



KNOWLEDGE COOPERATION IN METROPOLITAN REGION VIENNA-BRATISLAVA

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Abstract: *The paper presents the results of the international research project Twinregion within the Cross-border cooperation programme Slovakia - Austria 2007-2013 co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The School of Economics and Management in Public Administration in Bratislava is one of the main associates of its international project team. The paper provides basic information regarding the analysis and the current status evaluation of the cross-border cooperation in metropolitan region Vienna and Bratislava. It presents "best practices" of chosen regions in Europe, describes the structure and focus on the drawn up instructions for cross-border cooperation and, finally, it supplies the information on the draft of instrument set up to search for and to compare partner cities within the project region - "Scorecard".*

Key words: *metropolitan region, cross-border cooperation, scorecard*

INTRODUCTION

More than seventy per cent of the European Union inhabitants live in cities and their surroundings. The regions with high concentration of the population require our attention and professional discussion, but not only for this reason. The cities are natural engines of the development of national and regional economies. The concentrations of economic, social and cultural activities are reason for that. The globalisation brings for urban areas of the European Union (EU) additional challenges. The role of the city modifies as well as the requirements for functional agglomeration. Attractive and modern cities have to provide its inhabitants with qualitative environment to live and to work, and at the same time they must be able to create appropriate conditions for the investors. This creates a natural pressure to make the best use of territory potential and to interlink the city centre with its surroundings on most efficient way. In order to achieve these objectives several important European cities have strengthened the cooperation with neighbouring regions (municipalities) and have established so called metropolitan region.

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE SOURCES

The efforts to improve the management of metropolitan cities and regions include activities promoting participatory processes, creation of partnerships with representatives of non-governmental

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sectors and companies, strengthening the effective functioning of local self-government and the reform of bureaucratic and non-functioning structures (UNFPA, 2007). At the same time it is necessary to emphasize that there is no one universal model of metropolitan city or region administration. On the other hand, there exist a set of five principles; in accordance with which the metropolitan structure should be operated (OECD,2000):

- **Competitiveness:** The urban regions are basic components and pillars of the world and the national economy. Following a major reduction of trade barriers and increase of mobility of production factors the metropolitan regions must focus on social and human resources development to attract new investments. Nowadays the competitiveness and the life quality environment provided to residents are important for the success of the metropolitan regions. The city must become more competitive to increase its attractiveness for living and at the same time, the quality of life is an essential factor of the city competitiveness.
- **Cooperation and coordination:** Taking into account the administrative differentiation within the metropolitan regions, then the coordination among cities' and municipalities' self-governing authorities, the coordination among self-governing authorities and particular socio-economic actors from different sectors in the territory concerned should be the priority. At the very beginning it is important to define strategic goals of the cooperation and the way to achieve them. Towns and municipalities within the metropolitan region also have different strengths. The cooperation may bring new opportunities for increase of the region's attractiveness for enterprises and citizens: The larger cities may be attractive from the perspective of job possibilities, while the smaller surrounding cities and municipalities are able to offer a high-quality environment for living of new employees and their families. The cooperation is especially important in times of adverse economic development when the partners are able to overcome better the negative consequences of the crisis in basic sectors (Hutton, 2007).
- **Flexibility, efficiency and expertise:** The institutions responsible for the administration must adapt to ongoing changes. A dynamic environment requires continuous updating of tools to achieve the strategic goals of metropolitan region. Administration oriented to achievements and quality of human resources is essential part of the metropolitan region success. Particular institutions and structures must be able to mobilise public and private resources for the implementation of common development strategies and plans.
- **Openness:** The modern metropolitan region should take full into account the opinion of relevant players, groups of citizens, social partners, business world as well as various levels of self-government. New technologies and communication forms have significantly enhance the interaction of particular structures; they promote the openness of the processes and the adoption of basic decisions within the metropolitan region. Its administration should be transparent and as close as possible to the residents and business entities.
- **Sustainability:** The economic, social and environmental objectives must be integrated into the developing strategies of metropolitan areas and regions. These objectives should be in balance, and the promoting of the objectives in one area should not be a barrier for the implementation of objectives in other areas. Results-oriented administration should take full account of short, medium and long-term interests of the region. In the social field, the activities should take into account the need to strengthen the social cohesion. In relation to the environment, the administration of metropolitan region requires improvement and maintenance of quality and environmental potential of the region for future generations. Only the development of the city and the region, which does not disturb the ecological stability of the territory, is currently a specific challenge for larger metropolitan regions in Europe.

