

Experiences with the use of European Union resources in the Southern Great Plain region (Hungary) in 2007–2008

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Abstract

From the very formation of the European Union there have existed regions with different natural and social endowments. This causes a diversity in living conditions, income, and maturity within the integration. To reduce the socio-economic disparities between regions, and to raise the lagging ones are the major tasks within the EU in order to strengthen social and economic cohesion. The 2007–2013 year planning period for the first time opened an opportunity for the regions to develop separate operational programs in the EU. The present study summarizes the results of a survey which examined the direct or indirect resources that arrived into the region during the first two years (2007–2008) of the Southern Great Plain's Operational Program (SGPOP). An analysis is made how the EU funds were used, which part of the regional operational program was financed from them and how the mechanism for resource allocation worked.

Keywords: European Union, regional development, regional policy, Southern Great Plain

Introduction

Hungary's accession to the European Union in 2004 opened up new prospects for ample improvement in functioning of the country's urban system. The EU-membership has brought along a significant change in the settlement development in Hungary due to the access to the new financial resources providing new opportunities.

The resources provided by the EU funds support the advancement of the economic and social cohesion and balanced territorial development. From 1990 Hungary was a beneficiary of the PHARE (*Poland and Hungary: Aid for Restructuring of the Economies*) Program, which provided non-refundable resources to enhance the transition process into market economy, to advance the establishment of political democracy and to facilitate the integration process and the preparations for obtaining EU-membership (HORVÁTH, Gy. 2001). From 2000 on, Hungary received a share from the two pre-accession funds: SAPARD

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and ISPA. While the PHARE Program mainly prepared Hungary for the utilization of the Social and Regional Development Fund, the SAPARD Program paved the way for the reception of the Agricultural Fund whereas the ISPA Program did it for the use of the support from Cohesion Fund. The significance of these programs amounts to much more than the financial advantages they provide. These programs could make Hungary acquire the knowledge necessary for handling the rather complicated procedures and performing tasks in relation with the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

Hungary established relationships with the European Committee as early as the first days of the change of regime and signed the articles of partnership in 1991. Among the first ones in Central Eastern Europe the country submitted its application for the EU accession in 1994 (FARAGÓ, L. 2000). The Regional Development Policy of Hungary underwent a significant qualitative change in 1996, when the XXI Act on Spatial Development and Planning was passed including the establishment of the institutional system of regional policy as its greatest achievement (FORMAN, B. 2001). In 1996 the Act did not take the responsibility of accomplishing the "top-down" regionalisation of the country, but it determined the regional levels and their range of tasks delegating some of the latter to organizations for public benefit (HRUBI, L. 2000). The range of actions of regional politics is determined on the one hand by the institutional, operational and financial reforms of the EU and by its Eastern extension, and on the other hand by the decentralisation processes within the national states (MICHALSKI, A. and SARACENO, E. 2000). As a consequence of the decentralisation it may occur that the consolidation of the regional level is not followed by cooperation between the local and other sub-regional authorities. The networks established between the various levels, sectors and actors as a rule improve the innovative capacity and flexibility of the regions significantly (CAPELLIN, R. 1997).

On May 1, 2004 the European Union welcomed 10 new member states in the Union and Hungary was one of them (PROBÁLD, F. and SZABÓ, P. 2007; NEMES NAGY, J. 2009). The benefits of the Eastern extension were expected from the region's dynamism and consequently from the increase of the EU's inner market and the growth of the EU's weight in world economy.

The economic development of the new member states is accelerated by the support granted from the EU funds. By the harmonized regulations, the risk foreign investors hitherto had to take has become reduced, thus the inflow of the capital could be growing. After the accession the newly accepted member states had the right to participate in the EU's decision making processes in those pointing out the future trends of the development over the whole continent (PROBÁLD, F. and SZABÓ, P. 2007).

