KIKINDA AS AN IMPORTANT POINT FOR INTERNATIONAL BORDERLAND COOPERATION IN THE EUROREGION DANUBE-KRISH-MURESHER-TISA

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Abstract. International cooperation is based on economic, political and social progress. Borderline districts, due to their location, first of all, represent the points that create the opportunities for a vast variety of cooperation, most commonly based on ethnic diversity, demographic potentials and natural resources. Kikinda is a settlement in north Banat, located in the middle point of Szeged, Zrenjanin and Timisoara. Long period of isolation and inadequate planning management prevented the town of Kikinda in gaining position as the international border cooperation. However, thanks to the existence of the Euroregion the Danube-Krisk-Muresh-Tisa, which is considered to be a new approach to the development of borderline districts, the situation is gradually changing.


Keywords: borderline district, economy, politics, demographic potentials, Euroregion, Banat
Cuvinte cheie: district de frontieră, economie, politică, potenţial demografic, Euroregiune, Banat

1. INTRODUCTION

With the period of isolation left behind, positive political changes on and new approach to the European Union ahead, Serbia is putting an emphasis on the development of borderline districts. During the crisis these were badly managed and mostly stagnated. At the time borderland settlements improved only due to grey economy and illegal turnover of goods (Dordević, J., Panić, M., 2004, p. 183).

Kikinda sets an example of a borderland settlement which in the period of crisis had faced numerous difficulties whose roots were associated with its remote position in the Republic of Serbia and Banat, too. Kikinda is situated in northeast Banat and within Vojvodina it has a peripheral position. It is positioned in the triangle whose points are
Szeged, Timisoara and Zrenjanin, which at the first sight may seem a favorable position. Considering that the three mentioned towns belong to three different countries and that their gravitational spheres are cut by national borders, it is obvious why in the position like this, Kikinda has been isolated (Davidović, R., 1996, p. 9).

Owing to the new political attitudes and approach to European integration, borderline districts and their development have become priorities. These districts are also ideal places for testing the ideas of Europeanization both for their natural values and historical and cultural factors. Peripheral position is not thought of as it used to be, which gives hope to the settlements which once were treated like borderline ones and therefore of no importance.

Spatial planning draft of the municipality of Kikinda of 2008, among other things, anticipated to remove all political and economic barriers which were restraining the development of the municipality and to revive international cooperation, which was defined as the basis of further development. This form of cooperation was perked by the increased number of border crossings, simplified border crossing procedures and market liberalization. Kikinda needs to create a brand which will be recognized in the whole region and with its ethnic diversity, agriculture and touristic attractions prove not to be a peripheral, but a very important part of the region to which it belongs (PPOK, 2008). The idea of creating Euroregion and its realization provided an additional opportunity for improvement and rapid development of the borderline districts. Euroregion the Danube-Krish-Muresh-Tisa like other Euroregions, was formed for the purpose of mutual interests and activities based on socio-economic development and cultural cooperation. The aim of Euroregion is not only the development of economic cooperation, building the infrastructure, environment protection, tourism, cultural and educational activities, but to make the governments both on state and local level plan their development modeled on the existing one on the territory of the European Union (Todorović, M., Tošić, B., Stojanović, B., 2004, p. 24-26).

This paper is an account of how a borderline settlement manages in the process of Europeanization within Euroregion the Danube-Krish-Muresh-Tisa and how important it is for the international cooperation and development of the entire district.

2. EUROREGIONS LIKE FORMS OF TRANS-BORDER COOPERATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE EUROREGION DANUBE-KRISH-MURESHER-TISA

Trans-border cooperation is gaining interest in economic, political and social sphere of a state and also the bordering states. Nowadays it has a clear definition, which is directed towards the development of the borderline districts. The foundation of international cooperation of a Euroregion usually relies on the association of some areas that possess certain similarities in natural, social and economic potentials and tend to bond into one entirety. Because of the above mentioned, national borders are not considered as an obstacle to cooperation of the bordering areas, but as a result of historic events. The existence of Euroregion means that borderline position of a region in the country is not peripheral any more (Todorović, M., Tošić, B., Stojanović, B., 2004, p. 24-26).

