TRANSFRONTIER CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ROMANIA AND UKRAINE AND THE RIVER TOURISM

Adriana PORCUȚAN
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Lăcrămioara POPA
Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch

Abstract. At the beginning of this article there is made a short introduction over the term of borders, cross-border regions and transfrontier cooperation. In this frame it is presented the Carpathian Region and its components. After that we make a short description of the natural landscape of the Zakarpathia and Ivano-Frankivsk Regions and of the Maramureș County, focusing over the relief, river, climate and vegetation aspects. Following this description comes some short information over the sports that can be realized on water courses, such as rafting, kayaking and canoeing, with examples from the both sides of the border. A new chapter presents the programs of co-operation that have developed between the two countries in the late years, showing the things they want to study and develop. After showing this programs, a correlation between them and the sports presented before can be made, underlining the positive and negative aspects and impacts over the society and nature. In the final we try to underline the importance of a better understanding of tourism and the relations that can be created between it and the economy of the two countries that take part in this kind of programs, with a brighter future for both of them.

Rezumat. Cooperarea transfrontalieră dintre România și Ucraina și turismul de rafting. La începutul acestui articol este realizată o scurtă introducere asupra termenilor de granițe, regiunii transfrontaliere și co-operație transfrontalieră. În acest cadru este prezentată Regiunea Carpatică și componentele sale. După aceea se realizează o scurtă descriere a cadrului natural a regiunilor Zakarpathia și Ivano-Frankivsk și a județului Maramureș, cu o concentrare asupra aspectelor legate de relief, ape, climă și vegetație. În continuarea acestei descrieri se face o scurtă prezentare a sporturilor care se pot practica pe cursurile de apa, cu o concentrare asupra raftingului, kayakingului și canoeingului, cu exemple de pe ambele părți ale graniței. Următorul capitol prezintă programele de cooperare care au fost dezvoltate între cele două țări de-a lungul anilor, arătând lucrurile pe care acestea le studiază și pe care vrea să le dezvolte. Pe baza acestor programe se face o corelație între acestea și sporturile prezentate mai înainte, subliniind aspectele și impactele pozitive și negative ale acestora asupra mediului și asupra societății. În final se prezintă importanța unei mai bune înțelegeri a turismului și a relațiilor care se pot crea între aceste sporturi, ca și elemente ale turismului, și economia celor două țări care participă la astfel de programe. Ele sunt elemente de succes care pot determina un viitor mai bun pentru zonele în cauză.

Cuvinte cheie: co-operație, granițe, turism, râuri, hidrologie, relații.
Key words: co-operation, border, tourism, rivers, hydrology, relations.
1. INTRODUCTION

Through the years, borders between countries have changed as the relations between the states changed. In some regions, the borders moved in the territory, some lands becoming, in time, parts of other countries than the native ones, being taken by peace or by force. These lands have changed in these tough conditions into regions that had their own way of life.

These kinds of regions have a mixture of nationalities, languages and cultural and ethnical characteristic preserved from the populations that passed through these lands. This mixture is very hard to be managed, sometimes solving in wars and silent fights between the opponents.

In Europe there are many lands that have passed from country to country. They are called cross-border regions. In the endeavor to set peace in this region and for a better collaboration between states, the European Union has established through years some Euroregions that share territories of many states. This states, through programs, try to improve the relations between people from the both sides of borders, between families and to settle better economic, cultural and ethnical relations between countries. Such euroregions are Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion, Black Sea Euroregion, Galicia North Euroregion etc. A wide spread euroregion is Carpathian Euroregion. It is an international association formed on February 14, 1993 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Ukraine, and Hungary in the city of Debrecen.

Fig. 1 Carpathian Euroregion logo (text in Polish language)

“The Carpathian Euroregion comprises 19 administrative units of five countries from Central and East Europe, which are Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania. Its total area is about 160,000 km2 and it is inhabited by approximately 16 million people. The Carpathian Euroregion is designed to bring together the people who inhabit the region of the Carpathian Mountains and to facilitate their cooperation in the fields of science, culture, education, trade, tourism and economy.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carpathian_Euroregion)

We will focus only over the Ukraine and Romania’s part of the region, which consists in Zakarpethia (Transcarpathia) and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast (Province) and Maramureș County.
2. NATURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE AREA

Romania and Ukraine share a border that includes the Maramureș and Suceava County from Romania. We will concentrate only over the west part of the border, with the Maramureș County.