In the financial period of 2000–2013 more than one third of the budget was aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the EU's regional policy. More than

80 per cent of the whole sum is devoted to facilitate “convergence”. Within the framework of the “convergence”, the poorest countries and regions of the EU (among them Hungary and the Southern Great Plain region) are eligible to obtain financial support. There are significant differences regarding the economic structure and the development levels of the EU member states and regions (PROBÁLD, F. and SZABÓ, P. 2007). Various methods have been used to reduce or balance these territorial differences, and depending on the methods the states and regions use, they may become either losers or winners (HORVÁTH, Gy. 2009).

The primary objective of the policies in the European Community is to achieve balanced, harmonic development, which is not equal to “general” spatial development. Rather the policies highlight the most important developmental factors of the various territories, emphasise these factors and indicate the developmental directions, taking into consideration the most important characteristics of the various regions (CSATÁRI, B. 2002). STÖHR, W. and TÖDLING, F. (1997) point out that the concept of “spatial equity” is rather changeable regarding its content. According to their research the internationally defined aim of spatial and settlement development policies are to create spatial equity and reduce inequality.

The agreements and documents of the EU concern all the member states impartially, but their effects may be different in the various member states and regions (HAMEDINGER, A. *et al.* 2008).

By now it has become obvious that in certain territories of the EU the financial resources distributed for developmental purposes have not yielded sufficient results (BOLDRIN, M. and CANOVA, F. 2001; PUGA, D. 2002), which is the case in Hungary as well. It is impossible to control the spatial processes without monitoring them. This is the reason why the analysis of the spatial data is essential and has great importance in predicting the outcomes (KIS, K. 2008).

The Community’s most important strategic aim is to mitigate the backwardness and to develop the regions. The member states and their regions receive significant monetary support from the common budget to overcome the differences (HORVÁTH, Gy. 2009).

The changing role of the territorial levels in the new access countries

Comparing the countries that joined the European Union in 2004, it can be concluded that the territorial levels of the countries gain different functions.

– In *Poland* the spatial planning, regional development and economic development belong to the regions’ range of authority (YOUNG, C. and KACZMAREK, S. 2000; SWIANIEWICZ, P. 2006).

– In the *Czech Republic* and in *Slovakia* the function of territorial development, which is rather important for the local economic development, also belongs to the regions' responsibility (JÓZSA, Z. 2006), but local governments have important functions as well (MEZEI, C. 2006).

– In *Lithuania* the supervision of the use of territory, planning, education, the support of training and employment fall to the scope of the regions, however, in the field of infrastructural development the local governments also have the right to intervene (PETKEVICIUS, A. and LINERTAS, R. 2005). The role of the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) being active participants in the management of the projects, is changing from country to country. RDAs are actually the actors between the public sphere and the market sector. Though forming part of the state governance still they are financed from public funds (PÁLNÉ KOVÁCS, I. 2003).

– In *Latvia* the development concepts of the planning statistical regions are prepared by the RDAs, at the same time they cooperate with the local governments and with the regional organs (ESPON 2006).

– In *Romania* the RDAs are subordinated to the Regional Development Councils (RDC).

– In *Slovenia* the RDAs are the representatives of the settlements' interests both on local and national level, and also in the structures of the Union. Their task is to prepare the regional plans, to initiate regional developmental projects, to present them at public tenders and to monitor and evaluate these projects.

– In *Slovakia* the RDAs function as the local and regional governments' educational institutions, methodological centres or EU related centres for consultation (BUČEK, J. 2005).

– In *Bulgaria* the agencies operating in developmental-financial regions both coordinate the resources deriving from the Structural Funds and play a mediating and communicating role between the public and the private spheres.

The *Hungarian* RDAs are not only the operative organs of the Regional Councils, but they also play an active, initiating role in spatial development (SOMLYÓDINÉ PFEIL, E. 2004), and as a re-conciliating organisation of the regional operational programs, they also manage the EU applications and participate in regional innovative and international projects.

Southern Great Plain region

Taking into consideration the state of infrastructural development, the Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld) usually is listed as underdeveloped macro-region in Hungary. This statement is exaggerated and it simplifies the existing differ-

ences in the urban system of the Great Hungarian Plain (Kovács, Z. 1999). The Great Hungarian Plain is one of the most extensive physico-geographical units of Hungary. The endangered state of its environment, the structural problems of its economy, the unique structure of its settlement system, the state of its infrastructural development contribute to the area's being "different", due to its unique characteristic features that are strikingly different from those of other Hungarian regions.

