hungarian–Ukrainian and the Hungarian–Romanian borders, which is a serious bottleneck of the cross-border co-operations. After the designation of the Trianon borders several railway and road connections were eliminated and have not been restored since then. It is true that several new border crossing stations were opened after the systemic change that took place at the turn of the years 1989/1990, but these are still too few to meet the demand. According to our experiences – which were reinforced both by empirical studies and the local seminars – one of the main bottlenecks of the cross-border relations in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region is still the length of waiting necessary to cross the border. Especially the economic actors are put off by the several hours of waiting, but it also makes educational relations and the other personal relations very difficult. The situation was further exacerbated by Hungary's accession to the EU in 2004, after which it is impossible to use those special border crossing permission in the possession of which those with business travel purposes could cross the border out of turn. The small-scale cross-border traffic is also temporarily stopped. Due to the increasing shopping and fuel tourism, the number of those who wish to cross the border has increased to a large extent. This considerably increases waiting time and makes the time of border crossing unpredictable, making it impossible e.g. for the guest lecturers to reach the educational institutions on the other side of the border in time. The difficult conditions of border crossing also discourage the actors of the economic sector and other actors active in cross-border relations, when they have to wait for hours to get a signature necessary for a project proposal or to manage any other business affairs in a settlement only a few kilometres away on the other side of the border. Formerly there was a significant shopping and fuel tourism in the Hungarian–Romania border region too, due to the different price levels, but the equalisation of the price levels and the strict Hungarian customs regulation resulted in a new situation where it is not typical to have to queue up at the border.

Our experiences suggest that at the Hungarian–Ukrainian border it is not the physical permeability of the border crossing stations that causes a problem (although this too could be improved, especially the capacity Záhony-Csap border crossing stations is inadequate, because of the narrow bridge over the Tisza river); the speed of the border crossing procedure is also slow. As the Hungarian–Ukrainian border became an external EU border, customs regulations have become extremely strict. On the Ukrainian side, on the other hand, it is the control and ad-

ministration of the passports and the documents of the vehicles that takes too much time (in case of cars with foreign licence plates it is necessary in each case to show the licences and environmental certificate, “green card” of the car; each passport is stamped, and even the registration number of the car driven is written in the passport of the driver). The computer system necessary for the management of the border traffic is not free of occasional problems, either. Our survey suggests that all these problems are exacerbated by the slow pace of work, bureaucracy and corruption that are present at the border crossing stations.

The findings of the empirical researches also revealed that the economic co-operations have also appeared very slowly in the cross-border relations. One of the reasons for this is the economic crisis taking place after the disintegration of the COMECON and the systemic change, another reason is that during the socialist decades no significant industry was located in the border region, for economic policy and military policy considerations; i.e. there were no large-scale investments that could have boosted the economy. The economic crisis following the systemic change had very serious effects on the border regions, because the business plants operating here were usually subsidiaries or suppliers of large companies operating far away, consequently these remote units were liquidated first. This generated rather serious employment problems in the border region, also contributing to the unfavourable demographic processes (outmigration of the young and highly skilled population).

On the basis of the summary report we can say of the cross-border relations that the co-operations at subnational levels (of regions, counties and micro-region) are usually of protocol and formal character, despite the fact that a decade and a half have passed since the systemic change. This circumstance is visible in both the quantity and the character and depth of the co-operations. Within the co-operations the proportion and weight of economic and trading relations is still relatively low. However, in the recent years we can witness some positive changes, the relationships have developed towards concrete, operational and often project-based co-operations in several cases. In all probabilities this is partly due to the EU resources (e.g. Phare, Interreg) available in an application system.

In the Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Ukrainian border regions the personal relations, very much limited before the systemic change, play a very important role. In these relations, in addition to friendships and family ties and also shopping, subsistence tourism plays a very significant role – especially on the Romanian and Ukrainian sides –, the most lucrative activity of which is illegal fuel and cigarette trade. Now more and more institutions, non-governmental organisations and businesses use the opportunities offered by the cross-border co-operations. There are more and more Hungarian investments planned in the Ukraine and even more in Romania, together with an increasing number of business supports,

expanding investments, and in general, the favourable effects of the improving business environment are more and more visible.