The spectrum of knowledge-based cooperation is specified through six areas: information and communication platforms, identity and marketing of the metropolitan region, educational networks,

coordination of regional development plans, and development of economic sites and innovative and sustainable use of resources.

For the development of the cooperation it is very important to collect and to present needs and possibilities of the cooperation. In addition to information and discussion events the internet based platforms and evidences on the existing plans and possibilities can start the future cooperation. In generally it can be stated that there is a lack on transparent and standardised information for potential cooperation partners in the cities and particularly the required information in foreign languages (German and English) are missing, too. In addition to the general information about the cities the information and communication platforms shall present information on urban infrastructure, services and infrastructure projects, publication of local developing concepts, databases of sites or portals providing information on industrial sites, geodetic information etc.

A joint external presentation using websites, information and promotion materials is one of the basic preconditions for establishing a sustainable structure of cooperation. This can be reinforced by measures supporting identity to create awareness of the agglomeration as e.g. elaboration and presentation of connecting elements and potentials of the region, presentation of local specialities and producers. In the framework of a marketing cooperation it is also possible to determine the thematic core points of places/cities and therefore to create the basis for regional developing concepts, or concepts of tourism.

Management of relations is important not only in the commercial field (Mura, 2005), but in the municipal or non-profit sphere, too. Establishing personal relationships is a key factor for adapting cooperation between the cities. The organisation of joint trainings, support of the transfer of know-how within the communities of further education and meetings of experts are approved tools to achieve required goals. The measures of further education can be used in almost all relevant municipal topics and they have due to the multiplicand effect a very significant impact on the creation of a strong, through awareness and identity. They prepare the way for joint cooperation. Joint bilingual initiatives of further education for persons working in the field of children care, for teachers at primary and secondary schools and especially for the employees of the public administration are first possibilities of cooperation. For this purpose it is recommended to set up communities of further education, which will organise the transfer of know-how in a specific group of staff of particular industry on the basis of regular meetings, experts' round tables, excursions, and other information events.

There is a high need for cooperation in the field of compliance and coordination of commune infrastructure and regional development in small regions, particularly in the cross-borders regions and in the surroundings of Bratislava. A transparent display and bilingual availability of possibilities and relevant regional projects give inputs for cooperation of municipalities. The motives for cooperation may refer to:

- alignment of construction and residential development as well as the traffic development,
- regional coordination of the planning and management of urban infrastructure facilities,
- optimization of the site selection and minimisation of negative impacts of huge projects,
- cooperative elaboration of development projects of small regions as well as the regional economic plan.

The cities situated more far away from each other can focus on the cooperation regarding exchange of information on current issues as for example how to revitalize the city centres.

Generally, cities and municipalities are competing to attract investors; thereby the position of particular cities is getting weaker. On the other hand the investors are missing the information on extent and accessibility of convenient areas in the region. The co-operative sale of appropriate sites or objects in the towns of TwinRegion could strengthen the attractiveness of the region in worldwide competition and attract other investors. A co-operative bargaining of cities towards investors – regional site marketing – would strengthen their position and weaken competition.

Cross-border partnerships yield stronger effects of energy saving for all participants through harmonised cooperation. In addition, it is possible to reach faster the achievements based on intensive technologies and experience exchange. Greater use of renewable energy resources strengthens the

independence of fossil energy resources and enables cities to a sustainable economic development protecting as well as the environment and climate, as humans by reduction of loads. Not only the elaboration of regional and municipal energetic concepts in the field of renewable energy sources but also other diverse options may strengthen the cooperation on the field of biomass, biogas, bio oil, wind energy, PV and thermal solar energy, e-mobility and water power plants.

METHODS

The aim of this study is to present and to assess the existing conditions of the agglomerations of Vienna – Bratislava (TwinRegion) and to identify possibilities of intensifying knowledge cooperation between the regions of Vienna and Bratislava.

In the first place the following definition is meant to describe the spatial orientation, potentially to describe the region as a base for source data. The core of the TwinRegion consists of:

- regions of NUTS III – Bratislava and Trnava in the Slovak Republic and Weinviertel, the Wiener Umland-Nordteil, Wiener Umland Südteil, Nordburgenland, and the city of Vienna in Austria;
- all cities over 10,000 population in the availability of approximately one hour drive using individual transport from the cities of Vienna and Bratislava.

