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**Chances of Hungarian–Slovak
Cross-Border Relations**

**by
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1 Introduction

The East-Central European countries between the Baltic and the Adriatic Sea can be found in one of the regions of Europe that have undergone the most changes. From 1987 these states could gradually get rid of the Soviet rule, start putting an end to dictatorship and ousting the communist ruling classes from authority. Their accession to NATO and the European Union (2004) was a sign that they managed to break off from Eastern Europe, which had meant an impasse for them, but only at the expense of suffering heavy losses. This, however, enables them to develop new relations, which are to be determined by freedom (democracy), equality (liberalism, individual and national equality) and fraternity (solidarity).

Owing to the differences in their historical past, Hungary and its seven neighbouring countries have specific relations. With Austria having become a member of the European Union in 1995, and Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia having joined in 2004, Hungary and three of its neighbouring countries belong to the same political and economic community. The present paper is about Hungary's 'closest' neighbour, Slovakia. Hungary maintains the closest relations with the Slovak people of all nations in the Carpathian Basin, because the Slovak people emerged within the Hungarian Kingdom in the course of the centuries before 1918. Now that the Soviet control has ceased, Hungary might continue its thousand-year-old history, and the two nations might cooperate as equal partners and strive for better, more understanding and free countries, while fully recognising the independence of the Slovak state that it gained in 1918.

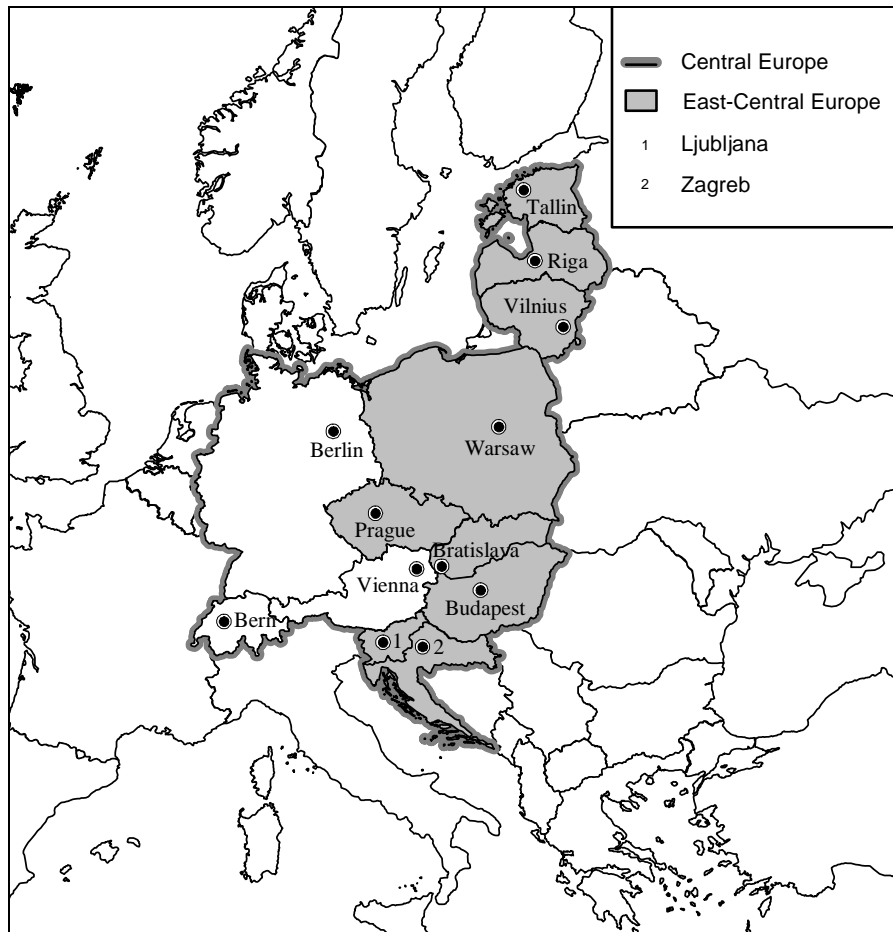
The present paper attempts to take a snapshot of the historical 'moment' after the accession. An important historical question arises for all accession countries and also for Slovakia: Will the differences between them and the Western European countries remain, or will these countries gradually become similar to each other? Will the centuries-long inequalities and development disparities between Western European and East-Central European countries ever cease?¹

Besides the general question that refers to all accession countries there is another one that especially affects the two neighbouring countries, Hungary and Slovakia. How strong will the dividing role of borders be in the future? With political and economic frames becoming similar, and the borders ceasing, will their former economic and cultural relations revive? Will the regions that provide a potential framework for economic and social cooperation be formed on the basis of the real needs of their people? Will everyday human relations really be free?

¹ In the present paper Poland (Pl), the Czech Republic (Cz), Slovakia (SR), Hungary (H) and Slovenia (SLO) are called East-Central Europe.

Figure 1

The countries in East-Central Europe



Source: Edited by the author.

1.1 Components of the conceptual frame

1.1.1 Interpretation of the border phenomenon

Europe is a continent in whose history borders have always played an important part and Central and especially East-Central Europe have always had ever-changing borders. East-Central Europe is rather 'isolated' from other European regions.

It has no sea of its own since Poland has not been able to take control over the Baltic Sea, Hungary has not managed to get to the Adriatic Sea and the Czech people have had no chance to join into the world trade on the sea. Consequently, these countries have not been able to establish really great empires, what is more they themselves have fallen prey to great empires. Important historical events have changed the borders in the area, or, like in case of Hungary, unchanged borders have been crossed by ever-changing great powers (*Herczegh, 1998*).

In Europe monarchies were replaced by nation states, which has enhanced the importance of borders. The central power defended the borders of the nation (France), or formed them (Germany, Italy). National movements remained state-creating factors in the 20th century, too. An example for this is the disintegration of the Austrian–Hungarian Monarchy and the establishment of the so-called succession states (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia – formerly the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom –, and Poland). These political changes encouraged border research. From the end of the 19th century, especially on the basis of *Ratzel's* work (1897), the problem of borders became the central issue of political geography. Next the model set up by *Martinez* (1994) will be used to illustrate the complexity of the phenomenon, and the Hungarian and Slovak border relations will serve as an example.

Due to the complexity of East-Central European relations, it is rather difficult to set up an unambiguous model for the description of the functions of borders. According to *Martinez* there are four types of cooperation between the actors in borderlands. They are as follows: (1) alienated, (2) coexistent, (3) mutually cooperating and (4) integrated borderlands. What makes his interpretation rather hard to accept for us is that in *Martinez's* view the individual border types show typical features, the most important of which are (measurable) cooperation and free movement conditioned by it. In Hungarian and Slovak relations, however, a certain duality can be seen as far as their borderlands and the countries themselves are concerned. Whereas relations between the two countries were completely cold and hostile for decades after the borders had been established, in the borderland considerable amount of personal relations were set up on friendly terms.

After 1920, the Peace Treaty, which ended World War I, the relations between the two countries were apparently hostile, because the new borders hurt the Hungarian people. According to *Martinez's* model, in such cases, stiff isolation is typical of the relations between the countries, resulting in a complete lack of cross-border cooperation (*alienated borderland*). The relations between the two countries were in fact negligible, but those living on both sides of the border could preserve their former cooperation because there were Hungarians living on the other side of the border, too. The Hungarian people had family members, relatives, friends, neighbours beyond the border, and they managed to keep in touch with them for long years by evading the vigilance of border guards. To be able to maintain legal

relations the Hungarian party put forward a proposal to open a special border station exclusively for those who lived in the borderland in both countries. This was introduced in 1927 on the Czechoslovak side (Sallai, 2004, 80).

The relations remained hostile after World War II, too. According to Martinez, in such cases the border is closed, there are almost no relations. In reality, however, these were the years of deportations, flights and population exchange between the two countries, which had been enforced by the Czechoslovak state. All this meant considerable population movement, and would fall into the 'coexistent' category according to Martinez's model. This type is not suitable for describing the above-mentioned historical situation.

In the years of waning dictatorship, the strict control over the borders was also slackening. State-organised commercial relations were completed by personal relationships, because local border stations opened again for those living in the borderland, which made their situation easier. In Martinez's model, this would be equivalent to the category of 'cooperating borderland', but in the decades of communism, in the countries of East-Central Europe this model did not function like that, as the occupant Soviet Union regulated their cooperation in the spirit of hypocritical 'brotherhood'.

This situation can be best characterised by the famous model introduced by Tóth (1996). His model defines this controlled 'socialist' form of cross-border relations much more clearly. The centralized state and party control did not make it possible to develop cross-border relations either at a local or a medium level, not even with 'sister nations'. If they were to develop such relations at all, both parties had to have their plan approved of by the central party and state authorities in both countries, and if they managed to do so, then the leading bodies checked it with the party and state leaders of the other country. If the plan was not turned down at this stage, either, then, after the agreement, the authorities of both countries gave permission to the appealing organisations to establish contacts. From then on they were allowed to maintain a representative kind of contact rather than a practical one, which was always controlled and depended on the prevailing political relations between the two countries.

This cooperative type of relations was also distorted by the fact that business relations existed exclusively at a national level, between state-owned companies, since privately-owned enterprises were forbidden by law. In this way people's communication did not mean more than exchange of goods, shopping and satisfying personal needs, because it was strictly controlled and offenders were strictly punished.

It was only after 1990, the year of the change of regime, that Martinez's 'cooperative' type of borderland began to emerge in the Carpathian Basin, after the above-mentioned antecedents. The system of twin-settlements and new relations between groups of settlements began to develop, euroregional organisations

became increasingly popular, and beyond existing personal relationships organised forms of civil relations also appeared. All this meant that different forms of exchange of goods, from shopping tourism through commercial relations to smuggling, began to spread. Therefore people passing the border were strictly checked. As a result of the accession to the European Union, in case of Hungary and Slovakia this kind of relations is developing into an equal rank mutual partnership.

The fourth category defined by Martinez is the most perfect one, that of *equal or integrated borderlands*. The neighbouring countries belonging to this type manage to overcome all kinds of obstacles that would hinder commercial, economic and social activities. The two parties become equal in all their relations. Martinez adds that in such cases they become economically equally strong, politically and militarily firm allied countries.

However, instead of clear, unambiguous relations, Martinez's model shows contradictions because he does not reckon with a situation when *the relations of the whole country and those of the borderland are different*. Realising this was important for us and this is going to be the central issue of the present paper.

Legally, both countries are members of the same alliance, both countries are members of NATO, the European Union, the OECD and other international organisations, what is more, members of the Visegrád Treaty, the treaty of four countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary). In spite of this serious doubts appear. While we are all hoping for the long-awaited equality, the asymmetries between the two countries will still hinder wholehearted cross-border cooperation.

1.1.2 Regionalisation and political interest

The border phenomenon is in close connection with a regional problem, which affects the Hungarian–Slovak border indirectly, and it is regionalisation.

What is a good border like? When can the people living in the borderland accept the existence of a border? When has a border got full legitimacy? If it can be found in a geographical area where it permanently divides a national, economic, social, cultural, religious etc. entity from another, similarly complete entity, like in the case of the Czech-Slovak and the Slovak–Polish borders. Although there was strong political intention to abolish the Czech-Slovak border and reconcile the differences between the two peoples, it failed. In 1993 the former, seemingly indissoluble union broke up. Still, the border is easily passable. The other example, today's Polish–Slovak border has been a border since 895, the Hungarian conquest of Hungary. It used to be the border of contemporary Hungary, a border which divided real regions. There are hardly any other borders in Europe where there

have been so few manifestations of hostility between those living on both sides of the border.

In such cases it is easy to see that a border not only separates countries, but also protects them against disturbing or dangerous external phenomena, and connects different qualities, besides, the borderland becomes the zone of exchange and co-operation. This kind of border can be used as an efficient filter, since the population expects the government in power to hold off undesirable phenomena and people. The Hungarian–Slovak border, however, is not like this, or only in its form, since it obviously meets the general formal criteria. But as far as its practical role is concerned, it is different. To make it more understandable the process of regionalisation has to be analysed.

Researchers of historical geography have shown that, like in other regions of Europe, in the Carpathian Basin regional specialisation of production was typical. In fact, it meant division of labour between the internal lowlands and the external edge of mountains. The activity of production zones that complemented each other changed in time and space, there were a lot of local variations, but the economic unity of the Great Hungarian Plain and the mountains surrounding it remained as long as until the disintegration of Hungary. It was the Peace Treaty in 1920 that ended World War I and brought the end of the system of relations developed by individual economic areas and those based on labour division, which were also equivalent to geographical units. This was the background of the establishment of Czechoslovakia (*Frisnyák*, 1996).

The territory of Czechoslovakia and its borders were not marked out along the boundaries of big geographical units and the aspects of economy or labour division were completely disregarded. The administrative borders were not established between the existing geographical units of the time and in no form were their differences marked. It is true, however, that with the help of the great powers, the Czechoslovak peace delegation managed to obtain a territory in which they could achieve a certain kind of labour division within 85 years. They completed the mountainous edge (the northern ring of the Carpathians) with lowland areas (Csal-lóköz, Mátyusföld, Bodrog-köz, Ung-vidék), ensuring the food supply of the new country in this way.

The area that was torn off had not been an independent unit for centuries before, it had been rather heterogeneous, and had belonged to several gravity zones. Its western part with Pozsony as its centre gravitated towards Vienna. This orientation was strengthened by the Pest–Vác–Érsekújvár [Nové Zámky]–Pozsony [Bratislava]–Vienna railway line and the waterways of the Danube. This was the main axis of communications in Hungary at that time. The route of the communications corridor followed both banks of the Danube. The area to the north of the Danube, which was torn off, had been in close connection with the whole of Hungary (*Erdősi*, 1996). The eastern part of Upper Northern Hungary, Kassa [Košice]–

Miskolc–Debrecen, had belonged, in fact, to the gravity zone of Transylvania and the Great Hungarian Plain, so e.g. the wine-growers in Hegyalja used to transport their goods via these areas to the north, to Poland and Russia. The central part, like the whole country, had belonged to the gravity zone of the central region, first of all to that of Pest-Buda (from 1873 Budapest) for centuries.

At the peace negotiations the question of language boundaries was considered to be one of no importance compared with economic interests. It would have been really difficult to take language boundaries into consideration because, although there were some big regional units within Hungary with one domineering language, (such were the mostly Slovak-speaking northern parts with mostly Slovak ethnicity), these language blocks were connected with the mostly Hungarian-speaking (though not monolingual) lowlands by wide areas where people spoke several languages. This diversity of languages was especially typical of cities. In the different periods of dynamic economic development and with certain industrial, commercial and financial activities appearing and strengthening, some non-Hungarian ethnicities (German, Greek, Czech, Moravian, Jewish etc) appeared, too.

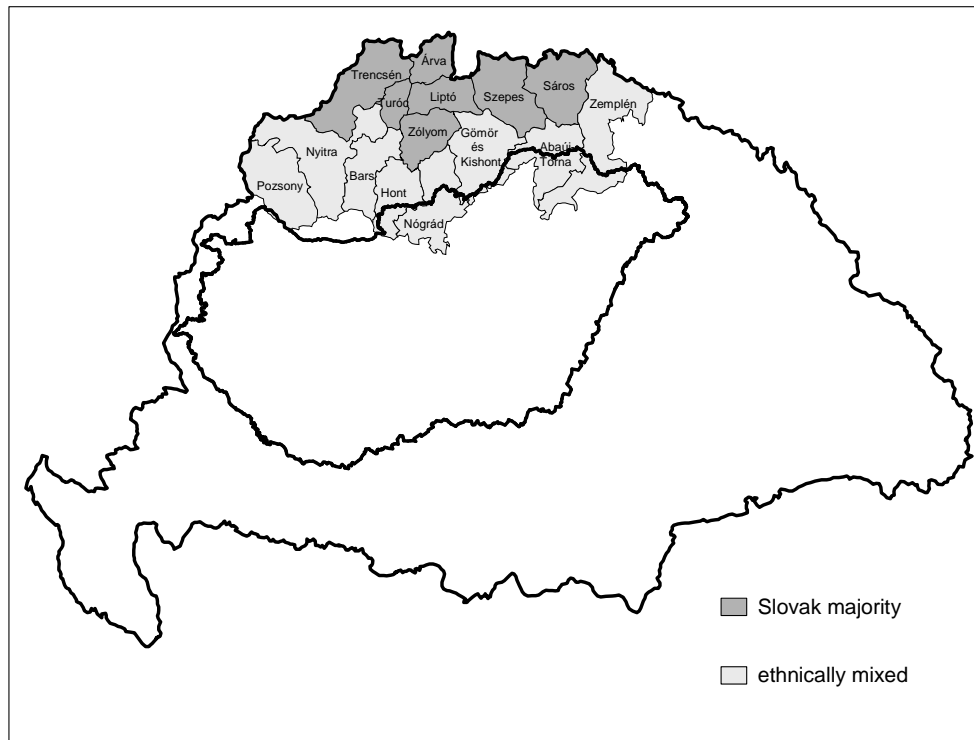
Since there was no strict language segregation in the territory of Hungary (or in a wider sense: in East-Central Europe) and therefore there was no language-based system of provinces, no ethnic regions, the language itself or ethnicity could not serve as a basis for a clear-cut separation of regions. In spite of this, the borders might have been marked out after a referendum, taking the population's will into account, but it was only a declared intention of the contracting parties of the peace treaty, and not an aim to achieve. Obtaining territories was the main motive and it did not matter which language people spoke in those territories (*Figure 2*).

The possibility of an ethnic region arose when in 1861 the memorandum drawn up by Slovak nationalists in Turócszentmárton (*Desires of the National Assembly of the Slavs (Slovaks) in Upper Hungary*) included a list of the counties where they wanted to achieve the exclusive use of the Slovak language.

