

THE DKMT-EUROREGION: AN INSTRUMENT FOR CROSS BORDER REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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EURO-REGIONS

Up to now border regions of national states have been and still are characterized by “ends”: the end of traffic and communication infrastructures, the end of national laws and mentalities. They have been part of the peripheral space surrounding the centre or the centres of national states. Borders have been and partly still are lines of more or less strict separation between one state and another, between one people and another.



Fig. 1. Donau-Kreisch-Marosch-Theiss Region

Encouraged by the increasing cooperation between the “centres” after World War II, border regions seek to change their bad situation caused, on both sides, by their separating border line, through cooperation

across these lines. Initially represented by personal contacts, soon cooperation came to take institutional forms that would stimulate it. The most accepted of cross border cooperation becomes the “Euroregion.” Usually Euroregions are associations of neighbouring local or regional administrative units on the borderlines of two or three, rarely more than three states.

Since 1957 when the so-called “Euregio” was founded on the German-Dutch border, these Euroregions have aimed at improving the welfare of the people on both sides of the border. One of the most effective ways to reach this aim is the holistic method of regional development. This means making use of the whole regional potential in a sustainable way for the people living in the region.

Therefore, all Euroregions – beside their differences in size or organization – have common projects for cross border regional development. Slowly, Euroregions have been acknowledged as suitable instruments for cross border regional development.

Soon after 1989 Euroregions appeared, by transfer and attraction, in the former widely isolated countries in Eastern Europe. One of the dozens of Euroregions now existing in this area is the DKMT-Euroregion, the “Danube-Körös-Maros-Tisza-Euroregion” between Serbia, Hungary, and Romania.

THE DKMT – A SHORT PRESENTATION

The DKMT-Euroregion includes the province of Voivodina in northern Serbia-Montenegro, the Bács-Kiskun, Békés, and Csongrád Counties in South-Eastern Hungary and the Arad, Caraş-Severin, Hunedoara, and Timiş Counties in Western Romania. Those eight administrative units have a common area of 71,879 km² and, together, a population of 5.4 million inhabitants. The region is, roughly, twice as big as Belgium, but it has half the population of this country.

Mostly plains, which are very suitable for agriculture, favourable climate and soils, characterize the regions’ natural background. Besides the Fruska Gora (539 m) near Novi Sad, only the Eastern areas are hilly and mountainous (1446 m), and finally rise to the Southern Carpathians (2509 m). The hilly areas are mostly suitable for orchards and vineyards. Wide areas of forests cover the mountains. Except some oil and gas resources, there are no mineral resources to be exploited economically today.

Geographically, the DKMT is situated at the crossroads of old continental roads, which nowadays constitute the “trans-European traffic corridors” IV (NW-SE), VII (the Danube) und X (N-S). Therefore, this region is a gateway between Western Europe and the Black Sea area, the Balkans, the Aegean Sea and, finally, the Orient.

The spatial distribution of the population and, hence, the structure of settlements is well balanced in the plain areas. The biggest city is Timişoara (320,000 inhabitants), followed by Novi Sad (235,000 inhabitants), and Szeged, and Arad (about 170,000 inhabitants each). In the bigger cities there are many businesses, education and research institutions. There is also a wide-meshed network of smaller towns and villages. Very small villages can be found only in hilly and mountainous areas, where they face great problems because of the population’s migration and overaging.

The extraordinary ethnic variety is to be pointed out. In each of the three areas of the region live minorities of the two other nations, and also some others. In the Timiş County this variety culminates with about 20 ethnic groups (tab.3) who live together without great problems. Among them there are Germans, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, and a large group of Roma.

