

The Cross-Border Regions - Strips of Contiguity and Dysfunction at the Eastern Border of the European Union. The Case of Romania

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Abstract

Borders represent the vertical planes that determine the territory of two neighboring countries. In situ, the border becomes a space that includes the “border corridor” of 5 m out of each country’s territory and the 20-meter long border “security strip”. Border police exert their professional obligations in the “border zone”, stretching over 25-30 km along the borders, which is to say that the actual border is more complex than the “red line” drawn on maps.

Borderlines could be compared to atmospheric fronts, as they also change their trajectory along the time when the pressure is higher. In older times, borders were rather meeting areas, regions connecting different entities.

However, the modern world, together with the construction of national states, established the new type of border, through which passage is conditioned by the passport. The barrier role of borders was introduced in the east by the “iron curtain”, not only between the socialist and the Western European zone, but also between socialist states.

Thus, a process which was positive in its essence at a national level (leading to the establishment of national states), eventually engendered extremely strong social and economic consequences. It led to the cleavage of well-established territorial systems, to the division of transport systems, to the destruction of infrastructure elements etc.

After two world wars, aimed at solving border problems, proved that imposing force is not the best option, there is a new tendency emerging in Western Europe to optimize cooperation across the borders through the association of regional or local entities, known as Euroregions.

After the deep changes that took place in the early 90s in Eastern Europe countries, several Euroregions appeared across their borders. The European unification allotted significant funds for strengthening cross-border cooperation at its Eastern boundaries.

The present study aims at analyzing the present-day situation and the prospects of Romanian-Ukrainian and Romanian-Moldovan cross-border relations.

Key words: cross-border regions, barrier effect, cross-border interrelations, Phare CBC Programme, eastern E.U. border

1. Defining the cross-border regions

The frontier is the limit that outlines the spatial form of the state, up to which its integrity and sovereignty is manifested. The frontier fulfils military functions (of protecting the territory), fiscal functions through the system of customs duty, legislative functions (up to the frontier a state has legislative competence) and control functions for the import and export of goods, capital, services or the flow of people.

Through the functions fulfilled the frontier has an evident barrier role. The contiguity involves exchanges of matter, energy, information, not even the most sealed frontiers succeeding in imposing a total interruption of cross-border interrelations.

The cross-border regions are "*strips of contiguity and dysfunction on both sides of the frontier, between which spontaneous cross-border interrelations occur*". (Boar, 2005). The legal framework of cross-border relations is set by the agreement between the two countries, stating that at the border there is only one cross-border region. In this approach, the cross-border regions are analysis regions, the results of defining regions in a positivism scientific manner, having the ability of separating them in frontier fragments, on formal normative or informal symbolic criteria, based on territorial administrative units, economic organizations or identity regions. (Benedek, 2004).

They are different from "euroregions" that were defined as "*associative structures of institutional cross-border structures, stretching over the territories of the member administrative units*". They may include territorial administrative units of different rank (regional, local), from two or more states as well as territorial units that do not have direct contact with the border but are interested in initiating institutional cross-border cooperation. They have their own leading structures, nevertheless they are not territorial administrative units and are not recognized as such by international law. Euroregions have constituted the pioneers of the European Union edification process. The emerging of The European Union has turned the inner borders from "*barriers*" into "*binders*" and the barrier role of the frontiers has migrated towards the outer borders of The European Union.

The present paper analyses a fragment from the eastern border of The European Union, the romanian-ukrainian and the romanian-moldovan border respectively, from the perspective of the cross-border cooperation projects unfolded within the PHARE CBC Programme during 2004-2009.