On the basis of NUTS2 Great Hungarian Plain consists of two parts: Northern Great Plain and Southern Great Plain regions. By area Southern Great Plain located in the south-eastern part of Hungary, is the largest region in the country. Southern Great Plain is covered by Bács-Kiskun, Békés and Csongrád counties. Most of the territory is flat – no more than 200 m above sea level – and rich in diverse natural assets and landscapes. Given the number of municipalities (254 being the lowest value within one region compared with the rest of the country) and the size of the region Southern Great Plain has the lowest density of municipalities in Hungary. However, with 49 towns, it is also the second most urbanized area of the country after Northern Great Plain (Figure 1).

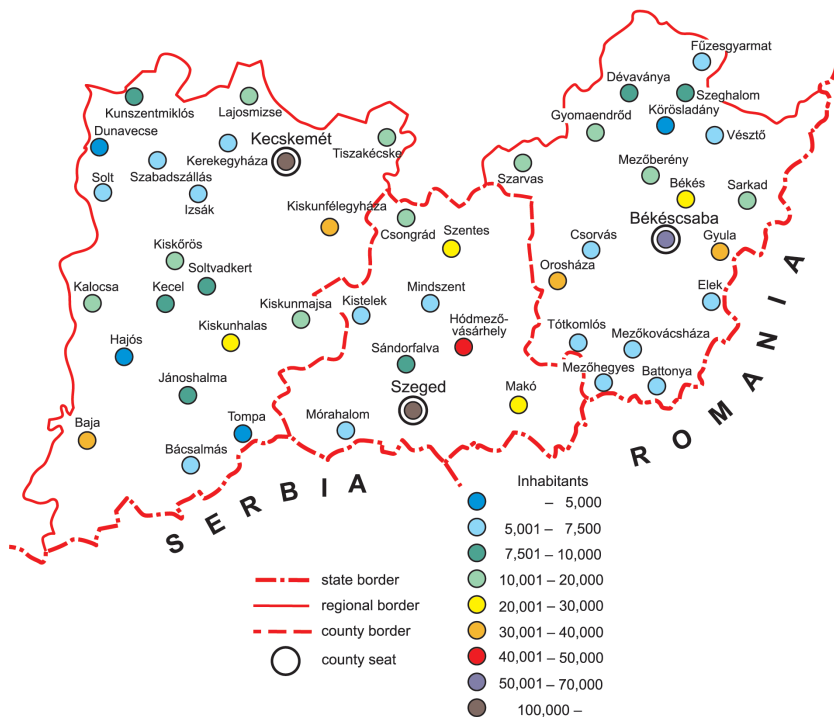


Fig. 1. Size of urban settlements in Southern Great Plain. Source: Own editing on the basis of Statistical Yearbook, 2008

Municipalities lagging behind in regional, social and economic terms include villages and towns alike and these municipalities represent 42 per cent of all populated areas. It is highly typical of the network of municipalities in Southern Great Plain that there is an increasingly varied range of scattered farmsteads, which constitute an integral part of the municipalities and therefore they cannot be developed separately from them (SGPOP).

Taking into consideration the GDP per capita, of all the Hungarian regions only Central Hungary belongs to the “Competitiveness and Employment Regions”, all the other ones are “Convergence Regions”. The present study deals exclusively with the “Convergence Regions”. Of the latter Southern Great Plain is among the most populous ones in Hungary being second only to Northern Great Plain (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Comparative figures for regions in Hungary

Region	Population, person	GDP per capita, 1,000 HUF*	Share of GDP, per cent*	EU source development, 2007–2013, billion HUF**
Southern Great Plain	1,334,506	1,564	8.8	207.05
Southern Transdanubia	960,088	1,596	6.5	194.99
Northern Great Plain	1,514,020	1,490	9.6	269.64
Northern Hungary	1,236,690	1,512	8.0	249.91
Central Transdanubia	1,104,841	2,139	10.0	140.46
Central Hungary	2,897,317	3,921	47.1	430.29
Western Transdanubia	997,939	2,370	10.0	128.25
<i>Total</i>	<i>10,045,401</i>	<i>2,363</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>1,620.59</i>

