

THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION EXPERIENCE BETWEEN ROMANIAN AND HUNGARIAN ECONOMISTS. THE IMPACT OVER THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIHOR HAJDÚ-BIHAR EUROREGION

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This paper analyzes the particular situation of the economists from Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar County who are members of different professional organizations and who play an active role in raising the grade of structural funds absorption in the general context of the changes determined by the country's joining the European Union as well as in the particular context of the Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar euroregion, a context which, by means of cross-border exchange, have the great facility to transfer the knowledge between the Romanian and Hungarian economists and share both experience and problems encountered in the profession exercise, aspect that brings direct benefits for the development of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar euroregion, empowering the occupation of economist.

Key words: economist occupation, cross-border cooperation, regional development, euroregion

Introduction

One of the European Union's great missions is to reduce disparities between euroregions. This purpose requires a cohesion policy promoting constant improvements in competitiveness and employment. By stimulating cross-border cooperation, it helps regions that are less prosperous or are suffering from structural problems to improve competitiveness and to achieve a faster rate of economic development in a sustainable way¹⁵⁸. In order to accomplish this European Commission introduced the INTERREG programme that is designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion throughout EU, by fostering the balanced development of the continent through cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.

The present research will focus on Interreg III, which is a Community initiative that aims to stimulate interregional cooperation in the EU from 2000 to 2006. It is financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The strands A, B and C of this initiative support cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation to encourage an harmonious and balanced development of the European territory for which more than EUR 6 billion were available between 2000 and 2006. The guidelines for 2000-2006 take into account the experiences gained during the period 1994-1999 and they aim to reinforce these results by ensuring that the regions and territories concerned co-ordinate their efforts and co-operate in an effective manner. They must also implement their strategies and common programmes, as well as put into action their common administrative structures to ensure the development of the programmes, their co-ordination, and the selection of projects, the management and the monitoring of the programme implementation¹⁵⁹.

This paper analyzes the particular situation of the economists from Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar County who are members of different professional organizations and who play an active role in raising the grade of structural funds absorption in the general context of the changes determined by the country's joining the European Union as well as in the particular context of the Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar euroregion, a context which, by means of cross-border exchange, have the great facility to transfer the knowledge between the Romanian and Hungarian economists and share both experience and problems encountered in the profession exercise, aspect that brings direct

158 http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/regional_policy/index_en.htm

159 Guidelines for the Community initiative INTERREG 2000-2006, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/guidelines/index_en.htm

benefits for the development of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar euroregion, empowering the occupation of economist.

The project: “THE COOPERATION OF THE ECONOMISTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIHOR – HAJDÚ-BIHAR EUROREGION”, contract RO-2006/018-446.01.01.02.06, financed through the program PHARE CBC 2006/INTERREG IIIA Romania – Hungary.

The main objective of the project entitled *„The cooperation of the economists for the development of the Bihor – Hajdú – Bihar euroregion”*, financed through the Phare CBC 2006 Programme, is the establishing of contacts and lengths between the economists from the border area, through the professional associations of economists, in order to involve them in the raising of structural funds absorption in the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar euro region; as well as promoting the Romanian-Hungarian cooperation between institutions and local communities through the professional associations of economists from the border area, for equilibrate economic and social development of the entire area, with benefits for both Romania and Hungary. The objectives of the project include the unfolding of cross-border cooperation activities for the members of professional associations of the economists from the Hajdú-Bihar, Hungary, and Bihor County, Romania, to facilitate professional experience exchange; preparation for the members of the professional association of economists from Bihor County and Hajdú-Bihar County to become change factors in the institutions and community, in order to raise the absorption grade of structural funds in Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar euroregion; knowledge transfer from the Hungarian partners, of the experience that resulted from the post-admission integration process and accession of structural funds; institutions and communities support for regional development. Activities taken in this project have the purpose the visible active implication of economists in cross-border cooperation¹⁶⁰.

The economists involved in the project are members of the General Association of Economists from Romania – Bihor branch (60 persons) and members of the General Association of the Economists from Hungary, Hajdú-Bihar county (15 persons); There are also analyzed **4 professional organizations** of accountants, auditors, assessors, fiscal consultants: CECAR, CAFR, ANEVAR, CCFR from Bihor County, Romania. There are also included institutions from the both counties Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar as follows: **10 institutions from Bihor County, Romania:** North – West Regional Development Agency – Bihor branch, The General Directorate of Public Finance Bihor, The House of Health Insurance Bihor, Court of Accounts Bihor, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Bihor, The Oradea City Hall, The Treasury of Oradea, The County Pension House Bihor, The Authority of Public Health Bihor, The Police Inspectorate Bihor and **3 institutions from Hajdú-Bihar County, Hungary:** Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hajdú-Bihar, The Debrecen Town Hall, The County Council of **Hajdú-Bihar**.