From geographic point of view inter-border cooperation indicates arrangements in the form of cooperation of local and regional governments which are in the borderland with the aim
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to promote mutual interests and enhance the standards of living of their populations (Ilies, A., 2004, p. 52).

At the end of the 20th century the countries of central and east Europe resorted to successful experiments on the example of the West in attempt to see if it is doable, within the Euroregion, not only to stimulate the economy, but to improve the relationships with their neighbours at the time when the process of globalization is not possible to ignore. The successfully realized project on Europeanization in Western Europe in the 1950s proved valid. Doubting this form of cooperation in the 1990s, the countries of east and central Europe took the challenge which differed from the old concept of national sovereignty, national interests and secrets. Regionalism as an entirely new concept in the process of political transformation relinquished a substantial portion of political scene to regional initiatives (Cernicova, M., 2000, p. 25-28).

The first Euroregion formed on the territory of Serbia was the Danube- Krish-Muresh- Tisa, established in 1997. It comprises areas belonging to three countries: Hungary, Romania and Serbia and covers a territory of 71,879 km$^2$. In Serbia the Euroregion DKMT occupies an area of 21,506 km$^2$, in Romania 30,032 km$^2$ and in Hungary 23,921 km$^2$. The population in this region is approximately 5, 4 million. The creation of DKMT Euroregion was aimed to valorize the values and potentials of this district and enable it to develop. The basic elements of the cooperation within the Euroregion DKMT are based on economic and political cooperation, building of infrastructure, environment protection, the development of tourism and civilian relationships. A significant importance attached to the mentioned Euroregion is in international cooperation as a stimulating factor for regional development and sustainable effects in Romania, Hungary and Serbia. Within international cooperation there is an outstanding need for promotion and strengthening of the partnership from which the citizens of the three countries would benefit the most (Nad, I., Todorović, B., Tošić, B., 2005, p. 98).

Euroregion DKMT is located on the crossroads of central Europe and the Balkans, which is of great importance for international cooperation and taking in the account the fact that the important lines of communication and traffic corridors run through this area, it gives an additional incentive to the idea of international cooperation. Despite the dense network of lines of communication in this region, the international cooperation is being hindered by the fact that not all border crossings have international character or are not in accordance with the regulations of the European Union (Nad, I., Todorović, M., Tošić, B., 2005, p. 98).

As it was stated in the Strategic Plan of the Danube- Krish- Muresh- Tisa, the largest part of the Euroregion is composed of different units formed in the Pannonia plain, which in the past made it easier to construct lines of communication, while the identical flat terrain, suitable for agriculture, made this activity predominant for the population of the region. The Danube is definitely one of the most outstanding potentials of the district and being so, represents the framework of navigable waterways and also the Pan-European corridor VII. The existence of this corridor largely improves inter-border cooperation and linking of the district not only within Euroregion DKMT, but also on the larger scale. The DKMT is multicultural region with diverse ethnic and religious population, and according to data in 2002 it is nearly 5, 4 million. Both multiethnic and demographic characteristics of the district give reason for inter-border cooperation and connection. Regional centers on the territory of Euroregion rank among the highest of the kind. There
are three such big cities here functioning as the centers of the region (Timisoara, Novi Sad, Szeged). These cities stand for national centers and settlements with distinct ethnic diversity and multicultural character, which is a starting point for a good relationship. Also there are many small towns in the region which have important public institutions in the field of education and health care. Some of those closer to the borders perform international activities and it should be emphasized that their trade and cultural gravitation crosses the borders.

