

POTENTIAL POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSBORDER CO-OPERATION AFTER HUNGARY'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

Problems of border regions shows up presently with different functional content and spatial dimension for the European Union, and these questions will get new dimensions after the accession of Eastern-European countries. The radical increase of the extent of territories beyond the border incites political, economic questions, and also these of territorial development and safety policy. Especially after the war in Yugoslavia in spring 1999, border regions would become more and more organic part of foreign and safety policy, it would be not only the question of territorial development, subvention and co-operation of regions situated beyond the border of the European Union.

From the point of view of safety policy, spatial functionality and human relationships, border regions can be analysed from three aspects: topographical (between settlements – micro-regional), tactical (area) and strategic (summing up the determining territories and regions of a given country). Depending on the date and the characteristics of the country's accession (sometime between 2002 and 2006), a forth spatial category may emerge, the structural frontier zone of the newly joined Central-European countries, because of the transitory rules these countries may form a secondary integration zone, a group of countries of frontier character from several points of view.

The treatment of new border regions mean for the European Union an increasing internal task especially at the borders of newly joined countries and previous EU members, and an external need (forefront organisation, safety, interception) at the same time. The significance of external and internal borders will depend mostly on the sphere of the joining countries.

So far as well, the treatment of border regions played an important role in the EU foreign, safety and territorial development policy; but by spatial exten-

sion, the political importance of the question will increase with the partial get in of the eastern well-fare slope, and partly with its increase beyond the external borderline (as in the first step the most developed Central-European countries will join).

Important elements of the EU frontier policy practice so far will remain valid in the future as well, but new approaches will be needed depending on the spatial significance of joining and the sphere of joining countries.

In our analysis we did not tend to observe the historical or present day EU practice, but we aimed to measure Hungary's possibilities after the joining from its new, potential situation.

Hungary – “a country at the frontier”

Seven neighbouring countries and 2,246 km of borderline frame the country's territory of 93,030 km². For Hungary border regions are an essential question from different viewpoints:

- Due to the borderline changes in the 20th century, one third of the ethnic Hungarians live partly beyond the frontier or at the Hungarian border. Official statistics of the different countries, data of population counting, estimations of Hungarian churches and civil organisations in the given country vary significantly as far as the years 1990's are concerned: in Burgenland there are 4,000 Hungarians after the Austrian statistics and 15,000 according to the estimations of Hungarian organisations, in Slovakia 567,000 or 750,000, in Ukraine 155,000 or 200,000, in Romania 1,598,000 or 2,200,000, in Yugoslavia 385,000 or 330,000, in Croatia 26,000 or 30,000, in Slovenia 10,000 or 12,000 Hungarians are living;
- Most of the infrastructure elements constructed within the border of the former state territory are cut off by the present day border (rail, roads);
- 10% of the 3,200 localities in the country are in direct touch with the border, among them several cities;
- One third of the 150 statistical small regions are along the border, several among them are peripheral and under-developed;
- 14 out of the 19 counties in the country are along the state border;
- The seven projected statistical regions are all in touch with the border, and that was essential at their set up;
- The number of neighbouring countries per 100,000 km² of state territory in Hungary – not counting the mini states – is one of the highest in Europe.

With the split up of the former socialist federations, Hungary's neighbouring environment changed radically in the 1999's. There are tremendous differences in the neighbouring and European policy in the newly formed states (Slovakia, Little Yugoslavia, Croatia, Slovenia and Ukraine).

The Austrian–Hungarian border (356 km) is today the external border of the European Union, and the only EU border for Hungary; after the joining of the Central-European countries the Hungarian–Slovene border (102 km) becomes also an internal EU border. This is highly important for us, because, with the exception of the Austrian-Hungarian and the Hungarian-Slovene borders, the great majority of our borderline (Slovakia – 679 km, Ukraine – 137 km, Romania – 453 km, Yugoslavia – 164 km, Croatia – 355 km, a total of 1788 km that is 79,6%) stays for a period of time an external EU border after Hungary's joining. (The Schengen-type of construction of the external border claims 30 billion HUF in the first step according the most modest calculations. Border guard and control will be claiming significant budget expenses. That is why it would be lucky if Slovenia joined the EU in the first round as well.)