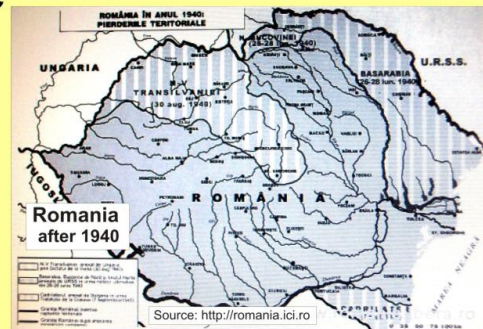
2. The cross-border regions-lines of contiguity and dysfunction

The contiguity and dysfunction are two properties offering the best characterization for the functional aspect of the frontiers. On one hand, at each frontier there is "the other", and a series of common elements which turn the frontier space into a meeting place, mutual connexion, elements mixture, mutual exchange of matter, energy and information. On the other hand, the filter, or the barrier role, imposes a certain dysfunction exerting an ever intensifying effect as the the degree of frontier sealing is increasing.

However sealed a frontier would be, it cannot inflict a total rupture between the two parts meeting at the borderline. Neither The Great Wall, nor The Berlin Wall, or other isolation attempts can keep the two contiguous parts from interrelating. The watersheds, chosen many times as borderlines, do not have permanent stability and constitute limits only for the surface water. Other water forms (precipitation, subterranean) do not take into consideration such delimitations. The other natural components of the geosphere have an uninterrupted continuity, over the borderlines, and for the human factor not even the Earth's limits are borders that cannot be crossed, man already having started his expansion in outer space.

Hence it is more appropriate to speak about frontiers rather than borders, the term "frontier" being understood as "a space in which an expansion could take place" (Bodocan V, 1997). The meaning of this quotation targets not only the "space" but also the "time" dimension. In time and space the frontiers develop a certain dynamics, process explainable through the human society dynamics. The yesterday's frontiers are no longer actual, and the today's frontiers will not correspond for the future. Not understanding this process, the refuse to accept the changes produced in time, can lead to painful conflicts,

The evolution of the frontier in time and space



experienced the most intensely in the frontier spaces (the case of Kosovo).

Romania's northern and eastern borders had their own dynamics in space and time. After World War I Romania completed its national territory, by free will, with Basarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania.

In 1940, following the Ribentrop-Molotov Pact and the Vienna Dictate, Romania lost the territories of Basarabia, Bucovina and NV Transylvania, motivating Romania to enter World War II, along with Germany. After World War II, Romania recovered NV Transylvania, but lost Basarabia and Bucovina again, and the USSR became the neighbour of Romania at the northern border as well, instead of Czechoslovakia and Poland, which neighbored Romania during the interwar period. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia transformed the former administrative structures into political entities, as Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia became Romania's new neighbours.

3. The Cross Border Regions and the Frontiers Regime

The regime of the frontier is essential in order to identify its dysfunction degree. Generally there are two types of regimes:

- The sealed, closed regime (Breitung, 2002), which discourages any type of border crossing, regardless of the fact that it is people, goods, information, capital;
- The open, permissive regime (Rietveld, 1993), which reduces as much as possible the control over the circulation of people, goods, information or capital.

We have to mention the fact that however permissive the frontier is, the dysfunctions are present as long as the frontier is maintained. Even after its disappearance, the differentiating elements ("relict frontiers") are still kept in the aspect of the settlements or in the way of soil management, traditions, gastronomy, costumes, religion, etc., especially in the rural world.

The more democratic and more liberal political leadership promote rather permissive frontier regimes, through free competition, these having the role of stimulating the internal forces through the increase of competitiveness. The more authoritative left-wing or right-wing political leadership develop more restrictive frontier regimes, the barrier, or the filter function becoming a priority.

4. Types of Cross-Border Dysfunctions and the Role of Cross-Border Regions

The cross-border regions constitute lines of variable width for which even the dictatorial leadership granted some facilitation for border crossing, in order to solve humanitarian problems, inherent to interrelating spaces. The manifestation of frontier dysfunctions takes many forms. Breitung W. (2002) identifies five types of manifestation, five forms of approaching the frontiers:

a) the **political approach** of the frontier dysfunctions is manifested through different jurisdiction and legislation. Even in The European Union, where for a traveller, coming from the former communist Europe, the physical disappearance of the frontier is of great importance, for a western european citizen the difference between the states is still obvious. The very persistence of the cross-border regions in a space where the frontiers have become of maximum permissiveness, constitutes an extra argument that the political frontier between the EU states has not disappeared. The political frontier is manifested best through the different competence that the regional or local state institutions hold. In this field, there are still many differences from state to state, according to their own legislation.

