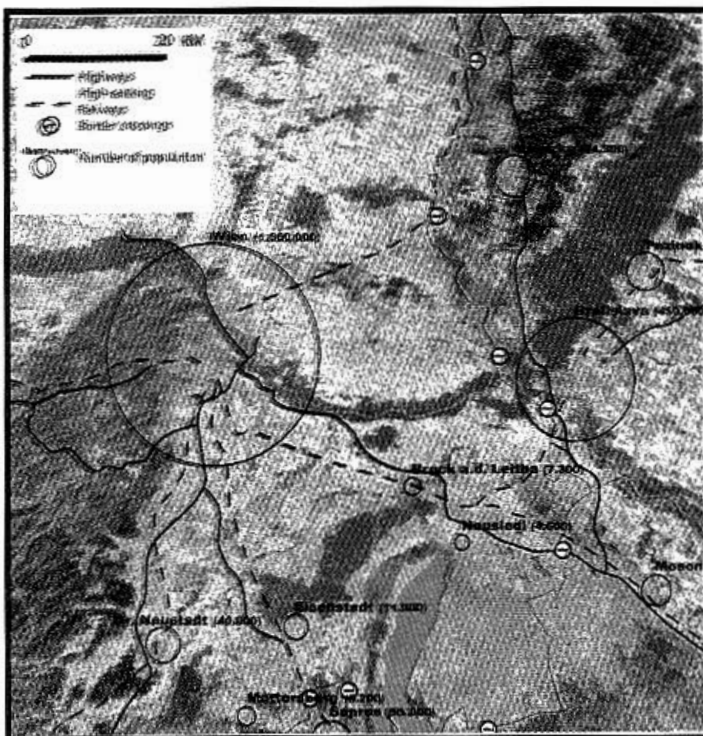


Hannes Schaffer*

FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR THE VIENNA REGION

HISTORY



The Vienna Region with the Austrian parts of Niederösterreich and Burgenland, the Hungarian region Győr-Mozon-Sopron, the Slovakian surroundings of Bratislava as well as South Bohemia and South Moravia in the Czech Republic looks back at a long common history and had strong functional ties in the past. Only political events in the 20th century turned that region into a border region. Even though economic and systemic differences currently exist, the accession to the EU of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary revives the spatial

functionality of the region that is reflected in cross-border economic, cultural and social activities. The spatial development after 2004 knows no borders any more - policy still does.

CENTROPE AS PATH FOR COMMON FUTURE

The CENTROPE region, strategically located in the heart of the "New Europe", is one of the continent's most dynamic economic regions. The creation of a cross-border economic region in the heart of Europe is one of the greatest opportunities for Vienna, offered by the European enlargement.

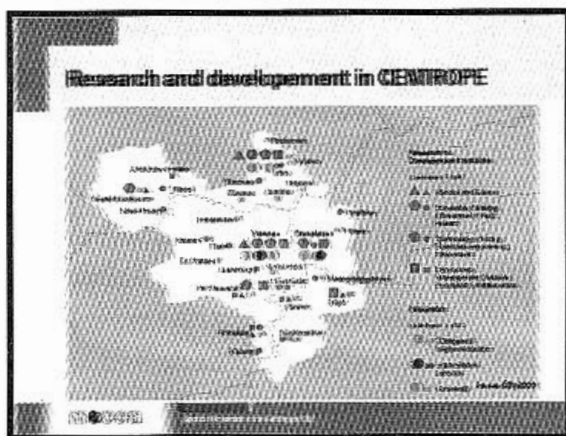
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The four neighbouring countries constitute a region which is diverse in terms of its citizens and markets. Intensive cooperation can make the region unique, attractive and strong: capable of meeting the challenges posed by the competition between the European regions. The economic and politic success of the Vienna region is, according to my view, dependant on the following preconditions

1. There has to be a common system of science, education and research
2. The transport and telecommunication infrastructure should not only link the region to all the other parts of the world but also guarantee crossborder connections within the different parts of the Vienna region
3. There should be clear political mechanism to handle crossborder conflicts and to find consensus about common development visions

Focus 1: The system of education and research

Typical for the entire CENTROPE region is a broad offer of educational and qualification institutions and the respectively high level of qualification of the population. The systems of school education in the CENTROPE countries hardly differ from each another. Basically, all four countries have general secondary schools, technical and economic higher secondary schools, and specialised colleges and universities. The educational system meets the needs of a competitive economy" very high.



