

EUROREGION DANUBE-CRIS-MURES-TISA (DKMT) – A SUCCESSFUL STORY?

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Abstract: Outbursts regions from different European countries on international stage are a fact that without being fully realized seems inevitable. With the globalization of trade, the regions seem involved in some kind of transnational frenzy. Fostering this new field of external relations was due to the adoption of decentralization laws that allow intra-European cooperation between regions. Through these relationships are established not only to peer into shares of common interest, but also it gives powers to local authorities in the international order.

The paper highlights the success story of the Danube-Cris-Mures-Tisa, focusing on its development strategy analysis. Also, are underlined the complications caused by unsynchronized accession of partner countries to the European Union.

Key words: regional development, cross border cooperation, euroregion, development strategy, SWOT analysis

JEL classifications: O18, O10, R11

1. The importance of DKMT Euroregion for regional cooperation

Euroregions represent particular forms of over-border cooperation of local territorial authorities. They involve local territorial collectivities association of two or more neighboring countries, forming a unit area, characterized by certain peculiarities shared interests

Euroregions materializes geographical solidarity, despite state borders, creating new spaces for decentralised cooperation in Europe. In principle, for creating an Euro-regions not participates local authorities at grassroots level and those at the intermediate level or lower, but higher intermediate local territorial authorities, immediately below the state level, generally referred regions.

Euroregion associates border regions. The particularity of the Euroregions in terms of their composition is given by the fact that, in federal states case, are included in the Euro-regions the federal states that are not just a simply local and regional administrative authority administrative. Moreover, there Euroregion in which one component is even a state, it is true, a micro-state of a region. It's about Luxembourg and Andorra. Therefore, only theoretical Euroregions are structures composed exclusively of administrative regions because in practice many of them including political entities, federal states or even countries (Duda-Daianu, C., Abrudan, D., 2012).

Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisza (DKMT) regional cooperation is a type of organization at the administrative level, initiated in 1992, but only in November 1997 established as an organization for cooperation between local governments of the nine partner lands from Romania, Hungary and Serbia From Euroregion DKMT the Romania partner participate with the following counties: Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara and Timis; from Hungary partner: Csongrad, Bekes, Jasz-NagykunSzolnok, Bacs-Kiskun and from the Republic of Serbia, the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

The main functions performed by Euroregion are:

- strengthening the ability to identify financial resources

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- assistance in carrying out cross-border development and implementation of programs,
- assistance regarding the strengthening of political, social and economic development of the regions involved.

Euroregion DKMT was involved primarily in promoting projects of regional interest, playing a role as a forum for information and advice on cross-border issues, thus allowing local authorities of partner countries to develop and raise the level of cross-border cooperation in accordance with the cross borders strategy development and aimed at greater involvement in the initiative INTERREG-program of cooperation between regions, the largest of the Community initiatives for EU structural funds (Rieser Hans-Heinrich, 2010). The four main goals of this program are:

- help the border areas to overcome problems arising from their relative isolation, with the support of local authorities and local communities, taking into account a number of parameters: environment, transport, spatial planning, investments, employment, vocational training, culture, health;
- promote the creation and development of "micro integration" between border regions within the Community in the perspective of a single market;
- helping external border areas to assume the new role of external border of the common market in a perspective of economic and cultural development for these territories;
- fostering cooperation with third countries at the external borders of the Community.

The structure and competence shown by DKMT are:

- ✓ Forum of President: Formed by nine representatives, delegates from councils of concerned areas, represents the outside political expression of common interests, the decision makers.
- ✓ President: This function is occupied in turn by a representative of each participating country, for a period of one year.
- ✓ Secretarial: This structure serves Presidents' forum (ruling body), making preparations for decisions, administrative issues of the functioning of the forum or president and coordinates the activities of the working groups.
- ✓ Working groups: It deals with issues of professional nature regarding the activities of the Euroregion and make proposals and recommendations for the forum and the presidency.

2. The SWOT Analysis of DKMT Euroregion

The SWOT Analysis was concentrated on the four pillars, as follows:

1. An increase in social cohesion, human resources, education-culture and R&D

✓ Strengths

- Ethnic and cultural diversity, co-existence of diverse cultures and communities, understanding of differences, an open European mindset.
- Advanced and comprehensive secondary education.
- Sizeable student bodies and famous institutions of higher education in cities.
- A strong research basis in large cities, catering for the needs of local economies in their chosen areas of research.
- Social and cultural trade associations and civil organisations enhance co-operation, making it possible for inter-cultural projects to be financially supported.