The empirical survey conducted in the framework of the EXLINEA programme underlined the findings of the previous researches and also supplied important new information among other things about the role of the European Union in the region (for more details see Chapters 1–4).

3.2 The presence of the border region and the cross-border relations in planning documents

When outlining the problems and the possible future development directions of the Hungarian–Ukrainian and the Hungarian–Romanian border region, in addition to *inter-state agreements* and the *programming and planning preliminaries at national level* and in the *NUTS 2 areas* including the border regions it is the *joint development documents* worked out for the border regions that give us information (such documents are the “Joint development concept of the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region”, “Development concept and programme of the Hungarian–Romanian border region”). Also, we have the *Euroregional planning documents* of the respective areas (“Strategic development programme of the Carpathians Euroregion Interregional Alliance”, and the Strategic plan of the Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Co-operation”; also the Hajdú–Bihar–Bihar Euroregion at county level and development documents of the Bihar–Bihar and the Interregio areas at micro-regional level).

Following the systemic change, a relatively long time passed until the Hungarian–Romanian Treaty was signed (in 1997), which is primarily due to the special situation of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania. The Treaty set up international professional committees (for minority affairs, economic co-operations, co-operation of municipalities, environmental protection), which work out the co-operations concerning the “common issues” of the two countries and revise the factors blocking their implementation, assisting this way the development of cross-border co-operations also at the local level. The treaty between Hungary and the Ukraine was signed as soon as in 1991 (“Treaty on the grounds of good neighbourhood and co-operation between the Republic of Hungary and the Ukraine”), which included the improvement of the conditions of cross-border co-operations both at national and individual level. Several of the professional committees created by the Treaty still operate.

In addition to the treaties, there are several valid bilateral agreements in several fields. As regards the connections at state level, the water management and environmental protection co-operations are the most important both in the Hungarian–

Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian relation. The necessity of such co-operations was demonstrated by the huge floods in the Tisza river system, affecting all three counties, and the cyanide pollution resulting in the mass destruction of fish.

As regards the relationship of Hungary to its eastern neighbours, the *Act LXII. of 2001* on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries (commonly known as the *Status Act*) received the biggest attention, together with the connected so-called “*Hungarian–Romanian Agreement Declaration*”. As regards the implementation of the act providing the Hungarians living in neighbouring countries with special benefits (in health care, travel, employment), no final solution has been found to date, despite the several negotiations.

In Hungary the long-term objectives of regional development are set by the National Regional Development Concept. In this concept, being located in a border region is mentioned as an influencing factor mainly in connection with the extended and contiguous regions with low competitiveness in the eastern part of Hungary. On the other hand, a positive sign mentioned by the document is that a significant part of the sporadic areas in good environmental condition can be found in the border region. The document treats as a cornerstone of cross-border co-operations the fields of water management and environmental protection, because the pollutions occurring in the catchment areas of the Tisza River are problems for Hungary as a “country downstream” that can only be solved together with the neighbouring countries. The positive effect of the local initiatives supported by the Phare CBC programmes is underlined in the document, but it is also mentioned that despite these the catching up of the eastern part of Hungary still has not started. Among the factors influencing co-operations the concept mentions the date of the EU accession of the neighbouring countries and the presence of a large number of Hungarian ethnic group living in the Carpathian Basin – considering common culture and language as a catalyst for co-operations.

An objective to be reached is the establishment of integrated border regions intensively connected at several levels within the framework of an effective and successful co-operation, by which the development of the regions on the other side of the border can greatly contribute to the catching up of the border regions of Hungary as well. The basic objective of the cross-border co-operations is the creation of integrated cross-border regions, for the realisation of which the following are important: establishment of a coordinated system of tourism products; building out cross-border nature and environmental protection systems; revitalisation/creation of cross-border centre and hinterland relations; utilisation of special benefits in trade; building out logistic services related to transit and border traffic; joint investment promotion and economic development; joint physical planning and regional programmes; transfer of experiences and further development of the joint institutional structure with the countries involved in joint programming; improvement of accessibility by cross-border trunk and side road developments and the

launch of cross-border public transport, and also by the establishment of new border crossing stations.

