Abstract

The paper’s intention is to deal with the issue of the comprehensive integration within and outside transborder regions of Bulgaria and Romania. The author presents some basic principles of internal and external integration of small, medium sized and large transborder regions. The accent is put on particular cases.

An integration methodology is suggested to be used for the conceptualization and development of the co-integration process. Another aspect of the paper is the presentation of models for regional integration of real territorial entities from Bulgarian perspective.

Some of the problems of marketing of the transborder formation and development are the third aspect of the article.

Keywords

- Transborder regions;
- Transborder integration processes;
- Meridian integration axis.

1. The methodological aspects of the transborder regions integration

The formation of the Pan-European Union possesses various dimensions. One of them is the regional dimension, which has to be conceptualized not only by the European planning bodies and the respective countries, but also by the real objects of the integration process – the regions themselves.

The basic thesis is that the coordinated, joint, comprehensive and mutual development of the closest territories will bring synergetic and increasing effects. The final goal is vertical and horizontal building-up of the European Union of the 27th nations.

As a whole, the European integration process aims to “open”
melting of the state borders to a commonly agreed degrees and in the spirit of the Pan European ideas.

Transborder regional integration has to be a well-directed process. It has to include balanced initiatives both from “up-down” and “down-up”. The integration process could be or accidentally happened, or goal oriented. It requires not only action on the level of transborder region as a whole but also well-coordinated local initiative.

In the integration process, a holistic approach has to combine two directions: a) from “general to local” + from “local to general”; b) from “general to particular” (or from “particular to general”). In this regard, the integration process could start both from governmental initiatives and/or from local initiatives.

Now it is necessary to conceptualize the trajectory: from activities for development, integration of small euro regions towards activities for the integration of medium sized integrated transborder regions. In the future, they have to interact more and more actively.

On the other hand, integration process includes the formation and the development of medium class regions and afterwards their integration in higher-class regions. That trend is in the agenda in many Balkan countries. This process has not only to be studies and modeled, but also predicted. (“and” to be excluded)

In this frame, one of the integration priorities is the forming various classes of interstate (and transborder) regions. For the accomplishing of the process, first it has to be determined their role and meaning for the Pan European social and market space as connecting (logistic) network, the EU as a whole. After this action, the transborder regions have to be conceptualised with various activities such as analysing, modeling, strategizing and planning.

A transborder region (TBR) has obligatory components, some of which could be considered as parts of the territories of the two (or three) countries, linking infrastructure, linked networks of business and non-business oriented organizations, jointly working organizations of the citizens’ society etc.

The new paradigm of the integration has to be based not on the “divide et empera” principle, but on the principle “integrate and manage as a whole of already integrated territories, knowledge, skills for using the given potential, specific local prerequisites and facts (datum) etc. Afterwards there has to be included the transfer and the usage of that managerial model. With such a strategic thinking, many problems, which up until now are being solved separately, would be approached and resolved as a whole, or in an integral way.

The problems formulated so far are a part of the agenda regarding the market development of the TBR.

The process of transborder regions integration started a couple of years ago, and as a whole, its development is very positive. The new moment is that instead of integration of isolated levels there has to be integration process among different levels – namely vertical and horizontal integration.

Some of the nowadays shortcomings to be mentioned are that the integration process is somehow impulsive, reactive, it is a result of local initiatives, and it is formal. There is a lack of vision for the common (joint) perspective development of the transborder regions as entities. The local character of the already formed formations called “euro regions” (which are relatively small in scale) does not create necessary critical mass for serious goal setting, for realization of larger projects etc. In some of those regions, the enthusiasm is gradually fading after the announcement of their
formation, and a “wait and see” attitude is being noticed. In spite of those shortcomings, the first step is already made following the trajectory: “FROM lack of structures (transborder region) TOWARDS their conceptualizing and institutionalizing TILL jointly prospecting possibilities for their multi vector development. At the end of trajectory, it is expected to obtain a synergetic effect from “softening” And even eliminating the existing borders. In this regard the exchanges of people, ideas, product – the great European idea, will be not an incident but an everyday activity.

The transforming of the idea for cooperation and integration between the regarded up till now as a state periphery regions in reality is a basic precondition for removing the existing borders.

The trajectory, which gives a more concrete vision of the transborder regions integration process, could be presented in the following way – figure 1.

\[\text{Figure no. 1}\]

FROM

Formally formed (on paper) TBR, with incident contacts (regarding the movement of people, ideas, products) etc.

TOWARD

Transborder co-operation, mutual market penetration, intensified business contacts; periodical social, tourist contacts etc.