The Ukrainian part of the region has two provinces: Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk, both in the south-west part of the country. The first one has the administrative center at Uzhhorod and is the only Ukrainian oblast to have boundaries with four countries: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

The Ivano-Frankivks province is the eastern neighbour of the first and has its administrative center at Ivano-Frankivsk. The two provinces have a thing in common: the Carpathian Mountains that form the central and the biggest part of them. The highest mountains are Gorgany (the highest peak is the mount Syvulya (1818m)) and Chornohory (the highest peak is the mount Goverla (2061m)). The lowest point, 101 m (331 ft) above sea level, is located in Zakarpattia, in the village of Ruski Heyevtsi in the Uzhhorodsky Raion.

In the south part of the region contains the Maramures County. It has its administrative center at Baia Mare. 43% of the county is covered by the Rodna Mountains, with its tallest peak, Pietrosul, at 2,303 metres altitude. Together with Gutăi and Țibeleș mountain ranges, the Rodna mountains are part of the Eastern Carpathians.

Another important part of the natural landscape are the rivers of the area, with a high impact over the tourism of it. The largest rivers that flow through the Zakarpattia province...
are Tysa, Borzhava, and the Tereblia. Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast contains the Dniester River and other major rivers include Prut, Cheremosh, Bystrytsia, and others. The Maramures county is crossed by Tisa River and its main tributaries: Iza, Vișeu, and Mara rivers.

The climate of the area is mildly-continental and damp with cool summers and mild winters. The average monthly temperature in June is 18°C with 12-16°C in the mountains. The average monthly temperature in January is -4°C with -6°C in the mountains. The average precipitation varies annually around 650 mm with 1550 mm in the mountains.

Very important for tourism is also the forest-covered mountainous landscape. In this area are many reservations, in which we can introduce the Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians, part of which are located within Zakarpattia Oblast, were recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007. Also, there are national parks in Maramures, such as The Rodna National Park and the Maramures National Park, with very important geological, floral and faunistic elements.

3. TOURISM AND RIVERS

The natural potential of an area is very important in the development of it through the use of it in tourism. Although the relief is the most utilized resource in tourism, a high potential has also the water resource. The most important component of it are the rivers. They have developed their own touristic activities, that have a high influence over the tourism of an area.

Some of the touristic activities connected directly with the rivers are: bathing, navigation, punting, jet boating, swimming, scuba-diving, whitewater rafting, cave rafting, kayaking, canoeing, water skiing, kitesurfing etc. The most important touristic activities for our area are whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing. They are the most important because they are very spectacular and they attract many people, especially young persons.

![Whitewater rafting in Romania](image)

Whitewater rafting is an extreme activity that uses a raft for 5-12 persons and some rows (one for each member of the crew) to navigate the river. It is a nautical sport that uses white waters (dangerous rivers, with high difficulty, both with natural or artificial courses). There is also flat rafting that takes place in flat waters; it is less difficult and can be taken by more people.

This sport needs special equipment, such as vests and caskets, to assure the safety of passengers. Also, it is very important the river quality. Not only the length and the width of the river matters, but the depth, the constitution of water bed (rapids) and the speed of water...
that influence very much the movement through water and determines the difficulty degrees of rivers.

Kayaking and canoeing are sports that use a kayak or a canoe. They are distinguished by the fact that the first has the front part opened, and the second one hasn’t. Another difference is the fact that kayaking uses one paddle and canoeing two. As the whitewater rafting, they need special equipment and an adequate water speed.

The rivers from this area are very good for this kind of sports, offering many possibilities to practices them. The rivers from Ukraine are very different, but they all can be used in this way. Dniester is a calm river with no rapids, so flat rafting is a perfect recreation available for everybody. Along the trip you will see the ruins of old castles and churches, beautiful nature of Dniester canyon, feel the wildness of Ukrainian river.

Another river, a different one, is Cheremosh - its wild whitewaters covers you with adrenalin emotions. Plus there is a possibility to trek to the Pope Ivan mountain (a peak with the ruins of the old Polish observatory), to visit local museum of Gutsul (local folk) culture and to see the life of a small mountain village.

There are other river that can be well mastered by tourists: the Chornyi Cheremosh, Bilyi Cheremoch, Prut, Stryi, Tysa, Rika and Latorytsia. Of recent times the routes along such small rivers as tributaries of the Cheremosh River (Probiina, Bystrets), tributaries of the Stryi River, the Upper Prut have been navigated. This has become possible due to the comparatively new type of boats available. The Carpathian Rivers can be navigated by kayaks, canoes, catamarans, and rafts.

In Maramures the rivers that can be used for whitewater rafting can be found especially in the east side, in the Maramureș Mountains, that have high water speeds and
rapids, that increases the adrenaline. The rivers that are navigated are Vișeu and its tributaries (Vaser, Ruscova, Frumușeaua). They have also gorges, canyons and falls, that increase the difficulty of the trip. For flat rafting we can use Iza and its tributaries, that are calm water, but not so large.