* 2006 data, ** data calculated on 2007 prices

Source: Own editing on the basis of Hungarian Statistical Yearbook 2007, and regional development operational programs

Regarding the GDP per capita, Southern Great Plain is far from being in the leading group. When compared to the other regions, it is considered to be a medium-ranked one. If the financial resources distributed by the EU in the 2007–2013 period are taken into account, it can be seen that the regions with lower GDP and development level have gained stronger financial support. The greatest amount of the EU-resources was received by Northern Great Plain, followed by Northern Hungary, whereas Southern Great Plain ranked third.

The financial period of 2007–2013 was the first one, when the regions were given the opportunity to work out their independent operational programs for the utilization of the financial resources allocated for development purposes (*Table 2*).

The Southern Great Plain’s Operational Program (SGPOP) was the first Hungarian regional programme that was accepted by the European Commission in July, 2007. The first tenders for applying for the EU-resources

Table 2. Southern Great Plain's Operative Program resources allocated and announced during the 2007–2013 planning period

Priority number and name	Source 2007–2013, million HUF*	Announced source in 2007–2008, million HUF		Advertised resources in relation to the annual source in 7 years period, %
		Tendering	Featured project	
1. Regional economic development	37,523	5,471	1,120	17.6
2. Tourism-related development	39,608	18,324	4,500	57.6
3. Development of transport infrastructure	45,677	13,951	4,844	41.1
4. Human infrastructure development	40,648	23,785	0	58.5
5.1. Urban development actions	26,578	6,502	2,999	35.7
5.2. Settlement development with environmental focus	18,426	4,570	5,778	56.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>208,460</i>	<i>72,603</i>	<i>19,241</i>	<i>44.1</i>

* Data corrected on 2009 prices

Source: Own edition based on data from Southern Great Plain Regional Development Agency (SGPRDA) and National Development Agency (NDA)

available from 2007 were published in April 2007. Since then 53 tenders have been invited. The financial resources could be applied for by submitting projects within the framework of one- or two-round procedures. In case of two-round procedures the preliminary proposal of the project had to be submitted first, and the detailed project was to be submitted only later, in case the preliminary proposal had been accepted and its further elaboration advised.

The aim of the two-round procedure is to make it easier for the large investments with the requirement to elaborate the projects in more detail only if they have not been rejected in the first round. The projects of high priority are the special ones that are approved by the national government, and thus they are treated differently.

The analysis of the submitted projects

During the first two years of the implementation of the SGPOP nearly 45 per cent of the financial resources of the 7 year-long financial period became applicable. 60 per cent of the financial resources aimed improving tourism and human infrastructure became applicable in the first two years of the period. In connection with the tenders invited in 2007 and 2008, 1315 project proposals arrived at the Instrumental Constitution from the region (Table 3). The outstandingly high proportion (46.5 per cent) of the projects aims to develop human infrastructure.

Table 3. *Tenders received for the SGPOP in 2007–2008*

SGPOP priorities	Advertised resources (million Ft)	Tenders received		Claims received / available resource share, %
		Number (pieces)	need for support (in millions Ft)	
1. Regional economic development	5,471	70	6,842	125.1
2. Tourism-related development	18,324	120	24,877	135.8
3. Development of transport infrastructure	13,951	405	43,869	314.5
4. Human infrastructure development	23,785	611	85,930	361.3
5.1. Urban development actions	6,502	48	16,615	255.5
5.2. Settlement development with environmental focus	4,570	61	11,713	256.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>72,603</i>	<i>1,315</i>	<i>189,846</i>	<i>261.5</i>

Source: Own editing based on data of SGPRA and NDA

Other substantial part (30.8 per cent) of the projects is related to the development of transport infrastructure.

