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OF HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**

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**Report on the Research Results of  
the Centre for Regional Studies of  
the Hungarian Academy of Sciences**

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## **Preface**

The analysis on scientific workshops is such an instrument that evaluates the efficiency and deficiencies of political and professional practice the most objectively. Modern research deals not only with the scientific analysis of the past but also interacts creatively with the practical world in more complex global and partial issues and problems.

For that reason, the National Regional Development Council considered very important to discuss the achievements of its activities at the Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. On its meeting having held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2002 the Council has acknowledged the researchers' personal achievements and the Centre's results in the successful co-ordination of research and development in the field of regional processes and the education of regional science in Hungary.

The National Regional Development Council proposed to publish the report of the Centre for Regional Studies on research results that have been completed between years 1998–2001. This report includes a pragmatically arranged listing and descriptions of research works. This summary delivers a scientific message to those who are interested in the present problems of Hungarian regional policy and practice.

The researches that include international comparisons as well, acknowledge the competitiveness of Hungarian regional policy, which has been established by the past results of Hungarian regional development. At the same time they also warn that this competitive advantage may be lost if we are unable to take an active part in forming the future of European regional policy and remain unprepared for the new challenges.

A great encouragement has been given to us from some scientific papers urging for a more decentralised, regionalised territorial development policy, which may both serve as remedy for all of our national problems and as a catalyst for benefiting all the advantages that our EU membership provides for regional policy.

From the point of our future tasks, researches have clearly proved that region-based national planning has vital importance in the future of Hungarian society and economy. As a member of the European Union, Hungary may receive Community support funds for easing of regional disparities only through the preparation of a National Development Plan and viable, realistic

operational programmes that meet the high requirements of the European standards. The results of research may be utilised not only for the transitional programming period of the EU between our accession until 2006, but also for the preparation for the new period starting from 2007.

Budapest, December 2002.

*Endre Szala*  
Director of Department,  
Regional Development Office,  
Prime Minister's Office

## 1 Strategic goals

During the past few years, the Centre for Regional Studies has continued to advance regional science, and has started to prepare the theoretical ground for a paradigm shift in regional policy. Activities to this end have included research programmes, the organisation of scientific life, publications, participation in international research programmes, successful application for domestic and international funds to finance research programmes, maintenance and development of a complex system of contacts with third level institutes, participation in the preparation of government decisions related to regionalisation and EU accession, and participation in the preparation of regional policy documents both for the whole of Hungary and for the different territorial levels. These activities have turned CRS into a research centre which links the western and eastern countries of Europe.

The Centre has further widened the circle of its strategic allies with new partners, domestic and foreign scientific institutions, and consultancy organisations. Co-operation with these partners in actual research programmes has inspired new directions of research – prominent among which is the competitive analysis of Hungarian regions and settlements. Most important of these contacts is third level educational institutions. The Centre has signed strategic agreements with six universities that play a crucial role in the teaching and research of regional science. In order to disseminate the results of regional science, preparations have been started for the establishment of the Hungarian Regional Science Association.

The institute considers as its important task to help the country prepare for the accession to the EU by providing research results on regional development and regional policy; and, by the same token, to help base the decisions of the central and local governments, and the municipal bodies, on a scientific ground with the preparation of development documents of different levels and scopes, and by working out the methodological grounds for the completion of such documents. Research related to territorial structures have included the assessment of regional development initiatives in border areas, the assessment of trends in the changing spatial structure of Hungary, the investigation of the international roles assumed by Budapest and its agglomeration, the survey of the various small area organisations working in Hungary, and also the assessment of the experiences of the European and domestic regional and rural development policies: where the natural connecting points are, and what factors justify just what extent of individual autonomy and divergence in the case of these two policies.

