

Introduction

The Hungarian–Romanian and the Hungarian–Ukrainian border sections (which are 447.8 and 136.7 kilometres long, respectively) and border regions touch Hungary from the east. Although they share several common characteristics, still it is reasonable to survey them separately. Both eastern border sections of Hungary were designated by the Peace Treaty of Trianon concluding World War I; however, there are significant differences between them both as regards their past to date and their future prospects. In the case of the Hungarian–Romanian border section, on both sides of the border the same state has existed since the borders were drawn, while several different state formations succeeded each other on the Ukrainian side of the present Hungarian–Ukrainian border. Another significant difference is the fact that this border section is the only gate of Romania to the West, whereas The Ukraine can join the European socio-economic and cultural affairs via Slovakia and Poland, as well. In addition, the public administrative and the statistical system of Romania and The Ukraine are considerably different from both one another and the Hungarian system. The system of statistical data collection is not fully compatible with the EUROSTAT system even in Hungary, in Romania it is only partially and in The Ukraine not at all compatible with the European system. This makes the comparative study of the two border regions rather difficult, if we insist on the same indices. As regards future prospects, the two border regions cannot be treated jointly, either, as Romania will become a full-right member of the European Union in 2007, while the date of the possible accession of The Ukraine is impossible to forecast at this point. Even besides the above facts, we can see fundamentally different historical, socio-economic and political dimensions, also different traditions and ways of life in Romania and The Ukraine.

The region's socio-economic development is significantly lagging behind the European Union's average indicators. The total Hungarian–Ukrainian frontier zone and the northern Hungarian–Romanian border are peripheral areas within their mother countries. Thus, two peripheral areas are meeting at the border. Since Hungary's EU accession (May 1st 2004) the Hungarian–Ukrainian border is a long-term, the Hungarian–Romanian border is a short-term external border of the EU. Before the change of the political system (1989) East-Hungarian borders were very strict. The East Central-European political transformation opened them up but the quality and intensity of cross-border cooperation is still low, very few economic cooperation projects have been established so far. The enhancement of cooperation activities is further hindered by ethnic problems. For this reason the current researches are seeking for further areas of CBC.

Debrecen, August 2005.

Béla Baranyi
editor