In the Hungarian National Development Plan made for the 2004–2006 period, the eastern border regions of Hungary are mentioned as peripheries in whose catching up the accession of Hungary to the European Union may play a significant role, by the increasing economic relations. The document underlines the important logistic role of the rail border crossing stations and projects considerable future developments.

The Romanian regional development documents, similarly to the Hungarian ones, have been made in accordance with the planning schedule of the European Union and the expectations of the EU. In the Hungarian National Development Plan made for the 2004–2006 period, the issue of the borders and the cross-border co-operations is not seen as a major priority. The document mentions the effects of being located in a border region mainly as a factor influencing the development level of the regions. In the West Romanian regions adjacent to Hungary, border location does not have as negative consequences as in the peripheries in the eastern part of Romania. The development of the cross-border transport corridors is seen as a chance to promote economic relations. As opposed to this document, the development plan made for the 2000–2005 period dealt in much more depth with the cross-border co-operations, indicating them as some of the most important tasks of the development regions, with special regard to economic co-operations. The document deals in a separate chapter with the catalytic effect of the PHARE programme in deepening relations, together with the gradual adaptation of the practices of the Union.

In the Ukraine several development documents deal with the border regions and cross-border co-operations. The act defining the basic principles of regional development is the *National Regional Policy Concept*, which describes the tasks of the regional actors and the main directions of development. The concept also includes the institutional and practical tools designed for developments at local and regional level. The Act on *National Regional Economic Policy Concept* contains the definition of the border region and expresses the importance of assisting them. Among the successor states of the Soviet Union the Ukraine was the first to sign a *Partnership and co-operation agreement*, after whose ratification president Leonid Kuchma issued a regulation on the EU accession strategy of the Ukraine, including the establishment of relations between the Ukrainian regions and the regions in the member states and the candidate countries. An integral part of the Ukrainian development policy is the socio-economic development strategy called “Ukraine 2010”, which projects an administrative reform; as regards the directions of the contacts, the development of the economic zones along the western regions of the Ukraine is mentioned as a priority. After the “Orange Revolution” that took place in the Ukraine in late 2004, significant changes are expected in the Ukrainian regional

policy; the European relations and the western neighbours have become much more important, which projects the evaluation of the role of the border regions and the strengthening of the cross-border co-operations.

In Hungary the preparation of the development documents for the 2007–2013 planning period is underway. In the North Great Plain region, the development of logistic services, built on the location along the border and the cross-border transport corridors, is a strategic objective in the so-called gateway cities with favourable endowments. According to the document, the cross-border economic co-operations may receive more attention in the period starting in 2007 (following the EU policy), especially those peripheral border regions where these opportunities are underutilised at the moment. In this the business zones may have a dominant role. The makers of the concept only saw a possibility for the catching up of the backward regions along the Romanian and the Ukrainian border after the elimination of the “heritage of Trianon”.

Along the border areas of the South Great Plain region, the backward territories mentioned above as “external peripheries” continue with some interruptions. These areas are mentioned selectively by the development documents of the region. The development documents of South Great Plain deal in more depth and detail with the issues related to the state border, analysing the possibilities of the respective tiers (county, micro-region, municipality) separately. A problem mentioned is the uncertainty of the conditions for co-operation and the serious bottlenecks of co-operation (inadequate infrastructure connections, lack of information, and in some cases mistrust). A strategic development objective of the region is to “become a dynamic and open, easily permeable border region of Europe”, serving as a gateway to Southeast-Europe. This is why the development of cross-border relation is emphasised, whose spatial frameworks are set by the *Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion*. The solution of the problems of water management is also of special importance, like in the case of the national level development documents.

Among the development regions created in Romania, two are neighbour to Hungary, the “Nord-Vest” and the “Vest” regions. In the current development documents of both regions (for the 2004–2006 programming period), the development of the border regions and the cross-border relations are important elements. Both development documents see the respective regions as gateway regions, which is not surprising given the fact that these two regions are neighbour to the European Union; on the other hand, the development of the co-operations with Serbia and the Ukraine is also seen as a priority. It is clearly expressed, however, that the membership of Hungary in the European Union entails the increase of the number of co-operations. The surveys on the Romanian side have found that the cross-border economic relations and cultural contacts have an increasingly positive effect in the development of the border regions.

