

CURRENT PROBLEMS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BORDER REGION OF KOMÁRNO DISTRICT AND CONTIGUOUS PART OF KOMÁROM-ESZTERGOM COUNTY

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Abstract: International cooperation plays very important part not only in the development of national states but also in the development of individual border regions. Based on the analysis of the location, natural, human and socioeconomic potential (including SWOT analysis) as well as from the research of perception of state border it is possible to conclude, that the area of interest has very good precondition for regional development.

In the economy of the region the agriculture has traditionally an important task however currently the industry has been developing intensively as well. For this reason this contribution analysis current opportunities of the region's development in multiple fields – agriculture, industry, transportation, tourism, environment etc.

The aim of the cooperation in Slovak – Hungarian border area is above all to support of social and economic development of this area.

Key words: border, border region, border effect, cross-border cooperation, centres of innovation, regional development

1. INTRODUCTION

Revaluation of border areas functions which were in the previous era of socialism at the periphery of interest from the point of view of economic policy has become an interesting topic nowadays in the time of yet more enlarging Europe.

Precisely marginal border areas can thanks to appropriate regional policy and international cooperation accelerate in their development. For this reason the research of border area development based on mutual exploitation of natural, historical and human potential is a rewarding object of interest for the geographers as well.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

Presented study represents a partial synthesis of knowledge regarding development phenomena of border area of the Komárno district region and the adjoining part of Komárom-Esztergom county.

In the last years there were several studies analytically worked out relevant to the topic of our study. Drgoňa (2001) studied the cross-border cooperation between Slovakia and Hungary. The villages of Slovak-Hungarian border area, however within a wider scope of studied danubian euroregions – were subjects of study of the following authors – Dubcová (2002) was evaluating the perception of the state border by the locals, Kramáreková – Oremusová (2002) analysed the natural environment of the area, Pulpitlová (2002) gave characteristics of inhabitants and settlements, Némethová (2002) agriculture, Krogmann (2002) tourism and transportation, Oremusová (2002) preconditions of regional development.

Directly the delimited territory was studied in analytical studies focused on tourism (Dubcová, Kramáreková, 2003, 2004) and problems, respectively the perspectives of regional development (Bagitová, 2003, 2005). The monography about Czech border areas by Jeřábek, Dokoupil, Havlíček et al. (2004) has a comparative importance.

From the methodological point of view were – along the classic geographic analyses and synthesis – were used also findings from a questionnaire research focused on the perception of the state border and methods of regional analysis.

3. DELIMITATION OF THE AREA OF INTEREST

Borderline area of Slovakia and Hungary represents currently a space of very vivid mutual contacts which bring positive developmental momentum and tendencies on both sides of the border.

The area of interest, part of the Váh – Dunaj – Ipeľ Euroregion, was delimited along the both sides of Slovak–Hungarian border. The axis of the territory and at the same time the state border between Slovakia and Hungary is river Danube which divides the area in question to two parts, respectively two subregions – the northern and the southern. The borderline area in each of the states is build up by two belts of municipalities. The first belt directly touches the border, the second is adjoining the first one.

Delimited territory has an area of 1,009 km², the population of, the density of population 198 inhabitants/km² (2001). There are 33 villages and 2 towns obcí Komárno and Komárom divided by river Danube (untill 1918 these towns were one town), and they are the centre of the delimited area. The northern subregion covers the area of 553 km², with population of 68,466 and density 124 inhabitants/km² (2001). On the Slovak territory 22 villages belong to this region and the town Komárno. Southern subregion is smaller, covering the area of 456 km², with population of 50,867 and density of 112 inhabitants/km² (2001). On the Hungarian territory 11 villages belong to this region and the town Komárom.