## 2 Research results

### 2.1 Accession to the EU regional policy

Research on the *Eastern and Central European transformation* has aimed to describe Central and South-Eastern Europe at the turn of the millennium, with special attention to the process of restructuring, to the development of regional policies, and to the circumstances and conditions of integration. Research has shown what regional differences are inherent in the transition period and in during the preparations for the accession, and pointed out to what extent regional aspects have to be considered when describing these countries. The comparative analysis of the prevailing Eastern and Central European policies has clearly demonstrated the competitiveness of Hungarian regional policy; at the same time, it called attention to signs showing the waning of Hungary's advantage.

*In connection with the tools and institution system of regional development*, important research has been carried out to help establish the theoretical, methodological and regulatory rudiments of regional policy-making. The draft for the comprehensive reform of the regional development act has been completed. The operation of the regulatory and institution system of regional development has been evaluated and the relevant concepts have been clarified. Special attention was paid to the re-thinking of the intervention areas of regional policy; to the strategies of the decentralisation of resources and scopes of authority; to viable models of realising the principle of partnership; and to the more accurate definition of the theoretical and procedural issues of territorial planning. It has been pointed out that only a regional policy more decentralised than the existing one can serve both the solution of our national problems and the effective utilisation of the advantages in regional policy provided by our membership in the EU.

Analyses related to *territorial planning and programming* have indicated that the programmes need to be reviewed, primarily because of the changing priorities of the national governments; frequent changes in the national policies may threaten long-term programming. It has also been noted that even the programmes based on consensus lack, for their implementation, actors other than the local resources and the actors of the public sphere. Analyses have shown that Hungary's territorial planning system is based on the principles of EU regional policy, and it reflects the new concepts of modern market economies. The concepts and, in part, the programmes, of the different

territorial levels do not build on and only occasionally comply with each other. Underlying this is the fact that the plans are completed in different time frames, are based on different methodologies and concepts, and that the functions of the various territorial levels are not defined properly. Several parallelisms are inherent in the development concepts and programmes. The ambiguities in the functions of the various levels leave the planners and the actors of regional development in doubt as to what tools of action and implementation they are entitled to use. This way the plans lose their weight and they do not encourage partnership or the effective utilisation of resources; thus, programming becomes vague. The regional development related competencies and interrelations of the various territorial levels should be clearly defined, and the regional attitude should also be present in the sectoral plans. The efficiency and effectiveness of planning and programming are to be ensured by the guaranteed provision of decentralised development resources. One finding of these researches is that a separate *act on planning* could determine the types of plans to be worked out at the various territorial levels, the requirements for their content and the relevant procedural details.

A recommendation has been worked out for the methodology of a *National Development Plan*. An important concept of the recommendation is that the plan should discuss the goals of the various sectors in a regional framework, and that the national plan should primarily be built upon the regional plans.

The *methodology for the evaluation of the decision-making mechanisms of regional policy* is completely unknown in Hungary (despite the fact that the monitoring of efficiency is a growing requirement in the EU). This research is pioneering, which, apart from its content and findings, renders extra scientific value to its methodology. The study has shown that techniques and rules learnt during the Phare programmes aimed at preparation for accession have had little impact on how regional development resources are utilised in Hungary; which is a disquieting sign of how well Hungary is prepared to receive the Structural Funds.

The studies investigating the theoretical and practical methods of social and economic *impact analyses* have demonstrated the social and economic impacts of the plans aimed at facilitating the utilisation of resources. It has been shown that underlying the shifts in EU structural policy between planning periods are the different prevailing growth models and their various drifts. Surveying the application of impact analyses in Hungary, researchers evaluated the decentralised distribution of regional development resources; the application of impact analyses in Hungarian planning documents; the presence of indicators in the system of regional development tenders; and the ways these aspects could be modelled.



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## 2.2 Studies on territorial economic policies

Research results on the connections between *globalisation and regionalisation* have pointed out that the globalisation of the market and the parallel localisation of economic activities is creating a new kind of shared interest between the economy and the local communities. For this reason partnership in regional development becomes the interest of the economy: the principle that “the market should regulate all processes” gradually loses ground, while the local communities assume an important role and functions in economic development.