b) the **physical approach** is the most effective within sealed regime frontiers. In these situations the dysfunctions become obvious, many times the border being a barbed wire fence, a ploughed strip, a road or railway cut across by an obstacle, pillars of the former bridges uniting the banks of the rivers that meanwhile became frontier waters, etc. There are cases mentioned (especially in the Balkans), where the frontier line separated a house from its own back yard, or even whole buildings were sectioned in two sectors belonging to two different countries. In a very suggestive image W. Breitung captured the poor peasant households from Communist China, in contrast with the steel and concrete giants from Hong Kong.

c) the **social and economic** approach of frontier dysfunctions is manifested in the different life standard of the inhabitants on each side of the border. Although the frontiers frequently divide geographical regions with the same type of natural resources, the differences in the standard of living are sometimes unimaginable. Known for this fact is the american-mexican frontier, the european frontier following the "Iron Curtain" line, the frontier between the Jews and the Arabian countries, between South and North Korea and others. They generally tend to become more sealed, from the dictatorial regime part, in order to stay away from potential ideological influence, as well as from the more developed part, in order to reduce immigration and to protect the existing internal balance.

d) the **functional approach** of the border role is manifested through the truncating of networks, filtering the exchanges or even blocking them. Depending on how much the border is oscillating between the filter and the barrier role, the functionality of the networks and the degree of functional interconnection of the two parts will also oscillate. Some exchanges are weak, parallel networks will emerge, without communicating only sporadically. The functional approach concerns especially the flow of people, goods, services, information and money.

e) the **psychological approach** of the frontier has benefited from a rich profile literature, especially in the western Europe countries. Starting from the frontier between the individual and the surrounding people (quoted by Breitung, Massey and Jess-1995), up to the global scale frontiers (Kolossov V., O' Laughlin J., 1998), the authors identified a rich palette of psychological frontiers, which proved to be even more powerful than the actual EU states frontiers.

A research conducted in Strasbourg (Piermay, J.J., 2003) points out that the frontier between the port neighbourhood and the rest of the city is more powerful than the international frontier between France and Germany, which one can cross unawarely by crossing the bridge between Strasbourg (France) and Kehl (Germany). On the contrary, Luxembourg, the capital of the smallest EU state, has strengthened its economic position by turning cross-border experience to its own advantage. The interviews and the mental maps are the most efficient tools for the researcher in the field.

The cross-border cooperation structures facilitate contacts, stimulate exchanges, interconnect networks, facilitate common language and mediate competence, finding the most appropriate ways to diminish the frontier negative effects in various ways. The west European cross-border experience is a powerful argument in this respect.

In the context of extending the European Union to the east, the PHARE CBC Programme was started for the territorial administrative structures, schools, universities and cultural institutions, NGOs from the romanian-ukrainian and romanian-moldovan cross-border regions.

5. Financing the Cross-Border Cooperation

A research conducted at the belgian-dutch border (van Houtum, 2000), points out the frontier effect upon the entrepreneurs behaviour, emphasizing the role of mental distances in taking the decisions. This was defined as "the entrepreneurs' estimation of differences and the consequences of these differences in the way of doing business with a foreign

country or with their own.” The bigger the differences the greater the effort, necessary to insure success in the neighbour country, will be. The disadvantaged position of frontier regions in relation to the capital investments, foreign or domestic, is already well-known.

As a consequence, even from the preliminary stage of Romania’s adhesion to the European Union, cross-border cooperation programmes, from communitary funds, were launched in order to stimulate the development of border areas and to maintain good relations between Romania and the neighbour countries.