Which are the main problems that economists from the Bihor – Hajdú-Bihar euroregion encounter?

Even though it has been made progress, the integration and structural coherence of the border areas is still affected by serious deficiencies at the level of inter-institutional trans-border cooperation, of the forums organized to facilitate the approach between neighbor institutions and neighbor citizens, the objectives and measures followed in this project look to eliminate the constraints identified and consolidate institutional, economic and human relationships between the two border regions, through trans-border cooperation of professional associations of economists. At the meeting that took place in 2007 between the representatives of The General Associations of Economists From Romania, Bihor branch, and The General Association of the Economists

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from Hungary, Hajdú-Bihar county, it was identified the fact that the members of the two associations face similar problems: first of all, the problem of professional partition, towards which it was identified the need of some actions to strengthen the relationships with the professional organisations of accountants, auditors, assessors, fiscal consultants etc. and to define the common interests of the occupation of economist; secondly, the need of information and training in the field of project management for attracting structural funds, considering the belonging of the two countries at The European Union and the opportunities that come from this fact for the occupation of economist, the experience of the Hungarian homologues in accessing structural funds since Hungary is a European Union member being the object of an experience exchange in the present cross-border cooperation project, through which the problems identified can be solved¹⁶¹.

The first study that was taken analyzes the similarities and differences between The General Association of Economists from Romania – Bihor branch and The General Association of Economists from Hungary – Hajdú-Bihar County:

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both associations from Romania and Hungary where formed in order to defend and promote the occupation of economist; - the conditions that one has to accomplish to become a member of these two associations of economists from Romania and Hungary are the same: to have graduated from a higher economic education (BA degree, Master degree, Doctor degree); - the two Associations have approximately the same main objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o raising the prestige of occupation of economist; o militates for professionalism and full civic responsibility of the members; o promotes economic research at a theoretic and applicative level; - the two Associations have common actions foreseen in the Statute such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o organises conferences on major themes for the promotion of economic science and of the conclusions that come from it; o creates departments, groups, commissions in order to study and debate the economic, theoretical and practical economic problems. - the economists who are members of the two Associations come from diverse institutions such as: Town Hall; County Council; Chamber of Commerce and Industry; The 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Bihor branch of The General Association of Economists from Romania is a legal entity while the Hajdú-Bihar branch of The General Association of Economists from Hungary it is not a legal entity at it is represented as a legal entity only at national level; - the major difference identified is that the Hajdú-Bihar branch of The General Association of Economists from Hungary has a much more elementary hierarchic structure of administration compared to the Bihor branch of General Association of Economists from Romania who is organized very strictly with a Board Council, Special Commissions on different themes and a Censor Commission.

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General Directorate of Public Finance; The House of Health Insurance; Court of Accounts.	
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Table 1: The similarities and differences between The General Association of Economists from Romania – Bihor branch and The General Association of Economists from Hungary – Hajdú - Bihar County

The second study that was taken analyzes the similarities and differences between The National Association of Assessors from Romania – Bihor branch and The National Association of Assessors from Hungary – Hajdú -Bihar County:

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - both associations from Romania and Hungary where formed in order to defend and promote the occupation of assessor and promote the methods and techniques specific of assessment; - the conditions that one has to accomplish to become a member of the association of assessors is to follow some training courses and promote an exam that gives him the right to exercise the occupation; - the members of the organisations are both obliged to attend courses in order to improve and up-date their knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Bihor branch of The National Association of Assessors from Romania – Bihor branch is a legal entity while and The National Association of Assessors from Hungary – Hajdú -Bihar County it is not a legal entity at it is represented as a legal entity only at national level; - the differences between the two branches come from the different legal organization of the associations – Hajdu-Bihar is represented only at national level and they have local offices that do not have the ability to make decisions for their own, while Bihor branch has its own president and organizational structure.