The economic development functions of the local communities are centred around two main poles: the development level and adaptability of the human resources and the market value of the given location (settlement or area).

Research has also called attention to the fact that the *creation and spreading of innovations* presume local awareness of the need for innovation as deriving from the challenges of globalisation, as well as the establishment of the optimal territorial sizes. Development resources are characteristically scarce in the model areas of local development. Competition for outside resources requires new and original ideas and encourages competitors to raise their bids. Wherever local development programmes are launched, they generally lose impulse and cannot be sustained after support runs out. The reason for this is that the targeted activities are not viable on the market. The utilisation of local resources and the continuation of projects in these target areas are hindered by the practical lack of all those components that are needed to start businesses. Most prominent of these is the lack of capital, as well as the lack of technological and marketing expertise, proper sites, buildings and equipment.

Research initiated recently on the *territorial processes of the industry* have indicated that rapid changes have occurred in the spatial structure of the industry; that there is strong correlation between the economic development level of the provincial regions and their territorial share of industrial GDP; and that economic modernisation has been dominated by the processing industry. The industrial structure of Hungary has become more one-sided compared to its one-time complexity. Machine manufacturing has come to play an important role. The structural shift in the sector can be seen as basically positive; however, the country has lost its territorial balance seeing large areas with a weakened or shrunk industrial structure. Regional development has not been able to effectively address these processes neither during the socialist nor the present transition period.

Research on the spatial structure of *new economic sectors* have shown that the variation of the county level GDP figures increased by 20 per cent between 1994 and 1999; this variation is even heavier in the dominant company sector; and that the variation of GDP and the variation of GDP growth are not completely matching. At the sectoral level, the per capita investment rate in the business services sector between 1996 and 1999 was ten times as high in Budapest as the provincial average. The expansion and differentiation of the sphere of manufacturing services followed the processes of the structural and organisational transformation of the Hungarian economy. Important elements of this process were the strengthening of the business information monopoly of Budapest, and the emerging duality of the services market. The circle of

provincial-based businesses has strongly differentiated. As regards the structure of the manufacturing services sector, as well as the circle of its users, the county seats form a particular group. Towns at the same population level have been further differentiated regarding business services, which is most spectacular in the development of the service functions of the towns belonging to the agglomeration of Budapest and those in North Transdanubia, as well as in the growing underperformance of the settlements in the Great Plain region and in Northern Hungary. The spatial patterns of the business services sector dynamically emerging during the period of economic growth have mainly served to conserve the territorial differences that had developed by the mid 1990s.

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### 2.3 Studies on the urban network

Investigation of the *tendencies of the transformation of urban spaces in Eastern and Central Europe* has shown that the settlement network of the area has become strongly differentiated due to urban planning, centralised economic policy, and the impacts of the market economy. This process has been shaped by the activity of economic actors. Due to their different competitive endowments, the hierarchy of towns has changed.

Studies carried out on the tendencies of the transformation of the Hungarian *urban network* have pointed out that today Hungary has 252 towns, but only about 200 of these actually have town functions. This indicates that the wave of awarding town status to settlements has by far gone beyond the circle of settlements with town functions, and, therefore, only rural settlements will receive town status in the future. At the same time, attention is called to the problematic situation of declining towns, as well as the conspicuous gap between the capital and the regional centres; which indicates that one urban level is missing in Hungary, and that the medium town level is also rather distorted.

The modelling of the *urban gravity zones* and their links to statistical small areas using indicators of gravity and accessibility has shown that slightly more than half of all towns have a market large enough to become a fully functional small area centre, capable of performing the organising functions of a territorial centre. The present statistical design of the country includes more small areas than justified by the existing system of links between the towns and the rural areas.

