

REGIONAL POLICY OF EUROPEAN UNION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROREGIONS

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Abstract:

The present article presents some characteristics of the euroregions, their aims and objectives led to the Regional Policy of European Union. The cooperation pattern within the euroregions gets a great support from the EU, this being considered a preceding exercise for the adherence to this organization by the participating countries and as a micro-experiment regarding the implementation of the community relationships among the areas of the candidate states. The aims and the objectives of the euroregions can be characterized through a great typological diversity determined by content, all of these being the basis for the results of their activities. .

Key words: Euroregions, regional policy, regional development, European Union, convergence

JEL classification: F15, R58

1. EU Regional Policy

In the 2007-2013 programming period, regional policy and cohesion of the European Union will have to face a number of four specific objectives:

- *The need for enhanced cohesion in the enlarged Union.*

Enlargement to 27 Member States is an unprecedented situation in the competitiveness and internal cohesion of the Union. Enlargement will deep the inequalities in economic development, will produce geographic disparities gap of the East and will make the situation even more in the labor market; socio-economic disparities will double and the average EU GDP will decrease by 12, 5%.

- *Strengthening the Union's priorities*

In order to improve the economic outcome of the Union, and heads of state and government meeting in Lisbon in March 2000 have shown a strategy designed to make Europe by 2010, the economy the most competitive and most dynamic of world based on knowledge. Council of Nice in December 2000 translated the Lisbon objectives in terms of poverty reduction in a social integration strategy coordinated at EU level. At the Gothenburg Council in June 2001, the Lisbon strategy was broadened by bringing a new emphasis on environmental protection and achieves a development model more sustainable.

- *Improving the quality in order to promote sustainable development and balanced*

Strengthening regional competitiveness through well-placed investments in the Union and providing economic opportunities to help people to use their knowledge will increase the potential growth of the EU as a whole, for the benefit of all perk up.

- *A new partnership for cohesion*

The reform of cohesion policy will also offer the opportunity to increase the efficiency, transparency and political accountability. This includes deficiencies above all a strategic approach to this policy, setting out priorities, and ensuring coordination with a system of economic and social governance and providing a regular and transparent examination of the progress. Corollary of this approach is the need to

strengthen institutional capacity at all levels of the Union in order to benefit by one of the major strengths of cohesion policy.

On 18 February 2004, the European Commission adopted the Third report on economic and social cohesion: "A new partnership for cohesion in the enlarged Union: convergence, competitiveness, cooperation" in describing his vision of cohesion policy for 2007-2013. As a result of the proposed budget presented by the Commission on 10 February 2004, slightly more than 336 billion will be provided cohesion for the new period, with the following priorities:

- Convergence: stimulating economic growth and job creation in Member States and less developed regions
- Regional competitiveness and employment: anticipating and encouraging changes
- European territorial cooperation: securing a harmonious and balanced development throughout the Union

2 Characteristics of Euroregions

Beside the role in promoting mutual trust and cooperation, Euroregions have contributed for economic development and cooperation in Western Europe. This experience is translated as a background with high speed towards Central and Eastern Europe, but here the problem of perceptual great diversity of instruments and means of implementation.

In Europe there is a wide variety of such Euro-regional structure, caused by a wide range of criteria.

The first Euroregion - Regio Basiliensis, now renamed TriRhena - occurred at the border between Switzerland, Germany and France in 1963, followed by others in the border area between Benelux, Germany and France, after which it expanded at a pace fast, so currently, there are a hundred such structures for cross-border cooperation extended from the Atlantic Ocean until to the West part of the ex-soviet space.

It's very important to underline that the model of collaboration in the Euroregions is broad supported from the European Union; it can be considered an exercise preceding accession to the organization of the participating countries or as a micro-experiment for the implementation of community relations between the candidate states' regions.

Being the great diversity of acceptance regarding the content and skills of cross-borders cooperation Euroregions, with the aim of clear structural demarcations of them, the Association of European Border Regions (AEFR) applies the following criteria to identify the contents and default Euroregions skills, identifying with:

- Associations of local or regional authorities located on the both sides of border state, in some cases having the structure of the General Assembly like leadership structure;
- Cross-border associations with permanent secretariat, administrative and technical team with own resources;
- Under private law, associations of non-profit organizations or foundations located in a part or the other of the border, in agreement with the national in force laws;
- Associations, based on public law, based on inter-state agreements, with implications on other issues, involving local authorities.

