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WHAT CAN ROMANIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEARN FROM THE "V4" COUNTRIES?

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ABSTRACT – The so called Visegrad countries have different regional planning approach and tradition, but thanks to this colourful pattern, Romanian regional planning may learn from results gained by analyzing the current 2007-2013 programming period context. The paper argues that there is a major need for a detailed comparative analysis in this respect in favour of preparing planning capacities for the period after 2014.

Key words: regional planning, cohesion policy, regional data, V4 countries, Romania, regional disparities.

INTRODUCTION

In the present paper I would like to put into the context of the so called "Visegrad Countries" (V4) the Romanian regional development issues in order to obtain some useful findings on the future orientation of regional development planning of Romania. The V4 countries, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary may serve as models of new member states' regional planning, even if we can find that there is no single way of regional planning in these countries and the differences are much bigger than the common solutions.

The analysis below put in the focus only basic regional data:

- GDP per capita in PPS,
- GDP growth,
- unemployment rate,
- nights spent by foreign tourists,
- research and development expenditures in the % of regional GDP,
- Regional Operational Programme sources.

As the comparative study of these regional data is a bit positivist, even it fits current mainstream regional analysis trends (Wong, 2006), I also would like to emphasis some other issues, like the development of network of small towns (ESPON, 1.1.1) and also governance issues in the context of regional planning (ESPON, 2.3.2). By means of the below detailed complex approach I will hopefully show some useful results that may contribute for a more harmonious and effective regional planning of the next programming period of Romania, for the post-2014 period.

BASIC DATA OF V4+ROMANIA REGIONS

In order to clarify the context of the analysis, first of all I would like to show some basic figures of the regions of the V4 countries and Romania. In Table 1, one can find some relevant data of all regions form the area. Population, GDP per capita, R&D, unemployment and tourism data if from the year 2005, as most of regional development planning processes were based on data from the named year in these countries. GDP growth data reflects the average of GDP growth from 2001 to 2005 for each region. The NUTS 2 column indicates the official name of the given region as defined by the NUTS 2003 nomenclature and its later modifications.

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Table 1. *Regional data of the selected regions*

Member state	NUTS 2	Population	GDP per capita	GDP growth	R&D	Unemployment	Nights spent
Czech Republic	Praha	1 170 571	20 500	4.3	2.2	3.5	9 787 794
	Střední Cechy	1 144 071	9 000	4.9	2.77	5.2	507 591
	Jihozápad	1 175 330	9 000	3.8	0.87	5.1	837 505
	Severozápad	1 126 721	7 800	2.4	0.25	13.5	2 177 512
	Severovýchod	1 480 144	8 300	3.4	1.07	5.6	1 950 418
	Jihovýchod	1 640 354	8 700	3.7	1.26	7.7	719 166
	Střední Morava	1 225 832	7 600	3.4	1.05	9.7	391 542
	Moravskoslezsko	1 257 554	8 300	3.5	0.7	13.9	235 969
Hungary	Közép-Magyarország	2 840 972	14 300	5.6	1.37	5.1	5 656 301
	Közép-Dunántúl	1 110 897	8 300	4.8	0.42	6.3	541 565
	Nyugat-Dunántúl	1 000 348	8 700	2.5	0.31	5.9	1 526 501
	Dél-Dunántúl	977 465	6 100	2.5	0.44	8.8	617 298
	Észak-Magyarország	1 271 111	5 800	4.2	0.32	10.6	196 068
	Észak-Alföld	1 541 818	5 600	4.4	0.84	9	415 772
	Dél-Alföld	1 354 938	6 000	3.1	0.73	8.1	173 017
Poland	Lódzkie	2 587 702	5 900	3.4	0.52	17.4	175 542
	Mazowieckie	5 145 997	10 100	4.1	1.1	14.8	1 490 199
	Malopolskie	3 260 201	5 500	3.5	1.02	15.3	1 683 021
	Slaskie	4 700 771	6 900	3.2	0.34	19	500 610
	Lubelskie	2 185 156	4 400	2.4	0.48	14.3	120 897
	Podkarpackie	2 097 975	4 400	2.6	0.3	16.7	87 438
	Swietokrzyskie	1 288 693	4 800	2.5	0.08	19	103 625
	Podlaskie	1 202 425	4 700	3.3	0.27	14.4	51 738
	Wielkopolskie	3 365 283	6 800	4.1	0.47	17.2	186 327
	Zachodniopomorskie	1 694 865	5 900	1.9	0.17	22.7	425 847
	Lubuskie	1 009 168	5 800	3.4	0.15	19.1	906 401
	Dolnoslaskie	2 893 055	6 600	2.8	0.45	22.8	968 266
	Opolskie	1 051 531	5 300	2.9	0.13	16.9	62 841
	Kujawsko-Pomorskie	2 068 258	5 600	3.2	0.25	19.8	135 919
	Warminsko-Mazurskie	1 428 714	4 900	2.8	0.24	20.4	516 566
	Pomorskie	2 194 041	6 300	3.0	0.52	18.9	453 517
Romania	Nord-Vest	2 742 676	3 500	5.0	0.26	5.9	328 099
	Centru	2 533 421	3 600	4.1	0.15	8.4	564 918
	Nord-Est	3 735 512	2 500	4.1	0.19	5.7	207 416
	Sud-Est	2 849 959	3 200	4.5	0.13	7.9	801 207
	Sud – Muntenia	3 338 195	3 100	5.0	0.37	9.2	252 577
	Bucuresti – Ilfov	2 209 768	8 100	9.3	1.13	6.9	862 310
	Sud-Vest Oltenia	2 313 903	2 900	2.7	0.18	6.6	63 886
	Vest	1 935 094	4 200	4.7	0.18	6.7	296 735
Slovakia	Bratislavský kraj	601 132	17 400	5.5	0.88	5.3	816 536
	Západné Slovensko	1 863 940	6 700	4.9	0.45	12.5	887 630
	Stredné Slovensko	1 352 497	5 500	3.1	0.31	19.6	976 746
	Východné Slovensko	1 567 253	5 100	3.5	0.28	23.1	969 117

(Source: EUROSTAT)

The first step of describing the V4+RO region might be the comparison of GDP per capita in PPS indicator of 2005. If one takes a look at Figure 1, the following classification can be concluded:

- capital city areas,
- western regions,
- eastern regions.