Analyses of the *development of Budapest* have called attention to the fact that due to the spectacular economic development during the 1990s, soaring real estate prices, and the ensuing changes in the society, life-style, and the city's functions, the international roles of Budapest have multiplied, and the global elements in consumption and cultural life have appeared and become quite significant. The question is whether, and to what extent, these developments are capable of ensuring Budapest a stable international role: whether or not they are enough to keep the city attractive and functional, and, beyond global functions, enable it to provide particular and unique "services" at an international level.

Analyses of the *suburbanisation processes* indicate that the development of the Hungarian suburbs during the 1990s, considering the most important features of the process as well as tendencies of decentralisation, follows the trajectory of similar processes in the developed countries. The characteristics of

the transition period, the privatisation of homes and land, have provided a particular framework for this spatial process. The expansion and intensity of suburbanisation closely correlates with the territorial concentration of domestic and foreign investment and with the purchasing power of the population.

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## 2.4 Studies on territorial structures

The results of *studies on the Great Plain region* have pointed out that the general underdevelopment and underperformance characterising this area is permanent on some of its internal and external peripheries of considerable size. The versatile and sustainable rural and landscape development of this extensive region, in compliance with its endowments, is an urgent task. This could also provide a distinctive direction for the future development of the region's

agriculture. The most important factors of the future territorial development of the Great Plain are the development of the infrastructure and the establishment of a new system of effective links among the settlements.

The findings of the programme investigating the regional *development issues of the Hungarian section of the River Danube* have shown that development on this section of the river has been, and continues to be, subject to international processes. The designation of the river as a major European transport corridor has remarkably increased its significance; prolonged uncertainty in the Balkans, however, is a great obstacle to development. The section of the river on the Hungarian–Slovakian border has not become the scene of intensive intergovernmental or cross border co-operation. Except in Budapest, the Danube divides, and not links, regions; this is further strengthened by the heavily Budapest-centred development of the motorway network. The infrastructure of the Hungarian section of the Danube is only partly capable of performing the new type of regional development tasks.

Research on *border areas* has shown that the real territorial, economic and social conflicts of these areas can only be explored through research carried out, and using the same methods, on both sides of the border. These areas, however, begin to play an increasingly important role not only in the strengthening of cross-border economic links, but also in the catching up of the larger areas of these crossing zones.

*Spatial differentiation* and the territorial differences in opportunities have increased in the society, as has been shown by research indicating strong peripherisation at small area level and the increasing geographical expansion of such peripheries. According to the new classification of small area development introduced in the research, only one third of all small areas show considerable dynamism; in the meantime, due to outbound migration, peripheral areas slowly but steadily continue to fall behind. Research has shown that the traditionally underdeveloped areas and the structural crisis areas both suffer from permanent unemployment. Taking also into account the internal trends of these areas, we find that at least two thirds of the registered unemployed and the majority of the unregistered unemployed face the threat of being permanently expelled from the labour market. This threat is the greatest in rural areas as is reflected by the fact that the smaller the size of the settlement, the higher and more rapidly increasing its unemployment rate is. The areas where permanent unemployment is the heaviest are characterised by a marked lack of local initiative and by a communication breakdown and even hostility among the proliferating development organisations.

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## 2.5 Studies in rural development

Ever since the central regulation of regional policy changed, the Centre has insisted that *rural development is not identical to regional development*, but an activity focussed on a smaller area. The complex and comprehensive development of the agriculture and of rural areas is, in compliance with the processes of the European Union, a positive endeavour. The rural areas in Hungary cannot be brought to the level of other areas merely on the basis of the agriculture.