4. CHOSEN ATTRIBUTES OF THE SLOVAK-HUNGARIAN BORDER

One of the means of spatial organization is also border and it is border that is at the core of the interest of the research of borderline areas. The border fulfills an important function, it can check the movement of people, goods, services, information, capital etc. thus having an impact on the development of the territory. Borders exist in all geographic dimensions – from the local up to global. At the same time it creates a barrier which regulates the flux of interactions between the territories of different dimensions.

The region had developed together as a part of Austrian-Hungarian monarchy until 1918. Many barrier effects of the Slovak – Hungarian border were created due to historical development. Besides the period of WWII the border was not strengthened by military policy. Important role was also played by administrative and socio-economic policy of each state.

Social and economic development of the Slovak-Hungarian borderline area after 1989 points out to multiple changes which come out of sources of border area, the possibilities of bilateral cooperation, mobility of labour force etc.

The axis of the studied area is river Danube itself, flowline of which is at the same time a natural state border. Lack of crossing points as well as the natural barrier of Danube were the causes for independent economic development on both sides of the river. Still today there is only one important international border crossing on the studied area which is border crossing Komárno-Komárom.

State border creates a contact line between two states, thus creating political and economic barrier of different intensity. It does not have to have only an impact of restriction necessarily. A questionnaire research (Bagitová, 2003) focused on the impact and the perception of border by inhabitants in the period of 2001 – 2002 in the studied borderline area of Komárno district and Komárom-Esztergom county carried out on the sample of 11 936 inhabitants (6 763 from Slovakia, 5 173 from Hungary) showed that the respondents view border as something quite normal, the border does not make an impression of a barrier for them (see map No. 1). Its negative impact is attenuated by relatively satisfactory transport connections. The reasons of cross-border migration of citizens of both states are quite various – these can be economic, social, recreational etc. The most common are precisely the economic reasons – out of these most dominantly not only shopping and visiting relatives or friends but also suitable work opportunities. Daily egression to work from *Denná odchádzka* Komárno district to Komárom-Esztergom and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties is 10 000 people (Bagitová, 2005). Unifying language of the borderline area is Hungarian which enables an intensive interest about life matters in the neighbouring state.

Having as a base the characteristic of Czech–Slovak border by Řehák (1997, in Jeřábek, Dokoupil, Havlíček et al., 2004) we can ascertain similar qualities of Slovak-Hungarian border as well:

- ♦ the border is territorially fixed, its location did not change, what changed was the intensity of the barrier effect,
- ♦ the border is well permeable intensive cross-border effects are registered in coaction with remaining contacts carried over from the past while in a narrow belt along the border these contacts are perceived still as very important ones,
- ♦ the border is effective – transport systems and economic bounds loosen gradually,