After the joining external borders may become more diversified than they are today. If the circle of the present day associated countries did not change (Slovakia, Romania), Romania's visa exemption would be rational, thus there would be no decrease compared to the present day situation in the possibilities of relations towards Hungary for the numerically biggest Hungarian minority. External border co-operation would keep its present day border-passing character.

Compared to the associated countries Hungary's development is either minimal (as compared to Slovakia), or more significant (as compared to Romania). This manifests not only in the GDP per capita, but especially, in the capacity of adaptation.

The situation of the not-associated countries (Croatia, Yugoslavia and Ukraine) differs from many points of view, their policy towards EU is diversified. The joining of each country does not seem easy or close, but Croatia may reach soon the elaboration of the association treaty; Yugoslavia's possibilities or obligations after the war cannot be foreseen today. In Ukraine's case we can only speak about membership in a historical perspective. These countries' public opinion considers Hungary a developed country.

Croatia's catch up may be quick after liquidating the consequences of the war.

Because of the Schengen treaty of border control and economic reasons, border passes for small border traffic may close at our future external EU borders. EU membership may go along with external border traffic limitation or drive that cannot be foretold today.

State sovereignty and state border (Interpretation of certain notions)

In the nation state conscience formed in the 19th century, territorial sovereignty and representation of state borders were extremely strong, and still survive naturally in certain aspects not only in Central-Europe, but in the other parts of Europe as well. During integration categorical contents may strongly modify and gain new content. From the point of view of the internal legitimisation of integration, sovereignty and the relationship to state border remained significant up to now.

If we examine regional policy and practise of territorial development from the aspects of territorial sovereignty and state border, we have to distinguish at least four situations. These four types express only partially a historical process; they might appear simultaneously as well.

a) Border regions

Border regions are defined according to their topographical situation in a given state. It is up to the sovereign decision of a given state to develop or not border regions (by orienting resources to territories near the border or to take away resources in order to reduce population at the border). Development or regression of border regions is a unilateral, internal decision, therefore a neighbouring country cannot intervene in the border regional policy of an other country.

b) Transborder co-operations

A co-operation beyond the common state border of two countries is of common interest, it needs common decision. Set up of border passes, definition of their character, a potential close of a border pass etc. need always a bilateral decision, and sometimes a compromise. Neighbouring states define the frequency and location of border passes according to the minimum of their common interest, so this is a common decision, a common sovereignty practise.

Intensity of Tran frontier co-operation and frequency of border passes express a wider sphere of relations between two countries. The closer the common state border is, the bigger is the lack of confidence between the two countries; the more intense the border pass is, the stronger is a kind of mutual confidence.

c) State border co-operations

We can speak of state border co-operations, when a relationship of great intensity is emerging along the common borderline, a common decision or an approved one from every aspect is formed in certain fields or determined do-

mains. It results in a possibility of intervention in the direction of processes in the territory of the neighbouring country. State border co-operations express a great deal of mutual confidence and a long-term interest.

d) State border integrating co-operations

We can speak of state border integrating co-operations when in case of two countries, territories along the borderline go under identical (integrated) sovereignty as far as the most important factors are concerned, so the state border becomes almost virtual. (It does not disappear, but it's linking and not its separating function is determining.)

The notional separation contains formal elements, but basically content is determining, it qualifies situations along the state border, through the border and in the border zone from the aspect of state sovereignty.

Structural possibilities of state border relationships after Hungary's EU accession

After the joining, two relationship systems (EU internal and EU external) will emerge, differing in quality and content. Joining will affect differently certain parts of the border and the territories.

Topographical (micro-regional) relations (relations between settlements)

As far as the relationship at and across the border is concerned, micro-regional levels express physical, geographical distance (depending on the topographical conditions it cannot exceed 10 km) and social-geographical "visibility". In the life of localities, communities living at the two sides of the open EU internal border, the other side might be present in everyday life (co-operation and rivalry) in the future. In case of localities along the external border "opposition" will not involve significant changes.

Micro-regional co-operation along the border has a strong tradition at the two sides of the EU's present day internal border. Beside successful co-operation, micro-regional frontiership involves possibilities of collective or individual conflicts (If confliction may emerge between communities within the country, their presence is obvious between two localities at the two sides of the border.)

To support co-operations along the internal border is not simply an economic question – even if it has an important role –, but it aims to dissolve a

historically developed reserve. It wants to be a tool modifying the image that people living at the two sides of the border formed about each other.