The list included the 'purest' Slav counties, such as Trencsén [Trenčín], Árva [Orava], Turóc [Turiec], Zólyom [Zvolen], Liptó [Liptov], Szepes [Spiš] and Sáros [Šariš] counties, as well as the counties where Hungarians and Slovaks lived together (ethnically mixed counties). Such counties were Pozsony [Bratislava], Nyitra [Nitra], Bars [Tekov], Hont [Hont], Nógrád [Novohrad], Gömör [Gemer], Torna [Turna], Abaúj [Abov] and Zemplén [Zemplín]. The latter ones were considered suitable for separating the two ethnicities by an administrative border or being reorganised according to the distribution of ethnicities, or being attached to the neighbouring Slav counties. This plan also admitted that even in the counties with a predominantly Slav population Hungarian and Slav ethnicities mixed to an extent that it was impossible for the Slav ethnicity to have a separate Upper-Hungarian Slav area (hornouhorské slovenské okolie) accepted (*Pajkossy, 2003, 423–430*).

Figure 2

Counties with Slovak majority and mixed ethnicities as laid down in the 1861 memorandum of Turócszentmárton [Martin]



Source: Edited by the author.

Federation on the basis of the areas inhabited by different ethnicities could not be implemented at this time partly because of the Hungarian–Austrian conflict, (the supporters of the compromise stood up for the Austrian–Hungarian dualistic system, whereas those who wanted independence insisted on the secession from Austria, but they were never in power), partly because the aspirations of other ethnicities were much weaker than those of the Hungarians. Ethnicities needed some external power to support them. This was what happened at the end of World War I, when nationalistic revolutions broke out with the strong support of the great powers.

There were no administrative regions in Hungary, either. In the bourgeois era, following the compromise of 1867, order in administration was achieved by abol-

ishing former feudal privileges (e.g. Jazygians, Cumanians), creating a uniform system of counties on the basis of historical traditions. This means that neither economy nor linguistic or ethnic differences were so strong as to influence the former boundaries of the counties. When the borders were established after North Hungary had been annexed, there were no regions, provinces or administrative units, and no subnational governance bodies that might have been referred to, whose boundaries might have been taken into consideration, to whose boundaries the borders of Slovakia might have been adjusted.

It should be pointed out that in spite of the modernisation ambitions of the bourgeois state in the Hungary of the time, the importance of the local, small regional identity was extremely strong. These small regions adjusted themselves mostly to counties, but it is also true the other way round, county boundaries were adjusted to small regions.

The lack of a homogeneous region shows that the territory of today's Slovakia was not a regional, social, economic, administrative or linguistic etc. unit. The manifold names referring to the area also show the complexity of this part of the country. The name *Felvidék* [Upper-Northern Hungary] appeared in the 19th century, and then it referred to the high mountains close to the Polish border, mostly inhabited by several ethnicities, and it was only after 1920 that it gained a political and administrative meaning. Since then it has denoted the whole of Slovakia's territory, including the part of the Kisalföld (i.e. the plain in North-Western Hungary) to the north of the Danube (*Paládi-Kovács* 2003, 21–55). The present paper uses the name Upper-Northern Hungary as a synonym for Slovakia.

To sum it up, it can be stated that the borders of the new Czechoslovak state were not marked out on the basis of already existing administrative borders of an existing homogeneous region, but a new country was established, which included parts of different regions from which they intended to create a region, a social, economic, ethnic and cultural unit. This could happen because Hungary's regionalisation in the bourgeois era had just begun but could not be completed. After 1920 it was Czechoslovakia's main ambition and political and economic aim and since 1993 it has been that of Slovakia to turn the acquired territory into an indivisible unit. The present paper is to prove that Slovakia, following the activity of its predecessor, Czechoslovakia, has made considerable progress in implementing a new, internal kind of regionalisation, which will be irreversible, even after the borders have been abolished, or perhaps some (local) modifications will be carried out.

The duality, which has been typical so far, will prevail in the future, too, which means that the existing and developing relations between Hungary and Slovakia will remain at an international level and will only be completed by cross-border relations. Large investments of Slovak regional development are realised in the northern parts inhabited by Slovak people leaving the complementary task of supplying the country with agricultural products to the southern lowlands.

2 Factors affecting cross-border relations between Hungary and Slovakia

2.1 Effects of forming a country

2.1.1 The History of Slovakia and the Slovak People

The Slovak nation emerged within the Hungarian Kingdom in the course of centuries as different Slavic peoples merged into each other. On the basis of the above-mentioned memorandum drawn up in Túrócszentmárton [Martin] in 1861, their main settlements were in the counties of the Upper-Northern Hungary of the time. As the census of 1880 shows, in the Hungarian Empire there were 1,864,529 people who were Slovak according to their mother tongue. This number increased to 2,008,774 until 1900, but then it began to decrease. In 1910 there were only 1,967,970 Slovaks registered. 83.62%, that is 1,645,667 of them lived in the counties mentioned in the memorandum (*Table 1*).

At the time of the census of 1910, there were more than 3 million people living in the fifteen counties of Upper-Northern Hungary. Only 35.13% of them were Hungarians and 54.34% were Slovaks according to their mother tongue. *Above the linguistic border*, where the proportion of Slovaks was far more than 50%, this difference was even more striking. In the seven counties belonging to this part of the country, the proportion of the 772,000 Slovaks was 76.28% compared to the proportion of the 78,000 Hungarians, which was 7.74%. In Nyitra [Nitra], one of the eight counties *under the Slovak linguistic border*, this proportion was 70.97%, but it was more than 50% in Bars county, too, and in Pozsony county it was just 0.5 per cent fewer than 50%. Besides, this area is multinational also because, apart from the two big nations, there was a high number of Germans living here, but there were also Ruthenians, Poles, Czech–Moravians, Rumanians, Serbs, Croats, Gypsies, and even a small number of English, Italians, French, Russians, etc. In this period, there were more and more people belonging to the bourgeoisie. The result of this was the spreading of the language of Hungarians, the dominant nation. This process was typical of the whole country, as well as of the Upper-Northern regions. That is why the proportion of the Hungarians increased within the population in all the fifteen counties. The percentage of the Slovak ethnic population decreased because of the high rate of emigration and also as a result of the migration within the country around the turn of the century. The same thing happened to other ethnicities living close to the borders as well. The number of Hungarians was increased by the migration within the country and, among other

things, by the assimilation of the Jews. Assimilation of the Slovak population was

Table 1
Number and proportion of the people with Hungarian and Slovak as their mother tongue in Upper-Northern Hungary, between 1880 and 1910

County	The whole population number of inhabitants	Hungarian mother tongue				Slovak mother tongue			
		number of inhabitants	%	changes in their proportion		number of inhabitants	%	changes in their proportion	
				within the population, %	compared with the proportion of Hungarians, %			within the population, %	compared with the proportion of Slovaks, %
1910	1910	1910	1880–1910	1880–1910	1910	1910	1880–1910	1880–1910	
Trencsény [Trenčín]	310,437	13204	4.25	3.17	496.20	284,770	91.73	-2.22	123.72
Árva [Orava]	78,745	2000	2.54	2.09	543.48	59,096	75.05	-21.22	75.19
Túróc [Turiec]	55,703	5560	9.98	7.58	503.62	38,432	68.99	-7.58	109.26
Liptó [Liptov]	86,906	4365	5.02	3.03	292.76	78,098	89.86	-3.80	111.53
Zólyom [Zvolen]	133,653	16509	12.35	9.66	598.80	113,294	84.77	-8.73	118.22
Sáros [Šariš]	174,620	18088	10.36	7.77	415.24	101,855	58.33	-12.51	85.58
Szepes [Spiš]	172,867	18658	10.79	8.67	508.12	97,077	56.16	-1.83	96.84
Subtotal	1,012,931	78384	7.74	5.90	477.69	772,622	76.28	-5.58	105.97
Pozsony [Bratislava]	311,527	131,662	42.26	3.70	129.92	154,344	49.54	-0.77	116.72
Nyitra [Nitra]	457,455	100,324	21.93	6.67	178.20	324,664	70.97	-2.97	119.06
Bars [Tekov]	178,500	62,022	34.75	4.37	143.10	97,824	54.80	-2.25	120.17
Hont [Hont]	117,256	66,875	57.03	8.10	135.57	43,181	36.83	-7.11	97.49
Nógrád [Novohrad]	261,517	197,670	75.59	11.57	161.08	58,337	22.31	-10.00	94.19
Gömör/Kis-Hont [Gemér-Malohont]	188,098	109,994	58.48	7.53	127.69	72,232	38.40	-5.94	96.36
Abauj-Torna [Abov-Turna]	158,077	123,318	78.01	11.17	120.99	29,520	18.67	-8.40	71.51
Zemplén [Zemplín]	343,194	193,794	56.47	11.66	155.82	92,943	27.08	-11.38	87.06
Subtotal	2,015,624	985,659	48.90	7.76	143.80	873,045	43.31	-5.64	107.05
Total	3,028,555	1,064,043	35.13			1,645,667	54.34		

Sources: MSK (1909) pp. 102–103; MSK (1910) pp. 112–117.

typical of intellectuals and working class people who moved to towns. Besides economic, cultural, and modernisational influence, education also played an important role in assimilation. It was mostly due to the multilingual citizens of towns that people living in such a multilingual area could change their ethnicity easily, whoever came into power.

Consequently, the number of the Slovak agrarian population began to decrease, and the number of bourgeois citizens increased. As a result of industrialization, it was especially working class people whose number increased, but the rate of the industrial population belonging to the bourgeoisie became considerable as well. However, the remarkably small number of Slovak intellectuals did not increase, and almost all of them were priests or schoolmasters. As a result of the large-scale migration within the country is that 13% of all industrial workers in Hungary were Slovak according to their mother tongue. Budapest became one of the main centres of the Slovak people, as there were 20,359 inhabitants who declared themselves Slovak according to their mother tongue, but on the basis of other statistics it turns out that there were about 50,000 Slovak industrial workers or builders in the capital. It was a sign of Slovak bourgeois development that Slovak people had the second most highly developed economy and society of all national ethnicities after the Germans (*Hanák*, 1978, 1019).

The process of Slovak people becoming a nation took place in reaction to the events happening when the Hungarian nation emerged. The national movements of Slovak intellectuals could not gain enough political importance to enforce changes in the Hungarian political establishment. There were just few politicians of the Slovak National Party, which was founded in 1871, and they were not strong enough to enforce either the idea of Slovak autonomy, which, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, had always been present after 1848–1849, or the federalization of the country on an ethnic basis (*Kiss*, 1994).

The Slovak national movement also proved to be weak when they were unable to force their independence on the Czech supremacy. Furthermore, Czech nationalism even refused to recognise the existence of the independent Slovak nation (they looked upon the Slovak language as a Czech dialect). They continued their struggle for national independence and autonomy in the new state, too.

In his memorandum entitled *Independent Bohemia*, Thomas G. Masaryk, then an emigrant Czech politician, announced the necessity of the existence of a future Czechoslovak state that would include Upper-Northern Hungary and Kisalföld as well. Owing to the persistent diplomacy of the Czech emigration and especially the (French) interests of the Allies, they recognised the new state, which became one of the small states established from the Austrian–Hungarian Monarchy. With this method, the victorious powers eliminated one of the great European powers of the age, and with the help of the national states, which emerged as succession states,

they established a protective zone, a sanitary line (cordon sanitaire) against the Soviet Union, which had been founded in 1917.

The Slovak National Council, which was set up in Túrócszentmárton (Martin) in 1918, declared the accession of the Slovak people to the new state. That was how the new struggle of the Slovaks began. At the time of historical changes, they raised their demands independently, as a partner with equal rights, but as a part of the new establishment, they became subordinate to the Czechs (*Table 2*).

According to the Trianon Peace Treaty (1920) the whole territory of ten Hungarian counties (*Árva, Liptó, Turóc, Szepes, Sáros, Trencsén, Pozsony, Nyitra, Bars and Zólyom*) was attached to the Czechoslovak state. Seven of these (in italics) were above the Slovak linguistic border, but some *Árva* and *Szepes* settlements with Polish inhabitants were annexed to Poland. From the ethnically mixed territories, mentioned in the memorandum drawn up in 1861, the whole of *Bars* and *Nyitra* counties and the overwhelming part of *Pozsony* county were lost. Larger or smaller parts of eight further counties (*Esztergom, Komárom, Hont, Nógrád, Gömör, Zemplén, Abaúj-Torna* and *Ung*) were annexed to the Czechoslovak Republic. Fragments of *Győr* and *Moson* counties became parts of the new state, too. As these territories are very small, they are not involved in the table above. According to the census of 1910, there were 3,461,000 people living in a territory of 59,888 km² in 18 counties. 85.5% of this territory, that is 51,208 km², was given to the new state with 2,879,000 people, that is 83.2% of the population concerned.

The proportions of the mixed ethnicities that the annexed territory composed of can be shown by the data of the national census taken in Czechoslovakia in 1930. In compliance with the ideology of the Czech political ruling class, which was the real organizer of the state, the inhabitants whose mother tongue was Slovak were not separated from the Czechs but they were all regarded as Czechoslovaks by nationality. The Ruthenians of the age were now called Russian or Little Russian. Neither did they make any distinction between Serbs and Croats (*Tabel 3*).

The change in power brought a reduction in the proportion of Hungarian ethnic groups in the first place. In February 1921, there were 744,621 Czechoslovak citizens in Czechoslovakia who were Hungarians by ethnicity. 634,827 of them lived in Slovakia, 103,690 in Sub-Carpathia and 6,104 in Bohemia and Moravia. Compared with this, in 1930 there were far fewer people, only 719,000 who declared themselves Hungarian. 592,000 of them lived in Slovakia, 116,000 in Sub-Carpathia and 11,000 in Czech territories. These data also involve the Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia who were put into the category „foreigners”, since their citizenship was undetermined (*Popély, 1998*).

Table 2
Retained and lost territories and population in 1920 according to the national census of 1910

County	Total		Retained		Retained		Detached		Gain of the Slovaks	
	km ²	number of inhabitants	km ²	%	number of inhabitants	%	km ²	%	number of inhabitants	%
Trencsén [Trenčín]	4,456	310,437	–	–	–	–	4,456	100.0	310,437	100.0
Árva [Orava]	2,019	78,745	–	–	–	–	2,019	100.0	78,745	100.0
Túróc [Turiec]	1,123	55,703	–	–	–	–	1,123	100.0	55,703	100.0
Liptó [Liptov]	2,246	86,906	–	–	–	–	2,246	100.0	86,906	100.0
Zólyom [Zvolen]	2,634	133,653	–	–	–	–	2,634	100.0	133,653	100.0
Sáros [Šariš]	3,652	174,620	–	–	–	–	3,652	100.0	174,620	100.0
Szepes [Spiš]	3,654	172,867	–	–	–	–	3,654	100.0	172,867	100.0
Subtotal	19,784	1,012,931	–	–	–	–	19,784	100.0	1,012,931	100.0
Pozsony [Bratislava]	4,295	311,527	47	1.1	1,359	0.4	4,248	98.9	310,168	99.6
Nyitra [Nitra]	5,519	457,455	–	–	–	–	5,519	100	457,455	100.0
Komárom [Komarno]	2,802	179,513	1,438	51.3	97,766	54.5	1,364	48.7	81,747	45.5
Esztergom	1,077	90,817	532	49.4	53,725	59.2	,545	50.6	37,092	40.8
Bars [Tekov]	2,724	178,500	–	–	–	–	2,724	100	178,500	100.0
Hont [Hont]	2,545	117,256	459	18	25,360	21.6	2,086	82	91,896	78.4
Nógrád [Novohrad]	4,128	261,517	2,401	58.2	168,853	64.6	1,727	41.8	92,664	35.4
Gömör/Kis-Hont [Gemer-Malohont]	4,279	188,098	340	7.9	16,563	8.8	3,939	92.1	171,535	91.2
Abaúj-Torna [Abov-Turna]	3,223	158,077	1,672	51.9	83,347	52.7	1,551	48.1	74,730	47.3
Ung [Už]	3,230	162,089	16	0.5	1,303	0.8	3,214	99.5	160,786	99.2
Zemplén [Zemplín]	6,282	343,194	1,775	28.3	133,431	38.9	4,507	71.7	209,763	61.1
Subtotal	40,104	2,448,043	8,680	21.6	581,707	23.8	31,424	78.4	1,866,336	76.2
Total	59,888	3,460,974	8,680	21.6	581,707	23.8	51,208	85.5	2,879,267	83.2

Source: MSK (1920) p. 5.

Table 3

The division of the population according to ethnicity (thousand people)
*The data of the Czechoslovak national census of 1930**

Ethnic groups	Bohemia	Moravia	Slovakia	Sub-Carpathia	Total	%
“Czechoslovak”	4732	2617	2373	34	9756	66.24
Russian, Little Russian	17	6	95	451	569	3.86
German	2326	824	155	14	3319	22.53
Hungarian	8	3	592	116	719	4.89
Jewish	16	21	73	95	205	1.39
Polish	3	89	7	1	100	0.68
Gypsy	–	–	31	1	32	0.23
Rumanian	1	–	1	13	15	0.09
Yugoslav	2	3	1	–	6	0.04
other	4	2	2	–	8	0.05
Total:	7109	3565	3330	725	14729	100.00

* Between 1927 and 1939 the above mentioned four territories were the administrative units below the national level in Czechoslovakia.

Source: *Csehszlovákia II.*

The overwhelming majority of the Hungarians who became the inhabitants of Slovakia have been living in the zone along the Hungarian-Slovak border from Pozsony [Bratislava] to Nagykapos [Veľké Kapušany], up to the present day. However, the number of Hungarian inhabitants was also considerable in the towns of Upper-Northern Hungary, which are to be found in counties with a Slovak majority like Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica], Trencsény [Trenčín], Eperjes [Prešov] or Késmárk [Kežmarok]. All in all, in contradiction with the propagated aim of establishing a national state, a new multinational country emerged carrying a lot of unsolved social and economic problems in itself.

In 1938 the newly established state collapsed. The four-power Munich conference decided that the Sudeten should belong to Germany, a group of Slovak politicians declared the Slovak autonomy in Zsolna [Žilina], and in autumn, most of the Czechoslovak territories with Hungarian population were returned to Hungary in accordance with the decision taken at the first Vienna Court of Arbitration. The next year, in 1939, the Slovak Parliament voted for the establishment of the independent Slovak state. In the same year the Hungarian troops occupied Sub-Carpathia that had belonged to Czechoslovakia before. It was not only the logic of the German power that led to the disintegration, but also the dissatisfaction of the Slovaks. In Andrej Hlinka’s words, when Czechoslovakia was established, the Slovak nation was buried alive.