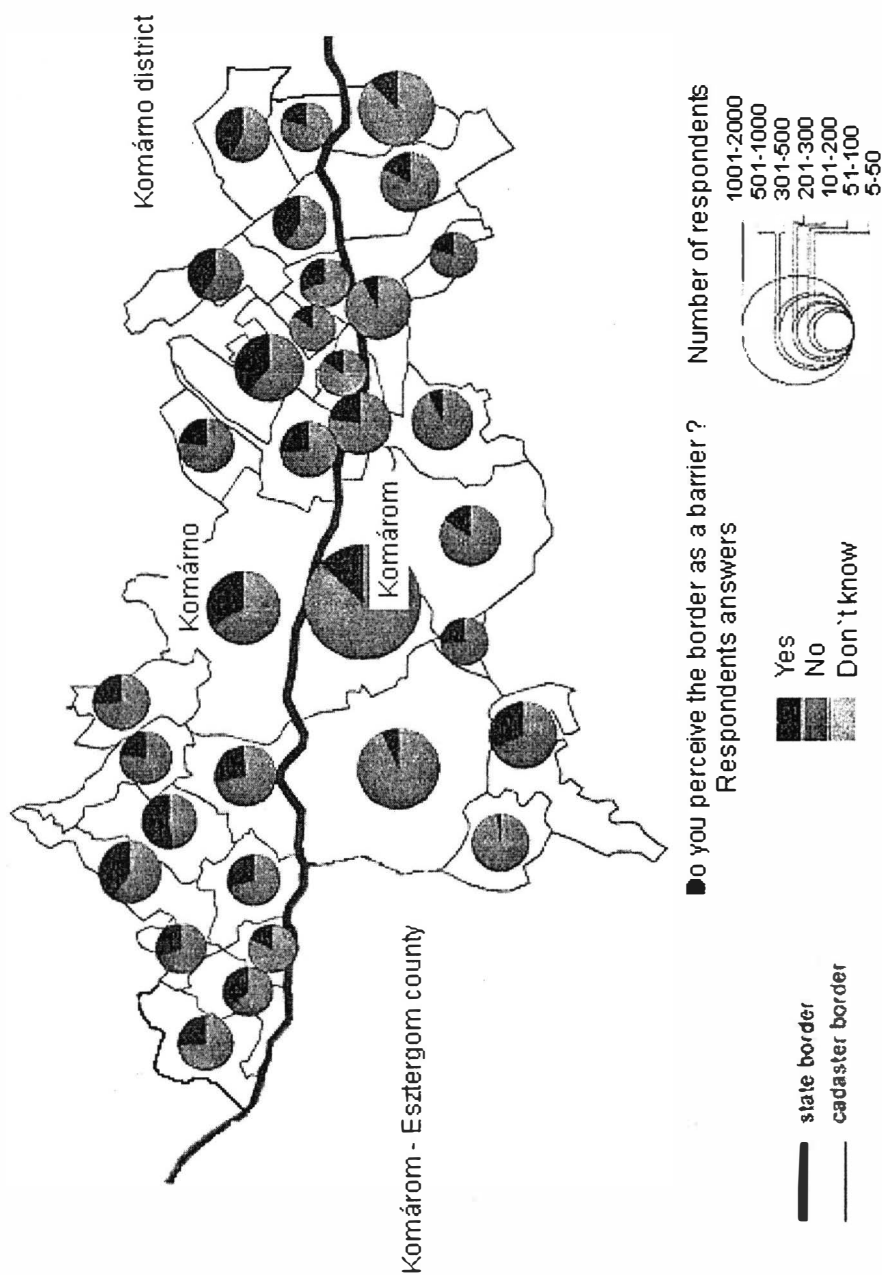


Figure 1 Perception of the state border by inhabitants of the cross-border region of Komárom district and contiguous part of Komárom – Esztergom county

- ♦ the border is pulsating which means that by a relative territorial stability the only thing always changing was the extent of openness.

5. CURRENT IMPULSES OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

Historical development, minimal language barrier, similarities of geographic environs and an interest in making use of territory's potential predestine this region to mutual cooperation and coordination of mutual activities.

One of the main activities of the region is agriculture, Arable land covers 81 % of northern subregion (NSR) a 92 % of southern subregion (SSR). Within vegetal production the cultivation of thermophilic crop prevails. In both part of the region there is quite significant cultivation of grapevine and fruits. Due to developed animal production an important segment of vegetal production belongs to cultivation of fodder on arable land. In animal production the farming of pigs prevails and the farming of boeuf; the village of Bábolna (SSR) has a tradition in breeding horses and poultry. In the regions some other activities narrowly connected to agriculture are developing e.g. in village Chotín (NSR) the enterprise Parm-Corn, s.r.o. is oriented on cultivating the seeds of corn.

Industry also belongs to the developed branches of region's economy represented especially by the following branches of industry: electrical, machinery, nutritional, chemical. In the structure of region's industry an important part belongs to companies producing shoes and haberdashery as well as processing of leather.