Fig 1. Areas in Serbia, Romania and Hungary which compose the Euroregion DKMT

Source: www.dkmt.net/sr/getdata.php?id=121872306727409

The Euroregion DKMT possesses important research and development capacities, which realize the exchange of scientific and technical achievements and ideas, which is of great importance for international cooperation. Thanks to the natural predisposition of the region one of the basic activities of the population is agriculture, which provides conditions for exchange of products and fair competition. Due to natural conditions food processing industry dominates the whole territory given that Romania possesses larger natural potentials and consequently the industry of wider range. When it comes to tourism, this region has not yet acquired a reputation despite the potentials that this region is abundant in. One of the major potential forms of the trans-border cooperation, tourism, along with natural wealth and multicultural character of the district give reasons good enough to stir its realization (Nađ, I., Todorović, M., Tošić, B., 2005, p. 104).
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF KIKINDA THAT CONTRIBUTE TO BORDERLAND COOPERATION IN EUROREGION DANUBE-KRISH-MURESH-TISA

As stated in the Space Plan of the municipality of Kikinda in 2008, Kikinda with its characteristics and potentials represents an important point for international borderline cooperation. What contributes even more to the borderline cooperation is surely its geographical location, historic circumstances and cultural heritage, demographic characteristics (with significant importance of demographic structures), ways of work and modern function of the settlement. Considering that all mentioned criteria are of great importance for borderline cooperation, they will be analyzed respectively.

3.1. Transport and geographic location as a factor of international borderline cooperation

Kikinda is located in the northeast part of Vojvodina, on the altitude of 45°31' northern latitude and 20°30' of eastern longitude covering an area of 782 km². It occupies 3% of the total area of Vojvodina. The territory of Kikinda municipality has a peripheral position, but it is well connected by the lines of communication with the rest of Serbia and also with the bordering countries, Romania and Hungary. A section of “Banat Highway” which leads from Belgrade via Zrenjanin, Kikinda, Senta to Subotica and Szeged runs through its territory. That way road traffic provides a good international cooperation and free flow of goods and people. Also a section of the railroad leading to Belgrade and the other one leading to Subotica i.e. Hungary as well as the one leading to Romania i.e. Timisoara goes over the territory of the municipality. The process of revitalization of the railroad Szeged- Kikinda- Timisoara considerably betters the transportation and geographic position of Kikinda, thus providing conditions for international cooperation with bordering Hungary and Romania. In this traffic system Kikinda represents the crossroads of great local and regional importance. All settlements in the municipality are well connected by locally important roads which all merge in Kikinda as the largest settlement in the municipality. The Danube- Tisa- Danube canal connects municipality with the section of the international hydro system, which adds up to suitable geographic position (Bugarski, D., 1982, p. 6-10).

3.2. Historic factors of the borderland cooperation

Flat terrain in which Kikinda and its surroundings lie is part of the vast plain, which largely facilitated the construction of the lines of communication and boosted the international cooperation (Davidović R., 1996, p. 10).

According to archaeological research carried out on the territory of Kikinda municipality proves that a settlement had existed here back in earlier Neolith, Aneolith and the Bronze Age. Some dependable traces from the Bronze Age have been excavated in the vicinity of Kikinda. Fertile soil of the area created the conditions for agriculture whereas swamps, ponds and rivers provided good fishing grounds.

In the Middle Ages parts of the territory north to the Sava and the Danube were populated by the permission of the Hungarians and later on in agreement with Serbian nobles. The fiercer the conflicts between the Turks and Hungarians were, the stronger the
connections between the Hungarians and the Serbs had become. The wars that had been fought between Turkey and Hungary, mostly on the territory of Serbia had marked almost the entire Middle Ages.

At the beginning of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the areas around Kikinda and Beckerek (present Zrenjanin) had been ravaged by the Turks as much as by the plague. In such circumstances the territory was being populated by Serbian border guards from Potamish, who in 1774 actually established the district of Kikinda with eight more municipalities whose inhabitants were granted substantial privileges. As early as the 18\textsuperscript{th} and the 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries the Serbs made the majority of the population in Banat while at the same time colonization of the Germans, Hungarians and Slovaks was going on.