The largest-scale developments (presently underway or planned in the future) are the investments of the cross-border transport networks – given the inadequate capacity of the present cross-border transport corridors –, and the connection of the dominant urban centres on the two sides of the border. In connection with the river pollutions occurring in the last years, the decrease of the cross-border effect of environmental accidents is of outstanding importance, especially in metallurgy and petrochemistry, as is the increasing the level of canalisation. The development documents mention that several towns have strong and traditional cross-border relations, the revitalisation of which has good chances and can be a considerable opportunity for the future co-operations. The document mentions the active participation of the member counties in the work of the Euroregional organisations as an important opportunity. In the Vest region the strengthening of the economic effects of the Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion is expected, and a great significance is attributed to the development opportunities opened by the Phare CBC programmes.

In the Ukraine the administrative units equal to the counties (NUTS 3 level territorial units) have development ideas and concepts. The socio-economic development programme of Transcarpathia, directly neighbouring Hungary, titled “*Transcarpathia – 2004. Entering 21st century*”, was created in 2001. The development priorities are grouped into nine major chapters, among which it is primarily the Foreign Economic Relations and the development of the Transcarpathian Special Economic Zone that mostly influence the development of cross-border relations. The development of the foreign economic relations concentrates on the transport infrastructure providing access to the border crossing stations, the improvement of the infrastructure of the customs office, and the increase of the volume of the economic relations, with an active participation in the Euroregional organisation called Interregio. The Transcarpathian Special Economic Zone is scattered in the logistic hubs of the border region, offering good opportunities for foreign investors. Since its foundation the economic zone has made several successful co-operation agreements with the *Záhony and Its Region Business Zone* on the other side of the border.

Both for the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region development concepts have been made with the contribution of experts living on the two sides of the borders, in order to harmonise the concepts and utilise the resources more efficiently. The *Development concept and programme of the Hungarian–Romanian border region* was made in 2000, with Phare support. The development document analysed the socio-economic conditions in the border region, the common features of the areas on the two sides of the border (which may provide a basis for further co-operations), the development of the cross-border relations (with special regard to the economic relations), the factors influencing them and the role of the institutions most active in cross-border co-operations. On the

basis of the European practice, the concept defined the basic principles of co-operation, and on the basis of the development priorities of the spatial units it also set the development objectives and strategy of the border region. The development programme defined five main directions of co-operations: permeability and accessibility of the border; environmental and nature protection and water management; human resources; the strengthening of economic relations; the institutionalisation of the co-operations.

As a result of the joint efforts of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Transcarpathia counties, the *Joint development concept of the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region* was made in 2003. The objective of the document is to promote the catching up of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border region and improve the quality of life of the population living there by the maximum use of the opportunities lying in cross-border co-operations. Among the five strategic priorities, the first is the creation of a competitive economic structure, as the economic indices of the region are bad from all aspects, the reasons for which are the relative homogeneity and inflexibility of the economic structures. The development of the human resources can be a catalyst for the development of the border region, but today it is the outmigration of the skilled people that is typical. Another basic precondition for the increase of investments is the improvement of the accessibility of the border region. The co-operations in the field of environmental and nature protection are basically determined by the role of the Tisza as a border river, which, as a joint asset, requires co-operation. The maximum use of the opportunities offered by the EU accession of Hungary can be seen as a non-sector specific field of development, which may entail the transfer of very important experiences, assisting this way the integration efforts of the Ukraine.

Each of the Euroregions in the respective border regions have defined their strategic development concepts, which, with a full consideration of the interests of the cross-border relations, try to find the most effective fields of co-operation on the basis of the development documents of the individual member regions. The Regional Development Working Committee of the Carpathians Euroregion worked out the *Strategic Development Programme* of the Euroregion in 2004. The analysis of the existing situation revealed that the organisation founded in 1993 had not been really successful by the copying of the Western European examples in the region, due to the lack of adequate conditions and the significant development differences among the member regions. Accordingly the strategy makes several proposals for the organisational and operational renewal of the Euroregion. The regional development strategic programme processed the planning preliminaries and analysed the success of the previous projects, on the ground of which the following main development fields were identified: transport relations; creation of a competitive economy; coordinated development of human resources; a complex approach

to tourism; nature and environmental protection; and strengthening the foreign relations of the Euroregion.