✓ Weaknesses

- Low population density, marked demographic ageing, migration of certain population groups and the young.
- Inadequate investment in the ongoing training of labour force.
- Low pay in higher education offering no appeal to young professionals, obsolete technology, some of the equipment is several decades old, inadequate co-operation between the individual institutions of higher education, a low percentage of institutions of higher education in national R&D capacity.

✓ Opportunities

- Economic participants' increasing demand for R&D means R&D institutions must adjust to the needs of local economies and strengthen relations between them and their business partners.
- The uniform management system of EU funds opens up new areas of co-operation and may strengthen the existing ones.

✓ Threats

- The lack of the mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the three countries and in the European Union hinders the mobility of highly trained labour within the region.
- The fact that the countries in the region acceded or will accede to the European Union at different dates may impair the region's compatibility.

II. Economy, services, agriculture, industry and tourist industry

✓ Strengths

- A traditionally variegated economic structure, open to foreign investors.
- Trained industrial labour
- Availability of raw materials necessary for industry (felling and wood processing, textile industry, shoe manufacturing, food industry, machinery and electronics).
- Existing and operational infrastructure supporting small- and medium-size enterprises in the DKMT Euroregion (industrial parks, chambers of trade and commerce, centres of business development, consultancies and duty-free areas).
- Considerable turnover of transit, hunting, health, wellness and nautical tourism; existing opportunities for new tourist industry products (eco-tourism, agro-tourism, gastronomic tourism, youth tourism, event tourism and pilgrimages).
- Diverse landscapes (mountains, rivers, lakes and thermal water), unique folklore and culinary traditions, which may be beneficial to various tourist industry developments.

✓ Weaknesses

- Low volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the border regions concerned in the three countries.
- High numbers employed in agriculture
- No uniform tourist industry strategy; inadequate tourist industry management and marketing in the Euroregion.

✓ Opportunities

- The uniform management of EU funds may contribute to the transfer of technologies and know-how to SMEs operational in the region.
- Increased demand for specialised tourist industry products.
- Global demand for health food may revive traditional agriculture.

✓ Threats

- Assembly industries are not integrated in local economies and fail to establish business ties with suppliers.

- Unless accessibility improves and favourable developments occur in the institutional, infrastructural and legal environment, capital investment will target areas further to the East rather than the Euroregion.
- Lower volume of FDI due to an increase in the cost of local labour.

III. Infrastructure

✓ Strengths

- Important traffic corridors intersecting the Euroregion.
- Emergence of modern components in the communication network (terminals and new sections of motorways) and that of mixed types of freight forwarding (RO–LA and RO–RO) in the region.
- International airport in operation.
- Advanced telecommunications network

✓ Weaknesses

- Weak horizontal links within the Euroregion.
- Inadequate capacity of frontier stations, lack of frontier stations along certain border sections (e.g. between Romania and Serbia–Montenegro).
- Obsolete rail infrastructure, long border-crossing time (there is no passport control during rail journeys).
- Lack of Euroregional motorway and state-of-the-art expressway links.

✓ Opportunities

- Activities and obligations supported by EU programmes to improve communal infrastructure.
- Investment opportunities in the IT sector are much sought-after among foreign investors.
- Making the most of the many opportunities created by the three Helsinki corridors.
- Channelling truck traffic to rail and waterway transport may lead to more effective container traffic.

✓ Threats

- The backwardness of trade infrastructure slows down the development of Euroregional links.
- Delay in motorway construction and the development of the railway backbone continuously impairs the region's competitiveness and reduces the possibility of the utilisation of its favourable logistical location.
- Load generated by increasing transit traffic on already decrepit and overloaded road sections.
- The long drawn-out process of the rehabilitation of the River Danube slows down river traffic and lessens the importance of logistics based on river ports. The unavailability of rivers as a means of transport leads to the channelling of freight forwarding to air/land means or even to routes outside the region.

IV. Environmental protection and nature conservation (Săgetă, R.,2014):

✓ Strengths

- Institutions and experts specialising in environmental protection.
- A balanced natural environment which is relatively undisturbed by human interference.

✓ Weaknesses

- Serious industrial pollution in some areas.

- Missing components of communal infrastructure (e.g. sewage treatment and waste collection and recycling), heavy pollution in large cities (dust and exhaust gases).
- The public is inadequately informed on the state of the environment both locally and regionally.
 - ✓ Opportunities
- The use of alternative sources of energy may help save energy in the region, especially in rural and tourist industry areas.
- The concerted development of protected areas and natural heritage within the framework of cross-border co-operation may help preserve biodiversity and make eco-schemes more effective.
- The on-going co-operation between the region's experts (researchers) and institutions (authorities) makes it possible for problems to be explored and remedied in a timely manner.
 - ✓ Threats
- Threats posed by sources of pollution outside the region.
- Differences between the European and national institutional and legal systems of environmental protection impair the efficiency of the region's environment management system.
- Inadequate preparedness of economic participants for emergencies.