In march 2004, at Galati (Romania), **The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine 2004-2006** was launched, and it benefited from a budget of 35,5 million euros, distributed as follows: Romania 29 million euros from the PHARE CBC Programme and Ukraine 6,5 million euros from the TACIS Programme. These funds could be accessed by the contiguous administrative units, respectively five counties from Romania (Tulcea, Botosani, Suceava, Maramures and Satu Mare) and four ukrainian regions: Odessa, Cernivestska, Ivano-Frankivska, Zakarpatska.

The Common Programme Document identified the following priorities:

Priority 1: Social and Economic Development

Measure 1.1. : Tourism Development and Expansion

Measure 1.2. : Economic Cross-Border Cooperation

Priority 2: Developing an Integrated Infrastructure System in the Cross-Border Region

Measure 2.1.: Developing the Cross-Border and Frontier Transport Infrastructure;

Measure 2.1.: Improving the Cross-Border Environment Management

Priority 3: „People to People” Activities;

Measure 3.1.: Common Fund for Small Grant Projects

Priority 4: Technical Assistance

Measure 4.1.: Programme Management and Implementation

Measure 4.2.: Programme Marketing and Evaluation

The total sum for Romania’s grants was 10.000-50.000 euros for small projects and 50.000-800.000 euros for large projects. For Ukraine the small projects financial limits were the same but the large projects could extend from 50.000 up to 1 million euros, at which a national cofinancing of 10%, insured by the beneficiary institution, was added.

For the post adhesion period the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 (JOP RO-UA-MD) was launched, financed through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), having an allocated amount of 126.718.067 euros at which a national cofinancing of 11.404.628 euros was added. Practically this programme was launched only in 2009, therefore the present research will focus only on the PHARE CBC 2004-2006 Programme, implemented up to present.

6. The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine 2004-2006

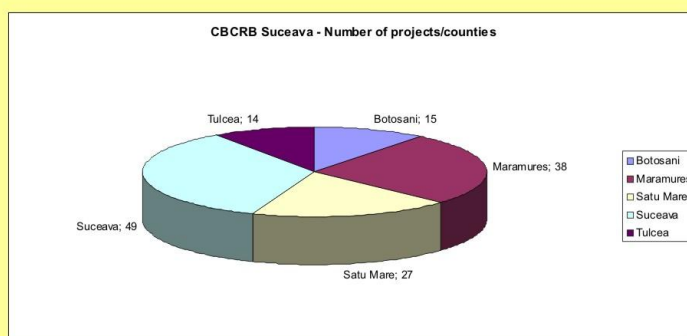
For the management of the cross-border cooperation programmes, specialized structures called C.B.C.R.B. (Cross-Border Cooperation Regional Bureaus) were established. For the Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine, the C.B.C.R.B. was attributed to the Suceava municipality.

Within C.B.C.R.B. Suceava, during the three years of contracting, a number of 143 projects were declared eligible, totaling 29 million euros.

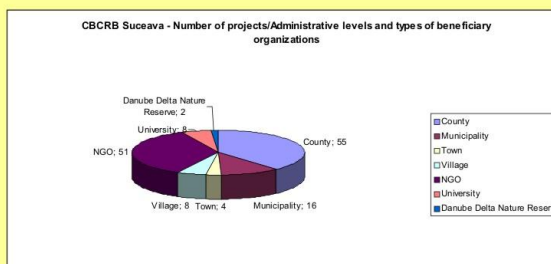
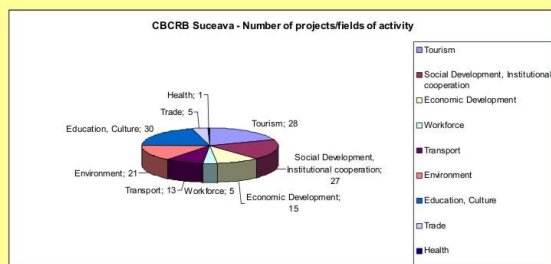
The tables analysis reveal the dominant position of Suceava county awarded with 49 projects (34,2%), followed by Maramures county with 38 projects (26,5%), Satu Mare county with 27 projects (18,9%), followed at a greater distance by Botosani county with 15 projects (10,5%) and Tulcea county with 14 projects (9,8%). If the dominant position of Suceava county can be explained by the presence of the C.B.C.R.B., Maramures and Satu Mare counties, having a better financial situation and a traditionally western orientation sought to take advantage of this opportunity in a better way, whilst Botosani and Tulcea counties, with a more modest economic development, are placed at the end of the awarded list.