Table 1. Basic Dates of the DKMT (manly 2000)

Subject	Region	Total	Vojvodina	Arad	Caras-Severin	Hunedoara	Timis	Bács-Kiskun	Békés	Csongrád
Surface (qkm)		71879	21506	7754	8520	7063	8697	8445	5631	4263
Inhabitants		5400294	2013889	476373	353728	524704	689765	532465	391702	417668
Natural Growth of Population		-23808	-11284	-1916	-1337	-1258	-1301	-2205	-2229	-2278
Migration Balance		7571	6468	3236	-572	-1851	1016	779	-887	-618
Settlements/100km ²		2.8	2.2	3.6	3.5	6.7	3.7	1.4	1.3	1.4
Employed Persons		1553140	413552	189200	137900	199100	294900	123332	89126	106030
in Agriculture (%)		23.0	11.7	36.2	45.3	30.3	35.2	8.7	9.7	7.5
in Industries (%)		28.2	38.8	20.0	18.7	18.1	24.1	34.1	31.5	27.8

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in Services (%)	42.4	41.8	37.1	21.9	31.4	23.9	39.8	44.7	47.1
Unemployed People	382860	231834	17430	14757	39163	24324	21248	18963	15141
Unemployment Rate	16.1	26.6	8.4	9.7	16.4	7.6	9.6	12.4	8.4
GDP in Mio. € (1999)	10238	2750		3000			1667	1201	1620
GDP per Capita in € (1999)	1900	1400		1280			3129	3054	3865
in Agriculture (%)	..	29.0		17.1			13.1	13.3	8.1
in Industries (%)	..	34.0		28.4			24.6	23.9	25.4
in Services (%)	..	33.0		49.8			57.5	58.9	61.9
Forests (ha)	1396859	165759	212182	389003	309122	109048	158792	11050	41903
Usable Land (ha)	5034675	1757022	511587	399694	347159	702326	554325	441513	321049
Arable Land (ha)	3720073	1580879	347780	127233	88556	533018	385276	397047	260284
Hotels	178	46	15	17	19	23	24	20	14
Hotel Beds	22782	5004	1811	5261	2088	2614	1812	2521	1671
Tourists	1239108	281176	145734	141322	77453	204404	134582	100523	153914
Roads	21614	6425	2240	1940	3096	2901	2215	1447	1350
Motorways	316	260	-	-	-	-	56	-	-
Dr. Hans Heinrich Rieser	DKMT	22.10.2004							
								.. = not to be calculated	
Data mostly from "Euroregion in numbers", Szeged 2002.								- = not available	
Romanian GDP (1999) approximative for "Region V Vest" from the Statistical Yearbook, 2002.									
GDP Figures for the DKMT are also approximative									

At 60%, the percentage of people of working age (15-59) is quite good. Generally, the labour force has a good level of technical or vocational training, less so in modern services. The structure of the labour force is widely unfavourable. In all the three areas, services are not too varied and Romania has with 35% too much employees in agriculture.

Table 2: Population Development in border communities in the Romanian Banat

Caras-Severin County										
Community	Census of the Year					Changes compared with the				
	Inhabitants					previous Census in %			1992 zu	
	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	1956	1966	1977	1992	1930
Caras-Severin County	319286	327787	358726	385577	376347	2.66	9.44	7.49	-2.39	17.87
Berliste	3681	2618	2430	2091	1533	-28.88	-7.18	-13.95	-26.69	-58.35
Berzasca	4084	4524	4594	4243	3419	10.77	1.55	-7.64	-19.42	-16.28
Ciuchici	4258	2919	2402	1952	1404	-31.45	-17.71	-18.73	-28.07	-67.03
Forotic	3798	3121	3015	2580	2055	-17.83	-3.40	-14.43	-20.35	-45.89
Moldova Noua (town)	7321	6220	10868	15973	16874	-15.04	74.73	46.97	5.64	130.49
Naidas	3393	2447	1979	1646	1430	-27.88	-19.13	-16.83	-13.12	-57.85
Pescari	1982	1558	1877	1923	2068	-21.39	20.47	2.45	7.54	4.34
Pojejena	4794	4508	4195	3969	3591	-5.97	-6.94	-5.39	-9.52	-25.09
Sichevita	3775	3813	3627	3355	2804	1.01	-4.88	-7.50	-16.42	-25.72
Socol	4516	3664	3204	3000	2434	-18.87	-12.55	-6.37	-18.87	-46.10
Varadia	3624	2372	2229	1898	1595	-34.55	-6.03	-14.85	-15.96	-55.99
Vrani	2701	1856	1713	1572	1424	-31.28	-7.70	-8.23	-9.41	-47.28
Border Communities (CS)	47927	39620	42133	44202	40631	-17.33	6.34	4.91	-8.08	-15.22
Border Villages (CS)	40606	33400	31265	28229	23757	-17.75	-6.39	-9.71	-15.84	-41.49