The amount of the required financial support of the submitted applications three times exceeds that of the available financial resources, which shows the region's sore need for sources of development. The invited financial resources to develop human infrastructure proved to be insufficient, as applicants would require 3.5 times more money. The greatest need for the financial resources appeared in the fields of transport infrastructure and educational infrastructure. School buildings and equipment in Southern Great Plain badly need modernisation, which is strikingly visible. The greatest interest was shown in the complex projects aiming to improve the infrastructure of educational institutions on the elementary and the secondary levels and of dormitories. Most of the projects arrived at the Instrumental Constitution in this area, claiming financial support five times more than the available sum.

The number of the submitted projects and the claims for the financial resources show uniform distribution between the three counties (Csongrád, Bács-Kiskun and Békés) of the region. Taking into consideration the main indicators related to the territory and the population of the counties, it is Bács-Kiskun County that claimed 34.9 per cent of the region's financial resources. This value is only slightly above one third still it does not reach the county's share within the regional population or territory of the region, which means that Bács-Kiskun County is under-represented in the 2007–2008 period. On the other hand 32.4 per cent of the submit-

Table 4. Tenders received according to settlement types

Settlement categories (resident population)	Advertised resources (million Ft)	Tenders received		Settlement rate of total need for support %
		Number (pieces)	Need for support (in millions Ft)	
County Town		183	32,687	17.2
Populous city of 30,000 inhabitants		85	21,361	11.3
Towns with population between 10,000 and 30,000	72,603	215	43,648	23.0
Towns with population of 10,000 inhabitants		235	36,198	19.1
Municipalities		597	55,951	29.5
<i>Total</i>		<i>1,315</i>	<i>189,846</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Own edition based on data from SGPRDA and NDA

ted projects from Békés, and especially 32.7 per cent from Csongrád (the latter with a territorial share of 23.2 per cent within the region), indicate overrepresentation of these two counties.

If the number of the submitted projects and the amount of financial resources claimed in them are also compared to the different types of settlements, a rather surprising result is obtained (Table 4).

Analysing the number of the submitted projects and the claims for financial resources, it can be seen that the major part of claims was submitted by villages. 45 per cent of all the competing projects and 30 per cent of the claims for financial support originated from these types of settlements. This is due to the thematic separation of the Sectoral Operational Programs (SOP) and the Regional Operational Programs (ROP). While the larger towns can finance their development from the resources of the Sectoral Operational Programs, the opportunities of the smaller settlements are rather limited. They can promote their development by using the financial resources obtained from the SGOP or occasionally from the Rural Development Programs.

The analysis of the projects from financial point of view shows that the average financial requirement of a project is nearly 150 million HUF. The projects that claim less than this amount were submitted by the villages. This is due to both the size of the projects and the restricting effect of the shortage of the settlements in own resources. Taking into consideration the type of settlement where the projects were submitted, it can be concluded that the number of the

Table 5. Rate of supported/received tenders

SGPOP priorities	Advertised resources (million HUF)	Tenders received		Tenders supported		Rate of supported of received tenders %	
		Number (pieces)	Need for support (million HUF)	Number (pieces)	Total support (million HUF)	Based on number of tenders, %	Based on amount of support, %
1. Regional economic development	5,471	70	6,842	37	3,680	52.9	53.8
2. Tourism-related development	18,324	120	24,877	47	9,651	39.2	38.8
3. Development of transport infrastructure	13,951	405	43,869	136	16,437	33.6	37.5
4. Human infrastructure development	23,785	611	85,930	171	15,308	28.0	17.8
5.1. Urban development actions	6,502	48	16,615	10	455	20.8	2.7
5.2. Settlement development with environmental focus	4,570	61	11,713	17	4,558	27.9	38.9
<i>Total</i>	72,603	1,315	189,846	418	50,088	31.8	26.4

Source: Own edition based on data from SGP RDA and NDA

submitted projects is in direct proportion to the size of the settlements. While the urban counties (towns with county rights) submitted 46 projects on an average, villages presented 2–3 projects at tenders to receive financial resources from the SGPOP.