Analyses of the *spatial restructuring of the agriculture* have proved that this economic sector, too, sees significant structural differences between the regions regarding ownership conditions and the structure of farms and plants, as well as the sector's ability to regenerate. East of the Danube, a large-scale process of

fragmentation has commenced, whereby individual users of land and smaller groups of users have indeed gained dominance; the sector's ability to regenerate, however, is stronger in Transdanubia, where agriculture is still dominated by large farms; here, however, the weight of agriculture in the whole of the economy has decreased. Small producers will be able to avoid becoming the losers of the accession to the Union only to the extent to which the leading sectors of the national economy will be able to employ those masses of small producers who are forced to give up agricultural activity. The strategy of Hungarian rural development should be build upon the *economic diversification of rural areas*.

*Strategies for making a living*, surveyed in certain agrarian areas, have indicated that in those areas where the peripheral conditions have conserved the outdated model of large farm agriculture, secondary transformations are expected to cause the sudden rise of unemployment and the outbound migration of the youth. We see concentration not only in co-operative property but also in land use; there is no concentration, however, in land ownership: present owners are waiting for new legislation and expect soaring prices after accession to the EU. New models can only emerge and strike root in those areas that have a deep tradition of agriculture and, thanks to their intensive production methods, survived the socialist era and became stronger during the emergence of a "socialist bourgeoisie." In communities where this leads to the emergence of a strong agricultural entrepreneurial circle, the municipal government and the local agricultural actors join forces to find solutions together.

Based on analyses of the *small area development organisations* in Hungary, it has been recommended that the work of small area organisations, established spontaneously or consciously, should be territorially harmonised, and parallelisms and double activities should be reduced or eliminated. Recommendations have also been made on the principles of a qualification system that would take into account the different nature of small area organisations, their different objectives, tasks, references and their different financing needs from the central budget. As an effect of the regional development act, municipal associations assumed dominance among the small area organisations; yet, the previous organisational forms did not cease to exist, and live on parallel with the newer forms. Regarding their functions and power for spatial organisation, these organisations are very heterogeneous, and are not yet capable of performing public duties.



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## **2.6 The competitiveness of Hungarian regions and settlements in the European economic space**

Investigation of the documents of international organisations, as well as the analysis of the international literature on the above research topic, launched in the framework of the National Research and Development Programme in late 2001, has concluded that the synthetic indicator of regional competitiveness is the average per capita production figure for the given region; this incorporates both the level of productivity and the level of employment. Competitiveness means sustainable economic growth that results from a high rate of employment and high productivity.

Changes in the competitiveness of the regions of Europe have taken place over a long period of time (five decades), and the ranking of regions has

undergone significantly transformation. There is a strong shift to the East on the competitive map of Europe.

Studies carried out as a test for methods designed to measure competitiveness, assessed complex competitive advantages and disadvantages in the Hungarian small areas. (Only one in three small areas in Hungary have a competitive advantage, and only six small areas have a complex advantage.) Having processed the data base gathered for the analysis of Hungary's urban hierarchy in 2000, results indicate that one fifth of all towns do not perform any considerable urban functions. There are substantial gaps and anomalies between the different levels of the urban hierarchy; the problematical levels are those of the regional centres and the medium towns.

An important component of regional competitiveness is infrastructure, the sectors of which can only involve minor advantages; infrastructural developments can reduce existing competitive disadvantages. The connection between competitiveness and infrastructure is different in developed and backward countries. Analyses of the comparative models designed to measure competitiveness have indicated that the individual regional infrastructure and the interregional aspects of the regional infrastructure both have to be taken into account in the evaluation.

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## 2.7 Developing the regional institution system

The regional development act designates the small area, the county and the region as the components of the territorial framework of regional development. The act and the consequent implementation orders, however, only determined the exact geographical borders, scopes of authority and resources for the counties; thus making the county level regional development councils the central element of the system. However, the conflicting need to strengthen the regional level has become a clear and widespread recognition among the professionals of the field; also underlined, apart from Hungary's accession to

the EU, by the requirements of the country's modernisation. Research was focussed primarily on the establishment of the institution system of regional development and on the further improvement of legislation in this field.