3. Considerations regarding the development strategy of DKMT Euroregion

Relying on the participation and taking into account the region's civil organisations, economic participants, municipalities, micro-regional associations and the organisations in the regions designated for development in the three neighbouring countries, the area development strategy of the DKMT Euroregion outlined the objectives of a shared future for the region through integration, which ultimately strives to improve the quality of life of the residents living there.

The establishment of the Euroregion as the most important task requires that strategic objectives be set on a dual geographical scale: firstly at a DKMT Euroregion level that established cohesion and is open to Europe and, secondly, at the EU level, into which it was integrated.

The strategy identified the objectives of three spheres (sectors). The DKMT Euroregion is to become

1) a multi-cultural Euroregional model in the human sphere - a multi-ethnic multi-cultural region with societies that recognised and identified themselves with each other's cultural, geographical and natural heritage and were aware of each other's current social, economic and environmental problems and objectives; a region where younger generations already have a Euroregional identity, which reinforces their ties with the region.

- ✓ Founded mainly on a sophisticated base of research and secondary and higher education, the study of and publications in 4 languages on cultural, natural and man-made heritage;
- ✓ Pursuit of new forms of mediation of co-existence and diversity as values;
- ✓ Communication infrastructure and a regional 'IT revolution' needed for an increasing number of personal and virtual relations of equally increasing intensity.
- ✓ In addition to the system of twin settlements and cultural links, co-operation involving the participants of the civil sphere and other participants through the utilisation of economic (tourist industry) co-operation, exchanges of professional experience and events.

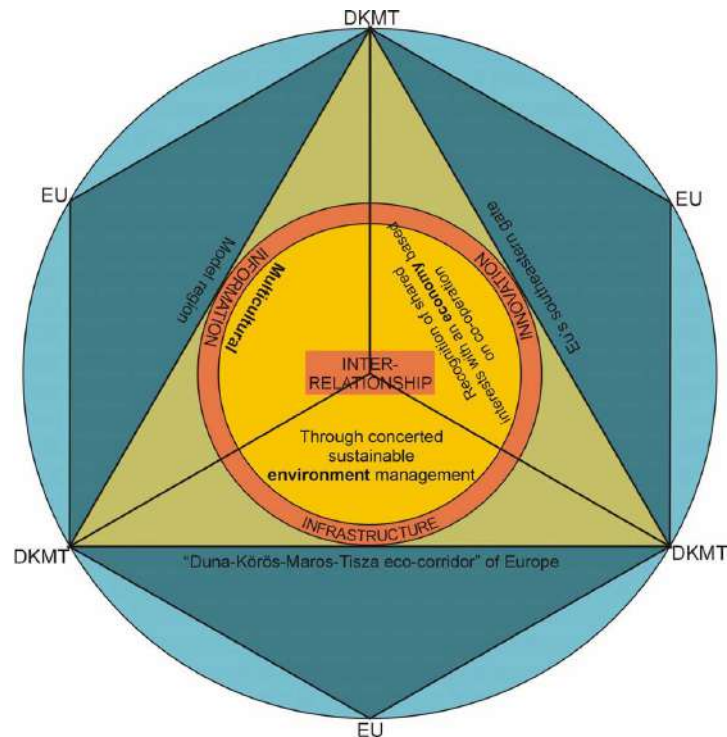


Fig.1. The 4 “i’s” for the integration of the areas of 4 rivers

II) the Southeastern gate of the European Union through the recognition of shared interests and an economy based on co-operation in the economic sphere - establishment of a system of cooperation between economic and other participants familiar with the economic resources and opportunities. They must also be familiar with the mutual interests in cross-border relations of the 3 member states. These foster economic integration and economic competitiveness of the DKMT Euroregion (Alfons Institute, 2012) .

- ✓ The on-going development of a four-language economic information base conducive to understanding cultural issues. It should help identify partners for potential co-operation;
- ✓ The launch of joint R&D projects, the efficient economic utilisation of research potential, and support for the spread of innovations.
- ✓ Communication infrastructure, an internet background and business service infrastructure indispensable for economic co-operation.
 - ✓ Establishment of bi-lateral agreements and Euroregional economic networks.

III) the Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza eco-corridor of Europe through sustainable concerted environment management in the natural environment sphere - the establishment of a hierarchical and homogeneous system of landscape ecology that is attractive, sustainable and pleasant to live in (Săgeată, R., Persu M., 2013):.