Between 1920 and 1945, the Slovak society underwent considerable development. The proportion of those who worked as intellectuals, in offices or in service industries grew dramatically. The fact that 90% of the civil servants were of Slovak ethnicity and the fast development of this social layer show that the Slovak society could easily recover from the 'Magyarization' policy of the dualistic era, and it was because the essence of this policy was not the homogenisation of these ethnic groups, but rather the implementation of dominance. Therefore the methods were also far from the extremely rough, aggressive atrocities of the 20th century. During these 25 years, the proportion of the agrarian population decreased, but, as a result of the land reform, the structure of ownership changed considerably. Confiscating the lands of Hungarian farmers and distributing them among the Slovaks (and Czechs) resulted in the emergence of a considerable agrarian Slovak middle class. This was how they began to break up contiguous Hungarian territories. On the lands of the Hungarians that belonged to Slovak and Czech settlers now, 55 new settlements and 99 new settlements attached to already existing villages, were established in territories with a Hungarian majority (*Szarka*, 165).

On April 5th 1945 Beneš announced the government programme in the liberated Kassa. In this he declared all the Hungarians and the Germans living in Slovakia war criminals collectively. He ordered by decree that the properties of Hungarians, Germans, traitors and collaborators must be taken over by the state, and in another decree they were denationalized. The Great Powers did not allow them to expel the Hungarians from the country, but in 1946, the Hungarian government had to accept the population exchange. The government reduced the percentage of the Hungarian ethnic population by deporting them to Bohemia, expelling them, forcing re-Slovakisation on them, (those who declared themselves Slovaks could get back their citizenship and the rights belonging to it: property, home, job, pension, etc.), and in many other ways.

In 1948 the communists took over control in Czechoslovakia. The events that had happened until that time, that is the establishment of the autonomous Slovakia, resulted in the fact that the separation of the Czech and the Slovak nations became unquestionable. However, they could not achieve political separation on the state level because communists did not even allow the establishment of a federal state modelling the Soviet system (*Zvara-Dusek* 1985, 5–22). This happened in 1968 only. The problems of the Slovak population were simplified into problems of economic and cultural investments during the 40 years of dictatorship (*Szarka*, 194–201).

Czechoslovakia, like other countries in the Soviet sphere of interest, had poor relations with the countries beyond the Iron Curtain or with the fraternal, communist countries. Only the borders of the most fraternal Soviet Union were stricter than that. The closed nature of their political system and their efforts to be economically independent are proofs of the communist system's inability to develop.

Besides, in most of their countries, especially in Czechoslovakia, there was extremely rough nationalism. In the Czech part of the country, it manifested itself in anti-German feelings, in the Slovak part it meant anti-Czech and anti-German feelings, but their anti-Hungarian feelings were the strongest.

After the 1956 uprisings in Poland and Hungary, the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 had the only result that from October 27th 1968, Czechoslovakia became a federal state, though their proclaimed aim had been to „democratise communism”. This was a great achievement of Slovak nationalism, a considerable step towards overcoming historical asymmetries. As a result, the number of Slovak bureaucrats increased both in the federal and in the Slovak governing bodies. A new period began when they wanted to reconcile differences between the two parts of the country and promote economic and cultural closing up.

Consequently, it is no wonder that due to political, ideological, social and mental differences coming to light in the course of the 1988–1989 change of system in Czechoslovakia, the evolving new possibilities of development were different as well. After the 1990 parliamentary elections, the new Czech-Slovak Federal Republic was established. (The most heated debate was about the use or omission of the hyphen.) In the years of the collapse of the communist regime, national conflicts arose, and nationalism that had been under „regulated control” (that is „controlled by the party state”) before, now blazed up openly. In the course of the change of system, the anti-Czech feelings led to the collapse of the state. On the motion of Slovak nationalist political parties, Slovakia became independent after January 1st 1993. Achieving independence was a milestone in the development of the Slovak nation. The struggle against their much stronger enemies proved to be successful. Slovakia was recognized as a nation with equal rights.

At first Slovakia followed a policy of isolation with many internal political scandals, an example of which was the country’s dilemma: joining the integration process of the European Union, maintaining neutrality, or cooperating with Russia, representing the force of the large Slavic culture (*Ivanička*, 1998).

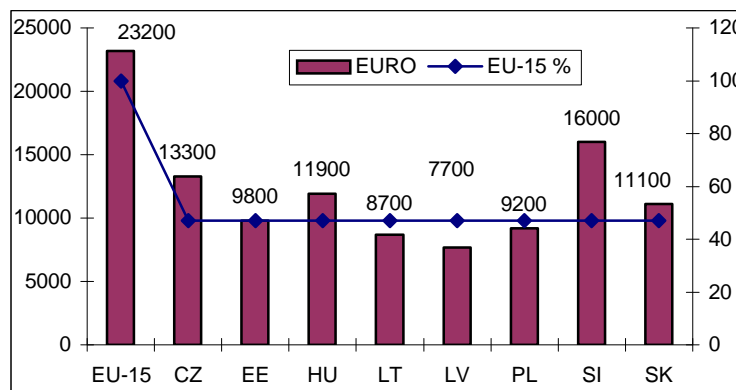
1998 can be considered as a sharp change, when the Christian-Democratic political forces could come to power. The conservative right-wing political parties could make themselves accepted by the European Union as well. They introduced reforms by which Slovakia could close up to European standards. Though the reason why Slovakia could join the European Union was not its highly-developed bourgeois democracy but rather the more economical borderlines marked out in Schengen, (the Slovak–Ukrainian border is only 98.5 km long. If Slovakia had been left out of the expansion, the new border would have been 1570 km long). From May 1st 2004, Slovakia became a member of the European Union with equal rights.

2.1.2 Similarities and differences between the two countries

Due to their centuries-long common past there are a lot of similarities between Hungary and Slovakia, since – as we have pointed out – the new state was torn out of the territory of the historical Hungary. This similarity can be seen especially well when comparing macroeconomic data. Similarities and differences can best be illustrated by comparing the different indexes of development of the former 15 member states of the European Union and the 8 new member states that joined in 2004 (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Economic development of the old and new member states on the basis of their GDP in 2001



Note: Cz: the Czech Republic, EE: Esthonia, HU: Hungary, LT: Latvia, LV: Lithuania, PL: Poland, SL: Slovenia, SK: Slovakia.

Source: Statistics in focus, 2002.

All the new member states are similar to each other (average: €10,963) rather than to the old member states, which have much higher economic performance (average: €23,200). Of the new member states Hungary (€11,900) and Slovakia (€11,100) show a similar degree of development.

Like all accession states, Hungary and Slovakia are in a period of transition, too. In the past one and a half decades we have witnessed continuous and quick changes. As an example employment could be mentioned, which involves both social and economic changes. In the past years the internal structure of the employed has changed. The proportion of those working in agriculture and in industry has decreased considerably, whereas that of those working in the field of

services has increased. This is typical of both countries with the proportions being a bit different. The largest difference can be seen in the proportion of the employed within the whole population (*Table 4*).

Table 4

*Divisions according to the number of the employed,
 schooling and ethnicity, %*

Categories	Indicators	Hungary	Slovakia
Proportion of the employed in	agriculture	5.50	5.38
	industry and construction industry	32.86	27.54
	services	61.64	67.08
	within the population	36.19	51.08
According to education:	secondary education with a school-leaving exam	19.12	25.62
	higher education, with a university degree	9.16	7.87
	proportion of those under 16	19.19	20.07
Ethnical proportions	Hungarian	94.40	9.68
	Slovak	0.38	85.79
	Gypsy	2.02	1.67

Sources: Data of the national census in 2001. Central Statistical Office Budapest. Štatistický úrad SR Bratislava.

As regards education the changes have been similar, however, due to the differences in the educational systems, the proportion of people with secondary education is higher in Slovakia than in Hungary. Aging and the decreasing proportion of young people cause a demographic problem in both countries. What they also have in common is that both countries have several ethnicities but Hungary is more homogeneous from this point of view than Slovakia. The proportion of the gypsy population has increased considerably in both countries, which is indicated by the official statistics but neither country can provide exact data.

On microregional level, however, there are considerable differences behind these similarities. The following chapters will show that the differences have their own internal logic, because it was not the political, economic, social etc. processes of development that led to them, but the intention controlled from above. Both Slovak administration and the development of economy have played and are playing an important part in territorial differences. It cannot be objected to, on the contrary, it is completely acceptable if a country makes decisions about its future development in its own interests, but in this case the decisions have been strongly motivated by the extraordinary conditions in which the country itself could emerge.

Table 5
Ethnicity and mother tongue in Slovakia according to the national census in 2001

Region	Population	Slovak		Slovak mother tongue		Difference	Hungarian		Hungarian mother tongue		Difference
	head	head	%	head	%	%	head	%	head	%	%
Pozsony/Bratislava	599,015	546,685	91.26	540,483	90.23	-1.04	27,434	4.58	31,070	5.19	0.61
Nagyszombat/ Trnava	551,003	553,865	83.65	548,520	82.84	-0.81	130,740	23.73	133,904	24.30	0.57
Nyitra/Nitra	713,422	626,746	81.82	596,818	77.91	-3.91	196,609	27.56	211,595	29.66	2.10
Trencsén/Trenčín	605,582	499,761	70.05	482,538	67.64	-2.41	1,058	0.17	1,533	0.25	0.08
Zsolna/Žilina	692,332	716,441	90.69	677,773	85.80	-4.89	660	0.10	915	0.13	0.04
Besztercebánya/ Banská Bystrica	662,121	589,344	97.32	588,974	97.26	-0.06	77,795	11.75	88,377	13.35	1.60
Kassa/ Košice	766,012	407,246	73.91	403,062	73.15	-0.76	85,415	11.15	104,181	13.60	2.45
Eperjes/ Prešov	789,968	674,766	97.46	674,049	97.36	-0.10	817	0.10	1,354	0.17	0.07
Total	5,379,455	4,614,854	85.79	4,512,217	83.88	-1.91	520,528	9.68	572,929	10.65	0.97

Source: National census, 2001. Štatistický úrad SR Bratislava.

2.2 Administration: conflict of nationalism and rationalism

2.2.1 Administration before 1990

Czechoslovakia, which emerged after the Peace Treaty in 1920, made and later Slovakia (1939–1945, 1993–) has been introducing remarkably frequent reforms in the administration system. The reason for this is partly that the changing state forms affect both the territorial division of administration and the extent to which competence was taken over by lower levels of administration. This led to significant differences between the democratic administration of the bourgeois Czechoslovakia and the centralized administration of the communist dictatorship. The other remarkable factor is that although Czechoslovakia became a state with a lot of ethnic groups, it manifested itself neither in their ideology, nor in their administration, nor in their everyday practice. What is more, it was an ambition of the Czech nationalism to form a homogeneous, one-nationality state, i.e. a state of Czechoslovak nationality. The most important obstacle of this was the presence of the German (3,319,000 people, 22.53%) and the Hungarian minorities (719,000 people, 4.89%) according to the national census in 1930. It was typical of the strong Czech nationalism of the new state (and of the weakness of the Slovak party) that it was only after a long struggle that they began to recognize the Slovak ethnicity, too. The new state often changed the territorial division of its administration in order to develop and strengthen its own power and make other ethnic groups weaker (*Table 6*).

Table 6

Administration system in the territory of today's Slovakia

Year	Large territorial unit	Small territorial unit (district)
1918	8 counties + 12 fragments of counties	97
1920	16 counties	95
1923	6 large counties	77 + Pozsony and Kassa
1928	1 province	77 + Pozsony and Kassa
1939	6 counties	58 + Pozsony
1945	–	77 + Pozsony and Kassa
1949	6 regions	90 + Pozsony and Kassa
1960	3 regions	32
1969	4 regions	36 + Pozsony and Kassa
1991	–	121 small districts (obvod)
1996	8 regions (kraj)	79 districts (okres)
2004	8 regions (kraj)	50 small districts (obvod)

Source: Edited by the author on the basis of Petöcz (1998) and Kocsis (2002).

After the territories had been occupied, the existing counties were turned into 16 units and then on January 1st 1923 the system of large counties was introduced. Six large counties were established with new internal boundaries in a way that nowhere in the eastern, Slovak territories should Hungarian people be in majority (*Popély, 1995*).

The system of large counties was turned into the system of provinces in 1928. The eastern part of the Czechoslovakia of the time was divided into two provinces: Slovakia and Sub-Carpathia. The division into districts remained and the two big cities, Pozsony [Bratislava] and Kassa [Košice] were also districts. The new system of administration in the independent Slovak state, which was established in 1939, restored the system of large counties. Again, there were six counties, their boundaries were modified without the southern territories that had been reannexed to Hungary.

In 1945 Czechoslovakia was established again, this time without Sub-Carpathia. The new districts were reorganised, but the counties were not. This, however, did not bring more democratic conditions for ethnicities, and it was because of the Beneš-decrees. From January 1949, after the communists had come to power, a new administration system was introduced again. The six administrative units were restored again, this time they were called regions. The number of districts increased, but the number of districts with Hungarian majority decreased because Hungarian people had been deported or intimidated. At the session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia on September 27–29 1948, Viliam Široký said proudly: ‘As a result of our policy that we have been following since 1945, all our southern districts have overwhelming Slovak majority’ (*Popély, 2001. 153*).

In the decades of communism administration functioned as the executive organ of the central power. The so-called national committees (councils) did not apply the principle of free elections, not even formally. In 1960 there was a large-scale centralisation. The number of regions decreased to 3 and that of districts to 32. The boundaries of regions were drawn in a way that it was only in western Slovakia where the proportion of Hungarian people exceeded 20%, in all other areas it was lower than 10%. In 1969 Pozsony [Bratislava] was declared a separate region and four districts were organised within the town.

2.2.2 Administration between 1990 and 2002

It was the revolution in 1989 that made it possible for Czechoslovakia to get rid of the administrative system of the communist era. The Czech and Slovak National Council, which was set up after the elections in 1990, abolished the system of national councils. It introduced a municipality system that was operated on the prin-

ciple of bourgeois democracy and the multi-party system. Administration and the elected local governments of towns and villages were separated by the Settlement Act 369/1990. The administration system of the dictatorship started to be eliminated and the tradition of municipalities restored, but only the level of settlements, i.e. towns and villages were granted self-governing rights. At the district level of administration the system of state authorities remained. Since then the extension of the municipality system has been going on amid continuous political conflicts.

Since 1990, local governments have been entitled to make decisions regarding the inner organisational and operative order of their own offices in Slovakia, too, and adjust them to local environment. This was when the three (and from 1969 with Pozsony four) large regions were abolished. The 32 districts established in 1960 and increased to 38 in 1969, existed till 1996, but in 1990 smaller units, small districts (*obvody*) were set up within them. Below the district level, the number of small districts was 121 until June 1996.

The reason why administrative reforms were delayed was that the most important event in the Czech home politics was the ambition of Slovak nationalists to secede. Slovakia, which became independent in 1993, started to reform its administration applying the centralisation principles of nationalists.

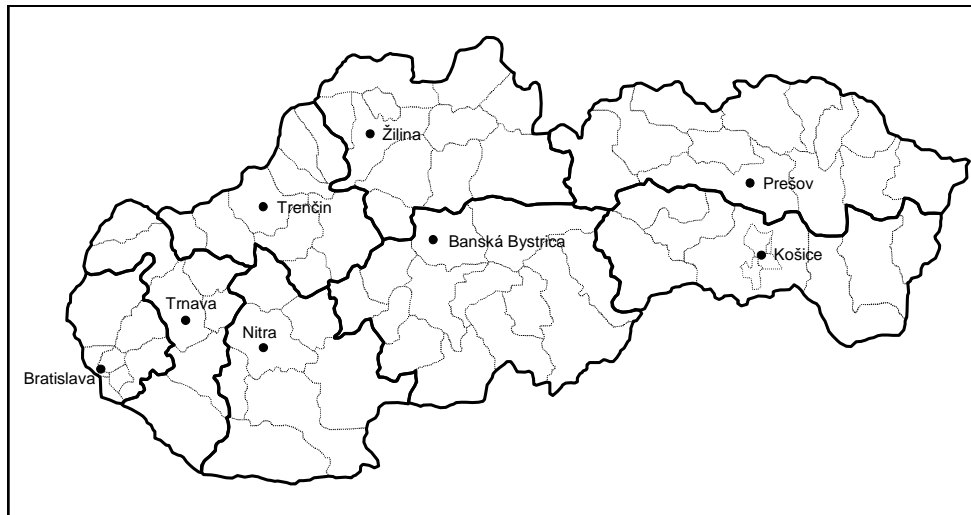
After long debates a new administrative division was introduced in 1996. By reforming the administration system, the Slovak nationalist parties governing at that time established the organisational system of a centralising policy on the one hand and, on the other hand, with the new division, wanted to make the constituencies of the opposition weaker. Since the most consistent supporters of reforms were members of the Christian Democratic opposition and the political parties representing Hungarian people, there were several reasons why Hungarians had to be divided. As the Act 221/1996 and the governmental regulation 285/1996 were of utmost importance in the history of Slovak administration, we have to emphasize that the division of the territories inhabited by Hungarian people was only one reason for the new structure, the other one was of merely political and electoral nature.

The organisation of administration shows that behind the electoral and ethnic conflicts there is the conflict between the nationalist political groups that support centralisation and the rational ones that claim for modernisation and want to carry out reforms. The conflict of Slovak nationalists and rationalists and their joining forces against Hungarian people provided topics of political debates between them but while carrying out administrative reforms, the nationalist centralizing ambition was much more important than differences in economic development, historical traditions, the needs of the population, the principle of democracy or autonomy.

As a result of long debates the country was divided into 8 regions (*kraj*) and 79 districts (*okres*) in 1996. At that time the reform affected only the territorial division (*Petőcz*, 1998; *Kocsis*, 1996, 2002) (*Figure 4*).

Figure 4

Boundaries of Slovak regions and districts in 1996



Source: Edited by the author.

The map shows that the Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] and Eperjes [Prešov] regions are disproportionately big compared with other regions. By establishing the Eperjes [Prešov] region the historical Szepesség [Spiš] (in German: Zips) was split into two parts because in this region the nationalist parties were defeated both in the local and in the general elections. At the same time Trenčsén [Trenčín] County was also established from the fractions of several former counties surrounding it, so that those voting for the Mečiar-party should be rewarded with a new region.