TILL

Normally functioning Euro regions – with joint marketing and mutual marketing activities, joint development projects initiatives’ teams, greater project realization potential, everyday contacts etc.

The intention to follow that trajectory implies an application of a general model. It could be used for analysis and strategizing of the TBR development as a whole. The model is outlined in the following way as shown in table 1.

\[\text{Table no. 1}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subsystems and components of the transborder region</th>
<th>Object of directed integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superstructure</td>
<td>Networks of specialists; Networks of institutions; entrepreneurs networks; stakeholders networks; civil society organizations networks; networks for training persons, who will act as integrators and manage the integration process etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic structures</td>
<td>Networks of business systems; Marketing networks; etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Connecting roads, ferries, ports, bridges, energy networks etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subsequently the particularization of the above model from the stakeholders’ network point of view could be outlined in the following way – figure no 2.

The efforts of the all stakeholders involved have to be coordinated and properly managed. Such a network (if created and well directed) will bring genuine TBR integration in the spirit of the Pan European integration process. The modern networks are products of the information/communication technologies.

The situations regarding the real network building-up is presented above is as follows – table no 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The stakeholders</th>
<th>Possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The planning organs of the European Union</td>
<td>They are interested and have vision about the particular TBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agencies for regional development</td>
<td>They have and work on specific projects regarding the particular TBR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stakeholders</td>
<td>Possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint body for TBR integration management</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The body is institutionalized and it is involved in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>strategic and planning activities regarding the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>integration and further development of the TBR as a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is not institutionalized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambers of commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are working on exchange of products in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whole TBR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are not engaged and face only the national parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the regions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State organs for regional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They have programmes and are giving (offering) the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>necessary support; they facilitate the TBR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development as a whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Development funds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They support the integration and further development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the TBR as a whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They support only particular activities and plans in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different parts of the TBR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The existing governmental and non-governmental organizations/ institutions create their own networks but unfortunately, now they act in different directions, following the “devide et empera” manner. They need (and at the same time they lack) potential for synchronizing their activities and conceptualizing and realizing large and significant projects.

2. Practical approaches and models for transborder regions integration

Instead of being natural border and obstacle, in the XXI century the Danube River has to be transformed into a linking platform between Bulgaria and Romania. That is a new approach to the Bulgarian and Romanian economic and social integration and it is expected that vital medium class euroregions to be formed as a result.

One advantage of the TransDanube regional integration is that there is portuar infrastructure. It has to be developed at least in two directions – to serve to the transborder regional integration and to the Danube transport corridor as a whole. From the other hand it is expected to play the role of a distributor regarding the adjacent territories and the localities to be served. Another particularity is the lack of transport connections across the Danube River with the exception of Ruse-Giurgiu Bridge and some ferryboats crossings.

There could be several levels of the Danubian transborder regions integration – the first, the second, the third and so the fourth.

The first level is the creation of small-scale euro region, integrating some number of neighbour municipalities. For example, such a formation is not so successful “Danube South” which includes municipalities from Romania and Bulgaria (from the Romanian side they include the municipalities of Alexandria, Turnu Măgurele, Roșiori de Vede, Zimmicea, and from the Bulgarian side – Sviștov and Belene).

The second level is the creation of medium level transborder region. A
formation of that kind could integrate territorial systems from both sides of the state borders. In the Bulgaria/Romania case there is lack of meridian transport connections, intensive business, social and spiritual closer activities, a long-term isolation.

In this regard the attention has to be paid to the integration of medium level TBR and the accent breviary should be put on meridian directions integration. The former is specific for Inferior Danubian macro-region and also present one of its particularities.

There are a couple of meridian axis, which could act as supporting points for future integration efforts. The problem is that within the both countries the parallel conection are functioning normally, but the meridian transborder links are not so well developed although the efforts were done in the last years. The meridian integration axis if created, could be the backbone for a higher degree of a multi vector integration – business, social, ecological etc. The actions following that axis aim to build-up relations between people, specialists, business organisations business activities, administrative organisations, information networks, cultural, sports and tourist activities; joint planning etc.

One of the examples outside the Bucureşti/Rouse meridian axis is the axis Veliko Tarnovo (Veliko Tarnovo district - or oblast – Bulgaria) ↔ Alexandria (județul Teleorman, Romania) ↔ Svishtov (Veliko Tarnovo district – Bulgaria). One possible abbreviation of many for this possible formation could be VTAS TBR (The idea started to be developed couple of years ago by the Centre for Regional Integration and Development - Sviştov. Afterwards it started to be disscused on different levels in the both countries.).