The centers of industry are towns Komárno and Komárom. In Komárno the traditional branch of industry is machinery represented by Slovenské lodenice, a.s. constructing and building ships for partners from Germany and Russia. In the process of restructuralization the shipyards reduced quite significantly the number of employees from the former 5.000 to the current 600 employees. The completion of containers for cargo transport in the Contexco, a.s. company is also very important. Electric material, wires, conductors and lightning rods are produced by firms ELMAT, s.r.o. and Jork-Sk, s.r.o. Production of shoes in an enterprise with foreign capital – Euroobuv, s.r.o. and haberdashery in Kožená galantéria, v.d. offers employment predominantly to women. Nutritional industry has a regional importance and is represented by a row of small facilities – bakeries, production of juices, fruit juices, pasta, alcoholic beverages. Small production facilities start to localize also in the countryside e.g. manufacture of windows, doors oriented mainly on export is typical for Madleniak – drevovýroba, s.r.o. in Chotín, production of nutritional supplements and cosmetics based on natural preparations by the firm Energy, s.r.o. in Iža, manufacture of plastic windows INTECO, s.r.o. Zlatná na Ostrove. However lack of employment opportunities in subregion forces the inhabitants to travel not only to the surrounding towns but also abroad. From this point of view the electrotechnical factory Kromberg Schubert in Kolárovo located nearby the northern subregion has an important stature and 400 inhabitants travel there on a daily basis.

Unlike Komárno, Komárom has a polyfunctional industrial park at its disposal on the area of 87,6 ha with crucial company Nokia Komárom, s.r.o. – the most modern factory of the company outside Finland aimed at production of cellular phones. It was

established in 2000, as a 25 billion forints investment and it employed 450 employees. Currently it employs 1,380 employees out of which more than a half travels to the site from the northern subregion according to the data from the factory's sources. In the area of park there is also located one of the main subsuppliers – Perlosz, s.r.o. oriented at the production of plastic parts. In the area of park there are also several small companies of different production aims. It is supposed that by 2006 the industrial park should provide almost 10,000 work opportunities.

Job opportunities in the town of Komárom complemented by other industrial enterprises such as Hungaromill (wheat mill), Heineken-Amstel brewery and factory producing linen yarn Hungaro-LEN.

Some facilities located in villages of southern subregion have supraregional importance – poultry company in Bábolna along with breed centre for broiler poultry, cooling chambers as well as manufacture of fodder or sugar refinery in village Ács. In the village Almásfüzitő is an industrial park which should become an impuls for the development of northwest of Hungary. Crucial company of this park is a chemical factory producing lubricants and oils, other objects in this park belong to small companies of local character with less than 10 employees.

A sort of a draw in centre of labour forces of the whole region is the town Győr, which creates the southwest border of the delimited area. In its industrial park there are headquarters of big international companies e.g. mounting centres of automotive industry – Opel, Audi, production of electronic devices – Philips, machinery production – Égáz etc. There are more than 40 enterprises there currently. Other draw in centre of labour forces of the region is Esztergom with its automobile factory Suzuki and Tatabánya with its SUOFTEC enterprise.

Foreign investments improve the financial situation in otherwise capital subdimenzed factories. The most important investors of the region are Audi, Opel, Kromberg Schubert (Germany), Nokia (Finland) a Suzuki (Japan) investing in already existing or gradually establishing industrial parks. In building industrial parks the northern subregion is way behind the southern – due to different rate of supporting the construction of their infrastructure. In SSR there are two industrial parks (Komárom a Almásfüzitő). The construction of other parks is already planned in rural settlements Ács (72 ha) and Bábolna (50 ha), respectively in urban area Komárom – Szőny. In the NSR there are prerequisites of using the area of west part of Komárno (33 ha) and industrial area in village Tõň.

For economic development of every region on any area a good transport connection is vital. The quality of transport infrastructure has a significant impact when deciding the future location of investments. The capacities of the bridge over Danube are overloaded, not only his reconstruction but its widening is necessary. There are considerations about building a new bridge over Danube with direct connection to I.class route /64, connecting Komárno and Komárom.