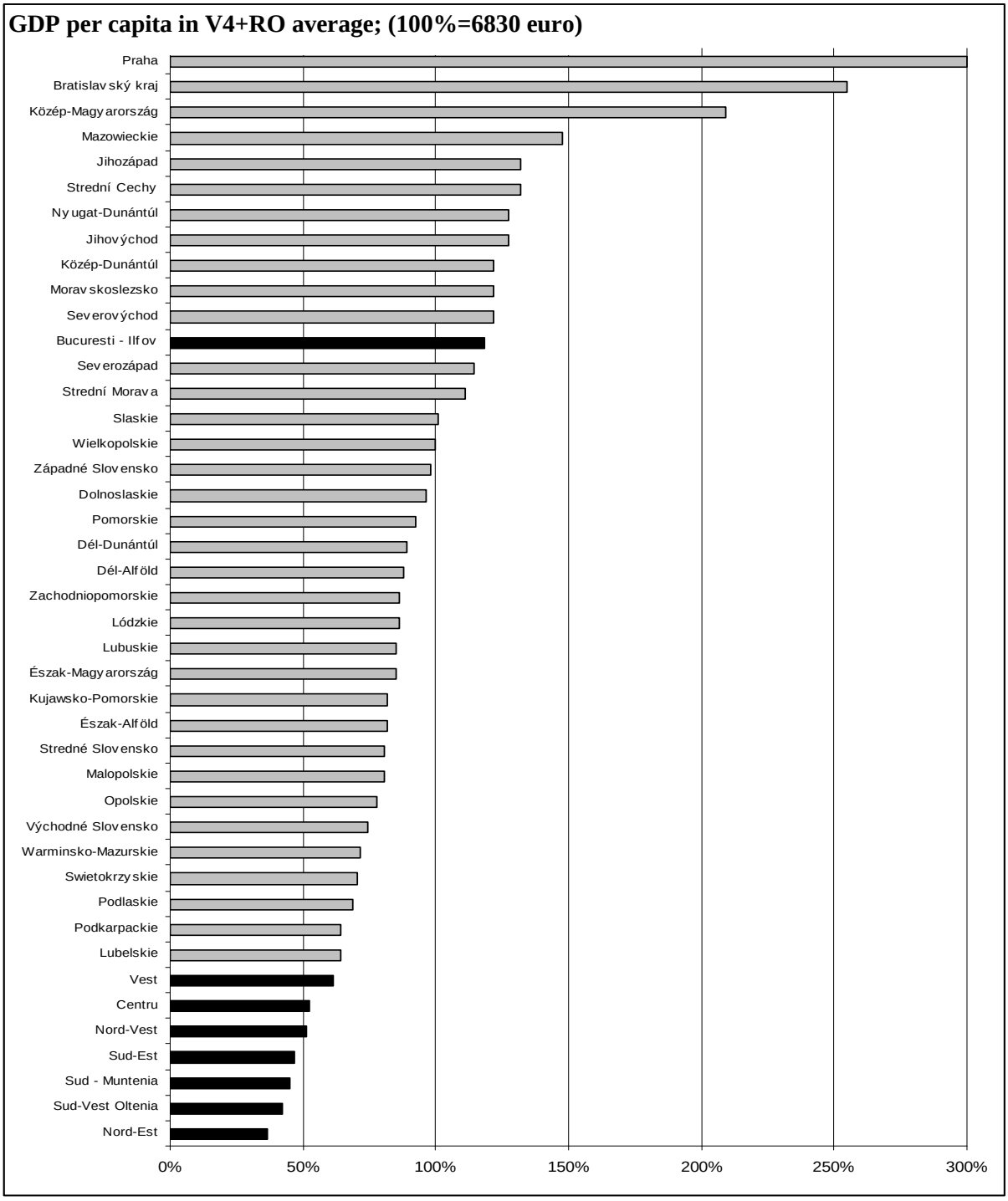

Figure 1. *GDP per capita in PPS in the V4+RO region*

Capital city areas can be characterized by outstanding GDP level in macro-regional and also in member state context. The most developed capital region is Prague and Stredni Cechy, the region around Prague – and it is not a contradiction as it might at first seem, as the Czechs divided the Central Bohemian region into the capital city and its neighbouring areas in order to maximize the eligible territory for Objective 1 of the current cohesion policy. In this context, Prague is well above 75% of EU average, but Central Bohemian region remained under convergence objective and can receive much higher level of European Regional Development Fund sources than Objective 2 regions.

Bratislavsky kraj and Kozep-Magyarorszag include the capital cities of Slovakia and Hungary, so none of them can receive convergence objective sources – these regions are eligible for competitiveness and employment sources only. I should also mention that Bratislavsky kraj has only 600,000 inhabitants, while the region of Budapest (including the capital and Pest county) has more than 2,800,000. So Bratislavsky kraj is not a real term region, it is more close to a metropolitan area – if we can use the word for an area with a population of 600,000.

On the contrary, Mazowieckie region, which includes Warsawa, the capital of Poland, is a real term capital region, as it has a population of more than 5 million. This latter data can tell us why the region is lagging behind other capital areas. Of course, I should mention also the more balanced spatial structure of Poland, as there are other large towns and MEGAs (for a detailed definition of MEGAs see also www.espon.eu) – this is not the case of Hungary and Slovakia, where the number of large cities above 500,000 is quite low. Bucureşti – Ilfov region will qualify, in a short period, in the capital city areas' group as the region has the highest growth rate in the studied macro-region, nearly the double of other capital regions.