By the type of beneficiaries, the county councils hold the first place, with 55 projects (38,4%), taken into consideration that they have the necessary resources for cofinancing the projects and specialized bureaus of cross-border cooperation where specialists work

The romanian-ukrainian border. The numerical analysis of the projects.



Source of data:
CBCRB Suceava



and have as tasks the writing and implementation of such projects.

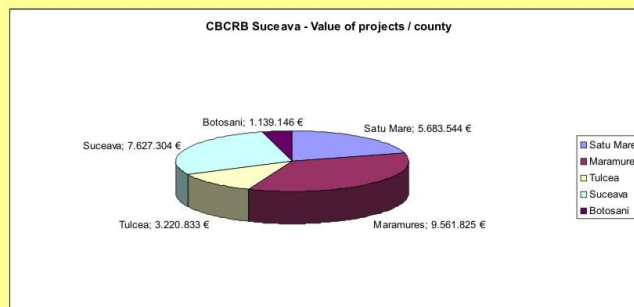
The NGOs follow with 51 projects (35,6%), this category taking advantage of a great number of intellectuals in their structure, able to write, manage and implement cross-border cooperation projects. At a great distance follow municipalities (16 projects) and universities (8 projects), having as constraints the reduced capacity of cofinancing, and with a small percentage are the small towns and villages, facing the same constraints together with a very small number of specialists.

Regarding the fields of the projects the most numerous are concerned with developing the cross-border cooperation in education and culture, which benefit from superior qualified personnel, nevertheless not very well paid, fact for which cross-border cooperation projects not only develop interhuman relations but also help improve the income for the project team members.

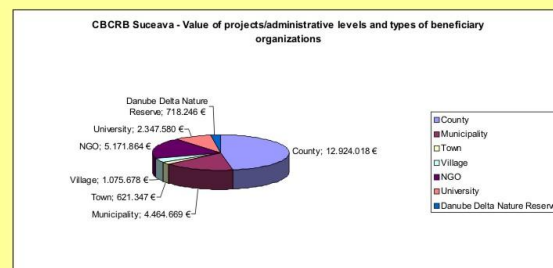
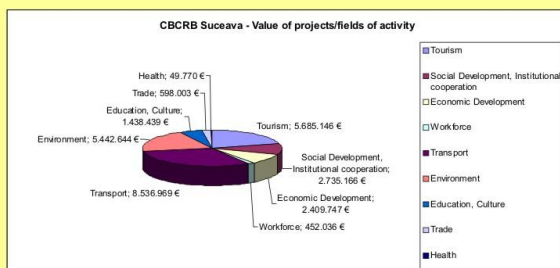
Judging by the number of projects as criterion, the tourism field is next with 27 projects, a hope for the entire romanian-ukrainian frontier region. The fact is explained by the high importance of this region for the romanian as well as ukrainian tourism. In Romania along the frontier there are a series of tourism regions such as: Oas Land with rural tourism, Maramures with rural, curative and mountain tourism, Bucovina with cultural, religious and rural tourism and The Danube Delta with leisure tourism. In Ukraine, at the frontier with Romania, lies the second tourism region of the country, as importance, (after the Black Sea coastline), with important curative tourism resorts based on mineral waters and leisure tourism based on mountain hikes and winter sports.

Next, judging by the number of projects criterion, are the fields of cross-border

The romanian-ukrainian border. The value analysis of the projects.



Source of data:
CBCRB Suceava



environmental protection and institutional development, to stimulate the mutual

knowledge and to identify the ways and main fields of cross-border cooperation. Other projects concern the economic development of the cross-border region, the transport infrastructure and the establishment of new border crossings, at the end of the list being the fields such as: instructing the work force, trade development and health.