The analysis of the supported projects

During the evaluating process of the projects, the Examination Committees decide whether certain projects are supported or rejected and whether the projects of two-round procedure are to be remodelled. The division of the winning projects according to the developmental spheres in Southern Great Plain is the following (Table 5).

As it is visible the amount of the claimed financial resources was 2.5 times higher than the available sum, however only 70 per cent of the available sum was distributed and 26.4 per cent of the submitted projects were decided to be supported.

There are several reasons behind this fact:

1. In case of two-round-procedures, the ultimate decisions regarding the range of the supported projects has not been taken yet,

2. The submitted and professionally acceptable projects (e.g. developing cluster management, creating barrier-free spaces) have not required all the available financial resources,

3. In case of several tender implications, there were no sufficient financial resources to support the professionally correct projects.

Taking into consideration the decisions about the supported projects taken in the first round of the two-round-procedures, the winning projects are going to receive nearly 95 per cent of the available financial resources. (In the areas of human infrastructure and environmental development this percentage is nearly 100 per cent.)

If the proportion of the supported projects within the submitted ones is examined, it can be seen that the projects submitted in the field of regional economic development were the most successful. On the one hand every second project submitted in this area won, whereas in the field of urban development only every fifth project was supported. On the other hand more than 50 per cent of the available financial resources were distributed between the applicants. The projects submitted in the area of urban development proved to be the weakest, as only every fifth project won and only 2.7 per cent of the claimed financial resources could be distributed.

Taking into consideration the territorial division of the submitted and the supported projects in the region the greatest number of projects and claims for financial support were submitted in Bács-Kiskun County. Regarding the number of the supported projects and the amount of financial resources distributed, Csongrád County was the most successful, where more than 37 per cent of the winning projects was submitted, which covers 45 per cent of all the distributed amount. If the efficiency of the two other counties is analysed, it can be concluded that in case of Békés County nearly 30 per cent of the submitted projects won, whereas Bács-Kiskun County proved to be the least efficient. The reason for these relatively low values is due to the unsatisfactory elaboration of their projects.

All the statistical subregions of the Southern Great Plain Region have submitted projects, and all of them – although in various proportions – have received some financial support in the financial period of 2007–2008. Szeged statistical subregion was the one that submitted the most projects with the highest amount of claimed financial resources. When taking into consideration the ratio of the supported projects and the received financial support it is again Szeged statistical subregion that has proven to be the absolute winner. The statistical subregion of Kistelek achieved the highest financial aid per capita, with more than 138,000 HUF (*Figure 2*).

Analysing the distribution of the submitted and the supported projects by type of settlements, it can be concluded that projects were submitted at all the types. The settlements received financial aid in various percentages, but nearly