The next category of regions in the V4+RO space is that of the western regions and includes six regions, namely 4 regions form the Czech Republic and 2 from Hungary. Jihozapad region is situated in the south-west of the Czech Republic, it has the highest accessibility to the core of the EU27 economic area and the best access to western markets. Nyugat-Dunantul is in the north of Hungary, right on the border of Austria and Slovakia – closer to Viena and Bratislavksy kraj, then to Budapest. The accessibility can be defined as the major factor of the development of the region. Jihovychod, Moravoslezsko and Severovychod regions are all neighboring Austria and the effects of the Prague-Bratislava transport axis (both motorways and rail) are explicit here.

Kozep-Dunantul region is situated between Nyugat-Dunantul and Kozep-Magyarorszag, the most developed regions of Hungary. The best transport opportunities of the V4+RO area cross the region and it traditionally had a developed high-tech industry even before 1990. In the case of Kozep-Dunantul, three major factors play crucial role in the development: industrial tradition, transport and the spill-over of neighbouring regions' development.

Severozapad and Stredni Morava regions start the list of the so called eastern regions, even if Severozapad is in the west of Bohemia, as Severozapad had undergone major structural change from heavy industrial past, inherited from the era before the Velvet revolution. From Stredni Morava region to Nord-Est region of Romania, the GDP figures are becoming lower and lower in a gradual way from the West to the East. This phenomenon can be evidently seen also at country level in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania, if we consider the eastern regions group of the V4+RO macro-region. In the case of Poland, as the spatial pattern of economic development is polycentric, Wielkopolskie and Slaskie, the second and the third region is not situated on the western border: the first is on the western border of the capital city region, including the city of Poznan, the latter is in the south, with major cities of Katowice and Czestochowa. Nevertheless, the three less developed regions of Poland are on the eastern border, so the general rule of west-east gradual decline can also be observed in Poland.

The dynamics of GDP can be most easily measured by the GDP growth. In Figure 2, I tried to show the breakdown of four year GDP growth rate of all the regions in the studied area. The factors in the background of dynamics will be detailed in the next section.

I have already mentioned that Bucureşti-Ilfov was going to qualify as a capital city region in the V4+RO space, as it has the highest growth rate of 9.3% on average. Budapest and Bratislava are well after Bucureşti, with their 5-6% growth. Kozep-Magyarorszag and Mazowieckie regions are above V4+RO regional average of 3.76%, which means that both capital regions can sustain their supreme role

in their countries. Praha and Stredni Cechy, defined above as a single capital city region, are also above macro-regional average growth, so Prague can sustain its top GDP level even in long terms.