In the case of Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica] the motive was again the conflict between governing party and opposition, but here the opposition, the reformers, the consistent supporters of democratic changes were Hungarian people. That was the reason why the southern parts mostly inhabited by Hungarian people were attached to the northern parts with Slovak majority and instead of Rimaszombat [Rimavská Sobota] (which had been the county seat for centuries) Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica], which can be found in the north, in a Slovak area, became the new centre.

The same principle was applied when the two towns, Nagyszombat [Trnava] and Nyitra [Nitra] became regional centres and when regions under the same names were established, with southern settlements with Hungarian majority having been attached to them. By marking the boundaries of the two latter regions, Csallóköz, which had Hungarian majority, was split into two big parts, and a small

third part was attached to the Pozsony [Bratislava] region. By setting up arbitrary boundaries they succeeded in keeping the proportion of Hungarian people low in the new administrative division (*Table 7*).

By continuously changing its administrative system, Slovakia infringed on the international principle, stipulating the individual countries to refrain from changing the proportions of ethnicities in the areas inhabited by them, from the policy and practice of assimilation and they have to make autonomy in administration possible for ethnicities. These principles are laid down in Article 16 of the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities², Article 15, paragraph 2 item d) of the Hungarian-Slovak treaty³, and the recommendation Nr. 1201 of the parliamentary general assembly of the European Council⁴.

The degree and prevalence of Slovak nationalism can be exemplified by the fact that the extremely nationalistic Mečiar-cabinet signed the Hungarian and Slovak treaty, because this was how he meant to ensure the invulnerability of the borders of the new state, (since they think it might be threatened by Hungary). Besides, the opposition party, the Slovak Democratic Coalition, was willing to sign an electoral alliance with the Hungarian Coalition Party in 1997 only after the Hungarian party had made it clear that they were not striving for ethnicity-based territorial autonomy (*Mátrai*, 1999).

Petőcz (1998, 174–206) explains the political motive of the territorial reform through the example of the division of districts. He analyses thoroughly the size of districts, the number of their inhabitants, the proportion of Hungarian people, the growth index of the population between 1921 and 1991 and the distance by road between the district town and the settlement which is the farthest from it.

² 'The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention.' Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities Strasbourg, 1.II.1995.

³ 'reaffirming the aims of their general integration policy, the Contracting Parties shall refrain from policies and practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to minorities against their will, and shall protect these persons from any actions aimed at such assimilation. The Contracting Parties shall refrain from measures that would alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and which aim at restricting the rights and freedoms of those persons that would be to the detriment of the national minorities.' It is a sign of the debates about the Hungarian and Slovak treaty that it was signed by the two prime ministers in Paris on March 19th 1995, but its enactment was delayed. In Hungary it was ratified on June 13th 1995 already, whereas in Slovakia almost a year later, only on March 26th 1996.

⁴ Proposal Nr.1201/1993 of the Parliament assembly of the European Council regarding minorities includes first of all individual rights to use their mother tongue, to remedy minority grievances, to maintain free relationships with people living in other states, but belonging to the same ethnicity, it mentions the right to establish minority organisations, political parties included, and finally the right to territorial autonomy, too, which incited the most heated disputes.

Table 7

The population of Slovak regions and the number and proportion of the Hungarian ethnicity on the basis of the national census in 2001

Region/kraj	Population head	Hungarian people				Difference %
		according to ethnicity		according to mother tongue		
		head	%	head	%	
Pozsony [Bratislava]	599,015	27,434	4.58	31,070	5.19	0.61
Nagyszombat [Trnava]	551,003	130,740	23.73	133,904	24.30	0.57
Nyitra [Nitra]	713,422	196,609	27.56	211,595	29.66	2.10
Trencsén [Trenčín]	605,582	1,058	0.17	1,533	0.25	0.08
Zsolna [Žilina]	692,332	660	0.10	915	0.13	0.04
Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica]	662,121	77,795	11.75	88,377	13.35	1.60
Kassa [Košice]	766,012	85,415	11.15	104,181	13.60	2.45
Eperjes [Prešov]	789,968	817	0.10	1,354	0.17	0.07
Total	5,379,455	520,528	9.68	572,929	10.65	0.97

Source: Data of the national census, 2001. Štatistický úrad SR Bratislava.

He claims that an average district in the southern parts of Slovakia is much bigger (1003 km²) than an average one in the north (607 km²). The southern districts are much bigger also as far as the number of their inhabitants is concerned; they have an average population of 86,758, whereas the northern districts have the average of only 61,335. 8 out of the 15 southern districts have more than 100,000 inhabitants. 11 districts inhabited by Hungarian people can be regarded as backward, so they have decreasing and aging population and are inflicted by a high rate of unemployment. The government has not made an administrative decision to tackle these problems, but they did in the case of the four also backward districts with Slovak majority: their centre became an administrative district town, which made them possible to have a share of the central development subsidies.

It can also be seen that the towns with merely Slovak inhabitants became district towns to a much higher proportion than the towns with Hungarian majority. The Hungarian towns that had played a central role traditionally were deprived of their district town status. The boundaries of 79 districts were drawn in such a way that only two, the Dunaszerdahely [Dunajská Streda] and the Komárom [Komárno] districts have Hungarian majority. The number of the districts with more than 20% Hungarian population decreased from 21.1% of the 38 districts before 1996 to 13.9% of the 79 districts after 1996, and some areas that used to be one unit were split into two (the new Nagyrőce [Revúca] and Rimaszombat [Rimavská Sobota])

districts). As for the longest distances from the centres by road, there are huge differences between the districts. In the north, the settlement which is the farthest from the district town by road is 26,1 km far on the average, and it is 38,6 km in the south. The most striking example is Nagytárkány [Veľké Trakany] in Töketerebes [Trebíšov] district, it is 70 km from the district town.

The motive behind the territorial reorganisation was in close connection with the electoral ambition of the Mečiar right wing. Since the opposition concentrated first of all in the cities Pozsony [Bratislava], Kassa [Košice] and Eperjes [Prešov] and in the southern parts, large districts/constituencies were established in these areas. To the north of the ethnic border, however, the supporters of the governing parties were granted more, therefore smaller districts/constituencies with a smaller number of inhabitants. This political division was also the main aspect of appointing administrative officials.

Since the change of regime the Hungarian organisations have had well-elaborated ideas about the realisation of exercising individual and collective rights of national minorities and ethnic groups, as well as the necessity of establishing their local, regional and national organs of local governments. These proposals have always been turned down by the Slovak parliament; they have always passed bills of local governments, which were exclusively in Slovak interests, disregarding any ethnic needs. The Hungarian ideas about the implementation of institutionalised equality were turned down in the same way (*Duray, 2000*).

All this shows that Slovakia is still struggling with ethnicity problems wasting much of its energy on trying to meet the criteria of a unified national state and the self-determination of settlements. The population and smaller or bigger groups of inhabitants are of much less importance. The changes in administration made for nationalist purposes break traditional connections, interdependence and create superfluous tensions in the population, distracting attention from building a welfare society and hinder regionalisation according to social and economic needs (*Table 8*).

Since 1990 Slovakia has been on the way to a strong constitutional state, which means that local governments may do what law does not forbid, but state authorities may only do what law requires. The strengthening process of local governments and a gradual withdrawal of government offices have started. The whole process, however, is contradictory as is shown by some critical opinions, according to which Slovak administration is like a man-faced Centaur (more correctly: Janus-face), which is outwardly (visibly) West and inwardly (invisibly) Byzantium.⁵

⁵ The Hungarian Coalition Party disapproves of the reform of administration being a Centaur law: a man-faced animal, outwardly West and inwardly Byzantium. I do hope that the state, which we are all representatives of, will not overrule its own citizens' A remark by Béla Bugár in the discussion of the Slovak parliament on 26 August 2001. From *Új Szó*, 27 August 2001.

Table 8

Territorial units of administration in Slovakia between 1996 and 2001

	Slovak	English	pcs	Function
NUTS I	straná	state	1	Legislative and executive central power
NUTS II		region	4	Regional statistical unit, administrative region
NUTS III	kraj	county, region HTU (Higher Territorial Unit)	8	– Administrative unit – Regional office – Planned but not realised (county) organ of local government
NUTS IV	okres	district	79	Administrative unit, district office
NUTS V	obec + mesto	municipality	2878	Local government + Its own office

Source: Edited by the author on the basis of *Negotiation* (2000).

The bourgeois government that came to power in 1998 decided to reform the public administration system. In autumn 1999 a parliamentary and social debate started about administrative reforms. It was by 2000 that the parties had managed to agree on the most important principles and aims. According to these, the establishment of administrative organs had to be completed and most competencies had to be delegated to those that are concerned with the method of subsidiarity, i.e. on the principle of self-government so that the activity of state organs should be restricted to control and supervision. These were the ideas to which the self-governing levels were adjusted, because according to their plans regional development, health care, education, cultural institutions and social affairs would be dealt with on the regional self-governing level.

Most debates, however, were not about the content of the reforms, i.e. transfer of political responsibility of the central power, self-governing duties and competencies, or the financial resources allocated for these purposes, but rather about the number, territory and boundaries of the regional municipality units that were to be established. The Slovak parties of the coalition were for setting up 12 counties, a solution which completely disregarded the interests of the Hungarian people (11 counties and Pozsony [Bratislava]), whereas the Hungarian Coalition Party wanted to be granted the concession to establish at least one county with Hungarian majority from 6 districts in southern Slovakia, with Komárom [Komárno] as its centre (*Kocsis, 2002*).

It was obvious that, if extreme parties should come to power, the last hope of the democratic forces could be decentralisation, which would be the only way to

prevent the establishment of an authoritarian state. For this purpose the constitution was amended and self-governing principles were extended to regional level. 64–71§ of the constitution determined the principles for both levels: independent self-governing rights, legal bodies, their own properties, and their own funds. State organs may require the performance of certain duties only to the extent enacted by law. They have their own elected bodies and the execution of state functions can be delegated to them.

After this, on July 4th 2001 the parliament passed the two bills regarding elections and municipalities of higher regional units (municipality regions), launching the reform of administration in this way. The boundaries of regional administration and regional municipalities remained the same, the Mečiar boundaries remained unchanged.

The elections were held in December 2002. The administrative boundaries proved to be 'successful', because nowhere, except for Nyitra County, was the proportion of Hungarian people enough for the victory. The electoral law was also 'successful' because the general elections had only one round, except when electing the president, when in the second round Slovak parties managed to join forces against the Hungarian candidate, who had been successful before.

The 1999 Act on the use of languages has also proved to be successful. The minority use of languages was put on the agenda of the government that came to power in 1998, because the enactment of this act was one of the preconditions of Slovakia being invited to the accession negotiations with the ten future member states. The act makes it possible for the people belonging to any of the minorities to use their own mother tongue when arranging official affairs if their proportion in the given settlement is at least 20%. This, however, does not make it possible for them to exercise their rights to use their own language in district or county towns, too, because their ethnicity proportion should be at least 20% there, too.

The act is also restrictive regarding the elected representatives of local governments in the settlements where minorities are in majority because according to the act the agreement of 'everybody present' is necessary in such cases, so occasional visitors may influence the use of language. The use of language in settlements with Hungarian majority is made even more difficult by the fact that employees in offices are not legally obliged to speak the language of the minority (*Lanstyák, 1999*).

The accession of the two countries, Hungary and Slovakia to the European Union has brought considerable rapprochement, because the municipality principle was realized in the administration practice of both countries. This, however, is no excuse for Slovakia wanting to hinder the self-governing rights of native Hungarian inhabitants in first of all its southern districts in many different ways. With this Slovakia wants to follow the example of homogeneous national states, for assimilation purposes it also uses the means of administration, refusing the examples that

countries with heterogeneous ethnic composition provide, like South Tirol (Süd-Tirol/Alto-Adige), the Aosta Valley (Val d'Aosta), Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy, Sardinia or Catalunya, Vascongadas in Spain, Galicia, or the autonomous provinces of the Aland Islands in Finland (Kocsis, 2002).

2.3 The effect of economic life on cross-border relations

From the whole system of economy we have chosen three elements to illustrate their effects on cross-border relations. The first will be the process of how the economic life of the territory of today's Slovakia has changed, what shifts have taken place in a geographical sense, strongly affecting cross-border relations. The centuries-long north-south direction of economic, commercial and mobility relations turned into an east-west direction. Next, the asymmetric conditions will be analysed because, in spite of the efforts made to eliminate them Czechoslovakia split, proving that neither the Trianon Peace Treaty, nor the existence of Czechoslovakia was justified. The third issue describes the Slovak way of state-controlled region establishment, the motive of which, just like that of the continuous changes in administration, was Slovak nationalism.

2.3.1 Geographical change in the direction of economic relations

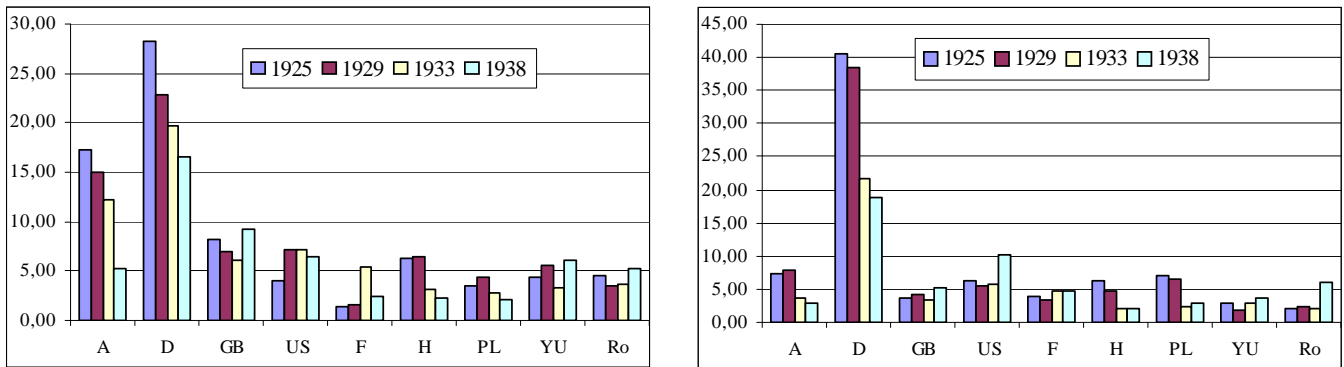
The countries of East-Central Europe had a problem in common, the problem of joining the economic systems of different great powers, which resulted in several changes in direction. After World War I, the (new) countries which were established after the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, had to organise or reorganise their commercial relations, since the succession states, among them Czechoslovakia, emerged after a protected, mostly self-supporting market had been broken up.

The most important foreign trade markets of Czechoslovakia, though to a decreasing degree, became Austria and Germany. Examining the data of all target countries it is obvious that Czechoslovakia was making efforts to reduce this one-sidedness, therefore the participation of the two countries began to decrease and other Western European countries not involved in the chart (Italy, Great Britain, France, etc.) were gaining more and more importance (*Figure 5*).

Comparing the data of foreign trade in the years 1925–1938 and 1975–1985, the phenomenon that we call change of direction can be seen clearly. The German dominance between the two World Wars was replaced by the Soviet dominance, then, after the collapse of the Soviet empire the direction changed again: the main direction of the goods transported on commercial routes turned to the west again (*Figure 6*).

Figure 5

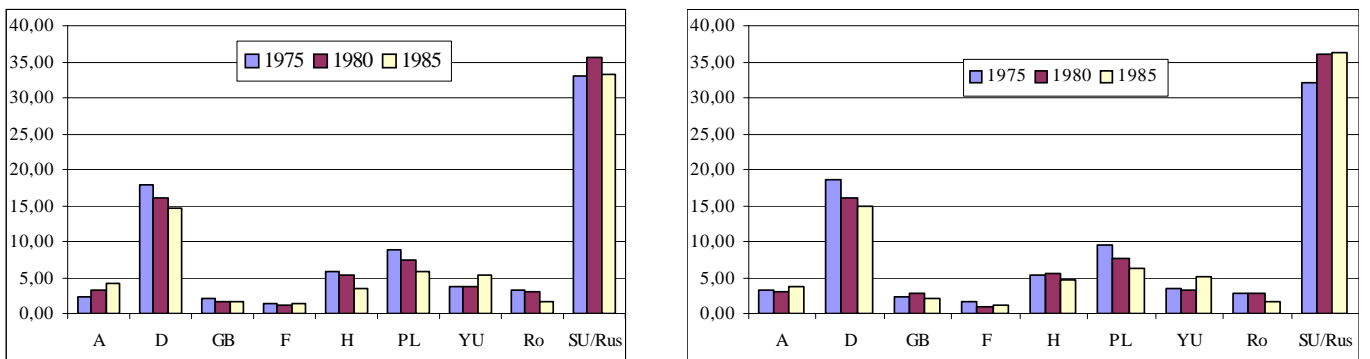
The main foreign trade partners of Czechoslovakia between 1925 and 1938, %



Source: Magyarország exportpiacai. 1934.

Figure 6

The main foreign trade partners of Czechoslovakia between 1975 and 1985, %



Note: The German data in the diagrams unite the data of West and East Germany of the age and also those of West Berlin, though in the beginning the former GDR played the decisive role. The proportion of East and West German foreign trade had become equal by 1985.

Source: Facts (1985, 1991).

From all this we may conclude to the economic reason of the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy: at the end of the 19th century the European market did not allow that a region, the size of an empire should form a separate economic unit. In the age of capitalistic economic competition, free competition and big, global monopolies it wanted to liberate this isolated market. This was how the empire disintegrated, which caused a lot of harm politically, as it enforced the interests of the victorious powers by sweeping aside the principle of ethnicity. While achieving its economic aim, i.e. it encouraged the emergence of a lot of independent economic units, which all were attracted by the western countries (*Figure 7–8*).

Slovakia's foreign trade has an east-west direction nowadays, too. Its most important partners are Germany, the Czech Republic and Russia. This tradition started as early as in 1918 in Czechoslovakia, when the country turned to first of all Germany, giving up its traditional southern (Austrian, but mainly Hungarian business and commercial) relations. Naturally, in the decades of communism eastern foreign relations were stronger, and the Mečiar-era preserved them.