The relationship between communities living near the open, and, in fact, almost symbolic border, their willingness to co-operate, their capacity to communicate can generate in the long run a frontiership of a new quality.

After Hungary's joining, this type of internal, micro-regional frontiership may appear primarily along the present day Austrian border, and, above all, not only bound to the present day border passes, but with a zone character. Transborder relations of certain localities are already forming with great intensity, the diversity of their content will deepen after the joining, weaving imperatively the line of the former iron curtain.

At the same time, we have to admit that even today the economically stronger Austrian part is dominating the shaping of micro-regional relations. (Austria's GDP per inhabitant was 22,100 USD in 1996 compared to 9,300 USD in Hungary. The difference between Austria's "poorest and the least developed region" and Hungary's developed western counties is somewhat smaller, but it still remains quite big.) Even if, in Hungary, the GDP per capita will rise significantly until the joining, the gap will stay important, if it becomes smaller at all. This means that a relatively poor region enters in open contact with a rich region. This may lead to the lack of balance based on economic domination. Its first negative signs have already appeared in the society of certain settlements at the Hungarian side.

Intense micro-regional relations emerged at the Hungarian–Slovene border as well, especially since the time when one does not need a passport to pass the border, an identity card will do. In Slovenia, the GDP per capita was 13,200 USD in 1996 that passed over notably the Hungarian value. If Hungary's and Slovenia's joining occurs at the same time, a completely new type of border relation network will emerge at the border of the two countries. In this relationship the Slovene side may be dominant, as the economic underdevelopment of the Hungarian territories compared to the Slovene side is considerable, even if we know that Alsólendva and Muraszombat are not the most developed settlements in Slovenia from an economic point of view.

One of the conditions for making profit of the advantages of micro-regional frontiership along the open, internal EU border is the capacity to adapt and to communicate of the economically active generations. According to the detailed regulation of joining, new spaces of working force market, service and consumption may emerge at the Austrian–Hungarian and the Hungarian–Slovene border that have not existed since the split up of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy.

Conditions of micro-regional co-operation changed fundamentally in the 1990's at the Hungarian–Slovakian and the Hungarian–Romanian border.

Changes had political and economic content at the same time. Despite all contradictions, Hungary's bilateral political relations improved notably with these two countries. The set up and gradual extension of CEFTA intensified in a strong way the possibilities of bilateral economic co-operation. (At the same time problems and protestations at the border showed that trade of agricultural goods could incite oppositions between people living at the two sides of the border.) Hungary became for Romania a region attracting working force – not only in the border zone, but also for the whole region inhabited by Hungarians. Similar phenomena evolved here too as, at the Austrian–Hungarian border, but in the other way round.

After Hungary's EU joining, possibilities of micro-regional relations and their development can deteriorate temporarily at the Slovakian and the Romanian borders.

After Hungary's joining the European Union, micro-regional relations will develop on an individual basis with a neighbouring country that did not sign a treaty of EU association. At the Hungarian–Ukrainian border we can speak about the mass development of personal contacts, and not really about collective relations, even if the borderline runs through a Hungarian-speaking territory. At the Hungarian–Serb border, rather personal contacts are determining, though collective relations recovered temporarily, but the spring 1999 war conflict was a break from every aspect, except for micro-regional smuggle. Collective, economic sectors and a wide range of personal contacts are equally present in Croatian–Hungarian micro-regional relations. The projected Croatian–Hungarian free trade agreement can give a new impulse to micro-regional relations, as well.

Tactical (territorial) relations

From this aspect, tactical (area) frontiership is rather functional and not distance-specific (more than 10 km) from a physical-geographical point of view. Area frontiership coincides partly with the administrative spaces of the two neighbouring countries, and goes to the edges of the first towns along the border. Co-operation along the tactical border is determined by the fact that the already efficient regions of given countries participate in the shaping of the relationship, but the co-operation does not “endanger the sovereignty” of the core territories or capitals of the given countries.

Tactical frontiership and co-operation provide a possibility for peripheral regions to use more efficiently their potential and to correct their disadvantages.

We consider as a tactical border relation system the co-operation between Burgenland and the counties in Western-Hungary. (Of course, co-operation has

also a strategic importance for the given regions.) Euro-regional co-operation can play a considerable role in the preparation of the three Hungarian counties to join the EU.