The other Euroregional organisation, the Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion involving the Hungarian–Romanian border region created its first strategic development plan in 2000, which was renewed in 2005. In the analysis of the existing situation the document mentions among the weaknesses the usually missing harmonisation of the objectives on the two sides of the border and the low number of joint programmes and projects. Among the strategic objectives we find the harmonisation of public administration, the improvement of the physical infrastructure, the diversification of the economy and the strengthening of the resource acquisition capacity. A programme of outstanding importance is the development of the communication and PR strategy of the formerly less known region, in order to introduce the activity of the region to as wide an audience as possible, make the Euroregion accepted for the wide public and allow the organisation to apply for application resources with better chances.

In order to reach a more operational co-operation, within the Carpathians Euroregion the Hungarian Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, the Romanian Satu Mare county and Transcarpathia county in the Ukraine founded *Interregio* on 6 October 2000. In 2003 a development concept was made for the Interregio (on a Hungarian initiative and with active Hungarian participation), the basis of which was the development concept of the Ukrainian–Hungarian border region. The range of development priorities built on the common possibilities is basically the same as the objectives of the Carpathians Euroregion, placing even more emphasis on the strengthening of the economic relations at the level of concrete projects.

The *Hajdú-Bihar–Bihar Euroregion* was also founded within the territory of the Carpathians Euroregion, on 11 October 2002 (since then these two member counties have left the Carpathians Euroregion), in order to establish a closer, project based and operational co-operation. The basic objective of the Euroregion is to contribute to the birth of good neighbourhood and promote the EU integration of the border regions of Romania by joint programmes and the acquisition of development resources. The founding document defined eight main development directions, including the strengthening of the economic relations, the improvement of the permeability of the border, the management of the often common cultural heritage, but also the establishment of the institutionalised relationships of the different professional organisations (e.g. in the field of environmental protection, education, health care) of the two counties, mainly because of the less advanced decentralisation processes of the Romanian public administration. The first results are realised in the field of tourism, implemented in the form of organising common events and making a joint marketing strategy.

A separate development document was made for the Bihar–Bihar Euroregion, the only micro-regional level Euroregional organisation in the Hungarian–Ukrain-

ian and the Hungarian–Romanian border region. The Bihar–Bihar Euroregion was established on 12 April 2002 in Biharkeresztes, it involves 19 Hungarian settlements and 17 municipalities (with a total of 40 settlements) in Romania. The centre of the organisation is Bors. The objective of the co-operation is the implementation of harmonised sustainable developments coordinated from social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects, as well as the preparation for and participation in the European integration processes.

Looking at the planning documents concerning the border region at different levels we can say that they well reflect the problems of the border region and have identified the breakout point concentrated on the most important dilemmas. An important step forward is that now there are efforts for the harmonisation of the strategies at least at the level of the planning documents, even if this is not always successful during the implementation in practice.

4 Conclusions, good practices, recommendations

The role of the European Union in the local co-operation mechanisms is not really significant yet, but its importance is expected to considerably increase parallel to the expansion of the European integration processes, above all due to the regional support and security policy of the Union. In the future the European Union can have a catalytic role. The EU policies and financial means promote the single operation of the formerly integrated areas, divided by the borders. Along the Hungarian–Romanian border, where some EU resources for cross-border relations were available as soon as in the middle of the 1990s, the effect of these supports is naturally stronger than in the Hungarian–Ukrainian border area where the Union resources for such purposes have only been available for a year or two.