As far as its foreign trade partners are concerned, the independent Slovakia is very different from Czechoslovakia. On the one hand the Czech Republic is a much more important partner for Slovakia, than Slovakia for the Czech Republic, and on the other hand the importance of Russia is also larger. The dominance of the western orientation, however is inevitable in Slovakia, too.

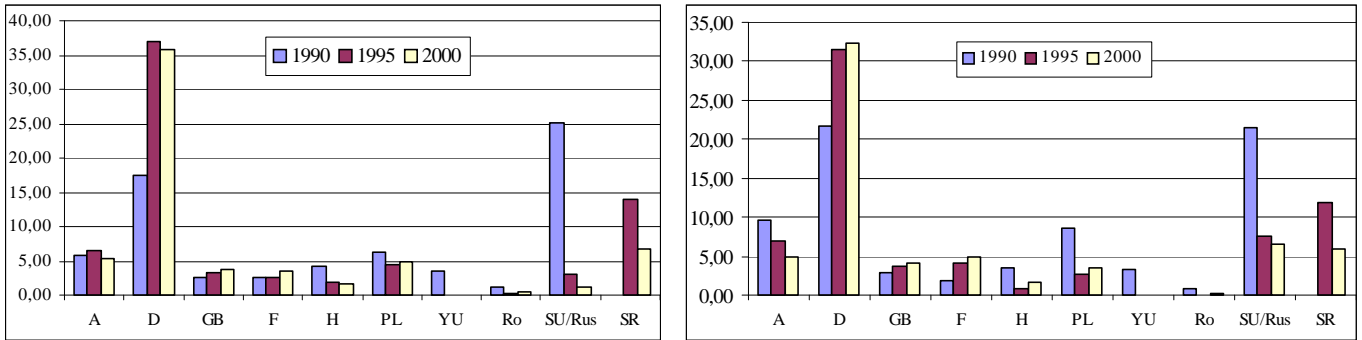
From the figures it is obvious that, after 1990, both countries had Germany as their main trading partner and that the majority of other countries involved in their trade are also European countries. In the case of Slovakia 50.3% of all exports go to European countries, 78.8% to OECD countries, 60.5% of all imports come from European countries and 91.5% from OECD countries. The European Union has become the new framework within which the presence of other countries makes it possible to control and dissolve the dominance of individual countries, (especially that of Germany).

This change in the orientation of foreign trade shows also the fact that the reason why these countries have a comparatively low degree of economic relations with each other is not simply the nationalism of some peoples, nations, policies or states. The reason for this is rather that, so as to be separated from and be independent of each other, (this process started as early as in the 19th century and was completed after World War I), those countries chose to serve first the economic and political interests of large European (German, then Soviet) empires, and then the European commercial interests determined by the European Union and globalisation.

Strengthening this ever-changing network towards Hungary's neighbours, too and increasing the level of the commercial relations e.g. between Slovakia and Hungary will be the result of patient, continuous, hard work. This could happen

Figure 7

The main foreign trade partners of Czech-Slovakia between 1990 and 2000, %

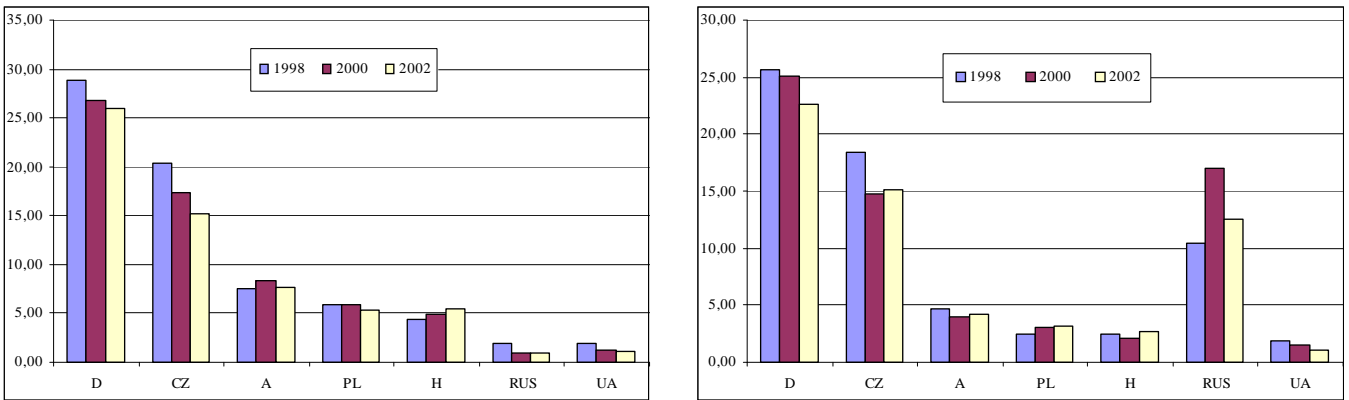


Note: The 1990 data in the diagram are those of the united Czechoslovakia. The data of the years 1995 and 2000 refer to the independent Czech Republic.

Sources: Yearbook of the Cz, 2002; Yearbook of the SR, 2002.

Figure 8

The main foreign trade partners of Slovakia between 1998 and 2002, %



Source: Yearbook of the Cz, 2002; Yearbook of the SR, 2002.

within the framework of the Visegrád Cooperation, which was an idea of Hungarian politicians. Their idea has been justified by the unexpected results of EU negotiations with future member states, the inequality between old and new member states.

To sum it up, it can be stated that significant changes have taken place since 1920 not only in the succession states but also in world economy, this is why new systems of regional relations have emerged. The main direction of the new relations is no longer north-south, they do not affect a smaller geographical unit, the Carpathian Basin, but rather follow a large-scale east-west direction. This change in economic and geographical direction influences cross-border relations the most, this is why it can be stated that cross-border relations have been exposed and subordinated to asymmetric conditions. They will be able to exist in the shadow of large, national relations, because they will not be strengthened by north-south, Hungarian and Slovak regionalisation.

If we want to raise hope, we have to emphasize that an extremely strong macroregional (economic and commercial) east-west mobility will have to be expanded into north-south direction in the future. This is the precondition of the recovery of cross-border relations.

2.3.2 Asymmetric conditions in the different parts of the country

After being established, Czechoslovakia's most important economic aim was to form an independent economic unit belonging to an independent state, to adjust economic life to the acquired territory, even at the expense of eliminating or at least restricting traditional, centuries-long relations considerably.

It created difficulties for the new state that there were asymmetries, different levels of development. The Czech part of the country had a much higher level of development than the other provinces. 57.7% of all those employed worked in the industry, but the proportion of those working in the services was also at least twice as high as elsewhere. Compared with the Czech parts, Slovakia was a relatively underdeveloped, agricultural region and apart from forestry, there was no other remarkable economic activity in Sub-Carpathia at all. Moravia was somewhere between the levels of development of the Czech and Slovak parts, but as for its proportions it was rather similar to the Czech parts (*Table 9*).

Machine production, textile, iron and metal industry of the Czech region were world famous. The Skoda-works possessed more than 30% of the capital of the most important 131 joint stock companies of the whole country. According to the market value in 1934, 60.6% of the textile industry was located in Sudeten German

and Těšín Polish areas. 93.8% of all brown coal production was in the Sudeten, which provided the basis for its machine industry (*Csehszlovákia II.*).

Table 9

The rate of the employed in different parts of the country, %

Branches	The Czech Republic	Moravia	Slovakia	Sub-Carpathia	Total (thousand people)
Agriculture	33.69	20.09	37.50	8.73	4,859
Forestry	30.45	17.28	28.81	23.46	243
Industry	57.70	28.27	12.34	1.69	5,147
Services	55.05	24.64	17.22	3.09	4,274

Source: *Csehszlovákia II.*

Czechoslovakia had the ambition of giving preference to the succession states of Hungary, (the so-called Little Entente states) over Hungary in the case of most agricultural products; what is more, it wanted to achieve autarky, too. The southern parts of the Slovak territories were gradually becoming the granary of the country and the Czech processing industry utilized the Slovak mining products. This was how the uneven development of the Slovak regions started since, in competition with the traditionally stronger Czech industry, the existing Slovak industry was in a difficult situation.

In the consolidation period of the new state the Czech bourgeois classes disregarded the needs of the more backward Slovak areas. At that time there was no political ambition to eliminate the regional differences. In the common state, asymmetric conditions remained and resulted in labour division between the different parts of the country. The Slovak province became the complementary economy of the Czech industry, or we may also say that the Czech province colonised Slovakia.

During the communist rule, in the period from 1948 to 1962 the forced development of heavy industry brought a boom, this was when Slovak regions were industrialised and urbanised. This, however served the aspirations of an external power for world hegemony. The Soviet Union, with the help of the Warsaw Treaty, suppressed the renewal attempt in 1968 cruelly, the oil price explosion in 1973 slowed down the already slow economic growth, and the 1980s brought the collapse of both the political system and the extensive economic policy. As a result of the one-sidedness of industrialisation a monocultural structure emerged, i.e. thousands of people worked in the factories of some favoured branches. Factories employing more than 500 people gave 95% of the industrial

production. In the background the munitions industry was strongly developed. In 1987 Czechoslovakia was the seventh largest exporter of arms in the world (*Sidó H.*, 2004, 53–54).

If the Czech industry regarded the Slovak province as a source of raw materials between the two World Wars, then we may say that it was the Czech people that paid for the communist development of industry on the Slovak side. This asymmetry of conditions between the two parts of the country, and the question of who was the giver and who was the recipient, who gained more and when were the topics of endless debates in Czech and Slovak public life and it all led to the separation of the country.

2.3.3 The effect of intended regionalisation

As a result of local and regional development policy, a new territorial division was introduced in the decades of the communist era. Forced industrial development (mining, heavy industry, munitions industry) was combined with urban development, with the aim of establishing a working class (and intelligentsia) that were loyal to the existing system. The Slovak part of the country was developed at a surprisingly quick rate until the 1970s.

The forced rate of industrialization had industrial and strategic reasons. The political aim was to do away with the backwardness of the Slovak part of the country, and the military, strategic aim was the development of munitions industry. Most of the munitions factories were set up in the Vág Valley, in towns with Slovak population (*Figure 9*).

That was how the former structure of Felvidék changed. Except for large towns (Pozsony [Bratislava], Kassa [Košice], Nagyszombat [Trnava], Nyitra [Nitra]), most traditional industrial and commercial centres had lost their importance in the 19th century, or even earlier. As a result of forced heavy industrial machine production new industrial centres emerged: Vágbeszterce [Považská Bystrica], Máriatölgyes [Dubnica nad Váhom], Túrócszentmárton [Martin], Garamszentkereszt [Žiar nad Hronom], Zsolna [Žilina], Simony [Partizánske], Vágújhely [Nové Mesto nad Váhom]. The map shows clearly that no southern towns or southern settlements are included in the list. In South Slovakia there was munitions industry only in Komárom, but it was of much less significance (*Sidó H.*, 2004).

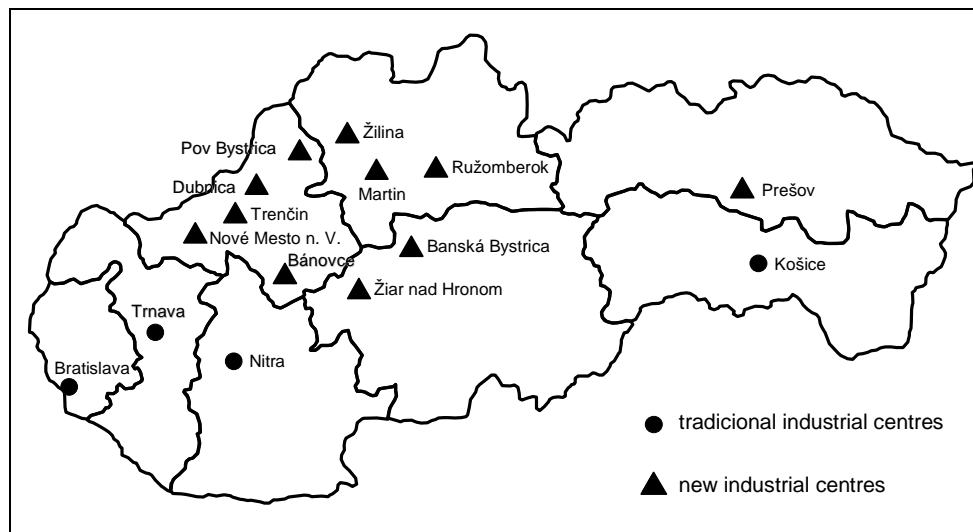
Heavy industry was not an organic part of a general economic development; it remained separate within the country, as well. It had provided jobs and welfare as long as the country had belonged to the Soviet sphere of interest, after that the region was inflicted by a crisis.

It was in the golden age of industrial development that the reform of the previously complementary Czech and Slovak economy took place. Due to the extensive

industrial development, the northern industrial and the southern agrarian regions were soon following a different way of development within Slovakia. This difference remained after 1989 as well, what is more, the new investments make this division even stronger. It is the deep crisis of heavy industry and the huge labour force of the munitions industry that forces the Slovak regional development to try to relieve the crisis by developing former industrial centres. The rate of unemployment being high, employing the large labour force that is present in a concentrated way is an especially important task. With the concentration of the population and the expertise provided, developers are urged to transform this previously heavy industrial region into the centre of development to relieve the crisis.

Figure 9

Traditional and new industrial centres in Slovakia



Source: Edited by the author on the basis of Sidó H. (2004).

These efforts coincide with the conception of the European Union as well. The Union emphasizes the importance of increasing competitiveness, rather than eliminating backwardness. This development strategy is based on the assumption that economic growth in innovated areas will have an impact on other regions, too.

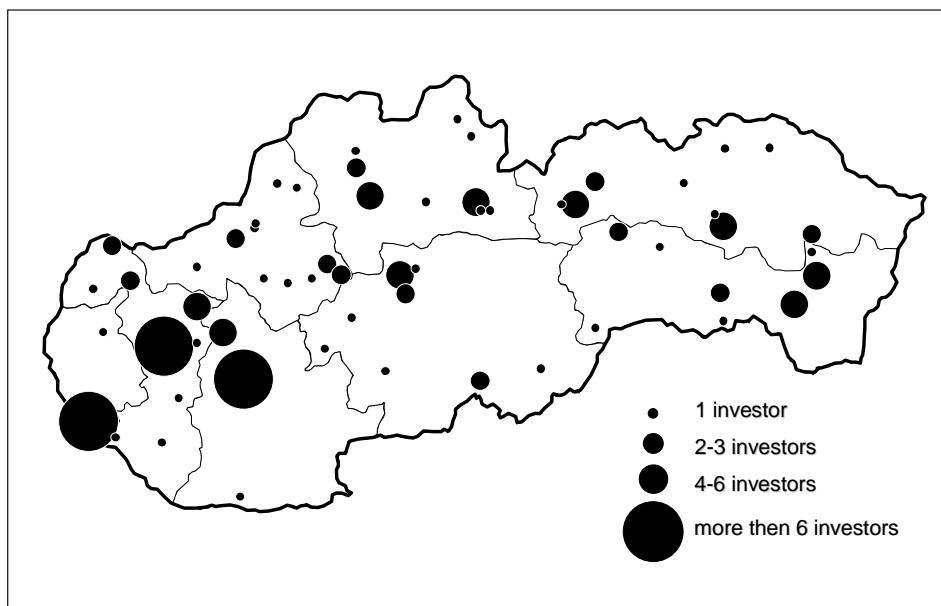
Slovak regional development seizes the opportunity to reconstruct this region, which can provide sufficient expertise but is now in crisis, and develop it into an innovation centre enjoying the support of the Union. This plan is made easier by the fact that the EU has declared the whole country underdeveloped, so it belongs to level *Objective 1*, and is not divided into further development regions. Conse-

quently, Slovak regional development has freedom of action because the whole country is a development area and they can chose regions to develop without external interference. As a consequence, the Slovak National Development Plan does not include an internal territorial division either; i.e. it is not concerned with regions.

Slovak regional development is now consolidating its previous crisis area. This explains the location of new automobile factories and other industrial units, as well as the geographical distribution of the infrastructural investments serving them. The internal division of labour between the industrial, economically dynamic northern part with its highly developed infrastructure and the agricultural southern areas, which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, still prevails in Slovakia. However, this division, difference, asymmetry and lack of balance is hardly, if at all, shown by statistics because the regional data are collected on the level of regions and county municipalities. On the other hand, the geographical distribution of industrial centres show that, with the exception of the region of Eperjes [Prešov], there is some kind of industrial unit or service sector in all the regions, which changes and improves the statistics of the region as a whole and also shows a slope from the west to the east (Bucek, 2000) (Figure 10).

Figure 10

The most important multinational investors in Slovakia



Source: Commercial Office. Bratislava. 2004. Edited by the author.

On the map, a semicircle shows the geographical area of the settlements preferred by investors. The table including the data of the Commercial Office of Bratislava shows the number of investors according to regions and the settlement of the region that has been the most popular with multinational companies, where most investments have been made. The advantage of the three western regions (Pozsony [Bratislava], Nagyszombat [Trnava], Nyitra [Nitra]) is unquestionable. In comparison with them, only few foreign enterprises can be found in the other regions (*Table 10*).

Table 10

The division of the most important investors according to regions and the location of the majority of investments

Region	Number of investors	Settlements with the highest number of investments	pcs
Pozsony [Bratislava]	15	Pozsony [Bratislava]	14
Nagyszombat [Trnava]	25	Nagyszombat [Trnava]	11
Nyitra [Nitra]	18	Nyitra [Nitra]	10
Trencsén [Trenčín]	15	Privigye	3
Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica]	13	Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica]	4
Zsolna [Žilina]	20	Liptószentmiklós [Liptovský Mikuláš]	6
Eperjes [Prešov]	20	Eperjes [Prešov]	6
Kassa [Košice]	19	Nagyimihály [Michalovce]	6
Total	145		60

Source: Commercial Office. Bratislava. 2004.

The network of roads also shows the north-southern division of Slovakia. The formerly existing road network was already unfavourable for southern settlements, and the motorways that are being built now are creating an especially disadvantageous situation because they are to be found in the northern part of the country, and they are definitely connecting the economically prospering areas, too (*Figure 11*).