The research was carried out in the form of an interview during seminars organised in the framework of the project Twinregion in the period from May 2011 to December 2011 and was attended by 63 representatives from Austrian and Slovak municipalities and institutions in the Twinregion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews with representatives of the municipalities, as well as experts' seminars have clearly showed that there is a great potential for cooperation in the project region. However, so far it has failed to implement a sustainable base for common development strategies and activities.

Critical factors are different local framework conditions, different starting conditions, and fear of losing own identity, operational requirements, the language factor and tense cross-border relations.

Different local framework conditions and questions regarding the added value of cooperation between Vienna and its nearby municipalities and Bratislava and its nearby municipalities: Especially the imbalance regarding the size and the economic power makes the conditions for building the confidence needed for cooperation more difficult. The small municipalities very often express prejudices against large cities as Vienna or Bratislava. The rule – a transparent display of different starting conditions – has to be applied and the purpose and the benefits of cooperation have to be jointly defined. It allows then to present and to control clearly the added value of cooperation. It is also very important to take into account the specific characteristics of the targeted municipalities so that they did not feel disadvantaged.

The fear of losing their own identity: The concerns regarding the loss of flexibility and the impact of the management as a consequence of the devolution of decision-making powers to the level of cooperation are often the causes for low readiness to collaborate in smaller municipalities. The fear of smaller municipalities of losing importance and own identity within the cooperation among unequal partners can be added to this concerns.

Operational requirements: The cooperation costs money, time and personnel (lacking resources) and requires usually changes. The higher level of cooperation requires more time and costs, which may constitute some barriers for smaller and financially weaker communities to cooperate. Particularly in the area of complex tasks and high investments needs (e.g. supplying of drinking water, waste disposal, industrial parks) finding balance between benefits and costs among cooperating partners requires in some cases increase in staff or financing. Summarizing: "Just in case, if the cooperation benefits are for all partners sufficient (a win-win situation), they will be ready to put up with their costs and possible disadvantages" (Huber, 2009).

The language factor cannot be missed out in cross-border cooperation. Only in exceptions the cooperation partners can speak German or Slovak, therefore English usually becomes a working

language of the cooperation. Based on the experiences it can be stated that these circumstances make it more difficult to involve local experts in the cooperation.

Also a tense cross-border relationship opens the discussions: Superior strategies versus concrete projects. Common concept (model) would promote the identity and facilitate the cooperation. On the other hand, the implementation of smaller projects and sustainable cooperation in the region may be an engine of further cooperation.

CONCLUSION

If a political decision on the initiation of cooperation must be taken, the most important task of the experts of the participating cities will be to explain to the politicians of the participating cities and municipalities the benefits of the cooperation. The political agreement of decision makers is a basic prerequisite for the implementation of the cooperation.

The trust is essential for good and successful cooperation. It is based on formal and binding rules as well as on good personal relationships among the representatives of the institutions (Huber, 2009). "The cooperation rises and falls mostly with people who stand behind it" (ÖROK, 2009). The measures to strengthen the cooperation as open discussion, transparency, participation of the inhabitants etc. should be a permanent part of the cooperation concept.

The classic urban tasks as a basis of the cooperation may be usually adapted in the later stages of cooperation. It is recommended to start with the measures establishing the identity to build the mutual trust that the individual actors do not concern on their roles or identity regarding the cooperation. The topics as information and communication, marketing or know-how exchange are more appropriate at the beginning of cooperation, building confidence and preparing the way for the achievement of common goals. The further cooperation regarding the commune services can follow when the common identity of the metropolitan region Vienna/Bratislava is built up.

The themes regarding planning are suitable for mutual learning how to align the strategic and development plans. This can be well in looser forms of co-operation without extensive legislation.

For targeted support and the initiation of cooperation it is necessary to have one or more independent intermediaries, who have not only long-standing experience in the communal politics, but they are also in close contact with local and regional actors, and are also respected by them.

The participating persons – the representatives of various institutions as well as the independent promoters play a significant role especially in initiating phase. The identification, connection and getting these people for planned cooperation is a central task of a commercial place, which acts as the first contact point, and managing place for cooperation.

Last but not least and less important is the targeted promotion of cooperation in particular projects, which increases the benefit, and enhances the sustainable cooperation among municipalities. Therefore from regional and national level of public administration will be required to provide respective financial and non-financials inputs to support the cooperation among municipalities. The commercial place may inform about possibilities of support, providing funds, as well as offering support services.

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