During the interviews conducted and the local seminars, several actors complained about the fact that very few of the resources coming from the European Union are available for concrete economic co-operations, there are much less resources available for this purpose than for bilateral discussions, conferences and exchanges of experience. Since the resources are rather scarce in the region, those projects are the most popular for the implementation of which resources can be acquired in an application system. This is especially true for projects with large investment needs (e.g. transport infrastructure, environmental investments). A problem is that the calls for tenders are often announced with a significant delay, which is a fault of the national level. In Transcarpathia it was mentioned too that it is very difficult to get information necessary for applying for EU money, and that there are too few experts with adequate professional and language skills who can write successful applications and can also successfully manage and administer the

implementation of the projects. It was raised also on the Ukrainian side that since there are significant EU resources only on the Hungarian side at the moment, the Transcarpathian partners are only needed for their Hungarian counterparts to make them eligible for supports; accordingly the real benefits are too few on the Ukrainian side. It is also true, on the other hand, that the acquisition of financial means by tendering, available for the development of cross-border co-operations, has been a strong motivating factor since Hungary's accession to the European Union.

In the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian cross-border co-operations a bottom-up approach is most typical, i.e. personal relations play a significant role not only in the personal but also in the economic and other co-operations. We can see that the municipalities and the municipal associations are much more active in the initiation and organisation of cross-border relations than the regional or national level, although the opinion of the citizens and the private sector is rarely asked. Today it is not typical but formerly the state level was rather an obstacle of the relations in Romania and the Ukraine, they often refused the establishment of cross-border co-operation organisations. A traditionally active administrative level in the countries in question is the county level; the counties are the leaders in the establishment of cross-border co-operation strategies. In addition, different professional bodies with competence in the respective areas (environment and water management directorates, chambers of commerce, national parks etc.) are active in the development of the relations, involving the actors of the economic and the civil sector and the municipalities. Although the reason behind the establishment of the large-scale Euroregions (Carpathians Euroregion, Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza Euroregion), organised on committee basis and often not free from politics, was definitely the development of the cross-border co-operation and the improvement of the population living here, they have not been able to achieve considerable results in the region. The future lies much more in the smaller, “project type” organisations (as opposed to the “committee type” ones), more suitable for an operational co-operation (e.g. the Hajdú-Bihar–Bihar Euroregion operating in the Hungarian–Romanian border region, involving two neighbour counties, is a good example; in this Euroregion a number of projects have been successfully implemented from tourism through training to the different conferences).

As regards cross-border relations, both in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region positive changes have taken place over the last few years, *structures and practices to be followed and further developed* have been made to which the resources of the European Union made a significant contribution:

- The *joint development concepts* of the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region have been made with the use of EU supports; parallel to this the *ad-hoc character of the co-operations has decreased*, the

participants continuously communicate to each other and think more and more in project-oriented concrete developments.

- An *institutional network of experts* have been created, is expanding and continuously developing *that can receive EU resources available in a tender system* and also to coordinate the implementation of the different projects.
- From EU resources *trainings are organised* for Hungarian, Ukrainian and Romanian experts, entrepreneurs, local governments, non-governmental organisations etc., by which they get an insight to the policy and tender systems of the European Union; also, the transfer of practical experiences and methods takes place in several fields.
- It is a very good practice that the *Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry* has established its Romanian and Ukrainian sections in Hungary (in Békéscsaba and Nyíregyháza, respectively), and they naturally have their partner organisations in the neighbour countries. This way the entrepreneurs, companies and those with investment goals can get very important information on the investment possibilities in the neighbour countries and they can also get assistance as regards the legal regulations, taxation, banks etc. in the respective country. In this respect we also have to mention the *business development centres* operated by the Hungarian state in the primarily Hungarian inhabited regions of the neighbour countries; these centres also play a very important role (e.g. tender information, partner mediation for businesses etc.).
- The *more and more intensive relationships* (especially due to the cultural, sports, educational, religious etc. events) *have brought the people on the two sides of the border closer to each other*, these relations have helped them to get to know each other's culture and contributed to the decrease of the conflicts on ethnic grounds.
- In the last decade the *infrastructure conditions of the border crossing stations have significantly improved*, but this has not improved the speed of border crossing to the necessary extent – due to the increased traffic and strict border control (especially at the Hungarian–Ukrainian border). In addition, the accessibility of the border crossing stations has slightly improved.
- The floods and environmental pollutions of the recent years have made the three neighbouring countries realise the importance of the prevention of disasters, and accordingly they have built out close everyday connections to each other. One of the most striking features of this may be the *monitoring system established along the Tisza River* that provides very useful information for the prevention of disasters.
- In the last decade and a half, the *inter-municipal relations* operating in a declared, institutional form have developed in the border regions in question, now reaching beyond the level of protocol; more and more concrete joint programmes are implemented (mostly cultural and sports events). In addition

to the twin municipality relations, *micro-regional and municipal associations* are becoming more and more important. These, co-operating with their counterparts on the other side of the border, have already implemented several projects (e.g. the Bihar–Bihor Euroregion was founded on the basis of the municipal associations in the Bihar border region along the Hungarian–Romanian border).