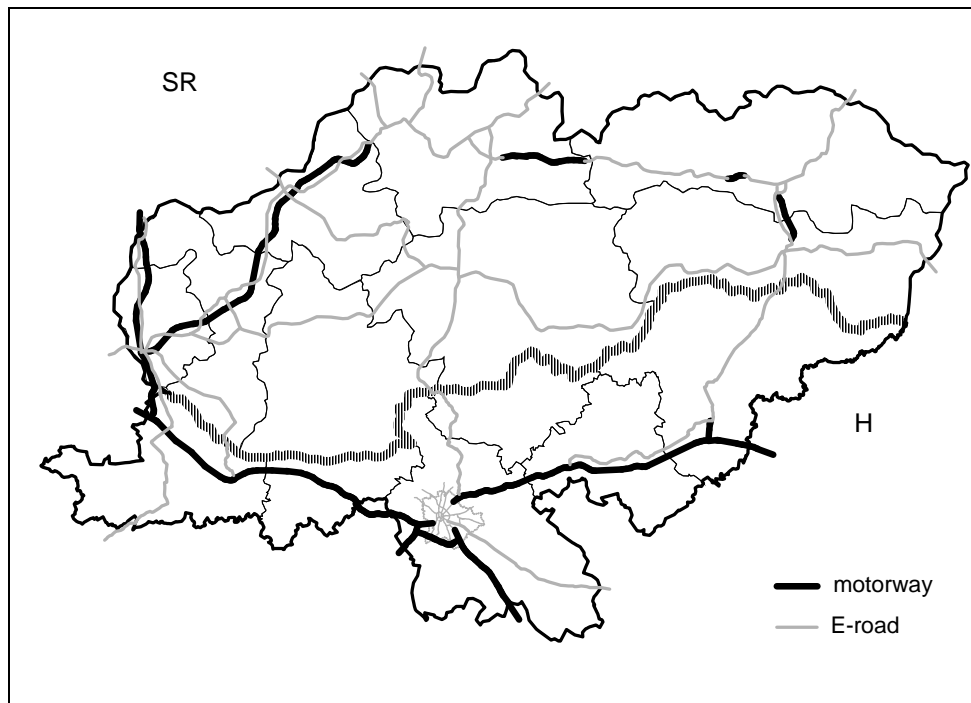
As for the road network on both sides of the border, it can be stated that on the Hungarian side of the border along the Danube, the communication system is favourable for the whole country. But on the Slovak side the settlements of Csallóköz are in an especially disadvantageous situation, and so are settlements to the east of the River Ipoly, on both sides of the border.

To sum it up, the north-southern division of Slovakia can be demonstrated with the help of the indicators of demography, ethnic composition, education and employment. We consider the 16 southern districts as Southern Slovakia, the 63 dis-

tricts to the north of it as Northern Slovakia. The proportions show the agricultural character of the southern and the more industrialised character of the northern districts clearly. The population in the 16 southern districts lives under more disadvantageous economic conditions. The two regions of completely different nature are divided into administrative regions in a way that makes their statistical figures show similarities (*Table 11*).

Figure 11

*Road network in the counties along the Slovak border
in Slovakia and Hungary*



Source: Edited by the author.

Table 11
The most important indicators of the north-southern division in Slovakia

Indicators		Northern Slovakia, 63 districts			Southern Slovakia, 16 districts			Slovakia	
		number of inhabitants	%	scattering	number of inhabitants	%	scattering	%	scattering
Employed people	Agriculture	89,053	4.40	3.24	59,900	7.96	2.73	5.38	1,98
	Industry and construction industry	573,148	28.32	7.00	188,766	25.10	4.22	27.54	6,72
	Service sector	1,361,318	67.27	7.27	503,412	66.94	4.60	67.08	7,52
	Total	2,023,519	100.00	0.00	752,078	100.00	0.00	100.00	0,00
Schooling	Secondary education	1,045,497	26.46	3.14	347,712	23.48	1.90	25.65	1,93
	Higher education	343,994	8.71	2.99	85,776	5.79	1.80	7.91	3,68
Children	Under 16	798,942	20.22	3.13	290,582	19.62	1.70	20.07	2,49
Ethnic groups	Slovak	3,725,153	94.27	7.26	929,498	62.81	19.17	85.79	10,23
	Hungarian	41,790	1.06	2.75	489,291	33.06	19.82	9.68	10,84
	Gypsy	56,741	1.44	2.11	33,218	2.24	2.12	1.67	1,64
Population		3,951,421	100.00	0.00	1,479,859	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Source: Commercial Office. Bratislava. 2004.

3 The condition of cross-border relations on the Hungarian-Slovak border

Cross-border relations are of great importance because, owing to the differences, asymmetries and the new directions of gravitation in Hungarian–Slovak relations, there is not much hope for the revival of the cooperation in the large region, the Carpathian Basin. It is cross-border cooperation that will have utmost importance in the Carpathian Basin in the future, instead. The former administrative, ethnographic and regional types of cooperation will be stronger, but the relationship between the two countries will not develop into a regional, cross-border kind of labour division, they will never become complementary economies. Below, the present situation of such local relations will be discussed.

After the international collapse of communism, there were several chances of organising cross-border relations again. Slovakia turned hopefully to Austria, which had belonged to the enemy's side before, because this country was „their only western” neighbour. The relations with the Czech Republic returned to normal flow after the separation, which means the development of a special kind of foreign relations. The Czech Republic is a neighboring foreign country, but the two countries have established such close relations with each other that they can almost be regarded as internal relations. The historical borders and the historical relations with Poland have been preserved. These had been developed by the Hungarians for a thousand years, so Slovakia only inherited them, just like the good neighbouring relations with the Czechs. Owing to the internal problems of the Ukraine and the backwardness of the eastern parts of Slovakia, cooperation between them is negligible.

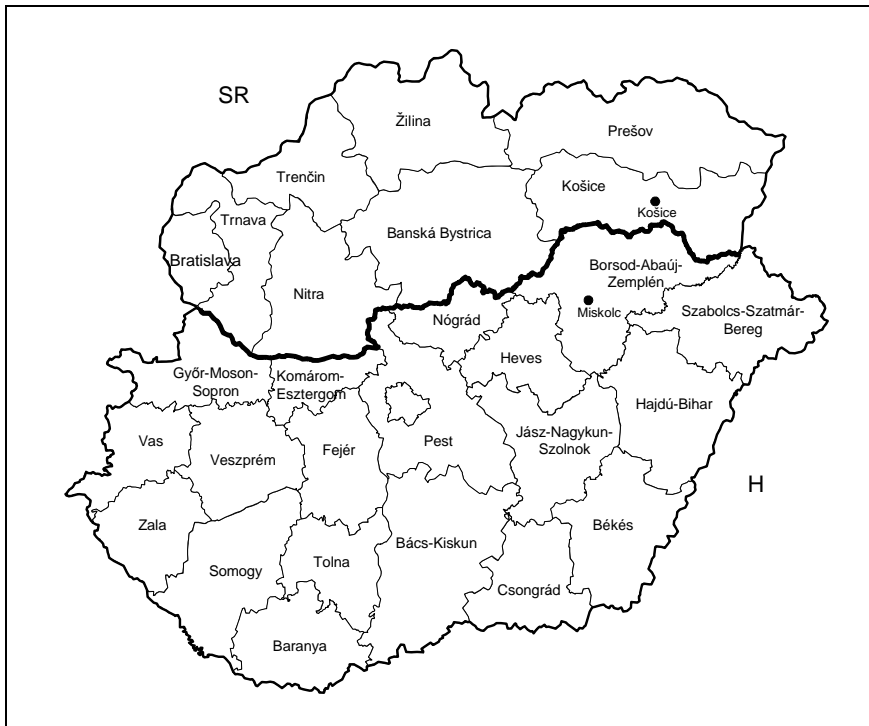
In a historical sense, the Hungarian-Slovak relations are most complicated. Re-discovering the historical patterns of coexistence draws attention to the possibilities of regional Hungarian-Slovak cooperation. The Hungarian-Slovak border section provides the opportunity for it, as this is the longest section of all Slovak borders. There is a good chance of developing good relations here, similar to those with the Czechs.

3.1 The most important characteristics of the Hungarian–Slovak borderland

As a result of research into cross-border relations, important works analysing the geographical and social conditions of the areas on the two sides of the border have been published in recent years. The books by *Attila Hevesi* and *Károly Kocsis* (2003) give a comprehensive survey of both sides of the border. The monograph on Southern Slovakia focuses on the 16 Slovak districts with Hungarian population (*Horváth*, 2004) (*Figure 12*).

Figure 12

Hungarian counties and Slovak Regions along the Hungarian–Slovak border



Source: Edited by the author.

Table 12 includes the census figures of the five Slovak regions and the six Hungarian counties. The data concerning the region of Pozsony [Bratislava] and Pest County also include the data of the capitals.

The whole of Slovakia is less industrialised than Hungary. The southern regions along the Hungarian border are even less industrialised, since there is a high number of agricultural districts there. The proportion of those employed in the service sector is high in both countries, but it is increased mainly by the two capitals. As regards the proportion of those employed compared with the whole population the advantage of Slovakia is obvious. As far as the educational level is concerned, there are more people with secondary education in the Slovak regions but in the northern counties of Hungary the proportion of professionals is higher. In the Slovak regions there are more young people, but only in comparison with the neighbouring Hungarian counties, because in the southern districts of Slovakia the proportion of the younger generation is lower.

Table 12
 The most important figures of the regions and counties along the border, %

Region/county	Agriculture	Industry	Service sector	Proportion of the employed population	Secondary education	Higher education	Children under 16	Hungarian	Gypsy	Slovak
Pozsony [Bratislava]	7.34	26.42	66.24	55.32	29.80	17.04	16.09	4.58	0.13	91.26
Nagyszombat [Trnava]	6.12	29.01	64.87	51.20	24.01	6.04	18.79	23.73	0.57	73.91
Nyitra [Nitra]	7.62	27.56	64.82	50.59	24.00	6.47	18.30	27.56	0.66	70.05
Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica]	7.34	26.42	66.24	50.11	25.77	7.01	19.36	11.75	2.34	83.65
Kassa [Košice]	5.68	22.74	71.58	51.76	26.07	7.51	21.47	11.15	3.89	81.82
The 5 regions together	5.68	24.12	70.21	51.08	25.89	8.67	18.93	15.74	1.64	80.03
<i>Slovakia</i>	5.38	27.54	67.08	51.08	25.62	7.87	20.07	9.68	1.67	85.79
Győr-Moson-Sopron	5.77	39.50	54.73	42.08	17.84	6.68	21.98	95.61	0.38	0.04
Komárom-Esztergom	4.39	45.33	50.28	39.16	19.86	8.60	18.67	94.12	0.84	1.61
Pest	1.50	25.18	73.32	40.63	17.77	7.25	19.03	92.40	0.93	0.46
Nógrád	3.01	43.54	53.44	32.99	18.66	7.03	19.65	96.03	4.52	1.58
Heves	5.60	38.71	55.69	33.78	17.10	5.77	19.27	95.95	3.88	0.22
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	3.88	34.32	61.79	28.12	24.21	14.35	16.93	96.58	6.26	0.30
The 6 counties together	2.68	30.47	66.85	37.96	21.75	11.35	18.27	95.01	2.75	0.64
<i>Hungary</i>	5.50	32.86	61.64	36.19	19.12	9.16	19.19	94.40	2.02	0.38

Sources: Data of the national census, 2001. KSH Budapest; Štatistický úrad SR Bratislava.

Both countries show a mixed ethnic structure, but Hungary is more homogeneous, the proportion of the inhabitants belonging to the majority is higher. The Hungarian and Slovak population as dominant ethnic groups are in majority in all the counties and regions of the two countries. There is a high number of Hungarians in the regions along the Danube, but to the east of the River Ipoly the continuous zone with Hungarian population is broken. On the Hungarian side, scattered Slovak ethnic groups can be found. Figures show that in the northern counties of Hungary, to the east of the Ipoly there are more Gypsy inhabitants compared with the national average. Similarly, on the Slovak side the highest proportion of the Gypsy ethnicity can be found in the region of Kassa [Košice] spreading along the border and in the large region of Besztercebánya [Banská Bystrica]. On the two sides of the Danube there are much fewer Gypsies.

3.2 The practice of border crossing

The Hungarian-Slovak border shows a type of cross-border relations where there is a possibility of rediscovering the important, mutually beneficial forms of cooperation that already existed before 1918, when there were no borders, and such relations were simply the consequence of coexistence. The whole length of the border, which was established on January 1st 1993 and surrounds Slovakia, is 1,672 km long and divides Slovakia from five countries. The number of border stations is the result of decades-long separation. Openness towards the Czech Republic, strong isolation from all the other neighbours: this situation has not changed much since that time (*Table 13*).

On the 106 km-long section of the *Austrian* border there were three border stations, now this number has increased to five, since this is the busiest section of the Slovak border. The whole westward traffic of the country goes through these border stations. The Slovak state is traditionally open towards the *Czech Republic*, moreover, they are planning to open new border stations in the following years. In fact, they are trying to make all their former roads suitable for such purposes. The other extreme example is the relations maintained with *the Ukraine*. The border station on this section is Ágcsernyő [Čierna]. The circulation of all the Slovak-Ukrainian commodities takes place at this border station. For passenger traffic two more border stations are provided, Felsőnémeti [Vyšné Nemecké] and Ugar [Ubl'a]. The relatively small number of border stations towards *Poland* is not surprising, because this is really a regional border in a geographical sense, since it has always separated the people living on the two sides of the Carpathians. It has remained a political border for centuries, since it is very difficult to cross it.

The 17 *Hungarian* border stations represent a low middle-rate level, as the average distance here is 39.1 km. However, there had never been a regional

(geographical, social, administrative, political, etc.) border here before; there had been close, everyday relations with different sorts of roads and paths. We can mention the River Ipoly [Ipeľ] as an example. The two sides of the river had originally been connected by 47 bridges on the 160-km long section, which was only declared a national border by the Peace Treaty, which ended World War I in 1920. These bridges were demolished by the Czechoslovak government. Only three of them have been rebuilt since then. So the Ipoly has become a border river as well as a river paralysing natural human life.⁶

Table 13

Sections of the Slovak Border and Possibilities of Vehicular Border Crossing

National borders	The length of the border (km)	Number of border stations (pcs)	Average distance between border stations (km)		
			2001	2004	
Poland	541.1	11	49.2	11	49.2
Czech Republic	251.8	16	15.7	16	15.7
Austria	106.7	3	35.6	5	21.3
Hungary	664.7	17	39.1	17	39.1
Ukraine	98.5	1	98.5	2	49.3
Total	1,662.8	48	35.6	51	33.4

Source: <http://www.minv.sk/uhcp>.

As a consequence of the accession, Hungary has started negotiations with the Slovak partner, to find out where they could make border crossing possible. This is necessary because sometimes there is a small distance between settlements close to the border and there are roads overgrown with weeds that could be used after being repaired. On the Hungarian-Slovak section of the border, which became an internal border after the expansion of the European Union, a group of experts named 84 potential border stations.⁷ On the section belonging to Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén

⁶ On the basis of the closing declaration made at the discussion „Ipoly-hidak” (Ipoly-Bridges) on October 25th 2003, organised by Ipeľský Euroregión, which had been established by communities and civil organizations of the Slovak Republic along the border.

Source: www.ipelregion@changenet.sk

⁷ *Az Európai Unióhoz történő csatlakozás utáni belső határvonalakon a közúti átkelési lehetőségek sűrítésének vizsgálata*. Kivonat, 6. kötet. TETTHELY Mérnöki és Szolgáltató Kft. Budapest, 2004. (Possibilities of Increasing the Number of Vehicular Border-crossings after the Accession to the European Union. Excerpt, Volume 6. TETTHELY Engineering and Service Ltd. Budapest, 2004).

county, the existing 6 border stations could be expanded to 21, 10 further potential border stations could be opened along the Danube, besides the five existing ones, and the existing 5 border stations in Pest and Nógrád counties could also be made 12.

3.3 Twin-settlement relations

Some settlements had to face new problems after the new municipality system had been introduced. As a consequence of the democratic changes, each settlement has become politically independent, which also means that they have become responsible for their own level of development. They have also been provided an opportunity to carry out their development projects in cooperation with other settlements.

There were twin-town relations in the past as well. This was a popular form of the affected friendship between the communist parties of different countries. These representative, official and authorized relations were developed with the permission of central party organisations, and were confined first of all to cultural and sports activities. Since the change of system in 1990, these kinds of cooperation have been formed with new intentions, this time on a voluntary basis.

It was a new impulse for Hungarian-Slovak relations and the relations of settlements, when, after 1998, the extremely nationalist government was replaced by the bourgeois right wing in Slovakia. The European Union also encouraged the intensification of cross-border relations and supported it financially with its PHARE CBC-project.

One third of the relations between Slovak towns is the consequence of the original system of relations in Hungary, whereas, at present, the proportion of relations developed with different towns of the European Union is much lower. The relations with Hungarian twin-settlements are especially strong in the case of villages. The reason for that is that the majority of the southern settlements along the border are inhabited by mostly Hungarian people. For them Hungarian relations are of crucial importance. On the other hand, even if it is a village with purely Slovak population, it can solve their disadvantageous situation only in cooperation with a Hungarian settlement on the other side of the border.

As for the wide zone along the border, we may say that the closer a settlement is to a border, the more likely it is that there are relatives living on the other side. On the Hungarian side there are many people who were expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II so that an ethnically homogenous state should be established. These people often go back to their relatives who have stayed there. There are many people who would like to reduce ethnic oppression, by expressing their solidarity, that is why they take every opportunity to cooperate. As a result of the strongly mixed ethnic structure of the population, there are Slovaks living on the

Hungarian side as well, though in limited numbers. They also try to maintain their relations with their relatives on the other side of the border. Finally, mention must be made of those who try to develop relations simply for practical reasons, mostly because there are goods that are cheaper or only available on the other side, etc.

One of the biggest problems of the settlements close to the border is vehicular isolation. That is why it is in the interests of these settlements to repair bridges and roads running across the border. Settlements along the border must coordinate their communal developments so as to find the easiest and cheapest technical solutions for waste disposal or sewage disposal.