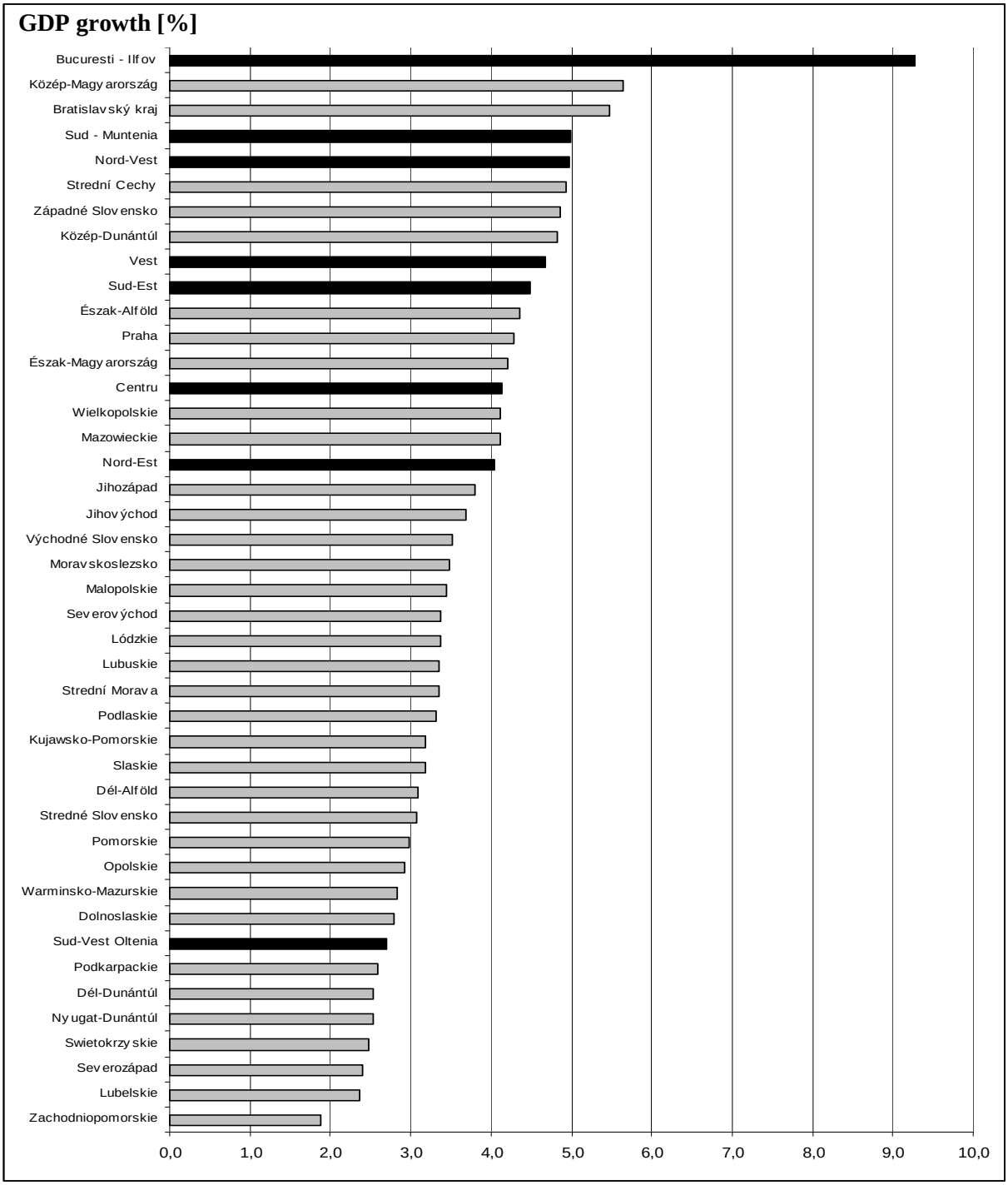

Figure 2. *GDP growth in the V4+RO region*

It is favourable for Romania that 6 out of 7 eastern-group regions have above regional average GDP growth. Sud-Muntenia, Nord-Vest had nearly 5% average growth, but Centru and Nord-Est have lower levels, not mentioning Sud-Vest Oltenia. The values of the 3 latter regions reflect the fact that in Romania, the inner regional disparities may have no medium term solutions and I should also mention

that Centru region's growth rate is below national average, and it may cause the relative decline of the region in medium term.

When analyzing the growth table, I would like to introduce a non-spatial factor too, namely the time or the history of a given region. For example, Nyugat-Dunantul region has a poor growth rate, which might show that the region is of a problematic kind. As Nyugat-Dunantul has a GDP of 130% of the macro-regional average and it is included in the above defined western regions category, we must conclude that Nyugat-Dunantul is full, which means that the region has already passed the first period of FDI boom during the nineties and now it has a relatively mature and developed economy. In the last period planners of the region tried to enforce development by the means of R&D, innovation and higher education as these activities were low before 1990 because of the iron curtain.

In a nutshell, one can say that capital city areas and western regions can sustain and enforce their economic strength while eastern regions have not just low GDP but also poor growth rate – excepting the Romanian regions, where the sustainability of the fairly high growth rate should be the overall policy issue in regional planning of the country. In the following part of the present paper, I would like to highlight these aspects, too, in the context of cohesion policy in practice.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

In this section I try to focus on some basic regional data which are supposed to have influence on GDP as a major indicator of regional economic development (Horváth, 2003; Polese, Shearmur, 2005). In Figure 3, the level of GDP growth average is shown in function of the rate of unemployment.

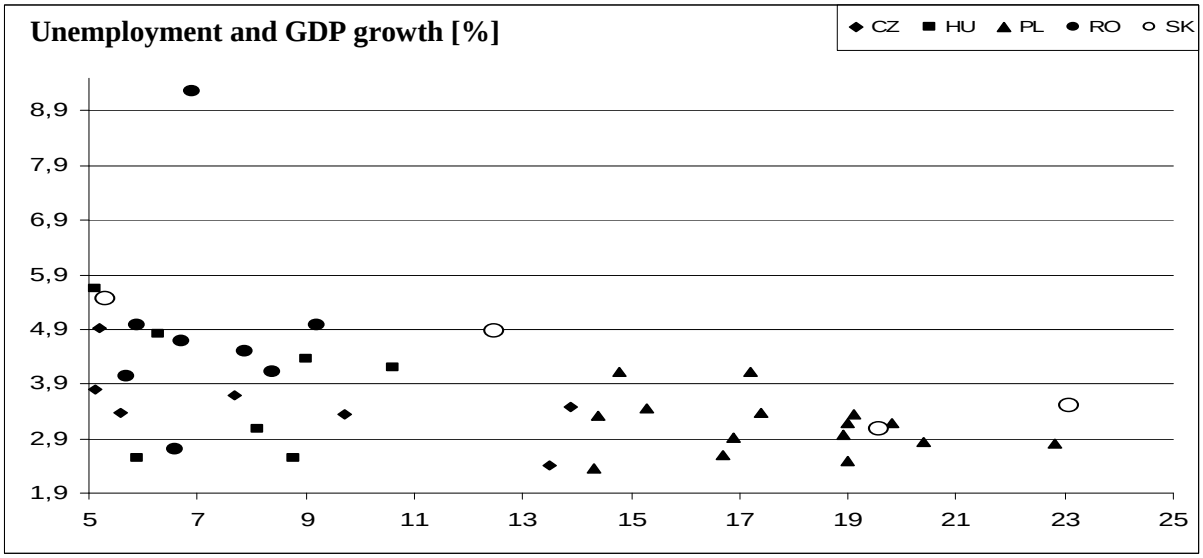

Figure 3. *Unemployment and GDP growth in the V4+RO macro-region*

The pattern may show that high unemployment is associated with low growth of the GDP, while the function of a trend-line is around y=-1/5x. The function is most evident in the case of Slovakia, where west-east gradient can also be seen. Major labour market problems in Poland caused that we can find all Polish regions in the group of the 17 regions with highest unemployment rate in 2005. The highest rate of unemployment is in the eastern region of Slovakia, in Vychodne Slovensko. We can easily see that there are country-level groupings of regions regarding unemployment, and the only country with a pattern of 5 to 23% is Slovakia. This phenomenon is caused by the fact that the data is from 2005, only one year after V4 countries joined the EU. Not belonging to the EU used to be the major obstacle of workers' mobility and all these labour markets had closed character at that time.