We also consider the Ipoly Euro-regional initiative as a tactical border relation that was created with the intention to prepare mostly for the situation after Hungary's joining.

A wide circle of twin county relations emerged at different parties of the border. These relations are recorded in contracts, and their great advantage is that the leadership of the neighbouring territories has comprehensive knowledge about the other side.

Success of border area co-operation may contribute to the improvement of the situation of peripheral territories, but results do not permit to foretell the fact if they change basically the development possibilities of a given territory.

Strategic co-operation

Strategic border co-operation affects considerable, "deep" territories of the countries in question. Several strategic border co-operation of this type emerged in the present day EU practise.

As far as Hungary is concerned we can range in this circle the Carpathian Mountains Euro-region, the Alps–Adriatic Sea working community, the Danube–Dráva–Száva and the Danube–Tisza–Körös–Maros Euro-regional organisations formed during the preparation for the joining. We can put in this category, even its main content is not frontiership, the Association of Provinces along the Danube.

Strategic border co-operation – if formal frames get meritorious content – can contribute significantly to the development of multilateral relations between bigger territories, independently of the fact whether they are EU members or not.

Strategic border co-operation – in the long run – can generate new regional formations and interests that have not existed so far. If we consider the Carpathian Mountains Euro-region, we can see that it may contribute to the deepening of relations at a delicate peripheral region of Central-Europe. The Danube–Tisza–Körös–Maros initiative, and the latest one, the somehow unreal Danube–Dráva–Száva Euro-regional initiative can play a similar role.

Organisations may contribute to the development of peripheral territories only if relationship systems will emerge and those separated by political borders will recover. That is why they became peripheral, at least compared to their relationship to their national capital.

It would be interesting to know whether this type of organisation of peripheral territories, their “get together” serves the interest of central authorities in the long run, or they feel as if their delicate territories “became independent”.

Strategic border co-operation was escorted by questions even in the European Union – despite all central economic and political support –, so a great deal of patience and endurance are needed for countries in Central-Europe, inside and outside EU, concerning this level of organisation.

Structural frontiership

The EU – explicitly in its program and partly in finance – validates a certain conception or policy of structural frontiership. This development-support policy serves above all the stabilisation of EU's external forefront. The EU cannot separate itself from its eastern forefronts either politically or economically or, particularly, from the point of view of safety policy.

After the joining of Central-European states, structural frontiership can be interpreted by EU from two aspects: we can speak of internal and external structural frontiership.

If the countries invited in the first round of extension negotiations (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia) join the EU at the same time, a particular internal EU frontier zone will emerge (by a territory of 505,000 km² and 62 million inhabitants) that means a new border structure from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea. This zone does not mean simply the postponing of EU's eastern border, but also the integration of new types of problems within the frame of the European Union. The integration process of these territories is a basic question for the EU and for the countries wishing to join the EU.

From the aspect of frontiership, the dilemma of joining manifests in two ways: whether these countries join as a unified “block” with a nearly identical transitory regulation (and, in this case, it is really possible to speak about an external, secondary integration zone). Or they join in a different structure, with different conditions, and, in this case, we cannot speak about a unified eastern border zone.

After the joining of Central-European states, external strategic border regions have to be treated in a different way, as the former Soviet states became widely the forefront of the European Union. (In the case of Finland there is a type of practise that cannot be transferred probably to the Hungarian–Ukrainian border, for example.)

When we speak about EU extension, then we also mean, explicitly or not, the restructuring of spatial and functional order of Central- and Eastern Europe.

The content and the circle of extension will modify deeply the EU and “the rest of Central- and Eastern-Europe” at the same time.

Conclusion

After the EU accession Hungary will keep from many aspects its “country-at-the-frontier” nature. What is more, the country's structural frontiership can get new dimensions.

Border relations and co-operations raise questions of different content after the joining at the future internal EU border and at the external borders of different status.

In this future situation, Hungary has to think over all potential consequences of border regions, it cannot consider border regions in a limited way.

After the accession, Hungary could undertake gradually a kind of mediating role towards EU's new external border regions. Possibilities of regional economic co-operation may widen, as Hungary will not become competitive in every field in the western territories of the European Union.

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