Table 2: The similarities and differences between The National Association of Assessors from Romania – Bihor branch and The National Association of Assessors from Hungary – Hajdú - Bihar County

The third study that was taken analyzes the similarities and differences between the Chamber of Financial Auditors from Romania and the Chamber of Financial Auditors from Hungary:

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - neither of the organisations of auditors has a local branch with legal entity, they are both submitted to the central authority; - both associations from Romania and Hungary where formed in order to defend and promote the occupation of assessor and promotes the methods and techniques specific of assessment; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The accession to this occupation is more difficult in Hungary as the process lasts about 14 years until you become a auditor with full rights, and the most difficult part is that during the last phase of work experience that lasts for 3 years the candidate has to practice this occupation 36 h/week on the attentive supervision of an auditor without being paid.

Table 3: The similarities and differences between the Chamber of Financial Auditors from Romania and the Chamber of Financial Auditors from Hungary

The fourth study that was taken analyzes the similarities and differences between the Chambers of Fiscal Consultants from Romania and the Chambers of Fiscal Consultants from Hungary:

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - neither of the organisations of fiscal consultants has a local branch with legal entity, they are both submitted to the central authority; - the organisation militates for the high quality of the services offered by the financial consultants; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in Romania, in order to become a financial consultant one needs to have graduated from university with economic profile, have a 5 years experience in the financial – fiscal field and promote an exam organised by the Chamber of Fiscal Consultants from Hungary;

Table 4: The similarities and differences between the Chambers of Fiscal Consultants from Romania and the Chambers of Fiscal Consultants from Hungary.

The fifth study analyzes the similarities and differences between The Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants of Romania – Bihor branch and The Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants of Hungary – Hajdú -Bihar branch:

Similarities	Differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Associations have the same main objectives: the promotion and assurance of a professional and modern environment for the development of the occupation; - the qualification of authorised accountant can be obtained in approximately the same conditions both in Hungary and Romania: if he has medium studies and an experience of 3 years; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Corp of Expert Accountants and Authorized Accountants from Romania – Bihor branch is a legal entity with autonomy and hierarchical structure at local level while in Hajdú -Bihar the branch that works there depends totally on the central organism; - in Hungary it does not exist the title of expert accountant, they have only the authorized accountant; - in Romania the qualification of expert accountant can be obtained after graduating from University with economic profile, one has to pass an admission exam to do a 3 years stage and at the end if he passes the final exam he becomes an expert accountant.

Table 5: The similarities and differences between The Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants of Romania – Bihor branch and The Body of Expert and Licensed Accountants of Hungary – Hajdú -Bihar branch

Conclusions and Suggestions

The analyzes that were taken together with „*The forum of the economists from the Bihor – Hajdú – Bihar euroregion*”, cross-border event organized as an activity of the project, show that there is a synchronization between the professional associations and organisms from Bihor County, Romania and Hajdú –Bihar County, Hungary and between the interests, proposal and scientific approaches of the economists from the two countries, and more specific from the Bihor - Hajdú - Bihar euroregion, towards the problems and aspects that economy faces nowadays.

As it can be seen in the studies that we developed the similitude between the professional organisms in the two countries are not few, and the most important difference encountered is regarding the fact that Hungarian professional organisms do not have local independence. This proves that Romanian and Hungarian economists might have free access on each other market, fact that would strengthen the regional development and the regional cohesion.

At „*The forum of the economists from the Bihor – Hajdú – Bihar euroregion*” it was identified as a major problem that concerns economists lately the global economic crises. The common current that is brought by the crises is the rediscovering of the road to labor, redefining the moral values of citizens and turning back to agriculture and tourism. The best solution at the moment for the two countries to attract foreign investment however is the absorption of structural funds.

The forum had the aim of bringing together economists from different institutions of the two counties to help them understand the process of writing a structural fund project. As a result of the debates were identified 12 new project ideas as follows: Summer school - gastronomic creation camp in the euroregion including regional specific meals; The road of the wine(Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar) on the Ieru valley; Identification of the finance needs in the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar euroregion; Romanian – Hungarian information business center; Forming trans-border partnerships – Work experience for the economist students; Cooperation and experience exchange in the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar euroregion; Centre for training sightsman in the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar euroregion; Romanian and Hungarian students in practice stages in the field of tourism in the Bihor – Hajdu-Bihar euroregion; Study regarding the reasons of the delay of constructing the highway between Debrecen and Oradea; Combined tourism mountain (Padis) – spa (Hajduszoboslo); The knowing of the legislation from the two countries to help the foreign investors come in this euroregion; Fast road between Debrecen and Oradea.

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