The territory of the region has very good conditions for the development of tourism. Three capital cities – Bratislava, Budapest, Vienna are located within the distance of Komárno, respectively Komárom. This region which has at its dispose outstanding cultural and historical sites not only in towns but also in countryside can offer various possibilities of recreation. The potential of this particular borderline region lies in its offer of space above all for water sports, cyclotourism, agrotourism, cognitive tourism, town tourism etc. Popular forms of tourism development are so called vine routes – Komárňanská (48.8 km), Hurbanovská (28.6 km), Patinská (38 km), in SSR between the

villages Dunaalmás-Neszmély, Lábatlan and Dunaszentmiklós and cykloroutes (international Danubian, further Nitrianska and Považská).

The development of tourism is boosted also by numerous projects. E.g. in NSR the village Iža is creating cycloroutes and horse ride route; in the recreational zone of the village the recreational and sport area is being built, the village Zlatná na Ostrove develops agrotourism, recreational area is being built., Patince present a complex centre of tourism based on thermal springs. In SSR village Bábolna based on long traditions a centre of horse riding is being built, in Komárom there are investment projects based on the base of Monoštor fortress etc.

A series of projects is dealing with the development of villages themselves since these make up 47 % of the borderline region. Associating of villages in order to solve crucial problems in the area of environment can be seen e.g. in building sewage and sewage water disposal plant (joint project of villages Chotín, Iža, Marcelová, Virt, Radvaň nad Dunajom, Moča, Modrany), in building dump site, sewage and sewage water disposal plant (joint project of villages Veľké Kosihy, Tôň, Kližská Nemá, Čičov, Trávník, Zemianska Oľča).

Further activities on the level of villages of the NSR are supported by the Program obnovy dediny (Programme of renewal of village). In SSR from the pre-accession funds of the SAPARD programme the enterprisers from Komárom, in villages Bábolna, Bana, Ács got financial aid (support in obtaining agricultural machines, financing the construction of poultry products manufacture), village Csém built the infrastructure of an industrial area, village Ács finished the building of pig farm and cereal dryer.

Within the EU structural funds and initiatives of European Community there were 56 successful applications registered by the end of 2004 for project grants (25 from NSR, 31 from SSR).

6. CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE AREA

The international cooperation has always played an outstanding part not only in the development of states but nowadays in the development of individual borderline regions. The aim of the direction of international cooperation in our delimited area is first of all the support of its social and economic development.

The cross-border cooperation of villages on both sides of the border exists and develops mainly on the basis of good friendly relations and cultural traditions. The cooperation on the level, respectively a union of villages has so far got only a character of one-off activities. However some of these activities can stand at the frontline of strategic cooperation. This type of cooperation declared by multiple bilateral agreements is forming on the level of region, towns or microregional unions. The following common goals are mainly accented – to increase the attractiveness of the region, to reconcile the development of transport, to reconcile the development of economy and tourism, to preserve common heritage, successful taking part in financial programmes of the EU, the coordination of joint projects and programmes and their carrying out.

The unions of villages play significant activation task in the recent time e.g. "Združenie obcí dolného Žitného ostrova" (Union of villages of lower Žitný ostrov) and "Most priateľstva" (Bridge of Friendship), which cooperate with cross-border partners.

They carry out various joint projects, e.g. building of harbour in Moča and in Dunaalmás-Neszmély for the perspective use in tourism.

In case of the towns Komárno and Komárom we can speak about close cooperation mainly in the area of culture and sport. Traditionally held and organized by both towns are e.g. Komárňanské dni (in May 2005 the 14th time of this festival was held), international run Komárno-Komárom (in 2005 it was the 31st time of the event) etc.