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Timis County

Community	Census of the Year					Changes compared with the				
	Inhabitants					previous Census in %			1992 zu	
	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	1956	1966	1977	1992	1930
Timis County	559591	568881	607596	696884	700033	1.66	6.81	14.70	0.45	25.10
Banloc	8834	7605	6901	6103	4649	-13.91	-9.26	-11.56	-23.82	-47.37
Beba Veche	4009	2766	2427	2142	1625	-31.01	-12.26	-11.74	-24.14	-59.47
Cenad	7236	6089	5614	5022	3991	-15.85	-7.80	-10.55	-20.53	-44.85
Cenei	6845	6089	5944	5761	4903	-11.04	-2.38	-3.08	-14.89	-28.37
Comlosu Mare	6920	5787	6050	5906	4664	-16.37	4.54	-2.38	-21.03	-32.60
Denta	5116	4330	4206	3899	3187	-15.36	-2.86	-7.30	-18.26	-37.71
Dudestii Vechi	11620	9653	9144	8030	6409	-16.93	-5.27	-12.18	-20.19	-44.85
Foeni	2962	2392	2218	1926	1639	-19.24	-7.27	-13.17	-14.90	-44.67
Giera	3221	2473	2185	1697	1228	-23.22	-11.65	-22.33	-27.64	-61.88
Jamu Mare	7513	6283	5907	4697	3487	-16.37	-5.98	-20.48	-25.76	-53.59
Jimbolia (town)	10873	11281	13633	14682	11830	3.75	20.85	7.69	-19.43	8.80
Moravita	4374	3376	3101	2874	2470	-22.82	-8.15	-7.32	-14.06	-43.53
Sinnicolau Mare (town)	10676	9956	11428	12811	13083	-6.74	14.79	12.10	2.12	22.55
Sinpetru Mare	9667	8318	7772	6820	5724	-13.95	-6.56	-12.25	-16.07	-40.79
Teremia Mare	5710	5470	5434	4544	3871	-4.20	-0.66	-16.38	-14.81	-32.21
Uivar	8350	7963	6914	5782	4324	-4.63	-13.17	-16.37	-25.22	-48.22
Border Communities (TM)	113926	99831	98878	92696	77084	-12.37	-0.95	-6.25	-16.84	-32.34
Border Villages (TM)	92377	78594	73817	65203	52171	-14.92	-6.08	-11.67	-19.99	-43.52

CS = Caras-Severin County, TM = Timis

Source: Census 1992

The economy of all the three areas of the region was much weakened by the 40 years of communist power, by the transition and, in the case of Serbia, by the civil war in the 1990's. But their economic positions are quite different both within their countries and among them. Southeastern Hungary is the second lowest within the country, but has a much better standing than the other two parts of the DKMT. However, each of these regions occupies the second position in their countries after their respective capital regions.

Short History of the DKMT

As early as the "Revolution of Timișoara" in December 1989, contacts and relief cooperation between people, NGO's, and regional public institutions began. Therefore, in 1990 there appeared the first ideas in favour of cross-border cooperation, which was also, in some respects, institutionalised. This led to the 1992 first official agreement between the cities of Timișoara and Szeged and between Arad and Békéscsaba, which were followed by agreements between the Counties of Timiș and Csongrád and between those of Arad and Békés in 1994.

However, up to 1996 these agreements were not acknowledged by any of the three central governments; in Romania they were even considered illegal. At that time, the politically instrumentalised aversion between Hungary and Romania, on the one hand, and the UN-embargo against Yugoslavia, where there was civil war, on the other hand, were great obstacles. Only in 1996 was the embargo cancelled and Hungary and Romania put an end to their dispute by signing a basic treaty of good neighbourliness.