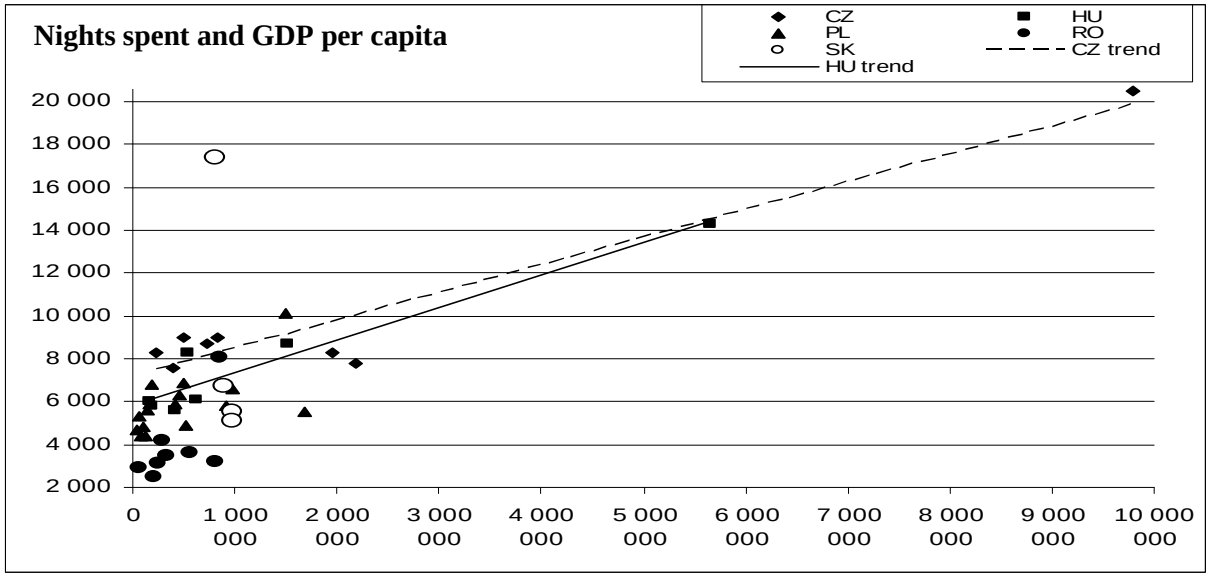

Figure 4. *Nights spent by foreign tourists and GDP per capita in the V4+RO macro-region*

It is an overall idea that tourism has a major impact on GDP, and even in rural development context media and politics is very much focusing on tourism (MONOD, Castelbajac, 2008). If we take a look at Figure 4, we can see that in the case of the Czech Republic or Hungary, a linear trend-line can be defined and the deviation of Czech regions is fairly low from the trend. But in the case of Poland, Romania or Slovakia, one can hardly find any function that may fit the pattern. If we consider all regions from the V4+RO macro-region, we can conclude that the critical mass of nights spent per a year in a region is above 1,000,000 nights, as the trend line can be reasonable to be used only for these regions. The ranking of these regions of "real" tourism importance is as follows:

- Praha (Prague)
- Kozep-Magyarorszag (Budapest)
- Severozapad (Karlovy Vary)
- Severovychod (Hradec Kralove, Pardubice)
- Malopolskie (Krakow)
- Nyugat-Dunantul (Gyor, Sporon)
- Mazowieckie (Warsawa)

The awkward character of the tourism-GDP pattern can be the best shown through the example of Slovakia, where the ranking is led by Stredne Slovensko (the Tatras) and others show a gradual east-west decline – quite the contrary of economic development. So we can say that it is not that simple to say that if we invest in tourism, then tourism will have an effective impact on GDP. It might be true only if a region can attract tourists and there is a tourism destination and the accessibility is good too – otherwise any public investment can take place, the effects will be poor on the GDP.

Another overall concept in regional development is that research and development can boost economy at regional scale (Duranton, 2008), so I also checked it in V4+RO macro-regional context. We can see in Figure 5 that there is no uniform trend in R&D effect on GDP growth, but we can find that Czech regions are nearly on the trendline. Most of the regions (29 out of 43) are below average (0.6% of regional GDP), while there is only one Czech region in this group. The extremities of the equations:

- Romania: y=5,4x
- Czech Republic: y=0,83x

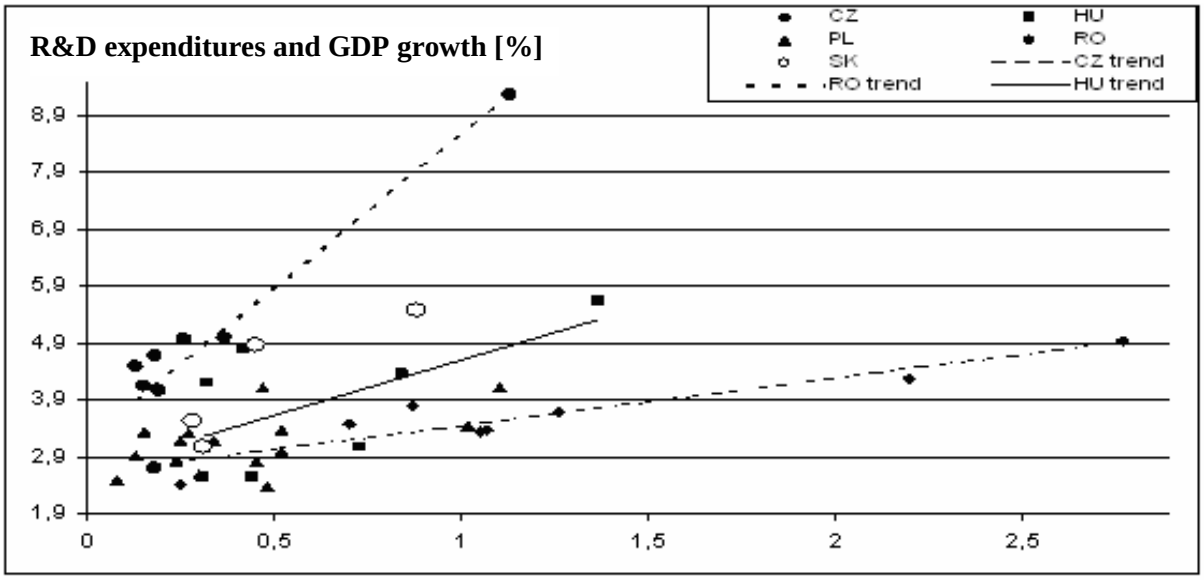

Figure 5. *R&D expenditures and GDP growth in the V4+RO region*

The equation of the macro-regional trendline is y=0,86x, which means that successful R&D-based regional development planning may use the Czech Republic as a medium term good example, which also means that the high value of Romania is not about real R&D-led development, but it reflects the fact that both R&D activities and investment are concentrated in Bucureşti coincidently. If we take the regions country by country, we can conclude that the higher the GDP, the closer the trendline is to the Czech one.