Nevertheless there is not enough cooperation in this field, especially among universities. As an indicator for the technological performance capability of an economy, the volume of spending on research and development in percentage of GDP is used (R&D ratio). Austria achieves the European average with approx. 1.9%, the Czech Republic with 1.3% (a value that is higher than the figures for the Southeastern EU member states), while

Slovakia (0.7%) and Hungary (0.8%) are at around 40% of the EU average.

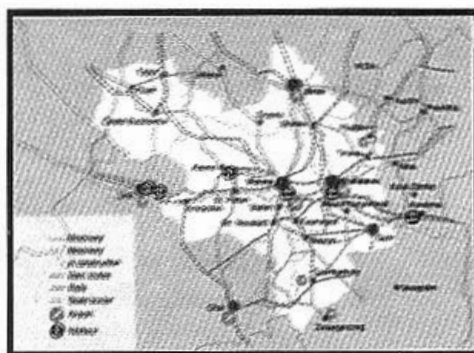
Focus 2: Infrastructure, Transport and Traffic

The international airports of Vienna/Schwechat, Brno and Bratislava Ivanka provide expedient connections around the globe. The Brno airport currently provides various charter flights.

Vienna International Airport has emerged as one of Europe's most significant transportation hubs, particularly to Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Its 55 airlines

reach 137 destinations including 38 Eastern European cities.

Nevertheless there are still a lot of lacks in the rail- and road infrastructure. It is, for example, still not possible to travel from Vienna to Bratislava by highway or to buy a railway ticket to the neighbouring capital by internet.



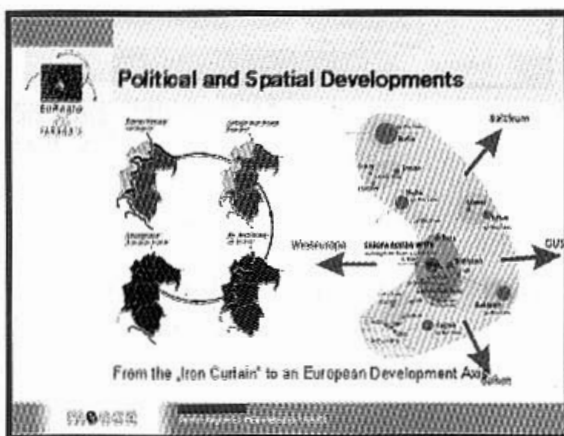
Focus 3: Political decision making across borders

In this field there is still a lot of progress that has to be made. There is, however, one positive examples for a region within CENTROPE where this problem has already sucessfully been tackled. One of the most sucessful examples is the EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia.

EUREGIO WEST/NYUGAT PANNONIA A SUCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF POLITICAL DECISION MAKING ACROSS BORDERS

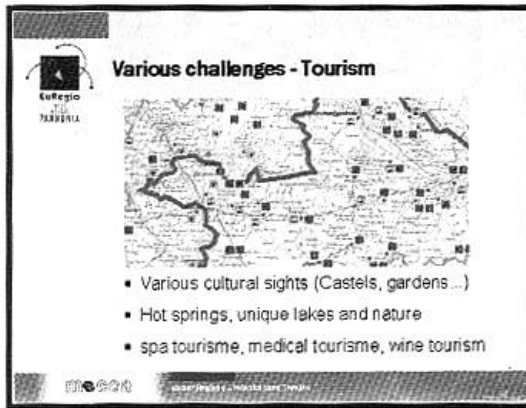
The EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia, situated in the heart of Europe, is based on four Regions: the Austrian federal country Burgenland and the Hungarian counties Győr-Moson-Sopron, Vas and Zala.

1,3 Million people live in the Region, which is nearby the capitals Vienna and Bratislava. The society has historically multicultural and multilingual roots and a common natural und cultural heritage. Transborder Cooperation has a long tradition.



One of the strongest links is the common landscape with its various natural resources. Starting from the Danube, connecting the counties in the north, going over to the Neusiedler See/Fertö as a common UNESCO World Heritage, and ending in the almost endless lowlands of the Pusta West/Nyugat Pannonia offers unique natural values. Unique is also the concentration of hot springs on both sides of the border. Huge winegrowing areas give a special flair to this region.