### *2.7.1 Decentralisation and the regions*

There are several factors that explain why regionalism has become a primary factor in integration: in modern states, the central governments delegate tasks to the subnational levels; the new, bottom-up regional paradigm requires actors capable of making decisions; the numerous regional economic actors confront the national schemes of regional development with their own interests and development strategies, and form political alliances to widen the scope of their decision-making competence; as a response to the pressures of globalisation, cultural identities tend to include an increasing number of regional factors, economic, political and intellectual; and the network paradigm of the organisation of the economy requires a wider territorial context to take advantage of economies of scale. In Europe, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, decentralisation was the link between economic development, regional transformation and the democratisation of power. Regionalism, as the expression of power sharing, optimally combining an increasingly globalised economy with the local endowments, has released fresh forces of development on the peripheries and thus the administrative region has become the driving force of modernisation.

The future of Hungary's spatial structure depends mainly on what role decentralisation will play in the utilisation of extra resources after accession to the European Union. Regions are necessary in Hungary because, as proved by European territorial development, territorial units with populations between 1 and 2 million, and operating on the principles of local government, are, due to their economic and structural endowments, the optimal framework for economy-based development policies. They are also the ideal ground for the activities and interrelations of post-industrial spatial organising forces; serve as the scene of the representation of interests; are the optimal territorial unit for the establishment of the modern infrastructure of regional development policy; and are the decisive element of the decision-making system of the European Union's structural and cohesion policies.

Today it is not public administrative reasons or our accession to the EU that compel Hungary to make progress in regionalisation. There is more at stake: the growth of the Hungarian economy, the modernisation of the country, and its future positions in the European territorial division of labour. The Hungarian

administration has been incapable of a paradigm shift during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; neither the central nor the territorial organs were interested in sharing power with other actors, and the various decentralisation schemes, in an attempt to pretend reforms, did nothing but minor adjustments in the level of redistribution. The emergence of a modern and competitive territorial economic structure is only possible within a new framework. Based on strong, central cities and assigned with political power, proper institutions and financial autonomy, the region can be the basis of this territorial framework.

### *2.7.2 The strategy of building regions*

The analysis of the effective Hungarian acts and regulations on the building of regions has revealed that the intentions of the legislative power and of the government regarding the future of the regions are not clear. Owing to ambiguous legal regulation and the lack of clear-cut concepts, the regions are the weakest element of regional development policy. As soon as a definite political stance is taken regarding the regions, the significant reform of the legal regulation of the regional level will be inevitable. First, the number of regions and their geographical borders have to be defined within the institution system of regional development. After this, the regions should be assigned with scope of authority and resources, in a process of the parallel decentralisation of government. Underlying this is the fact that the building of regions only helps the emergence of an effective regional policy if it is done through decentralisation and not to the expense of the tools of the county and settlement levels. Empirical studies have shown that it is the sectoral ministries that exert the strongest resistance towards the decentralised model of region building; therefore, the government has to act in a very determined and disciplined manner.

Empirical surveys carried out among the actors involved in the operation of the regional development institution system show that, apart from the problems ensuing from insufficient legal regulation, a number of other difficulties have to be faced in the endeavour to build regions. Although most actors support the efforts of regionalisation in principle, they show no interest or determination in the problematic issues of the present geographical borders and the potential centres of the regions; their territorial links are limited for a narrower area. Nevertheless, it has to be accepted that on the basis of the opinions of the actors, it is impossible to define more consensual region borders than the present ones. In the present phase of region building, therefore, the process should be encouraged within the present region borders; it will be reasonable, however, to

review the issue of borders before the regions are to be institutionalised. By that time, enough experience will be gathered and research carried out to make these long-term decisions more substantiated. The actors of regional development tend to find it difficult to place their interests in a regional context and to determine the optimal development objectives for the different territorial categories.