The cooperation of enterprise subjects in NSR is provided by Regionálna rozvojová agentúra (RRA) in Komárno. The results are financial supports of enterprise activities from different financial funds (e.g. PHARE, SAPARD, ISPA) in villages Veľké Kosihy, Komárno, Kravany nad Dunajom, Okoličná na Ostrove and others. Within this organization the Centre of Support of Enterprise (Centrum rozvoja podnikania) was established where they help those who are interested in obtaining financial means by legal advisory. This centre cooperates also with the fund "Kézfogás" in Budapest which helps with paying off credits etc. In these societies there is also a database of information regarding export possibilities of production and enterprise subjects. The information for enterprise sphere regarding the prominent fairs and expos in foreign partner regions and about new forms of cross-border cooperation provide the NGO's Euroglobal a Palatinus which have share their seat with RRA.

Higher form of cooperation – strategically and towards development oriented cooperation is being formed on the level of towns and region. On the level of Nitra's tear territorial unit part of which is also the region of Komárno is the Contract of cooperation between Nitra's tear territorial unit and self-administration of Komárom – Esztergom and Pest county was contracted. In the field of e.g. tourism this Contract accents the following common goals – to increase the attractivity of the region, to reconcile the development of transport, to reconcile the development of economy and tourism, to preserve common heritage, successful taking part in financial programmes of the EU, the coordination of joint projects and programmes and their carrying out.

Another contract on the level of the whole tear territorial unit is Agreement of cooperation between the Euroregion Váh – Dunaj – Ipeľ, Regional Comitee for tourism in Budapest and Central Danube area. This agreement in the field of tourism embeds the following cooperations – regular exchange of working materials, publications and information, mobilities of experts and journalists, mutual attendance on events, expos providing on an exchange base a space in their information posts, organizing propagational campaigns, workshops, conferencies, working out mutual programmes with entrepreneurs with an aim to address foreign markets, the possibility of presentation on partner's website while the websites of partners are interconnected or presentation on other media, respectively in partner's information offices, helping to establish contacts between professional organizations and organs of local administration.

In 1993 the Document of partnership of the town Komárno with Hungarian town Komárom was signed. Its goal is exchange of information about the activities in local policy, usage of local massmedia, creation of common work opportunities by mutual employment of citizens of both towns; reconciliation of development plans of both towns especially the reconciliation of future territorial development of the two towns; in the area of energetics, environment and transport, disburden the regime on border for citizens of both towns, cultivation of cultural, artistic and sport contacts, common organization of events and support of artistic ansembles, further development of business contacts, systematic providing of further intensification of contacts between citizens, unions, state, political, social and church institutions of the two towns, closer strengthening of family and friendship relations.