- ✓ Drawn from a research and secondary and higher educational base, views from experts and politicians, from the study of environmental and natural heritage, from the formulation and publication in 4 languages of a strategy addressing issues of nature and environmental protection;
- ✓ New solutions to shared concerns of issues of environmental protection;
- ✓ Establishment of an infrastructure defining the spatial structure of a uniform eco-corridor;
- ✓ Increasing the instances of interactions generated by formal and informal forums attended by commercial organisations, civil organisations and the general public.

**Motto: The 4 "i's" for the integration of the areas of 4 rivers:
information, innovation, infrastructure, interrelationship**

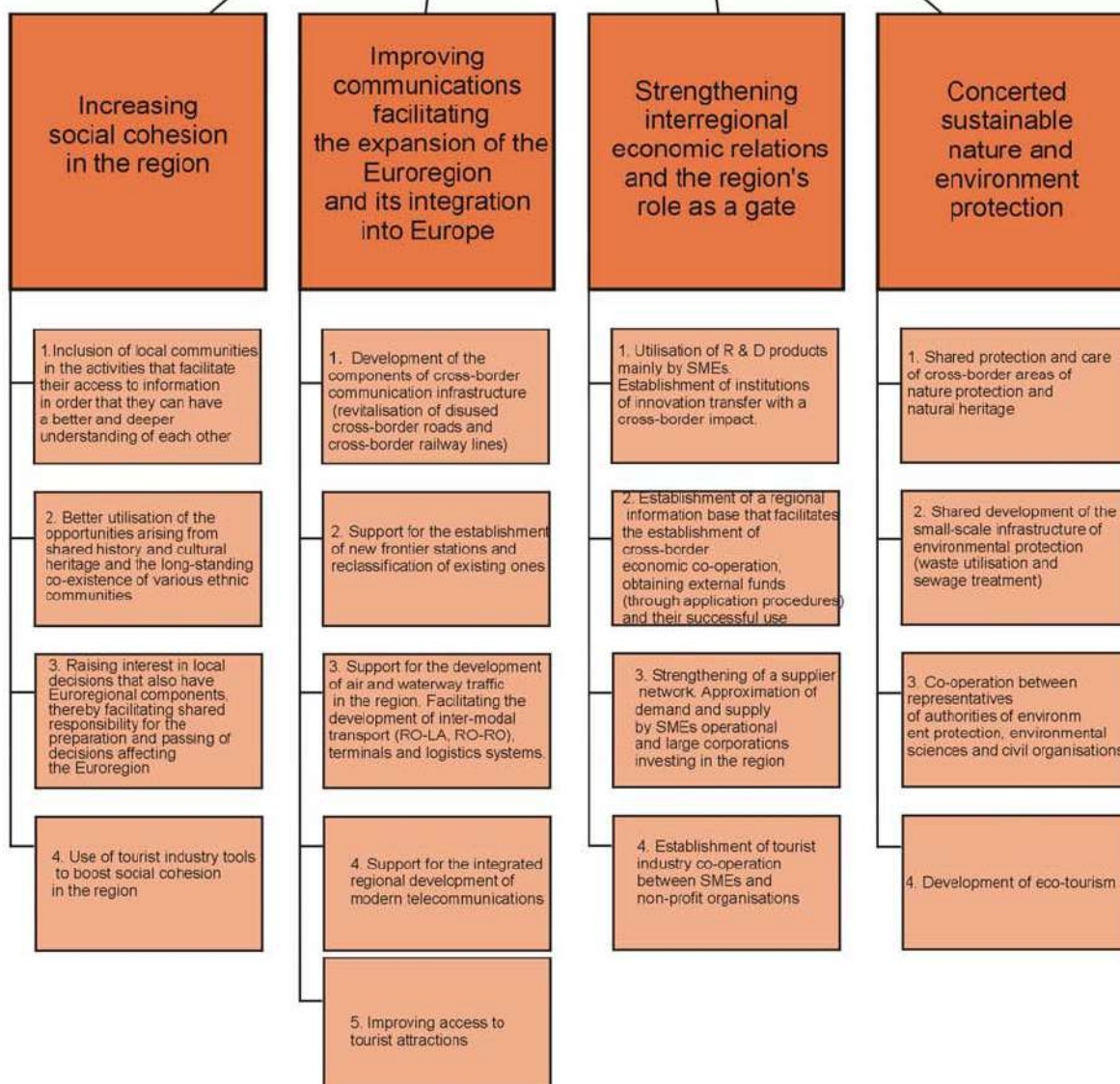
The structure of the strategy



Strategic goals: The DKMT Euroregion should become:

- a multi-cultural model region
- the EU's southeastern gate through the recognition of shared interests with an economy based on co-operation
- through concerted sustainable environment management Europe's DKMT eco-corridor between the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans in order to preserve the continuity of biodiversity

Fundamental goal: Establishment of a solid system of relations based on jointly developed infrastructure and an information basis and supporting the spread of innovation in order to improve the quality of life of the population in the DKMT Euroregion.