This paved the way for real institutional cross-border cooperation as a Euroregion. On May 31st 1997, a first "open borders" youth meeting took place at the "triplex confinium," the meeting point of the three frontiers. And on November 21st, 1997 the officials of the nine component administrative units, the cities and

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the chambers of commerce signed the DKMT-Euroregion-Contract. After six years of cooperation under this treaty, the responsible factors were ready to renew this agreement with stronger and more efficient organisational forms. A private limited company was founded for daily administration and project management. At present the first common project, promoted by the stability pact through Germany, is a master plan for common regional development.

Table 3. Development of the ethnic structure in the Timis County

Year	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992	1930	1956	1966	1977	1992
Total	559591	568881	607596	696884	700033	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Romanians	236305	325834	378183	472912	561200	42.23	57.28	62.24	67.86	80.17
Hungarians	84756	77530	76183	77525	62866	15.15	13.63	12.54	11.12	8.98
Germans	178238	114194	109319	98296	26722	31.85	20.07	17.99	14.11	3.82
Roma	8091	6089	4637	9828	14836	1.45	1.07	0.76	1.41	2.12
Ukrainians	1408	1405	1780	3773	6468	0.25	0.25	0.29	0.54	0.92
Serbs/Croats	27074	23871	22709	21782	17443	4.84	4.20	3.74	3.13	2.49
Russians/Lipov.	1189	316	342	340	160	0.21	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.02
Jewis	9761	7378	2909	1799	625	1.74	1.30	0.48	0.26	0.09
Tatars	2	10	4	10	6	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Slovaks	3913	2667	2300	2128	2229	0.70	0.47	0.38	0.31	0.32
Turcs	108	29	37	38	44	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Bulgarians	7527	7440	7509	7151	6466	1.35	1.31	1.24	1.03	0.92
Czechs	*	1216	971	796	389	*	0.21	0.16	0.11	0.06
Greeks	27	50	50	55	55	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Polish	178	268	220	177	107	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.03	0.02
Armenians	13	46	60	50	38	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
others	352	422	288	194	344	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.03	0.05
unknowen	649	116	95	30	35	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00

* = 1930 Czechs together with the Slovaks

Source: Census 1992

SOME AREAS OF COOPERATION

Political Cooperation

One of the most important problems at the borderlines of the former socialist countries is political and administrative cooperation. Up to 1989 these border regions were completely isolated and had almost no connection across the border. Their "border status" almost stifled economic and social life; many people used to leave these disadvantageous areas (tab. 2). Therefore, these regions not only suffered because of the overall increasing competition in the context of accelerating globalisation, but they also had to stop their decline and to rebuild even the basic administrative and political ties to their neighbouring regions. On the other hand, if frontiers are open, border regions offer much more possibilities for cooperation although there still are many differences between them: i.e. different laws, economic regulations, economic power, as well as different languages, mentalities, images and life styles.

In the DKMT-Euroregion there are two peculiarities of political cross border cooperation. All the three areas of the region are inter-connected because of long periods of common historical development. Therefore, there are many possibilities to start cross border activities in every field. Further more the three countries the DKMT belongs to are in different phases of the EU integration process. Hungary has been a member since May 1st, 2004, Romania is negotiating to become a member in 2007, whereas Serbia-

Montenegro hasn't even made the first steps towards integration. This situation makes it necessary for the whole region to benefit from political cooperation. The first challenge in this field is to overcome the obstacles imposed through the Schengen Treaty.

Another challenge for the political stakeholders in the DKMT is decentralisation. It has to increase on three levels. Inside the region, counties, cities, and villages have to get more rights and means to solve their own problems. Inside the countries, which inherit (hyper) centralisation, regions should have more competences in order to be able to fulfil the aim of subsidiarity. Therefore, the three areas of the Euroregion could help one another through political and administrative measures. But in this politically sensitive area one always has to emphasise that decentralisation and subsidiarity have nothing to do with separatism. And last but not least, the DKMT-Euroregion, as a whole, has to work together with the European associations of regions – especially the “Association of European Border Regions” – to profit from and strengthen the principle of subsidiarity in the EU.