PLANNING OF ROP SOURCES

While planning the regional breakdown of convergence sources, several principles have to be borne in mind (Horváth, 2003; Csák, 2006). We can set a non-complete list of policies' as follows:

- the Treaties,
- community strategic guidelines on cohesion policy,
- community law on the Funds (especially the 1080/2006/EC regulation),
- regional policy of the given member state.

We can also add to the list some specific and not obligatory documents, like the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Charter of Leipzig, or at national level any spatial development or regional development law and policy. As the planning situation is quite complex, any planner of a regional operational programme (ROP) can find itself in an awkward situation, as the list of documents can be always detailed and some political issues also cause interferences in a planning context (Campbell, Fainstein, 2005; McCarthy, 2007). The aim of a planner can be based on both EU and member state policy, but also has to take into account the urgent need of politics regarding short term outcomes. In this respect, cohesion principles and other knowledge based ideas of experts can be overwritten by a certain hurry for the Funds. If the overall aim is the short term absorption of EU Funds, the principles and goals of common policies and also those of member state policies can hardly be reached or can be obtained only by mistake.

In the present section, I would like to compare by means of very simple comparison the breakdown ROP of sources in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. In the previous sections I dealt with macro-regional data of all "Visegrad" countries, but now I focus only on the Czech and Hungarian experience, because Slovakia has no real term ROP, as the eligible activities are focusing on regional accessibility and the sources are not really have regional cohesion character. In the case of Poland, every region has its ROP, but there is another special OP for unique issues of the eastern regions. This OP has a strong territorial character but officially it is not a ROP. So the data from

Poland on ROP sources is not quite correct, as eastern regions also receive fundings from the Eastern Poland OP. I have to mention that both Hungary and the Czech Republic has one "non-objective one" region, Praha and Kozep-Magyarorszag, and in this respect I only concerned sources allocated for convergence regions.

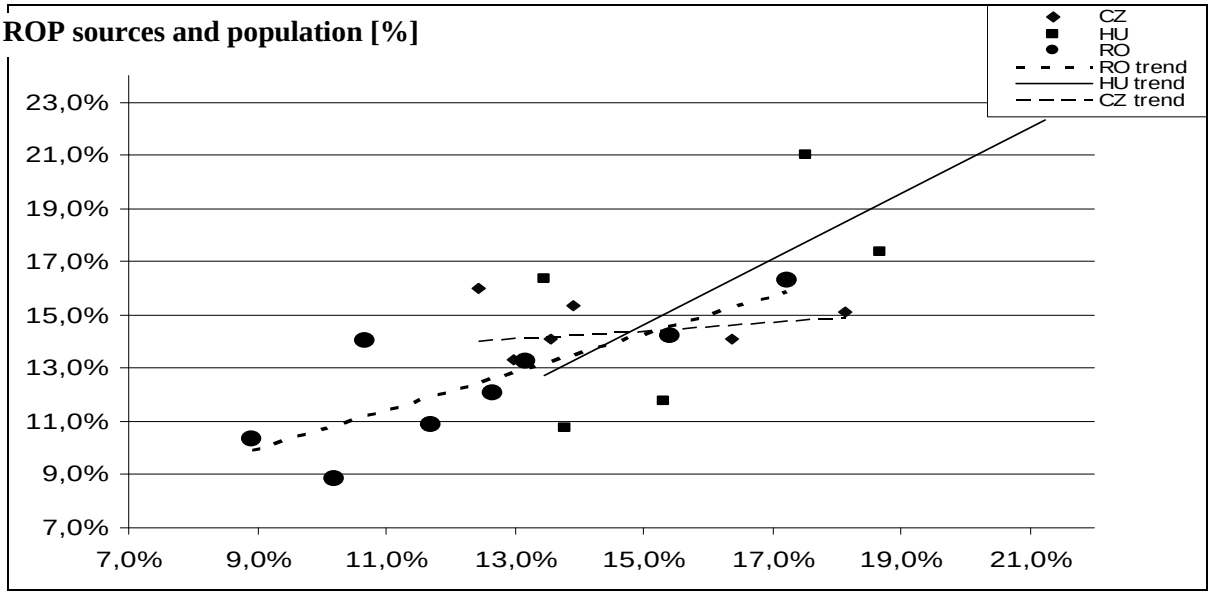

Figure 6. *Regional Operational Programme sources and population in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania*

In Figure 6, we can see that ROP sources are very much related to the population of a given region, so the higher the population, the higher the ROP allocation, but it is true only if we consider all these convergence regions in general. At member state level the correlation of ROP sources and population is only 0.25 in the case of the Czech Republic, 0.79 in Hungary and 0.82 in Romania. Based on these results, in the Czech Republic the key of understanding of the breakdown of ROP sources is not the population of a region. In Hungary we must add that regions with high population have low GDP per capita and those with low population have higher GDP – not including Del-Dunantul, where both population and GDP is low. So even if the correlation of population and ROP sources is high in Hungary, one can not easily say that Hungarian planners just designed the breakdown by using Census data on population.

In order to make clear the design of the named three member states' ROP allocation, and at the same time, checking if the cohesion principle is in practice or not, I suggest taking a look at Figure 7.