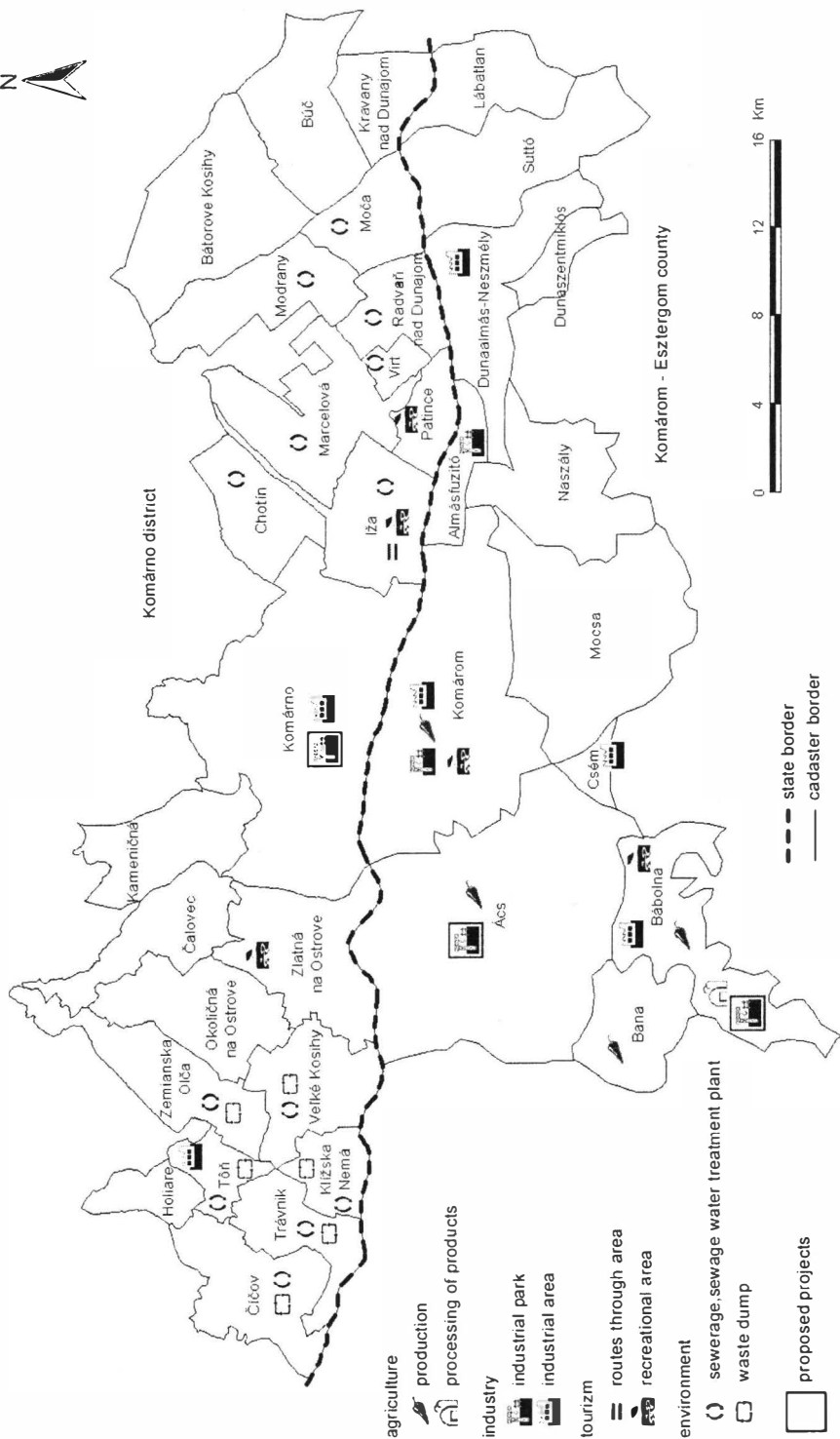


Figure 2 Selected projects of regional development in the cross-border region of Komárom district and contiguous part of Komárom – Esztergom county

Selected projects of regional development in the cross-border region of Komárno district and contiguous part of Komárom – Esztergom county on map No. 2 are shown.

7. CONCLUSION

Friendly relaxed environment, stability of border, minimal language barrier (knowledge of hungarian language on both sides), good transport connectivity, mobility of labour force and making use of the area's potential is reflecting in the ever intensifying cross-border cooperation and in the gradual influx of investments into different branches of economy. Steadily growing economic potential thus creates suitable preconditions for gradual adaptation of region to new conditions of market economy as well as gradual dynamization of sources creation.

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Aktuálne problémy regionálneho rozvoja pohraničného regiónu okresu Komárno a priľahlej časti župy Komárom-Esztergom

Resume

Predložená štúdia predstavuje parciálnu syntézu poznatkov o rozvojových fenoménoch pohraničného slovensko-maďarského pohraničia, ktorému bolo v ostatných rokoch analyticky venovaných pomerne veľa prác. Komparatívny význam má najmä monografia Jeřábka, Dokoupila, Havlíčka et al. (2004) o českom pohraničí. Na základe analýzy polohy, prírodného, ľudského a socioekonomického potenciálu (vrátane SWOT analýzy) ako aj z výskumu vnímania štátnej hranice je možné konštatovať, že záujmové územie ma pre regionálny rozvoj veľmi dobré predpoklady.