Analysed by the financial allocation, the projects reveal the prioritising position of the county and municipality councils which hold two thirds from the projects value. The fact is explained through the financial resources which they own to cover the national percentage in order to participate at the projects (10%). The same argument but with a backward action explains the less important position of the NGOs on the value scale, which do not have enough cofinancing funds, and implemented smaller projects. Taking into consideration the value, the projects hold three major fields: tourism, transport and environment protection, which hold two thirds from the total value, the rest of the fields having a reduced percentage.

Taking into consideration the value of the projects, the Maramures county takes the first place, surpassing the Suceava county, due to the projects regarding infrastructure, including the border crossings, which require higher financial allocations.

As a conclusion for the analysis of the cross-border cooperation, based on the projects submitted within The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine 2004-2006, we can state the following aspects:

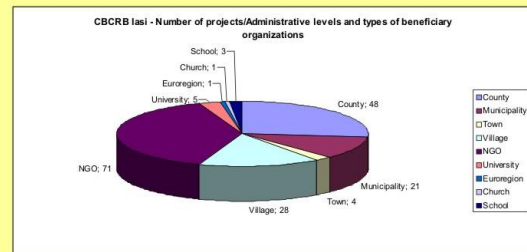
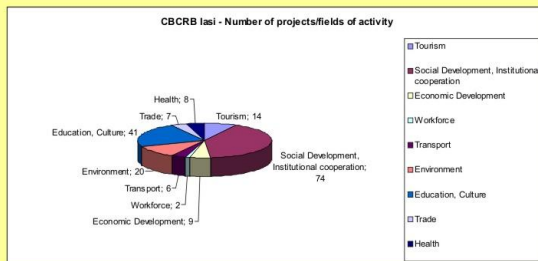
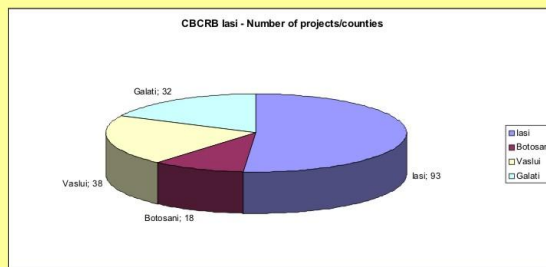
- the existence of the programme insured the financing of the projects through grants in a 90% fraction of their total value and constituted a special opportunity that was taken by the regional authorities as well as the NGOs, education institutions, private agencies, etc. Lacking some major investments of private capital, the financial opportunities of the european funds allowed cross-border cooperation initiatives to emerge, which otherwise would have been very difficult to achieve without the financial support of The Neighbourhood Programme.
- the value of the projects is generally small, even the large projects were situated below 1 million euros, not allowing very important material achievement; the importance of these projects is stated mostly by the identification of common interest fields of activity and the establishment of cross-border cooperation structures (bureaus, centres), as well as acquiring experience in the writing, management and implementation of future cross-border cooperation projects.

7. The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Moldova 2004-2006

As a result of the european financial allocations for this programme, a number of 182 projects were considered as eligible, having a total value of 30.165.272 euros. Their distribution per counties reflects the prioritising position of the Iasi county, housing the C.B.C.R.B. (Cross-Border Cooperation Regional Bureau) for the frontier with Moldova,

The romanian-moldovan border. The numerical analysis of the projects.

Source of data:
CBCRB Iasi



which, through the 93 eligible projects holds alone 55% of the total number of projects, the other borderline counties following with 38 projects (20%) - Vaslui, Galati with 32 projects (17.5%), Botosani with 18 projects (7.5%). Beyond the advantage of hosting the C.B.C.R.B., the dominant position of Iasi county can also be explained by the fact that it is the third largest university centre in Romania, supplying a great number of intellectuals, able to write, manage and implement such projects.