Twin-settlement relations are expanding on a territorial basis; they are being organised into regional cooperation. There are several reasons for the regionalisation of twin-settlement relations, such as the intention of expanding gravity zones, so as to organise tourism in a better way, protect the environment and reservoir areas or waste disposal, etc. In such cases the basis of cooperation is belonging to the same area. This area can be a genuine natural area, or it can be a former administrative unit, e.g. a county. In such cases the relations between the settlements of the former county are restored. Cooperation can also be based on economic interests, when e.g. a mineral deposit and a processing plant are on the different sides of the border. It is also easier to find financial resources for individual demands of settlements when several settlements join forces. When relations are becoming regional, towns maintain a leading position because they can provide competent experts for planning and execution. Smaller settlements can join these projects according to their capacity.

At present, we can say that twin-settlement relations provide the basis for the development of more comprehensive regional cooperation and strengthen the relations that have been maintained by settlements for development purposes (Mezei, 2004).

3.4 Social (civil) relations

It is sometimes twin-settlement relations that provide a framework for the relations of further social organisations, or sometimes the cooperation of civil organisations inspires the local government of a settlement to promote some form of cooperation. According to the types of organisation taking part in cross-border relations there are

- civil organisations
- economic organisations (for safeguarding of interests)
- local governments
- small regional organisations, associations
- local governments of counties

Apart from form or legal frames such organisations are also different regarding their motives to deal with cross-border relations. According to *the type of motive* we can differentiate between:

- Organisations that are set up *of their members' own internal motive*, as a result of their own decision, on an initiative from below. In such cases the personal demands and the world view of the members play a decisive role. Such voluntary relations can be maintained between civil organizations, local governments of towns and villages, or economic organisations.
- Organisations established *under an external inspiration* for developing areas along the border. A typical example is the organisation of euroregions for exploiting development tenders. The majority of the organisations belonging to this category are local governments that have already maintained foreign relations before, mostly with the settlements, regions, state organisations or local governments with which they try to revive their traditional, decades-long, mostly only representative kind of relations. In this case the external effect, tenders play the role of a catalyst.

Initiatives can be classified according to *function* as well, though their most important aim is social integration. They only have different means.

- The cooperation of environmental organisations is the best-known and the most manifold. They are separate types because they have very definite ideology: nature does not accept political borders, the protection of the environment can not take political borders into account, the conservation of nature is more important than temporary political interests. This is expressed in the well-known ideas of sustainable development.
- Similarly, cooperation established for economic reasons is also a special case when the interest groups of different countries want to enforce the implementation of market principles in this way. Not only business partners are involved in it, but organisations representing farmers as well.
- The next group is made up of relations maintained by local governments of settlements. Such relations express significant *social demands, demands of citizens*. They are mostly political and administrative kinds of cooperation, but very often the interests of the population play a considerable role, inspiring local governments to develop cross-border relations.

The table below compares the working principles of the so-called socialist era and the bourgeois-capitalist era from the point of view of cross-border relations. At present, a rich network of organisations provides the framework for cooperation. The objectives of the individual organisations are also promoted by external support. Their common aim is to realise social integration (*Table 14*).

Table 14

The scope of cross-border relations

	MEANS	METHOD	AIM
Socialism	Party and state organisations	Central control, external commands (Moscow- X capital)	Representation of proletarian solidarity
Bourgeois era	<i>Structural network</i> – civil organisations – chambers – local governments – small regional associations – county level local governments – euroregions	<i>Self-regulation</i> – internal motive (realising the organisations' own interests) – external inspiration (gaining financial advantage) (European interests)	<i>Social integration</i> – environment protection – economic cooperation – interests of citizens (family, neighbourhood, business)

Source: Edited by the author.

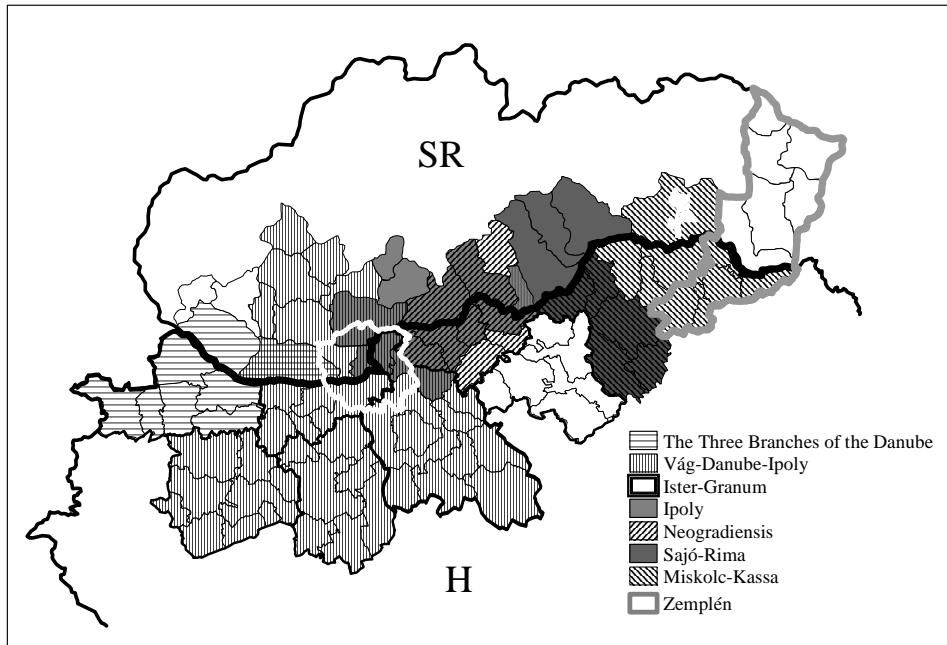
Social organisations are significant because, having a network type of structure, they can adjust to the opportunities in a flexible way. In Hungary large local governments have placed the civil organisations of a town in a common building. This solution saves expenses, is advantageous for organisation and results in such a wide variety of organisations, people and projects that results in a high degree of efficiency.

3.5 Relations of euroregions

Cooperation between euroregions looks back on a fifty-year-long tradition. Their activity is also important in today's borderless Europe, because those living in the borderlands would like to improve their disadvantageous situation with the help of this organisational form, in which the representatives of local and regional authorities, and actors of social and economic life participate. Thanks to the actors of local governments they are also decision-makers, therefore they can have contact with national and European decision-making organs, they can take part in tenders. Their strength is indicated by the fact that they have set up the *Association of European Border Regions* (AEBR), which can influence the policy of the European Council and the European Union regarding cross-border cooperation: They have elaborated the international legal frames and the policy of financial supports. The latter involves INTERREG, PHARE CBC and TACIS CBC programmes (*Figure 13*).

Figure 13

Euroregions on the Hungarian–Slovak border



Source: Edited by the author.

As an initial step, after 1990 Hungary regulated its relations with the neighbouring countries by treaties. In 1991/92 an agreement was reached with the Ukraine, Slovenia and Croatia and, for political reasons only much later, in 1995/96 with Slovakia and Romania. These documents also deal with cross-border cooperation because they stimulate such activities and lay down that constant and regular contacts between state, administrative, regional and local government organs have to be developed. The Hungarian–Slovak treaty deals with this issue in detail: 'The Contracting Parties shall create conditions for developing various forms of economic co-operation in the border region at regional and local levels, including co-operation between legal entities and natural persons'.

The Carpathians Euroregion was the first in our region to be established with Hungarian participation in 1993. Owing to their distrust, it was only in 1996 that Romania and Slovakia joined the agreement. The charter of foundation meets the requirements of the international treaty *European Outline Convention on Trans-frontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities*, which was approved of by the European Council in 1981 (Ludvig–Süli-Zakar, 2002). Upon the

request of Slovakia (and the Ukraine) strong restricting interpretation was included in the document. Their aim was to be provided a severe security that the euroregion would not endanger their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Since according to the framework convention of 1981, the status of international legal entity of euroregional cooperation depends on the inter-state treaties of the countries involved, a lot of difficulties arose during the actual activities. Therefore the European Council approved of a protocol complementing the framework convention in 1995, according to which local governments under the level of the national state are entitled to sign international contracts provided the country concerned signs the complementary protocol. This regulation does not cancel the priority of the sovereignty of the national state, but grants partial international legal entity to euroregions. This however, did not solve the difficulties, because, though Western European euroregions are international legal entities, East-Central European governments still interpret the framework convention in a restrictive way, in spite of the fact that it could raise much wider possibilities (Grúber, 2002, 194–209) (Table 15).

Table 15

Euroregions at the Hungarian–Slovak border

Name	Year of establishment
The Euroregion of The Three Branches of The Danube	2001
Vag–Danube–Ipel Euroregion	1999
Ister–Granum Euroregion	2003
Ipel’–Ipoly Euroregion	1999
Neogradiensis Euroregion	2000
Sajó–Rima [Slaná–Rimava] Euroregion	2000
Miskolc–Kassa [Košice] Euroregion	1999
Zemplén [Zemplín] Euroregion	2004
The Carpathians Euroregion	1993/1996

Source: The author’s own data collection.

Cross-border relations are important for Slovakia, because, according to the administrative division, which was valid until 1996, 24 out of 38 districts and according to the new division after 1996, 38 out of 79 districts can be found in the border region. The degree of interest in cross-border relations depends on whether it is a region that can be found in a borderland, because in such administrative units there is a strong intention to get in touch with the people living on the other side of the border, whereas in areas that are farther, or on levels higher in the political hierarchy, people are less interested.

The fact that cross-border relations cannot be regarded as a part of foreign policy was not accepted for a long time, although they do not solve political questions directly. Local governments and regional organs take part in carrying out measures to improve the conditions for everyday life. According to Slovak interests, it should take a long time to develop euroregional activities and they could be based on first of all actors of economy because attention should be focused on the development of economy within a euroregion and the cooperation should not concentrate on the ethnicity problem (*Boros, 2000*).

In the organisational structure of euroregions all kinds of cooperation follow a similar pattern. In some euroregions symmetrical organisations are established on both sides of the border, which, misleadingly, often call themselves 'euroregion' and the two symmetrical organisations work out a cooperation agreement. In this case new members are accepted by the common euroregion if they enter into the organisation on their own side.

In the other model, participants of both sides sign a contract of cooperation. The elected body, the chairman and his board, the secretariate, the operative staff and work teams make up the common organisation of euroregions. They are elected by the members. On the other hand participants in work teams are delegated.

As for the legal personality of organisations, the simplest solution is when an organisation is set up as a legal person for execution on one side. However, a lot of problems may arise with the establishment of a common organisation as a legal personality, but as actual examples have shown it is not impossible. The different law and order of in the different countries may mean difficulties, especially because in the majority of cases the members are actors of administration (local governments, villages, districts, counties).

Only few euroregions have independent offices for their secretariates or work organisations. In the case of a common non-profit organisation working on either side the firm is an independent organisation. On the other hand it is a solution for several euroregions that the operative staff is operated by one of its members and there may be a secretariate on both sides. Where a common organisation has been set up as a common legal person, there is naturally a centre, a headquarters, and the other country/countries has/have offices. The operating costs of the secretariate or the operative staff are usually covered by the contributions of the members, in most cases according to the number of the population, but it may also happen in equal proportions.

Organisations are often hindered in their activities by the fact that their heads (the chairmen), the elected bodies and in several cases also the members of the work teams are politicians, mayors and representatives of the local governments of counties. It is typical, especially of the post of the chairman that owing to his several duties he is not able to deal with the problems of the euroregion, so the organi-

sation becomes incapable of decision-making or squaring matters and the sessions ordained by its statutes are cancelled.

The Hungarian–Slovak cooperation has not reached the level which would make it possible to provide common public utility services, yet. Cooperation in health care, education, employment or communications is still laid down in interstate treaties and is not the result of the realisation of local interests. Ister-Granum Euroregion has signed the first health insurance agreement, according to which the Slovak insured are treated in the hospital in Esztergom.

When taking the initial steps it should be taken into account that cooperation is strongly hindered by the differences in administrative and taxation systems, legislation methods, markets, planning, currency and language.

Regarding the national development level of euroregions it can be stated that the first organisational steps to establish well-operating units have been taken. In order to make this organisational form complete, it is necessary to develop various networks between settlements, existing natural and cultural values, communications corridors, etc. In the background there should be a common development policy, which should be realised continuously, on the level of everyday activities, and not only if external resources are granted (*Moll, 2000*).

According to Hungarian public opinion it is a long-range aim in the relations between the two countries to make the role of borders unessential. There are two important arguments for it, one of them being the unification of the Hungarian people living on both sides of the border without changing the borders themselves, and the other is an even broader idea, which also justifies the above desire: the claim to strengthen the Carpathian Basin consciousness. We are going to live in a period of our common history, when the right of self-determination can be exercised with no invaders present, under democratic conditions. Regarding our long historical past, we have to count on the revival of the centuries-long coexistence in the future, which will be determined by a modern, local consciousness of Carpathian Basin identity based on equality and self-determination.

This long-range aim can be achieved by satisfying a very practical claim, i.e. dissolving the isolation and making continuous efforts to eliminate the critical situation in the borderlands. Solving different problems like the high rate of unemployment, the large number of those moving away, the lack of economic dynamism and the various disadvantages in settlement services give a lot to do in the future. The greatest ambition of each euroregion is to find a way out of isolation. An example of this is the general phenomenon that they try to make use of the disadvantage. It is a well-known fact that, because border crossing was rather difficult, there was only little industrialisation in these areas, which, however, meant that they could preserve the beauty of the landscape. It is their ambition to exploit this common asset.

Regional planning and drawing up documents of common development are involved in the description of the aims of all euroregions. By now several euroregions have started to draw up their programme or have completed their development document. The experience gained in this way is as follows:

- Financing the plans in Hungary happens at random and from various resources (Phare CBC, Regional Development Fund, county resources, their own resources);
- In Slovakia, a special fund administered by the Ministry of Public Construction and Regional Development has been established and it ensures the necessary resources for the plans on the Slovak side;
- Owing to the different resources it rarely happens that both sides have the necessary money for common planning, so the plans are drawn up at different points of time. There is often a time lag even if both sides have the necessary resources at the same time. The Phare CBC financed the project of Neogradensis Euroregion on the Hungarian side, while the same project on the Slovak side did not get any support;
- Owing to partly financing peculiarities, symmetrical rather than uniform plans have been drawn up on the two sides, and the other party has not always been involved in implementing these plans;
- While making these plans, they take the existing documents into consideration, especially, where there is an institution of regional development on either side;
- The ambitions of euroregions and the aims outlined in their plans are not always in accordance with the competence of the members of the given euroregion. In many cases the plans are much more ambitious than what the participants could ever realise or what they could exert a significant influence on. Such are the development of communications axes, the railway or the elimination of contamination of rivers.

Euroregions also have an important national aim. If they can accomplish their activities, and a growing number of euroregions can realise their plans, if the developing networks of relations spread extensively, then the participants will gain everyday experience in the cooperation practice of the two neighbouring countries. The experience gained in this way can be used at a national level, too.

3.5.1 The Euroregion of the Three Branches of the Danube

The Euroregion of the Three Branches of the Danube was founded in 2001 by the General Assembly of Győr-Moson-Sopron County (Hungary) and the Csallóköz-Mátyusföld Regional Association (Slovakia), with the Győr office of the county

general assembly as its headquarters, while in Dunaszerdahely [Dunajska Streda] it is the office of the regional development agency that is in charge of organisational tasks.

The central body of the euroregion is the council, which consists of 14 members from each side. The board consists of Hungarian and Slovak sections, with 5 members each. The chairman's office is held by two chairmen alternately, each for one year. Work committees help the work of the euroregion. The administrative organ of the euroregion is the secretariate, and the secretary's duties are performed by one person on each side, one in Győr and one in Dunaszerdahely [Dunajska Streda]. The incomes of the budget of the euroregion are made up of the contributions of the members and the resources gained on tenders.

It is an important result that, with the support of the local government of Győr-Moson-Sopron County, and with the assistance of the Central Statistical Office of the county and the Statistical Office of the Nagyszombat [Trnava] district, the statistical publication of the whole of the region has been issued.

The development of Infolánc, an Austrian, Hungarian and Slovak programme, a common database of environmental protection, is in progress in cooperation with the Hungarian Reflex Környezetvédelmi Egyesület (Association of Environmental Protection). It will be accessible on the Internet. The Austrian side is also involved in the programme through the Austrian organisation of the Communal Forum, a trilateral cooperation of local governments (*Hardi*, 2001b).

3.5.2 Vag–Danube–Ipel Euroregion

The document of the euroregional cooperation was signed on July 3rd 1999 by Pest County, Komárom-Esztergom County (Hungary) and Nyitra [Nitra] County (Slovakia) on board the ship 'Táncsics' sailing from Neszmély along the Hungarian-Slovak borderline of the Danube, within the framework of the 'Bridge-Building Days'. The establishment of the euroregion was preceded by five years of civil organisational work of mainly the Rákóczi Alliance. The Regional Development Council of Central Transdanubia and the Regional Development Council of Fejér and Veszprém counties joined the cooperation agreement later.

The Slovak Džurinda-cabinet approved of the euroregional cooperation with a decision of the prime minister. Then the operative staff of the euroregion, the civil organisation under the name of Vag–Danube–Ipel Development, which was registered as a partnership association, was founded. It is in charge of the realisation of the objectives of the euroregion by participating in tenders, since there are no other resources available for the euroregion. Two secretariates, one in Tatabánya and one in Nyitra, take part in this work.

They signed agreements with other euroregions, such as the Slovak–Polish Tatra Euroregion and the Czech–Polish Silesia Euroregion. In the summer 2002, these euroregions made up a notice (the ‘Neszmély notice’) with the purpose of establishing the alliance of the euroregions of the Visegrád countries. On the one hand this would help the work of other euroregions in a similar position, and on the other hand they could enforce their interests better.

The euroregion also operates the European Information Point, which is in charge of providing information about the European Union and its tender opportunities. The euroregion has gained financial support from the Phare CBC for two of its programmes, one of them being organising the Europe citizen-training academy and this was the reason why they signed an agreement with the Europäische Staatsbürger-Akademie (ESTA) in Bocholt. The other programme was the green corridor programme of the Danube. It is a programme of environmental protection, which focuses on repairing the damage caused by the Danube barrage in the Hungarian–Slovak border section of the Danube.