In the above figure I tried to make clear the connection between GDP per capita and ROP sources per capita. GDP is that of the year 2005, ROP per capita is calculated based on total ROP allocation from 2007 to 2013 of a given region. I hold the opinion that the result of this figure is quite shocking as we can see two very different approaches to regional planning. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, ROP sources have been allocated based on the cohesion principle, so they tried to give more funds for those with less GDP per capita in order to enforce activities which may lead to the reduction of regional disparities. In Romania, allocation is only based on the population of the regions, which means that all regions have equal opportunities to get EU fundings, but the allocation can lead to more cohesion only by mistake.

In the Czech Republic and in Hungary, planners used complex methods to determine the source a region can receive, but as all these methods were based on indicators of economic and social development and GDP per capita is the major and most commonly used indicator of this kind, they had similar results. Although their results are not based on the single GDP per capita indicator, they can be correctly interpreted by using it.

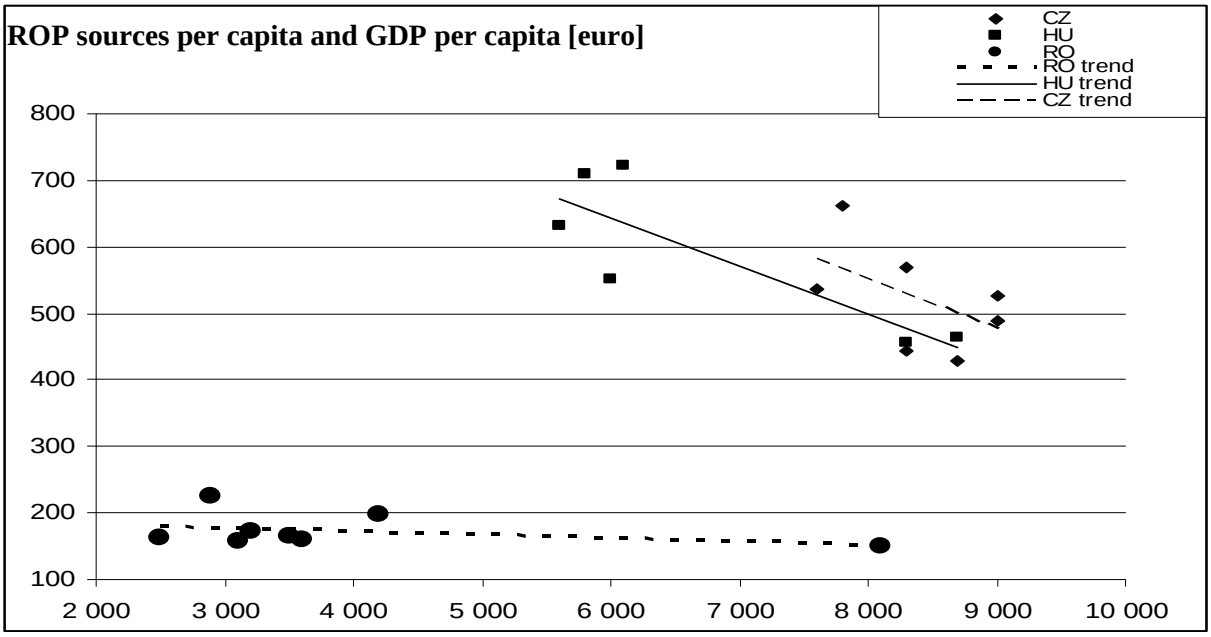

Figure 7. *Regional Operational Programme sources per capita and GDP per capita in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania*

We can also see a slight difference between Hungarian and Czech allocations, as a given region may get higher ROP sources if it is in the Czech Republic than in Hungary, but the difference between the trendlines is not big. This is not the case of Romania, where the function is parallel with axis "x", which means that no matter how low is the GDP per capita indicator of the region, ROP allocation is nearly the same and it varies between 146 and 226 euros per capita – I would like to highlight that Vest region receives the second largest amount from ERDF while it has the second largest GDP per capita figure. Nevertheless, these differences in Romania may not lead to the intensification of regional disparities, because hopefully they have no critical mass in this respect.

We can see that in Hungary and in the Czech Republic, cohesion policy principles are in practice as regions with lower GDP per capita receive higher ROP sources. In Romania, the ROP might not have any impact on member state level regional disparities. But we can also mention that the average level of Romanian ROP per capita is only 174 euros, while the average of these countries is 409, which means that it is 2.3 times higher than the figure of Romania. In addition, if ROPs have impact on reducing regional disparities, they may cause an increase in this context, as the less well off regions from Romania are going to receive much fewer ROP sources than the regions from Hungary or the Czech Republic. While Eszak-Alfold, with a GDP of 5,600 euros, will receive 632 euros ROP, Nord – Est region is going to get 163 euros with a GDP which is only 44% of that of Eszak-Alfold region.

I also have to add that even if there are differences between the Czech and the Hungarian trendlines, in Hungary some other sources do have regional or territorial character, because the so called "programme of poles" integrate R&D and other similar fundings from other operational programmes, which means that if we consider the sources allocated using the territorial development principles, even Hungarian trend is going to have a very similar value with the Czech one.

Regions are different not just in the context of GDP, but also in the context of their needs (Healey, 2007; Courlet, 2008). Regional transport infrastructure, educational needs are very different. Hungarian authorities decided to let all regions to design their own ROP, so the allocation of the sources by priority axis is different in every region. In Romania the case is quite the contrary. We saw that ROP allocation is more or less about the population of a given region, but the issue is of a much more problematic kind, because it is true for all priority axes included in the single ROP of Romania. The ROP includes the allocation of sources for every priority axis, but if we check the figures, we can

see that they used the same percentage as that of the total allocation. So regions receive the same allocation for example on tourism development, no matter if they have real potential or not.

