

REBUILDING THE NATURAL AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT IN BIHOR – HAJDÚ-BIHAR

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Abstract

The area of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar is a complex one, because first of all, in geographically sense, it contains all elements which define the landscape, from mountain, hill, to the plains. But not only this aspect is important in functionality of that area, even complementarity and unity made viable and operational the landscape regionalization system established by the European Union which that's two counties have agreed to join. For this aspect, our paper will try to establish some necessary intervention from the local point of view about the issue regarding an improving of natural and citizen environment in Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion.

Key words: environmental planning, quality of life, conservation, authority's intervention

INTRODUCTION

From those characteristics above, we can be added other common features in those two counties, namely: common language and culture, common history (Szilágyi, 2004), traditions and customs like; activities and economic sectors mainly focused on the same areas, being notably agriculture and services; other ethnic communities than Romanian and Hungarian being an equal report on both territories; towns twinned at EU level hierarchy of these localities being as – the most majority – rural type in both counties; the existence of natural resources etc. We believe that these issues are the most important features that contribute to successful establishment and maintenance of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar as well, not only as material support to the establishment of the Euroregion as administrative-territorial unit, but also incentives for joint development of that two counties and thus improve their quality of life. We also believe that this is only possible through a regional policy design (Zainea, 2006), developed by authorities in those two counties. It is necessary here not only a support of the existing population but also governments belonging. This policy must consider first improving of the environment quality and its factors in the Euroregion or at least maintain it to current parameters.

Along with these factors, comparing that two districts in the country to which each belongs, from economically side, we can add an important fact, namely that the economic status from Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties is not affected by a complex socio-economic problems. Here, there is a standard of living higher and the unemployment rate in the study area is one

of the lowest in that's two countries. This is due because combining a several factors, among the most important is to consider the location of those counties right on the border state, thing which contributed not only to maintain population and tourism flows between that two municipalities, but favoured a foreign investment (Urge-Vorsatz and Cherp, 2003).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The purpose of our present study is to present not only the features which our study areal has in common, but also to show their problems. Thus are that disadvantaged localities where it was almost completely abolished the industry sector, the economic branch in where the vast majority of the population were active. As a result, municipalities concerned have failed to support themselves and have not been helped to develop, or aid that was given was ineffective and insufficient. This is where the rural development policy of the Euroregion comes. And for this policy could be applicable and effective in the long term, must start from the idea of rebuilding of a disadvantaged communities within the Euroregion.

The authorities from the Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar area are aware about that for revitalize of the rural areas by rebuilding natural and human environment in affected communities is a problem not exactly easily solved. This is because small communities are not sufficiently prepared to deal with these problems.

Therefore, recognizing the importance of a common area is essential and this is the way to cooperation based on the values, characteristics and common aspirations, which we have already established there.

Thus the reconstruction policy must be effective, including development strategies based on enhanced cooperation and placing greater emphasis on local resources and a broader extension to exploit local opportunities.

Local communities will have to see these challenges as opportunities.

In this context, the mission established by the Euroregion policy will be to help revitalize rural areas by encouraging self-reliance of local communities and raising potential sustainable development. The local authorities considered essential for Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar areal that local communities must learn to highlight their capabilities and skills and this can not be done unless the natural environment reconstruction program in disadvantaged rural areas will consider the following:

- encourage a uniform development plan for rural communities;
- encourage the development of communities based on local and regional perspective (Süli-Zakar and Horga, 2006), taking into account the general characteristics of the region, which must be based on existing human and natural resources (Teperics, 2006);

- to stimulate indigenous community development efforts and promote initiatives of local people;
- encourage an integrated local development, or regional, in other words, a development that takes into account the social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of the region;
- strengthen partnerships and create a network between different local and regional non-governmental organizations, including local government and the business sector involved;
- strengthen organizational and management capacities of local NGOs, included capacities of regional and local administrative units.