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## 2.8 Environmental protection and regional development

Research related to the topic of *environmental protection and regional development* aims at exploring the regional characteristics and links of environmental protection. The importance and actuality of this topic is underlined by the fact that the environmental criteria of regional development projects assume increasing emphasis during accession to the European Union. We have investigated regional development activities and the increase in environmental burdens between 1950 and 2000. The most important results point out that attempts to reduce the differences between regions in environmental contamination cannot ignore factors like the level of population concentration, the size and rate of population living in environmentally burdened areas, and the negative environmental effects these areas may cause to the border areas of neighbouring countries. To be noted here are the several serious ecological and environmental crisis situations and catastrophes that afflicted Hungary via the river Tisza, in which cases international environmental responsibility was completely ignored.

Researches have also pointed out that existing data on the environmental burdens of the different regions are rather inhomogeneous and do not reflect the actual state of the regions. We must be aware that behind the more or less valid overall data on the environmental burdens of a given region, there can be enormous differences between the individual settlements (and often between the different parts of the same settlement) in the size and quality of the environmental burdens they suffer.

The other line of environmental research focussed on the links between *environmental contamination and health problems*. In comparison with other Eastern and Central European countries, Hungary's position could be described as average bad. Even so, the level of threat faced by the population from the various sources of pollution is still incredibly high. Air pollution seriously afflicts over 30per cent of the population, while nearly 50per cent are at least moderately affected. Health damage caused by pollution is estimated to reach 3 to 4 per cent of the GDP.

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### **3 The directions of the Centre's research strategy for the period 2002 to 2004**

The Centre, operating on the *networking principles* of the modern organisation of science, capitalising on its wealth of research results, and joining the mainstream of European regional science, aspires to contribute to two tasks during Hungary's integration into the EU.

One group of issues is to establish a theoretical basis on which the conditions of a *multi-level governance* and the conditions of the modernisation of the administration can be created; to work out the institutional framework of power-sharing; to study the theoretical problems of *decentralisation and subsidiarity*; and to explore the connections between regionalism and the productivity of the economic spatial structure.

The other strategic direction is to make available theoretical and practical results in order to help strengthen Hungary's *competitiveness in the European integration*. This line of research is to analyse factors that, considering also the European Union principles of efficiency and solidarity, could give Hungary a competitive edge in the context of the evolving new European regional policy.

On the basis of the *principles of partnership* applied in the definition of its scientific directions and organisation of research, the Centre for Regional Studies aspires to become the *centre of excellence* of regional studies in East Central Europe.

### **4 The contribution of the Centre for Regional Studies of the HAS to the competitiveness of Hungarian regional development**

According to domestic and international evaluations, the scientific strategy of the institute has facilitated the European acknowledgement of Hungarian regional policy through the following:

- By establishing an organisational framework for regional science, a significant basis was formed for basic research in territorial development, which, by analysing the European and domestic processes, has supplied the decision-making centres of Hungarian regional development with results and information on a continuous basis;



- By initiating new research programmes, the institute has orientated regional political action; later, by the investigation of current issues it has substantiated political decisions;
- The scientific publications of the institute (series of books and monographs, its journal and other publications) promote, among the professionals of the Hungarian society and economy, the concept of regionalism, the results of the structural and cohesion policies of the European Union, and the spirit of European integration;
- The foreign language publications of the institute's researchers in Hungary as well as their international publications and conference papers have facilitated international awareness of Hungarian regional development practices and the acknowledgement of Hungary's regional policy;
- The results of surveys carried out in the various regions of Hungary have facilitated the complex substantiation of regional development projects; the regional programmes and scientific events have contributed to the strengthening of partnership;
- By introducing, among the first in Europe, regional science in third level education, the institutional forms of education in regional policy and regional economy have been established in Hungary; today nearly 1000 professionals trained in regional development work in Hungary; most of them, unfortunately, not in the field of regional development.

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The *Discussion Papers* series of the Centre for Regional Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was launched in 1986 to publish summaries of research findings on regional and urban development.

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