Kontaktnú líniu medzi dvoma štátmi vytvára štátna hranica. Anketový výskum (Bagitová, 2003) pôsobenia a vnímania hranice obyvateľmi v r. 2001 – 2002 v sledovanom pohraničnom území na vzorke 11 936 obyvateľov (6 763 na území SR, 5 173 na území Maďarska) ukázal, že respondenti hranicu považujú za čosi celkom normálne, hranica na nich nepôsobí ako bariéra (mapa č. 1). Jej negatívny vplyv je tlmený dobrou dopravnou prepojenosťou s prejavom v intenzívnej migrácii, najmä ekonomickej – napr. nákupy a návšteva príbuzných alebo známych a vhodné pracovné príležitosti.

Najdôležitejším faktorom rozvoja územia je v súčasnosti jeho dynamicky sa vyvíjajúca ekonomika. V regiónu má už tradične významnú úlohu poľnohospodárstvo – orná pôda zaberá 81 % severného subregiónu (SS) a 92 % južného subregiónu (JS) záujmového územia. K rozvinutejším odvetviám ekonomiky patrí aj priemysel, zastúpený najmä elektrotechnickým, strojárskym, potravinárskym a chemickým odvetvím. Dôležité miesto zaujímajú tiež podniky s výrobou obuvi, koženej galantérie a spracovania kože. Ťažiskovými strediskami priemyslu sú mestá Komárno a Komárom.

V budovaní priemyselných parkov však severný subregión za južným zaostáva – v dôsledku rôznej miery podpory budovania ich infraštruktúry. V JS sú realizované dva priemyselné parky. Komárom disponuje polyfunkčným priemyselným parkom na ploche 87,6 ha s nosným podnikom Nokia Komárom, s.r.o. V súčasnosti zamestnáva 1 380 pracovníkov, z ktorých viac ako polovica dochádza zo SS. V areáli parku je lokalizovaných aj viacero subdodávateľov. Predpokladá sa, že do r. 2006 by priemyselný park mal poskytnúť až 10 000 pracovných príležitostí. Pracovné príležitosti v meste Komárom dopĺňajú aj ďalšie priemyselné podniky. V obci Almásfüzitő je lokalizovaný priemyselný park, ktorý sa má stáva rozvojovým impulzom severozápadného Maďarska. Nosným podnikom parku je chemický závod s výrobou mazív a olejov, ďalšie objekty patria k menším podnikom lokálneho charakteru. Plánovaná je výstavba aj ďalších parkov – v obciach Ács (72 ha) a Bábolna (50 ha), resp. v mestskej časti Komárom – Szöny.

Prírodný potenciál, daný najmä nížinatým, málo členeným územím a prítomnosť európskeho veľtoku Dunaj podmienili na území existenciu cestnej, železničnej i riečnej dopravy s nadregionálnym významom.

Územie regiónu má veľmi dobré podmienky pre rozvoj cestovného ruchu – priestor je najmä pre pobyty pri vode, cykloturistiku, agroturistiku, poznávaciu turistiku, mestskú turistiku a pod., vyhľadávanými a veľmi atraktívnymi formami rozvoja cestovného ruchu sú vínne cesty a cyklotrasy.

Cezhraničná spolupráca obcí, resp. ich združení po oboch stranách hranice existuje a rozvíja sa hlavne na základe dobrých priateľských vzťahov a kultúrnych tradícií. Realizujú sa viaceré spoločné projekty, z ktorých je teraz napr. aktuálne budovanie prístavu v Moči a v Dunaalmás-Neszmély s využitím pre cestovný ruch. V prípade miest Komárno a Komárom môžeme hovoriť o úzkej spolupráci najmä v oblasti kultúry a športu. Historický vývoj, minimálna jazyková bariéra, podobnosti geografického prostredia dobrá dopravná prepojenosť, možná mobilita pracovných síl i záujem využiť potenciál územia predurčujú región k vzájomnej spolupráci a ku koordinácii vzájomných aktivít.