The visualization of the VTAS TBR concept is shown in figure 3.

**Figure no. 3**

The third level could integrate European planning regions. A model of such an interstate (and transborder) region could be presented as follows – figure 4.
The fourth level is formed by couple of European planning regions from the both sides of the Danube River corridor and from Inferior Danube macro-region. Its outlines are shown in figure 5.
In this context there could be different processes of integration, namely: 1. Internal integration – in the frame of the region itself. 2. External integration – among the regions of the respective country and between transborder regions.

3. Transborder regional integration management and marketing problems

For a genuine managed integration process a strategic body is needed, which could play the role of TBR network integrator. It has to integrate different networks – not only administrative, but also organizations of the citizen society, business etc. Such a body, acting on the principle of consensus, could use both good practices and creative approach. Transborder region’s management institution has to coordinate the integration initiatives in the TBR as a whole. In transborder development the standard model (used by the Pan European planning bodies), should be complemented. They could be supported by a joint forum for transborder region holistic development, which could support the institution that manages the region. Acting based on the consensus, it will be the initiator of initiatives, vision, alternative strategies to be applied to the transborder regions as a whole.

In this regard, the first step is the conceptualizing of the TBR, and the second – linking different administrative, citizen organizations’ and other types of networks. The next move is formulating strategies for interconnecting infrastructure – communication, portuar, transport, energy etc.

The TBR joint development institution has to organize a more and more goal-oriented process. Acting on the basis of the consensus principle, it will be a driving engine of visions and alternative strategies for the integration process. It will give a real start for mutual business activities and for neighboring territories market exchanges and transactions.

The TBR coordinating bodies have to conceptualize the strategy and the development of the internal and external marketing on mutual and multilateral basis. The transborder interregional integration could start with processes as business and market integration; mutual marketing, common activities in social, ecological and other areas. One of the very significant activities is the achievement of a before hand determined degree of market integration. It has to be based on strategies for mutual (simetric and nonsimetric, but supported by different institutions) market penetration. In the Bulgarian/Romanian case, those penetration efforts have particularities as not so great differences in the production and in the supply of many local products; lack of differentiate specific selling proposition; price differences are small etc.

A very important tool for the integration is the marketing activity. It has to leave behind many other activities which are related the TBR internal and external integration, to anticipate many other movements concerning the TBR’s internal and external integration.

The joint (common) marketing of the TBR will create its attractiveness as a whole; will provoke, hopefully, foreign investors’ interest in co-financing of joint projects etc. The TBR marketing puts questions, which are badly needed to be answered. Some of them could be: • what have to be the accents regarding the TBR’s advantages; • how a proper strategy for communication (advertising) could be elaborated and/or chosen? • how to make the TBR to become attractive (and let’s be more specific - a constantly attractive centre) for foreign and domestic investors? • which bodies have to create the image of…
the TBR – national and transnational public relation institutions and persons?

One of the basic problems of the joint marketing is to coordinate different marketing strategies for the TBR and its marketing strategies toward the other regions of Europe and other continents.

One of the periodical activities, which include the process of conceptualizing, strategizing and marketing, could be a forum as an annual conference dedicated to the problems and prospects of TBR internal and external cooperation.

From the other hand the transborder regions’ markets have to be regarded as a part of Pan European Union Market (PEUM). In this regard many hyper-regional, national, transborder region markets as a whole form present and future structure and ways of functioning. The building the PEUM as the largest market of the world means internal market collaboration/co-operation and integration of different levels. The market integration starts with formulation of strategies for mutual (symetrical or not symetrical, but assisted, or made easier) market penetration. A possible synergetic effect would be the removal of the existing borders-barriers, borders which hamper the great process of Pan European integration and basic philosophy – free movement of ideas, people, information and commodities.

As the integration continues to mature, the importance of marketing agility and maneuverability will grow — both as a defense and offence against any anti-integrated efforts.

As a whole the real TBR integration would be an engine for overcoming of the existing Balkan non-cooperativeness and for the development of TBR markets.

4. Conclusions

There are preconditions in both Bulgaria and Romania for creating the medium class transborder regions and for their development as integrated euro regions.

A transborder business exchanges network is a functionally specialized body, which joins many stakeholders in one.

The joint management efforts could be supported by a joint forum for transborder region holistic development, which could help the institution which manages the region.

There are efforts and capitals to be invested in TBR markets in an interconnected complex. It will take advantages from the market systems proximity, from their mutual complementation in the production of specific row materials, products and energy.

Bibliography