The role and involvement of local authorities and government into the plans, strategies about improving of the environmental quality should be mandatory (Stanley and Carcelle, 1995). It also necessary that the involvement of the non-governmental associations and organizations with ecological profile with the local authorities' similar activities seems to gain ground increasingly more. And here we refer not only to associations / NGOs with environmental profile from Bihor County, because from our studies, the same concern exists too from the nongovernmental environmental organizations in the Hungarian area.

What is even more important to note is the cross-border cooperation between these organizations throughout the Euroregion under study, cooperation mainly aimed at ecological reconstruction of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar.

Thus, since its inception of the Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion (in 2002), in various Romanian and Hungarian publications and on the agenda of the two county councils were reported various joint activities on environmental conditions in the geographic area studied. At first these activities (exhibitions, trade fairs, cultural exchanges, conferences or competitions) had more education (Toca, 2006), economic and cultural character, for more detailed knowledge of the population of each county and their existential issues or cultural needs of those two counties. Then, over time and with common findings made by both sides, and in addition to continuing such activities have been established other activities, as will those aimed at improving environmental conditions Euroregion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this respect we remind a first step in the joint administration of the two counties. It is the most important document adopted the sustainable directions, which contains a number of environmental issues. It's about "Agenda 21", adopted at the World Summit of Rio de Janeiro (since 1992) as a tool to promote sustainable development, and which offering the local

solutions for balance of three important life areas: the economic, the social and the environment.

Agenda 21 of the two counties set in Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion was developed in 1997 by Self Autonomy of Hajdú-Bihar and Bihor County Council in 2002. In early 2003 it was harmonized by territorial administrative authorities of those two counties, for making a common regional development plan called Action Plan Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar.

The idea behind the goals unification contained by Agenda 21 of those two counties was the document entitled “Design and development program of the Romanian-Hungarian border region”, developed by PHARE CBC in 2000, a document that outlines the need strategic cooperation between that two counties, based on direct bilateral relations and adapted to the region’s development strategy.

In the protocol signed and targets contained by the Action Programme - Agenda 21 Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion, have established the following priorities with emphasis on environment matter:

- encourage the involvement of civil society, of the citizens in actions to protect and conserve the habitat in which they live and work;
- recycling of recyclable waste, including plastics;
- identify of the best solutions at the regional level for composting of the organic waste, which represents 40% of those deposited at landfills and for this the source separation of organic waste from other waste;
- empowering people about street waste coming from green spaces and parks;
- air pollution and water protection issues in the region;
- current problems of agriculture in the area and the difficulties in this sector mainly Hungarian;
- possibilities of tourism development in the Euroregion and investment within zone in terms of business tourism and agricultural tourism, mountain tourism as Bihar county.

During some years and having as starting point the objectives of the joint action of the Euroregion, were conducted 19 collaborative projects, of which 13 are on environmental issues. 7 projects (Table 1) of those 13 were specific as “improving environmental quality and agriculture” and refers only to the reconstruction of the two counties of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar. These are:

Table 1

Projects carried out in the Bihar - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion, aiming ecological reconstruction (source: Bureau Bihar - Hajdú-Bihar from the Bihar County Council)