On one hand the region is extremely interesting for tourism on the other hand it offers various opportunities for renewable energy forms (biomass, hot springs). Spas

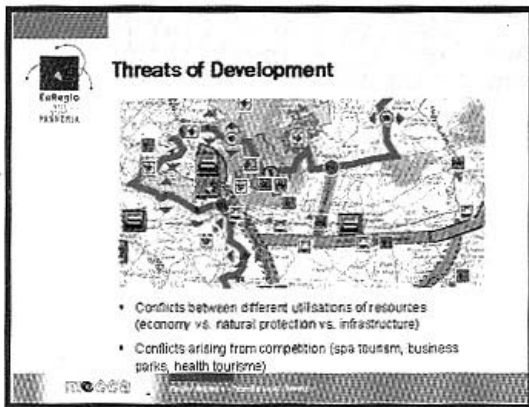


attract the segment of wellness tourism, nature parks and lakes offer hiking, cycling, sailing and swimming possibilities.

High economic dynamics of the last ten years led to fast structural changes. Expanding infrastructure and low labour unit costs attracted foreign investment. Industries of scale (car industry Győr) found their location in the region. Various opportunities of higher

education were established. Also specialised research institutions (renewable energy in Güssing) were established.

Different demands to the space can lead to conflicts. A wider intensification of for example touristical infrastructure at the Neusiedler See can put at risk its natural

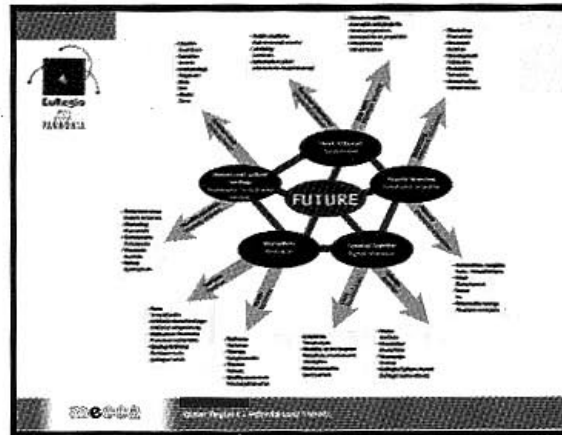
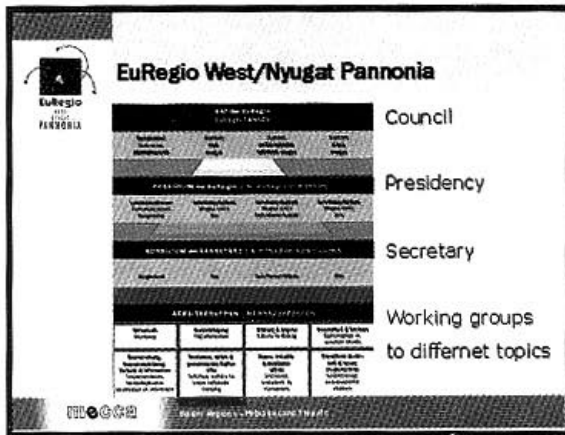


potential. Also new roads through nature parks can cause conflicts (B50). The trans-border dimension of the region makes it more difficult. As the region offers spas on both sides of the border one dimensional competition can lead to various irritations. The lack of embedding of foreign economies of scale in the local economy is another problem, which can effect the region due to rising labour costs. Even if a lot of pioneer work

concerning renewable energy has been done, the sector is dependent of public encouragements.

To handle transborder developments and conflicts an European Region, the EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia has been established. Officially represented by a council and presidency, composed of the political representatives of the counties, managed by the secretary, consisting of the regional managements of both sides and as regards content build up from working groups, composed of local administrative experts, the EuRegio fulfils more or less its tasks since 1998.

Due to its complex structure, decisions, which are more or less policy papers, take long time and consensus must be found in long term discussions. But nevertheless the EuRegio West/Nyugat Pannonia managed to formulate a common development vision which is valid and binding for the Austrian and the Hungarian part of the region.



The Development Vision gives also ways of solving the conflict. Coordination in general is essential - first of all information and communication of spatial developments on both sides of the border. To avoid economical irritations for example in the field of tourism, focusing on different target groups is important and can strengthen the region as a whole. Facing the threat of moving industries of scale towards the east, a stronger implementation of suppliers networks is necessary. One of the common strengths of the region is its natural and cultural heritage. In this field cooperation should be carried on and intensified and be archetypical, because developers on both sides have yet discovered the potential of cooperation: United we stand, divided we fall.

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