Cooperation in Infrastructures

Infrastructures are the basic means of every regional development. Since borders appeared in this space after World War I, infrastructures have declined rapidly. They were cut off across the borderlines with the exception of few and rarely used crossing points. There was almost no modernization and modern infrastructures were not implemented. That is why each decision-maker in the DKMT is convinced that improving all the infrastructure is the central issue in every form of regional development.

Most visible is the lack of modern traffic infrastructure both inside the regions and across the border. There have to be much more crossing points for any kind of traffic among the three areas of the DKMT, for local and international traffic. Otherwise, there will be no intensive exchange and trade will not grow above the very low present-day level. Modernization and building new modern facilities for every kind of traffic are a requirement. Motorways and high-speed interregional railroads are almost unknown; a canal and river navigation system has to be rebuilt and the capacity of airports must increase.

Supply and communication lines are old and often very wide-meshed roads across the border do not exist yet. Roads have to be modernized and connected to a narrower network. The lack of supply safety can be solved by a cheaper and more effective cross border network of plants and traffic lines.

Economic Cooperation

In each of the three economic sectors there are many possibilities to cooperate across the border. As far as agriculture is concerned, the region should seek to secure the basic food supply for the population. From the point of view of natural conditions this should be no problem; on the contrary the DKMT could produce much more food than it consumes. But the agricultural system has to be modernized and adapted to the market economy system, especially in Romania. Common programmes to use the existing institutions and to create new ones in information, education and research in agriculture and, later on, common exchange and distribution systems – for example, Raiffeisen-style cooperatives – would be helpful to reach this aim.

Especially in this period of different phases of EU-integration, cooperation in agriculture would be fruitful for the region, for the three countries states, for the EU integration process; and - last but not least - for the people in the region.

In industry and services there are lots of possibilities to cooperate across the border. This can involve policies but, also, businesses and such institutions as chambers of commerce, professional associations, or cooperative organisations. Research and educational institutions and capacities should be adapted to special sectors and work groups in the region.

There is no potential for mass tourism, but huge opportunities for a lot of niche offers for tourists. The physical, natural differences and the common cultural heritage could make excellent regional offers for both local and international tourists.

Cooperation in Environment Protection

As pollution does not stop at any artificial administrative borders, it is clear that environment protection works only if there is cross border cooperation. Air pollution can be fought only by continental agreements, but they have to be implemented regionally. Thereby cooperation in the DKMT can help the Romanian and Serbian environment situation reach the EU-standards.

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Using and protecting water is a typical regional field of cooperation. In order to protect the ground and surface water, air pollution has to be reduced and the use of fertilizers and chemicals in agriculture has to be diminished. Drinking water supplies have to be secured by protecting the resources and connecting the supply lines to networks. Sewage must be completely treated in cleaning plants. Therefore, a collecting system has to be built as well as new plants. In order to prevent downstream river floods upstream costly measures are necessary; without cross border cooperation this kind of protection will never work in the DKMT.

With the exception of the waterpower partly used in Romania, until now renewable energy sources have not played a great role. Through cooperation projects to use its high potential in agriculture as well as in forestry the DKMT could have both a remarkable economic development and environment protection. This potential has not been used up to now and the same is true for wind and solar power.

Cooperation in Education and Research

The multilingual situation could be favourable for education. Universities, research institutions, and private enterprises should cooperate in specialised workgroups. This is how both the internal demand and the necessities of other markets could be met.

Cooperation in Culture and Sports

Exchanges in culture and sports are already on a good track. Many NGO's operate in this area, namely in folklore, music, theatre, minority languages, as well in the organization of common cultural and sports events.