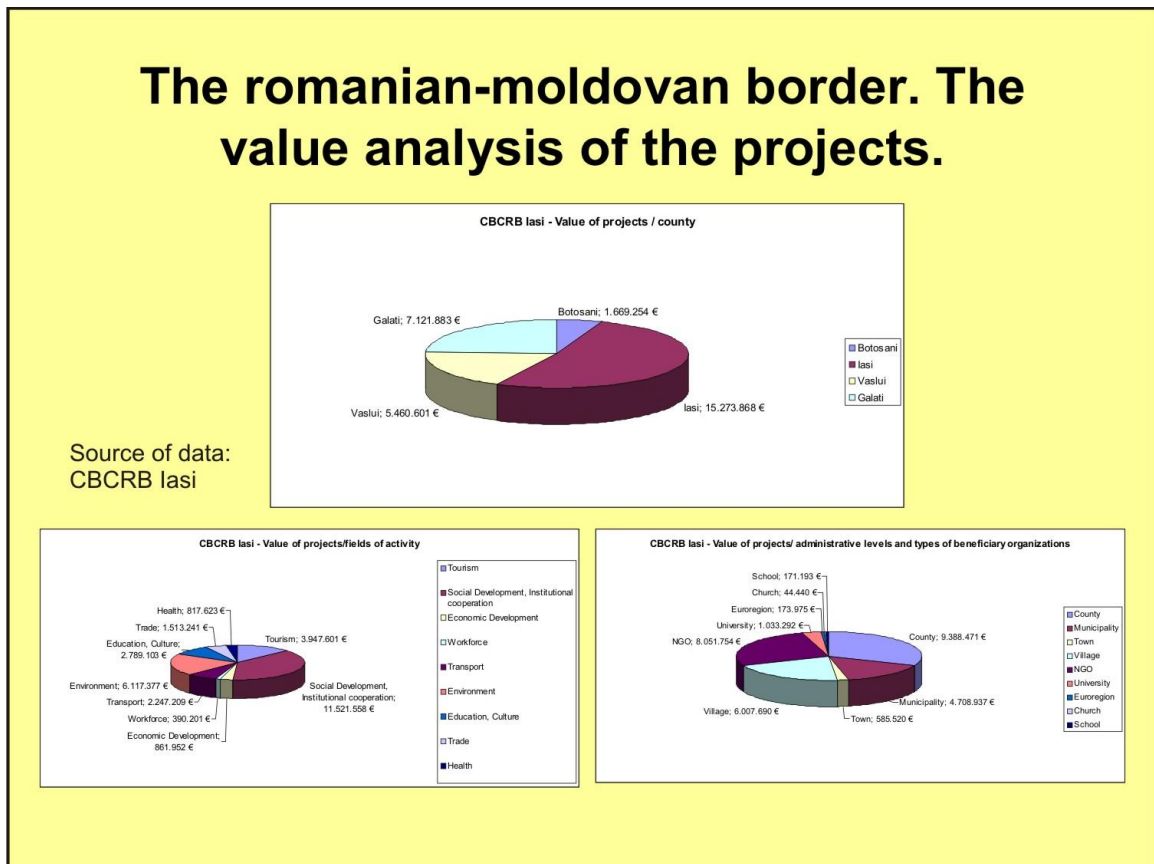
The projects distribution by the field of activity points out the 40% position for the projects having as main objectives the development of institutional cross-border cooperation. From the total of 182 projects, 74 of them have as objective the establishment of centres, pilot centres, bureaus, networks of cross-border cooperation, indirectly showing the weak activity of the euroregions, which do not fulfil the role of organization for institutional cross-border cooperation. The second field as number of projects is "education, culture", revealing the available number of specialists from this sector but also their insufficient wages at their main jobs. By their implication in the cross-border cooperation projects these specialists win supplementary wages, equal to their professional profile. There is an important number of environmental protection projects (20) and a smaller number of tourism development projects (14), fact explained by the reduced importance of this region (Central and Southern Moldavia) within the romanian tourism.