4. CO-OPERATION PROGRAMS

Through the years, in our region have been realized some co-operation programs between Romania and Ukraine that concern the touristic aspect. They have focused especially over the network and the monitoring of touristic attractions.

One of these programs is “ECOTUR - Transcarpathian Tourism - tourism promotion network in Maramureș County and Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk Province”, financed through the Neighborhood Treaty between Romania and Ukraine (PHARE CBC2006/018 - 449.01.01.11 with a sum of 550,000 euro). The program started at August 22, 2008 and ended at February 22, 2010. It tries to realize a better promotion and knowledge of the touristic attractions, such as reservations, natural parks and monuments from the Maramureș Mountains Natural Park, with an accent over the ecological tourism.

Through the program it was achieved the modernization and the equipping of two visitation/inform/documentation centers from Leordina and Bistra, to transform them into high interest point for the tourists of the Maramures Mountains Natural Park and other reservations. Also, there were made visits Rakhiv city in the Zakarpathia Region and instruction sessions about the opportunities of natural protected areas.

Another program is “The Establishment of transfrontier network for the of touristic and investment possibilities in Ivano-Frankivsk Region and Maramures County”. The program was financed by the European Union and started in October 2007. It is supposed to end in 20 months and cost 450,000 euro. The partners of the program were The Ukraine State Regional Administration and The National Natural Park “Karpatskyi” (for the Ukrainian part) and the Ecologic Association of Maramures County (for Romania).

5. RELATION BETWEEN CO-OPERATION PROGRAMS AND RIVER TOURISM

These programs concentrate their attention over the resources of the area and their promotion. This is a good thing to start with. They show the attractions of an area, their location and the way you can get to them. But they don’t give alternatives to it. We also need to concentrate our attention on how we can use these resources to more than only look at the view they offer.

There are other things that a river can offer, not only its landscape, its flora and fauna. The river length, speed, depth, difficulty can become a factor in the diversification of touristic attractions.

The river attractions can be used through sports, as they are presented before. The sports can become an alternative for tourism and tourism stakeholders. Through only personal development experiences or local, national or international competitions, sports can become a source of income for the inhabitants and for the countries.
These sports are a good opportunity for recreation, adrenaline and competitions, which can become in time events comparable with the cultural events - tournaments, contests etc. This kind of competitions can bring a large number, not only of contestants, but also tourists that come to see these competitions (fans, amateurs, and also usual tourists that come to see the landscape and to relax watching these kind of contests).

These kinds of competitions are well known and used in western countries and in USA. These kind of sports can provide access to places not usually reachable. Also, these can be used as trips to unknown places through which people can discover new places and new frontiers to their knowledge.

They can be taken by one person or more. So they can become a self discovery trip, an escape from the urban world into a savage, new and beautiful land. When taken by more than one person, this can become a way to communicate more with your friends or to make new friends. But more than that, it is a way to work yourself, to challenge yourself and to fight with yourself.

Some problems appear though. First is hard to implement a new way of life to the inhabitants, used with a traditional way of living and of tourism. They have to understand that this is just another way of showing their resources and qualities. They will bring more different tourists, with different needs and different way of life, to which the inhabitants and resort owners have to adapt. Also, these sports need a specific infrastructure, equipment etc. It requires investments that are expensive enough. But in time the money will come back.

Another impact, this time a negative one, is the impact over the natural resources. In time the tourists can damage them through the growth of incoming tourists and through their actions over the rocks, plants, monuments etc. (devastation). These also appear in kinds of tourism, and they can only be stopped through a good control of those who come in this area and through a good instruction of the rangers.

CONCLUSIONS

The programs of co-operation established between Romania and Ukraine try to develop the economic, cultural and ethnical relations between them and to enhance the results that can come from all the activities they include.

Tourism is a very important part of the economy of Romania and Ukraine, especially of this areas that have a reach heritage and a wide range of natural recourses. So this programs concentrate more on this aspect. The identification of touristic attractions that can be found on the both sides of the borders can bring benefits to the both countries and can help to bring together the people and the authorities from the both sides.

It is hard to realize such programs of co-operation between two countries. Their interests can be very different in this context. But if they come to agreement, both will have success. But only this level of knowledge of tourism and touristic attractions is not enough for a real tourism. An evolution to a better understanding of the new ways in tourism can bring mutual advantages for both countries. Such is the river tourism, which can become a real resource of income in the future, especially if it is used in cooperation by the both sides.

The future looks bright for the tourism of this area, the only condition being that the people to really want to work together and to evolve to a higher level.
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