Between the First and the Second World Wars, Serbian volunteers were colonized in Kikinda. During the Second World War, the Jewish population was destroyed while the German was partly withdrawn to Germany before the war ended. After 1945, a new colonization of the people from over populated agricultural parts of former Yugoslavia i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, devastated by war at the time, took place. Such diverse history, interwined by mingling and migrations of people, had largely influenced the creation of the mixture, which at present makes the basis of cultural and ethnic heritage of Kikinda. Thanks to it there is an intensive international cooperation going on in this district (Čarić, 1996, p. 53).

3.3. Demographic factors in borderland cooperation

The most relevant indicators for this paper are ethnic and religious structures since an international cooperation is established, among other things, in order to preserve ethnic and cultural characteristics of a district and maintain good relationships between the coexisting nationalities.

According to the census of 2002 the population of Kikinda was 68,256. The Serbs have always made up the most numerous ethnic group on the territory of Kikinda municipality. The census of 1991 stated 50,665 Serbs, 9,874 Hungarians while 5,669 citizens declared themselves Yugoslavs. The number of Roam was 1,631, but other groups were not of greater importance. At present the Serbs are in the majority with 74\% followed by the Hungarians 12, 6\% Roams 2, 0\% and the others make about 10\% (the Republic Institute for Statistics, 2003). On balance, such an ethnic mixture adds up to friendly relationships in Kikinda with the national minorities that maintain their connections with native bordering countries. All this supports the realization of the borderline cooperation. According to the data obtained by census, it has been established that the population of Kikinda municipality is mainly Christian, 97, 19\% of which 78, 02\% Orthodox and 19, 17\% Catholic. The rest of 2, 18\% are either of Muslim or Jewish religion (Stamenković, S., 2005, p. 172). The religious structure, just like the ethnic, indicates that living in the district where different nationalities and religions exist is possible only in the conditions of cooperation among the peoples.
3.4. Agriculture and industry as factors of international borderline cooperation

As it has already been stated, agriculture is an important activity of the population in Euroregion DKMT. One of the centers in this region, Kikinda has developed agriculture which supplies food processing industry in the region. However, trans-border cooperation is still not developed enough regarding the exchange agriculture and industrial products due to economic difficulties that Serbia is facing with. The positive thing in the whole Euroregion DKMT is that agriculture and developed food processing industry create possibilities for international cooperation and the exchange of products. Given that Romania possesses more various capacities to operate, the improvement of trans-border cooperation would be of varied importance for cooperation of Serbia and Hungary (Nad, I., Todorović, M., Tosić, B., 2005, p. 103).

3.5. Culture, tourism and education as factors of borderline cooperation

Kikinda is a settlement that has an important cultural function. It is not only the seat of municipality, but also the administrative, governmental and cultural center. The beginnings of culture in this district can be traced back to prehistoric epoch. Rich history, geographic position, multietnic, multicultural and many other characteristics of the climate made Kikinda an important cultural center. Of institutions that are important for culture Kikinda has the National Theatre, the Public Library “Jovan Popović”, the National Museum and the Municipal Archives. All these are places where culture of other nationalities is cherished and passed on to younger generations emphasizing how important international cooperation is. The National Theatre in Kikinda dates back in 1950 and was originally named the Public Amateur Theatre. This theatre has existed for more than 60 years enriching with its activities the theatrical art and cultural life of this and many more places beyond Serbian part of Banat. That Kikinda has always been oriented toward international cooperation is manifested by the fact that the first play that was put on was performed in the German language (The National Museum, 1994, p. 3-10).
The public library "Jovan Popović" is the oldest cultural institution in Kikinda. It was founded like the first “Serbian Reading Room” in 1895 and its activities are closely bonded with the cultural past of all the nationalities that lived on the territory of Kikinda. The first Serbian printing shop was founded in Kikinda in 1878. Up to the beginning of the war, 12 papers were published in Serbian, and a few in Hungarian and German, which points out that Kikinda is an important place where the culture of this part of Banat has always been cherished. The building of the Magistrate of Big Kikinda District houses the following institutions: The National Museum, the Historic Archives, the "Gusle" and the Culture and Education Association. These institutions along with the Youth Center, Hungarian cultural and artistic society “Edseg” and Tamburica orchestra complete the cultural milieu of the town and support the fact that Kikinda is and has been for decades the cultural center of this part of Banat. The grammar school in Kikinda established in 1858 is the oldest secondary school in Kikinda and north Banat and being so has played an important role in cultural and educational life of this area. In elementary schools in Kikinda the pupils of national minorities are being educated in their mother tongue, which is yet another proof that Kikinda is a Europe oriented settlement (the National Museum, 1994, p. 3-10).