- The different *Euroregions* created in the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region (above all the smaller, bi- and trilateral organisations, e.g. the Hajdú-Bihar–Bihor) intensively encourage the institutions operating in their territories to take up the relations with their counterparts on the other side of the border, because the adaptation of the EU methods and practices is both a common interest and a requirement).
- Over the last five years, in the field of *tourism* too, more intensive co-operations are unfurling, one or two practical results of which can already be seen (e.g. in the Hajdú-Bihar–Bihor Euroregion the member county of Hungary and that of Romania participate together on the international market; also, the tourism map of the Upper Tisza Region was published in a Ukrainian–Hungarian co-operation).

The findings of the survey conducted within the EXLINEA programme clearly demonstrate that the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border regions have similar problems and deficiencies, so the future development directions are more or less the same, too. However, there is a significant difference in the situation of the two border regions, namely that Romania is becoming a full right member of the European Union soon, whereas for the Ukraine even the associate membership is wishful thinking at the moment. Consequently the Hungarian–Romanian border region can actually function as a single region free from borders in the near future, where, due to the acquisition of the EU legal harmonisation practices, the cross-border relations will have less and less obstacles. On the other hand, the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region has a Schengen border, less resources and other obstacles, due to which it evidently has a longer path of development.

Mostly in accordance with the joint development documents made for the Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border region, in our opinion the *most important development priorities of the future* are as follows:

- *Speeding up of border crossing and improvement of the accessibility of the border region.* In order to achieve this, infrastructure developments are needed, on the one hand (expansion of the permeability of the border crossing stations and their linking to the speedway network in as many places as possible); on the other hand, the re-introduction of small-scale cross-border traffic should be achieved, because international passport is extremely expen-

sive in the Ukraine and not everybody can afford to have one (contrary to the preliminary expectations this is much more of a problem than the acquisition of the necessary visa). In addition, the restoration of a former practice should be considered: those who had to cross the border because of their work were allowed to pass through the border out of turn (e.g. with a special licence).

- The *promotion of economic relations*; the favourable spillover effects of this can be seen in other areas, as well. Within the economic sector, the joint development of business services and the business poles (industrial parks, business zones) should be a priority, together with joint tourism development programmes based on the complementary endowments; joint marketing; small and medium size enterprises; and the agricultural co-operations.
- For the catching up of the region, *transport and infrastructure developments* are of a selective importance, mainly the development of the roads and railways connected to the cross-border trans-European network running through the region, but also of the logistic hubs and services.
- The further development of *co-operations* in the field of *environmental and nature protection*, and also *water management* is an important task too. Joint efforts should be made for the preservation of the environment in the border region (flood and high groundwater prevention, waste and sewage management etc) and also for the preservation of the natural assets, as they are also the basis of tourism developments.
- As the border region in question is stricken by a significant outmigration, one selected task of the future can be the *development of the cross-border relations of human resources*. We should emphasise in this place the further expansion of the educational, training and research co-operations, the establishment of labour market relations, the development of social and health care co-operations, but the non-governmental organisations, the cultural and sports relations and language trainings can also be included here.
- Apart from these, there are *non-sector specific fields* that play a very important role in the relations. These include the development of long term institutional co-operations in the first place. Within this, of selected importance is the quality and preparation of the regional development institutional system for the use of the resources coming from the European Union, i.e. a significant emphasis should be placed on co-operations, exchanges of experience and trainings in this field, and also on the harmonisation of the development ideas in all of these areas. Also it is very important to improve the level of information and communication, together with the creation of a joint and mutual regional marketing activity.