Current Number	Project title	Partners	Results
1	Creating an environmental education centre in Oradea	Bihar County Council and MTESZ Debrecen and Nyiregyháza	Developing environmental conscience among the population
2	Development of a border tourism in Bihar - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	Bihar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chamber of Commerce and industry of Hajdú-Bihar	Publishing brochures on the area's tourism development strategy, a guide investment in tourism, CDs and maps
3	Prognosis and common consultancy on plant health in the region	University of Oradea and University of Debrecen	Develop a common consultancy on plant health and crop in the region
4	Development of cross-border cooperation in the Bihar - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	The Border Settlements Association Bihar for Territorial development Bors and Territorial Development Association Biharkeresztes	The establishment of information offices to develop a strategic plan for community development, exchange of experience with other Euroregions, namely the Danube-Tisa-Mureş and Sajó-Rima
5	Rural development through human resource training	The Border Settlements Association Bihar for Territorial development Bors and Dél-Alföldi Régióért Kht, Territorial Development Association Biharkeresztes	Develop a project management for local councils, institutions and civil organizations, organizing courses for those dealing with rural tourism and bioagriculture, training and consultancy for SME exchanges, for farmers and rural tourism promoters
6	Promoting of investments in Bihar - Hajdú-Bihar, the future EU border	Bihar Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chamber of Commerce and industry of Hajdú-Bihar	Publishing booklets, CDs and an investment guide
7	Integrated environmental quality systems	University of Oradea and University of Debrecen, Tisza Water Directorate, Local Self Autonomy of Hajdú-Bihar	The trainers formation for the implementation of quality systems according to European regulations ISO and ESO
8	Unity and diversity in tourism of the Bihar-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	Bihar Chamber of Commerce and and Chamber of Commerce and industry of Hajdú-Bihar, Development Agency of Hajdú-Bihar	Publishing brochures in 6 languages: English, Romanian, Hungarian, Italian, French, German, CDs presentation, leaflets, editing of a Guide for investors in tourism

As can be seen from the table, even issuing titles of joint projects undertaken views of the institutions involved, about the impact of certain factors on the environment and human health. As a result of these projects and common views within these projects were developed ecological restoration measures aimed both Euroregion's counties.

Also, these projects are based development cooperation relations between government and NGOs working in the environmental field. Governmental and nongovernmental organizations in those two counties of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar, in partnership projects for improving of the environmental quality and hence, of the people and communities to which they belong, considered important for the sustainable development of these only if closely follow the action Programme objectives local - local Agenda 21 of the Euroregion -, and if its implement these objectives by:

- developing and implementing community action plan, including projects and activities identified and undertaken by local community members;
- debate and continuous improvement strategy;
- promoting and developing the sense of belonging to the local community;
- stimulate and encourage personal initiatives of community interest.

CONCLUSIONS

Half of the land area of Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion is cultivated. Even only this fact underlines the importance of agriculture to the natural environment of this region, and therefore the need of the proposed project or about farming, especially organic. As we know, between farming and nature exerts a profound mutual influence, because over the centuries, farming has contributed to creating and maintaining a variety of valuable semi-natural habitats. And the most telling examples in this regard for Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar zone are protected areas and wetlands from Radvani (Cefa - Bihor) or Hortobágyi (Hajdú-Bihar), which host a rich variety of wildlife.

In this spirit, local authorities and other organizations, associations and institutions in the Bihor - Hajdú-Bihar areal, in addition to the above measures or process of public awareness about the environmental situation of the community in which it lives, have been made other recommendations relating to the mainly agricultural areas and the former mines, such as:

- Replanting forest belts to eliminate or reduce air pollution in critical areas in this aspect, namely: those zones around CET Oradea, HOLCIM Aleşd (cement factory), Suplac Refinery, Baita mining, radioactive waste repository from Baita, other industrial waste dumps

(Sinteza, Cemtrade etc.), but also for improving of the soil quality in these areas whose air is not only flawed, but also the soil;

- Maintenance of road edges, roads, railway embankments and riverbanks with native spontaneous vegetation;

- Determination by specialists together with ecologists of a specific policy which would be applied, especially in agriculture, to avoid systematic destruction of vegetation cover soil through improper use of fertilizers;

- Also need a strategy for nature conservation in agricultural areas for the purposes of restoration priority where areas are already anthropogenic or rather, where they exist, encouraging wild life (Bleahu, 2004);

- To develop of a sustainable agriculture, authorities in those two counties are thinking primarily agrarian areas, in order to restore soils and habitats, implement one of the latest EU measures, namely the “land freeze” (Bleahu, 2004) for a particular time, for rebuild by itself, because of the fallow phenomenon, and previously existing biodiversity.

Most existing problems due to lack of sanitation systems, irrational exploitation, unsustainable resources (forest, grassland, arable land, water) and a lack of information, education and civic awareness, and the residents. And maybe that’s why most of the projects undertaken, as can be seen in the “Results” of Table 1, considering public awareness regarding the problems shown.

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