The problematic side of this solution can be the best demonstrated in the case of the urban development priority axis. One third of the total ROP funding has been allocated for the realization of the so called integrated urban development plans. All towns or urban microregions with a population of more than 10,000 inhabitants are eligible for these sources. Authorities decided to divide the amount into three parts:

- growth poles (one city in each region expect Bucureşti-Ilfov),
- urban development poles (1-3 cities from each region, not including Bucureşti-Ilfov),
- urban centres (all towns not included in the above mentioned categories).

As there are no growth pole or urban development pole in the Bucureşti-Ilfov region, all urban development sources will be spent in towns from the category of urban centres. In order to make clear the results of this decision, I suggest checking the data in Figure 8.

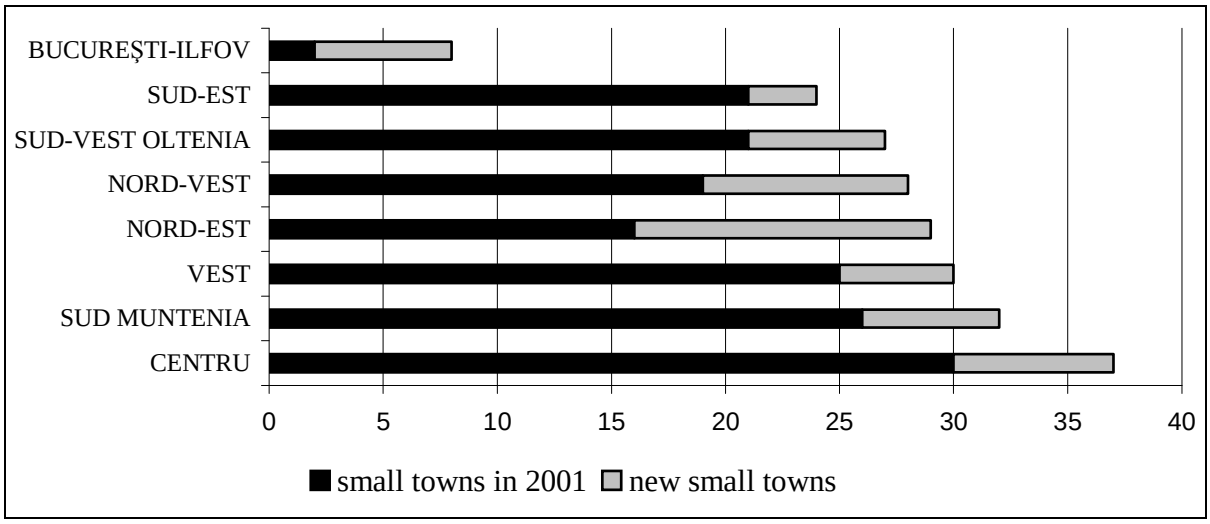

Figure 8. *Number of small towns in Romanian regions in 2008*

In the above figure one can see the evolution of the number of small towns in the Romanian regions. Small towns are defined in Romania by the law on spatial development, in the part on the system of localities (351/2001), as third grade towns with no county level importance. The number of these small towns was increasing between 2001 and 2007, as it used to be quite simple to make a town out of a bigger commune or of some nearby communes. The law aimed at increasing the number of towns in areas where only rural communes could be found, but only 10 of the new towns are situated in these areas. The network of towns and cities in Romania is very different from region to region, and it has a very dynamic character. The number of small towns grew by 31%, while 6% of them became second grade towns (towns of county level importance in favour of a more balanced network of towns and cities), which cased a 26% increase in the number of small towns.

But the spatial pattern of this process is not balanced, because the regions are very different (Csák, 2009). The number of small towns in the Bucureşti-Ilfov region is now four times bigger then it was in 2001 – it is surely not about the need for urban settlements in a rural area. In 2001, Nord-Est region had the second smallest number of small towns and now the region is at the fourth place by nearly doubling the figure. We can conclude that the Romanian regions are different also in the context of the maturity of the urban system, which supposes a wise planning of urban structure (Healey, 2007; Brunet, 2004; McCarthy, 2007), and it should be considered while planning the ROP. In the case of the above mentioned integrated urban development projects, Bucureşti-Ilfov region can have sources which have been calculated based on the population of the region in general, including Bucureşti. In Centru region, where the number of towns eligible for the so called urban centres call is nearly five times higher, they

may receive only 30% of all urban development fundings, as there are other poles in the region. No one can say that this is in favour of a more balanced urban system in Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

I do hope that some useful results can be gathered from my present text and I could demonstrate that Romania can learn something from the so called V4 countries in the context of regional development. I also want to highlight that the above detailed analysis considered only basic regional data and I did not refer to the governance and planning issues of high importance – these should be studied in detail in the future.

Regarding tourism and regional development, I concluded that if we only take into account the effective usage of EU funds, tourism development can result in higher GDP only in regions where the critical mass of tourists, around 1,000,000 nights per year, can be reached. We also saw that the R&D-growth function can be easily planned by using the Czech experience. The most useful result of the present analysis is that we could see that Romanian ROP planning is very different from the Czech or the Hungarian ones and it can hardly be a useful tool in favour of member state level reduction of regional disparities, but also insufficient at macro-regional level.

Romanian planning should learn from the Czechs' R&D and tourism development, while from the Hungarian colleagues the wise planning of urban development. Polish planners have shown the example of a regional-like non-ROP solution for their eastern regions. There is vast experience in capital city areas' planning in Slovakia and in other V4 countries. So, there are plenty of documents that can be checked in favour of gathering good practices.

Nevertheless, maybe the key for a successful regional planning for the period beginning with 2014 is the governance of regional policy (ESPON 2.3.2; Healey, 2006), as only by applying the principle of subsidiarity at regional level can real term regional planning begin. By means of partnership based planning, like regional foresight activities and other means of collaborative planning, Romania can boost regional planning capacity, and this latter can solve the issues caused by the top-down planning of the 2007-2013 period. In this context, Romania should pay more attention to solving regional bottleneck related issues by building regional level planning and management capacities, and also focusing on the legal context of a real term regional governance.

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