On the other hand, the latest political tensions between the national leadership of Romania and Moldova explain the small number and reduced importance of projects concerning cross-border transport and border crossings infrastructure.

The numerical distribution of the projects, taken by the number of beneficiaries, rank the NGOs in the first place, reflecting the presence of specialists. Next follow the county and municipality councils, a surprising high position being the village councils (third place with 28 projects), which reflects the fact that there had been elected some young intellectual mayors, able to conceive and implement cross-border cooperation projects. Another noticeable fact is that for the first time a Euroregion (Siret-Prut-Nistru) wins a 173.975 euro project, which holds as a main objective the establishment of a social and economic development strategy for this structure.

As for the value of the projects we have the same dominant position of the Iasi municipality, which holds by itself 52,8% from the total value of the Romania-Moldova Neighbourhood Programme.

Taken by the fields of activity the first place is held by the projects concerning the establishment of cross-border cooperation structures, next followed by the environment protection, tourism and educational and cultural projects. The lower financial availability of cultural institutions explain the decreased value of these projects. The same argument explain the number two position of the NGOs, financially surpassed by the county councils.



As a conclusion to The Romania-Moldova Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006 we can state the following aspects:

- by the financial opportunity granted, an even greater number of beneficiaries than from the Romanian-Ukrainian frontier sought to take advantage, fact explained firstly by the great number of qualified intellectual people provided by the great cultural and university center of Iasi. The same reason explains the leading position of the Iasi county, which holds alone over 50% of the value and number of the projects.
- the main target of the projects was the establishment of cross-border institutional cooperation, reflecting the insignificant role that euroregions, established in the last decade of the XXth century, have even today in the coordination of cross-border cooperation initiatives.
- the obvious anti-romanian politics of the Voronin regime explain the diminished value importance of the transport and frontier infrastructure development projects.

8. Conclusions

- The romanian-ukrainian and the romanian-moldovan frontier are not mere frontiers between two neighbour countries, but also segments of a macroregional frontier (Kolossov V., O' Laughlin J., 1998), separating the E.U. space from the former Soviet Union space. This involves strengthening the barrier role of the frontier in order to prevent specific negative phenomena such as: illegal emigration, smuggling, introduction of dangerous substances and guns, drug traffic, etc. The romanian authorities must find means through which the strengthening of the frontier's barrier role should not affect the romanian minority ethnic group from Ukraine and the majority of population from Moldova, which do not benefit from the attribute of EU member citizenship (although they want it).
- In order to develop the frontier regions and to maintain good relations with the neighbours, the E.U. allocates specific funds for cross-border cooperation projects, at which a small percentage has to be the contribution of the applicants. The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine respectively Romania-Moldova, each had a financial allocation of approximately the same resources (30 million euros) from the Phare CBC 2004-2006 Programme. An important number of beneficiaries from the border counties sought to take advantage of it. The approached fields of activity were varied, reflecting both the needs of the region as well as the regional specialists. The impulse of involving in cross-border cooperation activities was given by the 90% fraction of the EU grants, only 10% of the projects value being the contribution of the beneficiaries. In addition to reaching the target (cross-border cooperation stimulation) the projects also constituted complementary sources of income for the project team members.
- The fact that most of the projects had as a main target the establishment of centres, pilot centres, bureaus, networks of cross-border cooperation, prove the

weak activity of the euroregions, which have become purely formal; in future a revival of such institutions is necessary, or the establishment of new ones, able to plan complex strategies, on three time terms (short, medium and long) to establish priorities, to interconnect different sources of financing in order to concentrate the resources on concrete objectives, clear, able to lead to the progress of the cross-border regions, able to prevent the waste of the resources allocated by the EU in this field.

- The participation at The Neighbourhood Programme Romania-Ukraine respectively Romania-Moldova has constituted good experience for the most active part of the social, economic and cultural environment, from the frontier regions, opening the way to more intense participation at the new ENPI Programme 2007-2013 (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) with a more generous fund allocation (126.718.067 euros).

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