Particularly interesting is a good *algorithm of good Euroregion* proposed by Andre Louis inside which can find a very explicit logical schema and a mechanism for implementation, operation and development of such structures for cross-border cooperation.

3. The aims and objectives of Euroregions

Euroregions goals and objectives can be characterized by a variety of typological determined content, actors and actions, all of them sitting on the results of their activities. In general, the Euroregions basic aims of promoting understanding and cooperation at all levels and forms of culture and also of the economic cooperation.

Each Euroregion establish its own objectives, which for the most part are closely related to the objectives established by the European regional policy to date. All goals and objectives Euroregions take a number of factors among which the most important are the geographical, cultural, economic, etc.

Tabel no.1.: Some general characteristics of Euroregions

<i>No.</i>	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
1	Geographical area	In a border area that could become a center for economic development
2	When will take place a such approach	There is a tradition of collaboration, but without implementation of an Euroregional institutions Identifying the type of institutions that generate Euroregional tradition of collaboration
3	Extension	Not very extensive, the optimum dimension being between 3,000 and 10,000 kilometers
4	Population	Moderate number, the optimal value being between 500,000 and 1 million inhabitants
5	Internal and external networks	Depending on the external extension of their territory and density, the Euroregions can be adjacent and more continuous
6	Euroregional institutions	a) On short-term objective: development, mobilization and organization for transformation in a functional institution in Euroregion's area b). Use of internal and external resources c). General perspective for readjustment
7	Functions	Creating the sense of indispensability for cooperation, that will be urgently followed by the safety feeling of Euroregion concept.
8	The functions' stage and the institutions	The existence of 5 chronological sequences: active mutual knowledge, the indispensability of cross-border cooperation, tangible cooperation, cultural actions, euroregional sense of safety.
	Territorial coverage	Able to reaction in the local, national and European context.

5. Conclusions

Between the advantages creating by Euroregions, must be remembered:

- The process of European integration involves regional cooperation, such as border regions contribute to the preparation for accession countries in the European Union;
- Euroregions contribute to the diminish of tensions and to maintain the stability in the Balkans area;
- Euroregions represents a necessary stage in the process of transition from the geostrategy to geoeconomy;
- Euroregions engage human and material resources that would otherwise remain unused.

In the same time, it's important to mention the disadvantages that could appear:

- Euroregions generate agreements that local authorities could intervene in the policies of countries involved;
- Euroregions creates the possibility that some local communities to sign agreements against their own governments;
- Border regions are often isolated from the centers of decision-making and economic activity. Thus, these experience special problems such as lack of transport infrastructure; birth rate much higher than mortality; underdeveloped service sector, inadequate technological infrastructure, but can be solved through regional economic cooperation;
- There is lack of cooperation between national authorities and local or regional one;
- There's the inability of authorities to involve people in processes of cooperation.

Some governments are concerned that Euroregions are located at great distance from the central trying thus to undermine and diminish, enhancing cross-border relations with its neighbors.

At the regional level, the difference is even bigger: the richest region is Inner London with 290% of EU-27's average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, while the poorest region is Nord-Est in Romania with 23% of the EU average. Although GDP is not a completely accurate reflection of living standards as it does not factor in the relative cost of living, it gives an indication of the differences that exist.

Being more than a common market, the European Union is based on common values and policies agreed by its Member States for the benefit of their people. EU regional policy puts into practice solidarity between the peoples of Europe, while strengthening the competitiveness of the EU economy as a whole

More than one-third of the EU budget is currently allocated to the financial instruments of EU cohesion policy: the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund. These instruments will amount to a total of €347.4 billion between 2007 and 2013, with about 82% to be invested in the EU's poorest regions.

However, the European territory as a whole faces new challenges. Globalization, climate change and population ageing do not stop at national, institutional or policy borders. Instead, they impact on regional and local communities directly and to varying degrees.

Europe's competitiveness cannot be achieved through EU policies, individual Member States or regions alone. Economic success is a social process that requires close cooperation. European regional policy has the potential to turn common challenges into opportunities. It is designed in such a way that EU responses involve people in designing and implementing regional development strategies and local projects for the benefit of Europe as a whole.

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