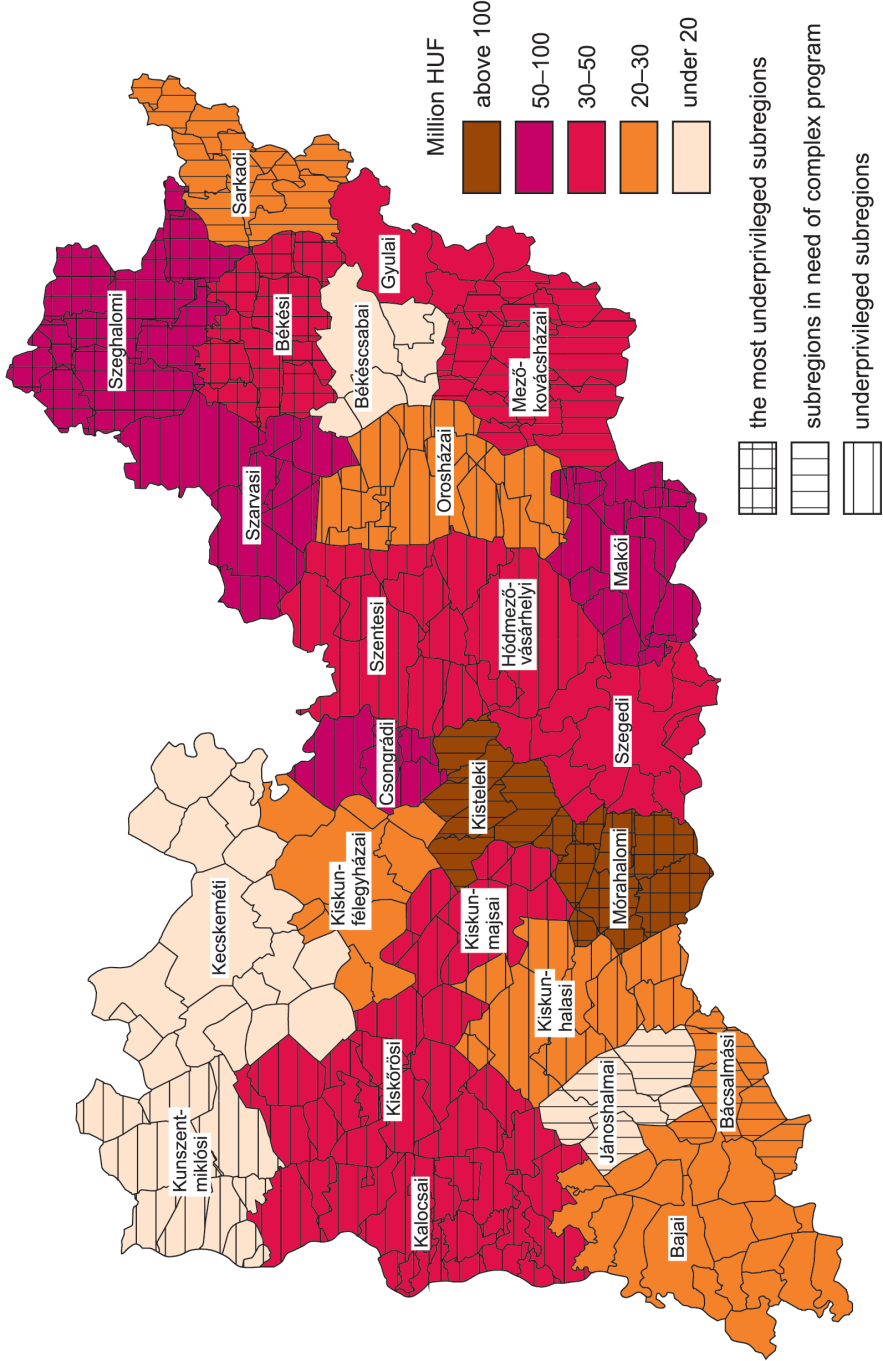


Fig. 2. Support needs per capita in the statistical subregions of Southern Great Plain. *Source:* Data collected by VÁJDA, G., map design: NÓGRÁDI, Gy.

Table 6. Supported tenders according to settlement types

Settlement categories (resident population)	Tenders received		Tenders supported		Rate of supported of received tenders %	
	Number (pieces)	need for support (million HUF)	Number (pieces)	Total support (million HUF)	Based on	Based on
					number of tenders, %	amount of support, %
County Town	183	32,687	61	11,203	33.33	34.27
Populous city of 30,000 inhabitants	85	21,361	24	3,893	28.24	18.23
Towns with population between 10,000 and 30,000	215	43,648	69	11,685	32.09	26.77
Towns with population of 10,000 inhabitants	235	36,198	89	9,992	37.87	27.60
Municipalities	597	55,951	175	13,316	29.31	23.80
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,315</i>	<i>189,846</i>	<i>418</i>	<i>50,088</i>	<i>31.79</i>	<i>26.38</i>

Source: Own edition based on data from SGRPDA and NDA

in direct proportion with the number of projects they had submitted. In the financial period of 2007–2008 most of the projects (597 items) were submitted by villages with the highest claim for financial resources (29.5 per cent). This type of settlement was the winner when taking into consideration the number of the supported projects and the amount of the distributed financial aid (Table 6).

Regarding the number of the submitted projects, the towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants were the second most active type of settlements (235 items). Regarding the claims for financial resources and the amount of the distributed aid, the same position is taken by the towns with population number between 10,000 and 30,000.