Source: Alfold Institute, Centre for Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

As is apparent from the above SWOT analysis, the most pressing issue in all spheres and sector and inter-sector development at this stage of regional development was that of improving the relations between the participants involved in the development and the links between the geographical areas affected. This can only be addressed through innovation and a multi-directional flow of information. Needless to say, the improvement of the region's infrastructure serving as a physical framework was an indispensable horizontal objective.

The future plans of the DKMT Euroregion are very well related to the fact that two of the participating countries are already members of the European Union, which assures significant support for cross-border cooperation programs. Moreover, Serbia's chances to become a European Union member will lead to the diversification and expansion of cooperation potential in the region (Fejes, Z., 2013).

The implementation of concepts defined in the strategic plan of the DKMT Euroregion will continue during the forthcoming years – in line with the national development plans of the certain member countries (Grigorescu, I.; Dumitrascu, M.; Sima, M., Micu, D., 2015):

- the projection of a “Euroregional TGV” fast railway connecting Budapest-Békéscsaba-Arad-Bucharest;
- a motorway between Röske and Belgrade, completely constructed on the E75 section;
- the Triplex international industrial park founded on the Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian triplex border; the “Banat road” built between the Belgrade- Pančevo-Kikinda-Triplex border point and the Deszk node of the M43 clearway;
- turning Danube into a complex European tourism and environmental protection route on the territory of the DKMT Euroregion;
- the reconstruction of the Timisoara-Szeged-Subotica-Bácsalmás-Baja railway line in the framework of a TEN corridor – Trans-European network; the Magyarcsanak-Cenad Bridge reconstructed on the Mures River;
- maintaining environmental protection green belts along borders; a new border crossing station is established between Caras-Severin County and the southern part of the Vojvodina etc.

Horizontal objectives were intertwined with sector objectives, with the latter mutually reinforcing each other. The development of the tourist industry was an excellent tool for the establishment of a multi-cultural Euroregional model as well as the understanding, preservation and development of the cultural/ethnic/geographical traditions and heritage of the ‘member states’ of the Euroregion.

4. Conclusions

Beginning of XXI century world is increasingly globalized. If the first years of the past decade have devoted affirm of the naive current globalist, thinking consistently and serenity in globalization / universalisation of western democratic values and creating a „global village”, the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Somalia or Rwanda, and especially the events of 11 September 2001 demonstrated that globalization has its dark sides. Moreover, the events that marked European and international security after the fall of the Berlin Wall demonstrated that regional differentiation is no longer a viable option for EU policies. Approach a border policy was one brave, and even more difficult than that of enlargement. This approach has been claimed by geographical proximity, representing both an opportunity and a challenge, redefine European security equation.

Regional stabilization attempt undertaken by the European Union is not without risks. It could lead to long-term continuation of the enlargement process, but this process

will slow down, largely due to the systemic differences between EU member states and candidates states. However, the enlargement process can not be continued indefinitely because it would profoundly affect functional and operational capacity of the Union. On the other hand, the exclusion from the expansion of states in exchange for promises of political and economic compensatory financial plan, could lead to bilateral tensions.

Specifics of the new threats affecting the security of the Union makes that the main tools for stabilization and strengthening extra areas to be inspired by the institutionalization and European integration: regional policy and cross-border cooperation. These policies are badly needed not only in political or strategic considerations, such as avoiding hostility of regional powers such as Russia, which could threaten the future of the European integration process, but also geo-economic and geo-structural considerations.

Inspide all the thereats mentioned above, the DKMT Euroregion is one of the most important and active areas of Europe by its position in the eastern border of the European Union at the crossroads of Trans-European and Pan-European corridors. However, intensity of the cooperation is lower than in Western Europe because homogenisation processes are significant barriers to the development of the border regions. Thus it stands as an important area in the development and stability of the West region. Hungary and Romania, belonging to DKMT, are parts of countries that are part of the EU and Serbia represents a candidate state to EU. In the same time, Hungary is part of the Schengen Area. All these factors provide a provocation for cooperation within and beyond the borders of the EU in Central Europe and Southeast Europe.

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