POSSIBILITIES AND OBSTACLES TO CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

External Obstacles

A lot of obstacles limit cross border cooperation, in general, and especially in the DKMT. First of all, the competences of local and regional administrations are limited. For example they cannot decide anything about the cross border traffic infrastructure, the opening of transit points or other public facilities. Especially in the highly centralised Eastern European countries, which gained their full sovereignty only fifteen years ago, central governments fear loss of power and even separation, if they gave too much power to regions, even more to border regions, which formerly belonged to neighbouring states. A third obstacle is that up to now the EU has promoted only national regions and not directly border regions as a whole. This means that the money coming from Brussels and distributed by central governments normally reaches the central regions and rarely the peripheral areas of a country and there is no interest in giving this money to a region also covering a neighbouring state. As one of the main EU aims is international cooperation, this method is not easy to understand.

Internal Obstacles

Though the different languages spoken in this multilingual region are not a main obstacle for wide cross border cooperation as it is, for example, in the German-Czech-Polish Euroregion, the legal, administrative, or cultural terminology differs quite a lot. Partly the EU integration process leads to a common terminology, but most of it has to be clarified in direct negotiations.

The information flow is often restrained and communication works slowly and sometimes selectively both in the whole DKMT-Euroregion and in the three component areas. Partly this is due to technical gaps and shortcomings. But sometimes the reason is the internal dissipation in many administrative or private institutions, which in some cases are quite isolated. Every agent works in its field and within its narrow competences (for example counties, cities, chambers of commerce, universities, etc.). A holistic or even a wider approach to connections and influences from other areas is still not usual, but in cross border cooperation it is quite necessary. In some cases political aversions hinder the broad flow of information.

Possibilities

In spite of all the obstacles, there are plenty of possibilities for cross border cooperation in a way that should stimulate regional development.

First of all, the different local and regional institutions have to use their own competences both for their internal and their cross border regional development. They can do a lot in many political, economic, social,

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and cultural areas: namely, in traffic, especially the public local and regional traffic, in supplying for the population's everyday needs, in economy, in education, sports, culture, or research.

If common needs are identified, cross border solutions can be found and there may be common coordinated projects and subsidies for each national area of the region separately, as well as in accordance with the different national and international development programmes.

In areas where regional institutions have no competences, i.e. cross border traffic affairs or any other matters of national competence, the neighbouring parts of the region or the region as a whole can lobby the central governments, the EU, or other international organisations for their common interests.

CONCLUSIONS

With the new forms of organisation, the growing national confidence, the increasing common lobbying outside the region of international and national institutions and the basic master plan for regional development, the DKMT seems to become strong enough to work effectively and successfully for a better future for all the people living in this region. It is in the next few years that the region has to solve many problems about the asynchronous integration process of the three countries. It will be a bridge between the EU-members and those on their way into the EU and – as a functional institution – to some extent, a pilot station for the integration and the cohesion of this part of Europe.

There are some signs that show that the DKMT will work. Members of the elites and many decision-making factors recognize the advantages of cooperation within a Euroregion. They are easier solutions for problems not limited by administrative borders (traffic, environment protection, disaster prevention, communication, etc), better access to international subsidies, more personal political power, and better economic opportunities. Therefore, they are personally interested in the success of this cooperation and will encourage it, though there were many difficulties and setbacks, and long discussions.

Very slowly even the population experiences slight improvements through cross border solutions. Communication and traffic cross borders more easily. There are better economic ties, visits to relatives or minority-members in the neighbouring countries are easier, and tourism in the other areas of the region is facilitated. The infrastructure improves more quickly not only at the borders, but also in a wider area within the border zone, an area that up to now has almost always been in a bad and backward situation. Cooperation in sports, culture, and education directly helps everybody to live better and have better prospects.

In order to improve the cross border cooperation within the DKMT some problems need to be solved. Better internal organisation and communication of a broad flow of information are needed. More people from all groups of the population have to be involved in the process in order to increase contacts among the three areas of the region. The members of all kind of organisations should also be shown the possibilities, which the DKMT offers them. This means that the bottom-up element in the work of the DKMT has to be strengthened and improved especially but not only for regional development.

The DKMT should apply, as an entity, to national and international organisations (EU, IMF, World Bank etc.) and institutions for sponsorship and cooperation. Also it should become a member and work actively in associations for similar units, for example the "Association of European Border Regions."

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