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## **MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN BIHOR AND HAJDU-BIHAR COUNTY THROUGH CBC PROJECTS**

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Through the cross-border cooperation programs HU-RO 2007 – 2013 and Interreg VA 2014 – 2020, we focused on Bihor County in Romania and Hajdú-Bihar in Hungary, which were supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through three components: cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation [1] with the aim of contributing to reducing disparities between the development levels of European regions and establishing standards of life in less favored regions, are part of the development initiatives supported by the European Union. Also, through the financial support provided, this program allows the exchange of opportunities and strengthening of collaboration between two regions with great potential for collaboration.

The border eligible area for the Hungarian – Romanian Cross – Border Cooperation program 2007 – 2013 includes the counties: Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș, in Romania, and Szabolcs – Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú-Bihar, Békés and Csongrád, in Hungary [2].

The Cross-Border cooperation aims to respond to common challenges identified in border regions and to exploit untapped growth potential [3]. Cooperation has multiple benefits, including: regional economic development by supporting local businesses and job creation, promoting stability and security in cross-border regions [4], by joint risk management and improving security collaboration, improving bilateral relations between Romania and Hungary, contributing to the development of mutual trust, sustainable development and environmental protection by implementing joint environmental projects, cultural and educational exchanges that support intercultural understanding and mobility between the two countries.

A relevant example of the impact of these initiatives is the Bihor – Hajdu Bihar Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2007-2013, which aimed to promote an active partnership between Bihor County in Romania and Hajdu Bihar in Hungary. According to the HURO 20072013 Cross-Border Cooperation program website, *the road to strengthening social and economic cohesion in the Romanian-Hungarian border area was opened on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007, with the official approval of the program by the European Commission [5].*

The program contains two priority axes. Axis number 1 consists in improving the key conditions for the common sustainable development of the cooperation area, having an allocated budget of 135.379.181,11€, and priority axis 2; strengthening social and economic cohesion in the border region with a total budget of 124.321.128,53€. The municipality of Oradea was involved in the implementation of 11 projects, two of which involved the construction of a bicycle path between Berettyóújfalu and Oradea and the Support Centers for non-profit businesses in the counties of Hajdu – Bihar and Bihor as a project partner and with a total budget of 1.868.092,7€ for these two projects. Also, in 9 projects that concerned supporting the sustainable development of the Bihor – Hajdu – Bihar Euroregion by establishing the public service, establishing free WIFI and Hot Spot internet access points in Oradea and Debrecen, preventing health risks through HighTech QR in Debrecen and Oradea, reducing road traffic and improving population mobility on the Oradea – Biharkeresztes cross – border corridor, developing natural habitats of voluntary flora and protected tree species on the Hill Ciuperca, cross – border cooperation for the development of the business center for agricultural products in Oradea and the Center for Entrepreneurial Development in Debrecen, the promotion of religious tourism, BHB– High Common Standards in surgery in the Euro-Region and the promotion of religious tourism through the optimal use of the communities of Jewish heritage from Oradea and Debrecen, all this as the main partner and with a total budget of 14.318.929,7€.

These projects brought results such as new WIFI access points and Hot Spots in Oradea and Debrecen, 1 improved common intermodal transport, 2 cross-border access roads and a fast link road created, construction works and essential repairs (sewage systems and heating, work of architecture, electricity, painting, water, furniture, restoration), 1.173,94 m<sup>2</sup> of built / reconstructed buildings, the construction of a 40km shared bike path, office spaces at a preferential price to non-profit organizations that aim to improve the business environment in the Hajdú – Bihar and Bihor regions.

Among the institutions in Bihor with projects won during the 2007-2013 implementation period, there is the Bihor County Council, with a number of 10 projects, and also the Oradea Metropolitan Area, with a budget of

956.316,13€, won 8 projects; 4 as a main partner, with results such as planning the emergence of a cross-border transport system at the urban poles of Oradea and Debrecen, creating opportunities for intermodal connections between buses and trams, as well as the transformation and reconstruction strategy to improve traffic flow; and another 4 as a project partner, with joint educational development contributions, a Hungarian – Romanian Cooperation for increasing investments in the border region which was drawn up with a joint database presenting the economic potential of the area for foreign investors and among others, newly built / reconstructed business infrastructures and the joint action to eliminate the illegal waste deposit of 5 cross-border rivers of Hungary and Romania by reducing and collecting municipal waste and more prevention methods.

Hajdú – Bihar Megyei Önkormányzat won 3 projects, with a total budget of 53.649,9€. 2 of these were implementing the cross-border digital common property and presenting our mutual history, organizing professional conferences, the emission of publications and a Restorative Workshop to be established with the Debrecen-Oradea center, being involved as a main partner, and 1 as a project partner in establishing the infrastructure environment in the protected areas of Bihor and Hajdú – Bihar.

During the 2014 – 2020 implementation period, the Interreg VA Cross Border Cooperation Program proposes 6 priority axes. [6]. The budget allocated for each axis is as follows: priority axis 1: 59.825.981,73€; priority axis 2: 20.254.134,90€; priority axis 3: 38.231.929,49€; priority axis 4: 73.901.244,64€; priority axis 5: 13.937.380,32€; priority axis 6: 4.457.280,41€. Interreg is a cohesion policy tool that promotes cooperation between different organizations in Europe to address common challenges [7].

The Bihor County Council won 3 projects as the main partner with a total budget of 2.023.429,35€, that propose the conservation, protection and promotion of nature on both sides of the Romanian – Hungarian border with a number of 2 buildings that will help increase conservation, the protection and promotion of nature and the contribution to the increase in the number of tourists and another integrated sustainable development project in the mountain area of Bihor County that promises to improve access and development in health services in case of medical interventions for emergency situations, making a contribution of 998.749,04€. Also, the Municipality of Oradea won projects with a budget of 5.791.614,63€. Among them, as a leading partner in improving employment opportunities and capacities through the development of employment and training initiatives on both sides of the border and the development of entrepreneurial and employment infrastructure.

Local public institutions in Hungary such as the Hortobágy City Hall as a project partner with the Sălacea Commune, won a project regarding the

increase in the number of visits to the area targeted by the project, facilitating local development through tourism, with a total budget of 1.611.547,26€. We see the same collaboration with the Local Government of Komádi in Hungary and Lugașu de Jos Commune, creating a cross-border ecotourism themed trail along Crișul Repede and 4.69ha belonging to Lake Varsánykerti, supported by the new visitor infrastructure, all with a total budget of 904.905,47€.

According to the research of statistical data, through the implementation of cross-border projects founded especially through the HU-RO 2007– 2013 program, we can observe an improvement in the administrative dimension in Bihor and Hajdu-Bihar counties. Subsequently, an infrastructure was developed that laid the foundations for sustained collaboration for the next Interreg VA 2014 – 2020 Cross-Border program [8], strengthening relations between the two regions and promoting long-term sustainable development.

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