In 2001 the ‘Programme of the Hungarian and Slovak Cross-Border Cooperation’ was completed, which is in fact the regional development programme of Vág–Duna–Ipoly Euroregion. Its ambition is to provide a framework for the eight operative programmes drawn up recently as well as for new programmes (Hardi, 2001a).

3.5.3 Ister–Granum Euroregion

Within Vag–Danube–Ipel Euroregion the Ister–Granum cross-border small region was established with the participation of the Council of Small-Regional Development of Esztergom–Nyergesújfalu, the villages Tokod and Tokodaltáró (Hungary) and Párkány [Štúrovo] and the neighbouring villages in Slovakia. At present 53 Hungarian and 47 Slovak settlements belong to it.

This euroregion can be found at the junction of three rivers, the Danube, the Garam and the Ipel. The reconstruction of Mária–Valéria Bridge between Esztergom and Párkány [Štúrovo] was a strong motive to develop relations between them. Since then this region at the junction of three rivers, which used to be a homogeneous unit, has been able to form an independent region again. Its core is made up of the former royal and ecclesiastical centres (Esztergom, Visegrád). One third of the region is a nature conservation area. By reuniting the former primatial wine-district the Ister–Granum international ‘wine road’ is being organised. A similar asset is thermal water, which Párkány [Štúrovo] is already exploiting.

The main decision-making organ of the euroregion is the assembly. Its members are the mayors of the 100 settlements, who have equal rights to vote, and their work is helped by the proposals of eight professional committees and the board. Their main objectives are as follows: building a cargo ferry between Párkány

[Štúrovo] and Esztergom, exchange of students, organising the wine road, promoting village, cultural and bathing tourism, diverting the Helsinki corridor marked V/c towards Esztergom–Párkány [Štúrovo] and the protection of rivers.

3.5.4 *Ipoly Euroregion and Ipel'ský Euroregion*

The treaty of cross-border cooperation of the *Ipoly Euroregion* was signed in Balassagyarmat in 1999. The document mentions two organisations, *Ipoly Euroregion* (with Balassagyarmat as its headquarters) in Hungary and *Ipel'ský Euroregion* (with Ipolyság as its headquarters) in Slovakia. Their chairmen were the parties signing the document and the organisation is also operating with two centres. The document calls the established organisation an alliance, the objective of which is the preparation for the European integration processes, promoting sustainable development in the area, eliminating backwardness, preserving existing (especially environmental) values and drawing up programmes of regional development. The signed documents agree with the Madrid charter of 1980, which concerns euroregions. The documents had been deposited in Brussels, where at the end of 2002, their application was approved of under the name *Ipel'–Ipoly Euroregional Alliance*.

The most important organ of the organisation is the assembly, which consists of all the members, and it makes decisions regarding everything that affects the euroregion. The assembly has a mandate for four years and chooses a board of 12 members, 6 of which are members of local governments and 6 people are members of social organisations. The secretariate conducts operative affairs. The ambition of the two euroregions was to unite and apply for admission to the Alliance of European Regions as one common organisation. This happened in 2004.

3.5.5 *NEOGRADIENSIS Euroregion*

To be able to seize the support opportunity provided by the Small Project Fund of the Phare CBC programme, Nógrád County established *NEOGRADIENSIS euroregion* with Losonc as its centre together with the Slovak partner organisation at the beginning of the year 2000. The choice of name was justified by the fact that the old Latin name of the county does not hurt the national feeling of either party. The partner organisation of the euroregion became the *NEOGRADIENSIS Euroregion Society*, because the euroregion can work in this legal form. The main organ of the euroregion is the assembly, the board elected from its members, the supervisory committee and the work committees. The two parties take part in the assembly at par, each having 15 representatives, and they have at least one session a year

alternately in the two countries. They also take part in the board at par (7-7 people), they are designated by the contracting parties and they have sessions at least two times a year. The post of the chairman is for two years, but besides the current chairman, there is a co-chairman elected by the other country. Secretarial and operating duties are performed by the Nógrád County Agency of Regional Development.

3.5.6 Sajó–Rima [Slaná–Rimava] Euroregion

The background of organising Sajó–Rima [Slaná–Rimava] Euroregion is that the Trianon Peace Treaty had divided the one-time Gömör County into two, as a result of which 252 settlements belonged to the Slovak side whereas only 22 remained on the Hungarian side. With new circumstances emerging, the establishment of the euroregion was determined by a geographical unit, taking aspects of environment protection into consideration. This was the valley of the rivers Sajó [Slaná] and Rima [Rimava], including the former Gömör County, too.

Three Slovak districts and four Hungarian small regions, altogether 123 settlements from Hungary and 300 from Slovakia take part in the cooperation. The development of the relations started with expanding relationships of families, and in the last decade cultural and sports relations have also become increasingly significant. The idea of international cooperation originates from a students' self-government, which drew the attention of a Hungarian mayor to the possibility of international cooperation on a study trip to France. He inspired Hungarian students to invite students from the other side of the border to the programmes they organised, and this was how cooperation between the leaders of the settlements began. The connections with the French student self-government have continued and helped with participating in international tenders. These relations have developed into a euroregional organisation.

Due to legal difficulties, first they signed an agreement of cooperation, in the framework of which they organised the programmes of the 'Gömör Summer', to which Slovak visitors were also invited. The Alliance of Slovak Entrepreneurs also takes part in the annual programmes of the Hungarian Gömör Expo as exhibitors. The result of the fairs is that several business relations have been developed between the entrepreneurs living on both sides of the border, what is more, several Slovak–Hungarian joint companies have been founded.

The leaders of Sajó–Rima [Slaná–Rimava] Euroregion signed the agreement of cooperation in Rozsnyó [Rožňava] in October 2000. The centre of the euroregion became Rimaszombat [Rimavska Sobota], where an office of the euroregion has been working since October 2000. The official registration of the agreement of cooperation took place in Brussels in 2004.

In the summer 2003 the consultative council of euroregions was set up in the Visegrád countries, with the Sajó–Rima [Slaná–Rimava] Euroregion as one of its founding members. The charter of foundation of the consultative council was sent to Brussels. According to the agreement they are invited to take part in meetings concerning the region as observers.

3.5.7 Miskolc–Kassa [Košice] Euroregion

It was the town strategy of Miskolc drawn up in 1996/97 that made it possible to develop twin-settlement relations from their rather representative kind of relations into real, practical activity. The main ambition was to make Miskolc a euroregional centre, which would promote accession to the union. The proposal pointed it out that the two towns should not be rivals, rather partners in the regional cooperation. The framework convention was ratified on May 7th in Kassa [Košice], then on May 11th 1997 in Miskolc. However, it only laid down neighbourly relations regarding the two towns.

In 1999 there were already four parties taking part in the talks: the town of Kassa [Košice], the region of Kassa [Košice], Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and the town of Miskolc. Since this time the two towns have been employing an official each to arrange routine matters. The Kassa [Košice]–Miskolc Euroregion was established in May 2000 with the purpose of taking the new opportunities provided by the European Union.

It may weaken the relations between Kassa [Košice] and Miskolc that neither founding politician takes part in the public life of their town. At present it is rather the larger region, i.e. county relations that are becoming stronger. An example of this is the fact that the common economic utilisation of the international airport in Kassa has become the subject of an agreement between Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County and the town of Kassa [Košice].

3.5.8 Zemplén [Zemplín] Euroregion

The Zemplén [Zemplín] Euroregion was founded in April 2004 with the participation of 32 Slovak and Hungarian small regions, civil organisations and local governments. The founders of the alliance were the Királyhelmec [Kráľovký Chlmec] Agency of Regional Development (Slovakia) and the Zemplén Regional Enterprise Developing Fund (Hungary).

The establishment of the Zemplén [Zemplín] Euroregion promotes the economic development and more efficient cooperation of small regions in southern Slovakia and northern Hungary. They elaborate common programmes of develop-

ment and cooperation, which affect the economic development of both areas and try to eliminate their backwardness. In this way commercial relations are also expanding. The Slovak partner organisation is planning to establish a centre in Királyhelmec [Kráľovký Chlmec], like the one in Hungary. The euroregion relies on the intellectual and infrastructural base provided by the Zemplén [Zemplín] Regional Enterprise Developing Fund.

3.5.9 The Carpathians Euroregion

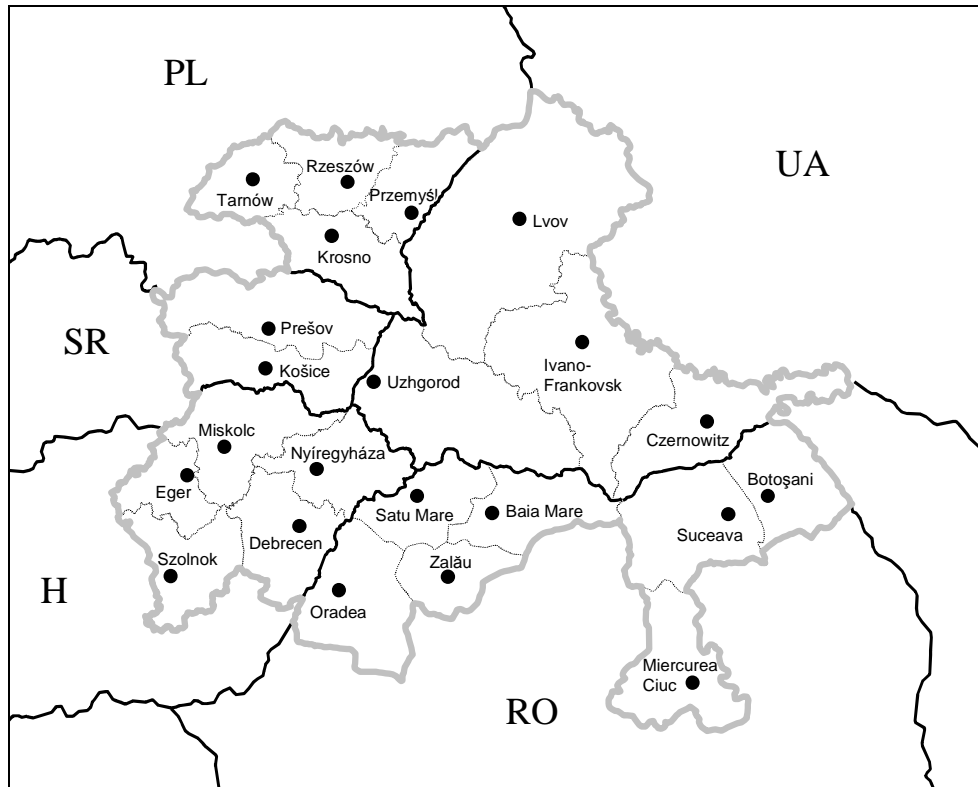
The Carpathian Euroregion can be looked upon as a symbolic euroregion, as the secretary-general of the European Council Catherine Lalumiere, who signed the document of cooperation together with the Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian foreign ministers on February 14th 1993 in Debrecen, also did. In the beginning Slovak and Rumanian local governments also took part in the cooperation, but in the end, owing to home political reasons, the representatives of the governments did not sign it. In 1998 Romania and in 1999 Slovakia became members of the organisation with full powers (*Süli-Zakar*, 2001). This euroregion can be considered symbolic because it is a huge territory (150,000 km²) and it has a large population (14.7 million people), which makes the cooperation of 26 member regions rather difficult. The numerous state borders, manifold customs and legal systems further increase those difficulties. However, the aim of the euroregion was that in this poor region, where people have suffered so much, peoples or rather their governments and political participants should communicate with each other. The Carpathians Euroregion is an organisation of this purpose (*Figure 14*).

The most important result of the activities The Carpathians Euroregions has achieved so far is the growth of political confidence, but the economic cooperation has not been really successful yet. Mention must be made of the 17 new border stations, which have improved the situation of communications, which used to be one of the main obstacles to cooperation between the countries of the region. They have not managed to change the extremely centralised decision-making system of the individual member-countries, either, which means slow and unforeseeable central decisions prevailing.

The two towns Eperjes and Kassa [Košice] in Slovakia take part in the activities of The Carpathians Euroregion, but real events are only the results of the work done by the Carpathian Fund (with Kassa as its headquarters). This organisation was set up on the decision of the generous supporter of the Carpathians Euroregion, The Eastwest Institute – New York (EWI), when, owing to a bank failure in the Ukraine, the organisation lost its funds. Since both in a territorial sense and regarding the aim of their activities the mission of the two organisations are the same, they have signed an agreement of cooperation, too (*Süli-Zakar*, 2002).

Figure 14

The Carpathians Euroregion



Source: Edited by the author.

4 Summary

4.1 Towards coexistence

Resolving all kinds of differences, differences between groups of countries, countries, cultures and languages, sexes and species has been a crucial question of human thinking for centuries. As G.E. Lessing expressed the equality of religions in his world-famous drama *Nathan, The Wise* in the age of religious intolerance, now the European Union recommends its member states equality between countries, peoples and cultures and that they should resolve the differences by negotiations. There was and there has been a whole system of inequalities not only between the old member states and between the new ones but also within the countries for cen-

turies, but the Union makes treaties with its members to eliminate differences, conflicts and inequalities by negotiations.

Slovakia's home policy is full of internal uncertainties. The reason for it is that in a historical sense it is only a comparatively short time since it has been an independent state, a national state. In the course of its history it always existed as a part of larger and more developed countries so it could not gain sufficient (democratic) experience in organising political life. Both its society and its economy were underdeveloped since the territory belonging to the Slovak people was always the periphery of larger countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia). In these countries, the inhabitants of economic and cultural centres, first of all cities were members of the dominant nation, so owners, leading officials were of Hungarian and Czech origin, or Slovaks who had assimilated into these nations. This lack of economic and political experience may be the reason for the strong ethnocentrism, which motivates their political acts even today. This is the reason why neither national independence, nor international conditions stimulating democracy can make them develop new relations based on equality with other ethnicities comprising the country. Their political life keeps focusing on dangers that might threaten their national life. Slovak political powers are afraid that they might lose their national identity or their territories. This fear, however, leads to aggressiveness, to which other ethnicities, first of all Hungarian people, react by trying to defend themselves, moving away or assimilating.

Slovakia insists on the principle of the national state. Just like in the decades of communism, now in bourgeois democracy they can also find the way of using democratic principles for building their national state. Their democratic state meets the principle of bourgeois democracy and the majority principle, but it is always the interests of the national majority that take priority over the interests of the native minority. Such interpretation of democracy precludes the possibility that the population belonging to the national minority can exercise their right of self-determination.

At the beginning, existing laws did not make it possible for villages and towns to develop cross-border cooperation in the field of economy. Since the introduction of the new administrative system and the Act of Competence, i.e. since 2001/2002, cross-border relations have been the competence of the new regional municipalities. Market competition has led to a high rate of unemployment in these areas, so it is urgent to develop cross-border economic cooperation and ensure the suitable conditions for commuting labour force.

The new kind of Hungarian-Slovak relations, however, is being formed by even deeper forces.

The present paper describes the international economic processes which forced a new kind of market mobility on the peoples in the Carpathian Basin and pushed the existing labour division into new political borders. This was supported by the

Czech/Slovak policy, which, after 1920, created a rather closed kind of labour division inside the new borders, in their own territories, excluding Hungary and other parts of the Carpathian Basin. Therefore the borderlands remain peripheries in both countries (and the Hungarian area along the Danube remains a dynamic connection with Western Europe without making the northern bank of the Danube its gravity zone). These peripheries will have to carry out development with the comparatively low sums of money that they may gain at tenders of regional development. In spite of such development they will never be able to achieve the degree of national dynamism. Consequently, much more moderate and controlled cross-border relations will mean the new form of cooperation.

Hungarian-Slovak place-names

<i>Hungarian</i>	<i>Slovak</i>
Ágcsernyő	Čierna
Besztercebánya	Banská Bystrica
Dunaszerdahely	Dunajská Streda
Eperjes	Prešov
Érsekújvár	Nové Zámky
Felsónémeti	Vyšné Nemecké
Garam	Hron
Garamszentkereszt	Žiar nad Hronom
Ipoly	Ipeľ
Kassa	Košice
Királyhelmec	Kráľovký Chlmec
Komárom	Komárno
Losonc	Lučenec
Máriatölgyes	Dubnica nad Váhom
Nagyróce	Revúca
Nagykapos	Veľké Kapušany
Nagyszombat	Tnava
Nagytárkány	Veľké Trakany
Nyitra	Nitra
Párkány	Štúrovo
Pozsony	Bratislava
Rima	Rimava
Rimaszombat	Rimavská Sobota
Rozsnyó	Rožňava
Simony	Partizánske
Torna	Turňa nad Bodvou
Töketerebes	Trebišov
Trencsén	Trenčín
Turócszentmárton	Martin
Vágbeszterce	Považská Bystrica
Vágújhely	Nové Mesto nad Váhom
Zólyom	Zvolen
Zsolna	Žilina

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Hungarian-Slovak place-names

<i>Hungarian</i>	<i>Slovak</i>
Ágcsernyő	Čierna
Besztercebánya	Banská Bystrica
Dunaszerdahely	Dunajská Streda
Eperjes	Prešov
Érsekújvár	Nové Zámky
Felsőnémeti	Vyšné Nemecké
Garam	Hron
Garamszentkereszt	Žiar nad Hronom
Ipoly	Ipeľ
Kassa	Košice
Királyhelmece	Kráľovký Chlmec
Komárom	Komárno
Losonc	Lučenec
Máriatólgyes	Dubnica nad Váhom
Nagyróce	Revúca
Nagykapos	Veľké Kapušany
Nagyszombat	Trnava
Nagytárkány	Veľké Trakany
Nyitra	Nitra
Párkány	Štúrovo
Pozsony	Bratislava
Rima	Rimava
Rimaszombat	Rimavská Sobota
Rozsnyó	Rožňava
Simony	Partizánske
Torna	Turňa nad Bodvou
Töketerebes	Trebišov
Trencsén	Trenčín
Turócszentmárton	Martin
Vágbeszterce	Považká Bystrica
Vágújhely	Nové Mesto nad Váhom
Zólyom	Zvolen
Zsolna	Žilina