Kikinda is renowned for the international symposium of sculpture named "TERRA". It is an ultimate phenomenon in the artistic world. One of the oldest sculpturing techniques, modeling in clay, i.e. realization of baked sculptures of macro format is being applied here. Every year in June, sculptors from all over the world gather in Kikinda and by their artistic creations materialized in this material make Kikinda a significant factor in the development of the world’s sculpture (the National Museum, 1994, p. 3-10). The symposium “TERRA” is of great importance for the development of tourism and a unique event in the whole region DKMT.

Kikinda is also famous for touristic manifestations which attract an increasing number of tourists from different parts of Serbia and borderline areas in Hungary and Romania. "The Pumpkin Days" is a manifestation which every October is visited by a large number of people offering an opportunity to cherish multi culture and international cooperation (www.kikinda.rs).

Over the recent years there have been intensive activities regarding branding of Kikinda mammoth “Kika”. Actually the skeleton of the mammoth was discovered in 1996 and it is one of the few in the world with 90% of the bones preserved. The skeleton of the mammoth apart from becoming the brand of Kikinda is a very promising as a touristic attraction. The target and most favorable group of the tourists is the one from the borderland (www.kika-mamut.com).

4. CONCLUSION

The existence of the Euroregion has broadened the frontiers of international cooperation which are no more the lines that divide peoples and territories. Although the countries in Southeast Europe were suspicious about the idea of Euroregion, the projects that have been carried out have proved beneficial to all countries. Euroregions have helped realize not only economic, social and political cooperation of the member countries, but all other possible forms of cooperation in the field of regional development, tourism, protection of the environment and urbanism. The existence of the mentioned regions is not
important only to developed countries, but it appears even more important for the
developing countries such as Serbia.

The example of Serbia leads to the conclusion that the Euroregion is of varied
significance to peripheral districts in particular. The peripheral districts in Serbia were for
long treated like less worthy and due to years’ long inappropriate and inadequate
investment were held back and stagnated. In almost whole Serbia the borderlands are
neglected compared to the others. They are typical for their depopulation, poor
investments, economy stagnation and underdeveloped tourism. Euroregion can bring a
solution to such districts, for though seemingly of very little potential, they have a lot to
offer. Their potentials can be identified as borderland position, which naturally decreases
the costs of shipment in turnover of products, and multinational and multicultural character.

Kikinda sets an example of prosperity and development brought to a settlement or a
region by the mentioned potentials. It also proves that peripheral position causes difficulties
like depopulation and economic stagnation, but on the other hand creates advantages that
other places do not have. The fact that Kikinda is an hour drive from the borders of
Romania and Hungary is the evidence of the advantage for the people living here referring
their mobility. Since the citizens of Serbia are finally allowed to cross the borders freely,
people living in the borderland have a choice of taking a job in some of the bordering
countries. Despite current trends in Serbia that only big towns are granted “bright future”, it
should be borne in mind that demands for work force in big cities have already been
satisfied. Consequently, there will be an increasing number of people looking for a job in
peripheral districts. On balance, peripheral region have potentials that combined with wise
investments, policy of openness and cooperation with neighbouring countries, and free
market promise prosperity. Naturally the international cooperation is the basis for all
mentioned forms of improvements.

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