When the amount of the distributed aid was compared to the amount of the claimed financial support, the towns with less than 10,000 inhabitants have proven to be the most successful, since 37.9 per cent of the projects submitted by them won support. Urban counties were also successful, as 33.3 per cent of their projects were also supported. Taking into consideration the amount of the distributed financial aid, the villages and the towns with inhabitants between 10,000 and 30,000 were followed by the urban counties. Regarding the number of the winning projects and of the amount of the distributed financial aid, the category ranked last were the towns with more than 30,000 inhabitants. These towns submitted the least projects selected to be supported and the smallest amount of financial aid was also received by this type of settlements.

Summary

To balance spatial concentration and promote territorial equalisation, polycentric development has to become of primary importance in the future. When future project tenders are invited, effective measures are needed to be taken to embed the region-specific elements into both the determination process of the supportable activities and the establishment of the criteria for the evaluating system. For example, it would be reasonable to give preference to the projects submitted in inner or outer peripheries by giving them extra bonus; or to definitely separate the innovation-type development of economic centres and the balance-type development that aims to moderate the spatial concentration.

As to facilitate the preparation works of the following periods, the implementation of the Southern Great Plain's Operational Program has to be continuously monitored and recommendations are needed to be produced based on the evaluation of financial and professional advancement. The content of the future project tenders has to be adjusted to the economic processes (crisis-management, more effective utilisation of the external sources).

The success of territorial development is signalled by emerging and strengthening of centres, by stabilisation and improvement of disadvantageous statistical subregions. In my opinion the evaluations of the developmental programs and regional developments are not to be regarded as mere evaluating reports. They aim is to identify the effects of interventions and also to – by providing feedback – help to establish a basis for future development. For decision making persons evaluating reports have to become an instrument that helps to understand the processes of interventions and the causes of the changes that take place. By taking all these into consideration, decision making persons need to make recommendations as to foster the elaboration of regional policy. In my view the necessity of the evaluations of development is obvious; however, further steps are needed to be taken as to put the gained results into practice.

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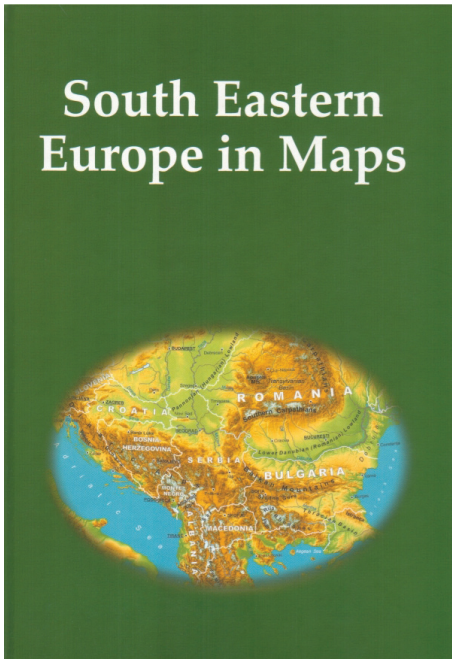
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Over the past fifteen years the explosion of the “Balkan powder-barrel” shocking the European continent deeply i.e. the fanning of ethnic-religious tensions (suppressed for several decades) into regional conflicts and warfare renewed traditional interests of the Hungarian public towards the countries of South Eastern Europe (the former member republics of Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania).

There has emerged a necessity to publish an atlas in the form of a book or a book combined with an atlas in which a large number of attractive thematic (political, ethnic, religious, economic) maps, charts, tables completed by concise textual analyses provide explanation for the up-to-date societal and economic issues of South Eastern Europe and the most characteristic segments of the region’s development in the 20th century. The present publication produced in the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy

of Sciences serves as a brief account for public and scientific audiences and political decision makers on the region which largely belongs to the Balkans, with some countries as the primary targets of the enlargement of the European Union. The chapters are entitled by the main topics figuring in the book: the concept of South Eastern Europe and the Balkans; territorial distribution by states; ethnic and religious patterns; urbanisation and town network; the standard of economic development; spatial disparities; industry; transport; and tourism.



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