

**THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROMOTED
BY UNIVERSITIES.
CASE STUDY: THE UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA –
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, TOURISM
AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING**

Grigore Vasile HERMAN

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC,
1 University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: grigoreherman@yahoo.com

Vasile GRAMA

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, TSAC,
1 Universitatii st., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: vasigram@yahoo.com

Cezar MORAR

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, TSAC,
1 Universitatii st., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: cezarmorar@yahoo.com

Iuliana Claudia BAIAS

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC,
1 University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: baiasiuliana@gmail.com

Marius I. STUPARIU

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC,
1 University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania, e-mail: marius_stupariu@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: This paper aims at emphasizing the role of universities in promoting the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation. In this respect, a systemic approach was needed, from general to particular, from the university system in the area eligible for the program to the University of Oradea (as its main component) and the Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning regarded as an execution factor in the implementation of the HURO projects.

Key words: educational programs, cross-border cooperation, universities

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INTRODUCTION

The Romanian-Hungarian border area consists of eight territorial administrative units of NUTS III type, located on both sides of the state border. With a surface of 50,454 sqkm and with a population of over two million inhabitants, this area of contact between two civilizations is represented by eight cities with university function. An analysis on their spatial arrangement shows their relatively uniform distribution. The only exceptions to this rule are the Satu

Mare County from Romania, where there is no university, and the Csongrad County, where there are two university cities, Szeged and Csongrad (Figure 1).

However, after analyzing the number of universities from both sides of the state border, a much higher proportion of universities can be observed in the western side of the border area (15 universities), compared to the eastern side (5 universities). Out of the 20 existing universities in the Romanian-Hungarian border area, only 16 of them are involved in promoting the cross-border relations (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Distribution map of the university cities in the HU-RO cross-border area

Two different aspects result from figure 2. The first aspect highlights the large number of universities situated in the university centres from the western part of the studied area. The second aspect emphasizes the high absorption and development capacity that the Hungarian universities have in what concerns the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation projects. This is proved by the value of the projects won in the competitions between 2009 and 2012. Using this as a criterion, the universities can be classified into four categories, namely: centres with large budgets between 15000000.1 and 20788000 EUR (Szeged and

Debrecen), centres with big budgets between 10000000,1 and 15000000 EUR (Oradea and Arad), centres with average budgets between 2000000,1 and 10000000 EUR (Timișoara) and centres with low budgets under two million euros (Nyíregyháza, Bekescsaba and Csongrad) (Figure 2).

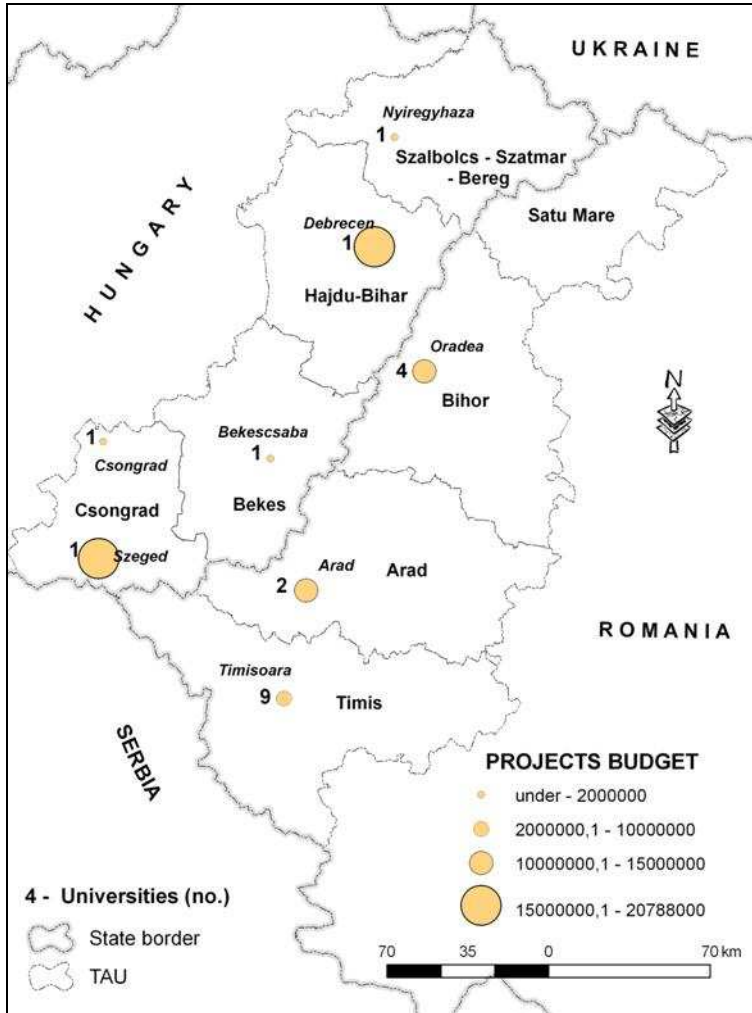


Figure 2. Distribution map of budgets allocated for the cross-border projects developed by the universities from the HU-RO cross-border area
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

Another criterion of analysis worth to be taken into consideration is the number of projects that won as leader on the one hand, and the number of projects that won as a partner on the other. At the level of the eight universities, the situation is as follows: Oradea (34 projects of which 16 as leader and 18 as a partner), Debrecen (33 projects of which 18 as leader and 15 as a partner), Timișoara (24 projects of which 4 as leader and 20 as a partner), Szeged (19 projects of which 15 as leader and 4 as a partner), Arad (9 projects of which 3 as leader and 6 as a partner), Nyiregyhaza (6 projects of which 4 as a leader and 2 as a partner), Bekescsaba (3 projects of which 1 as leader and 2 as a partner) and

Csongrad (1 as leader) (figure 3). In all, the universities have participated as partners and as coordinator leaders in the development of 129 projects out of 264, which represents almost 48.8% of the total number of projects, respectively 48.5% of the total budget allocated for the entire Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation program.

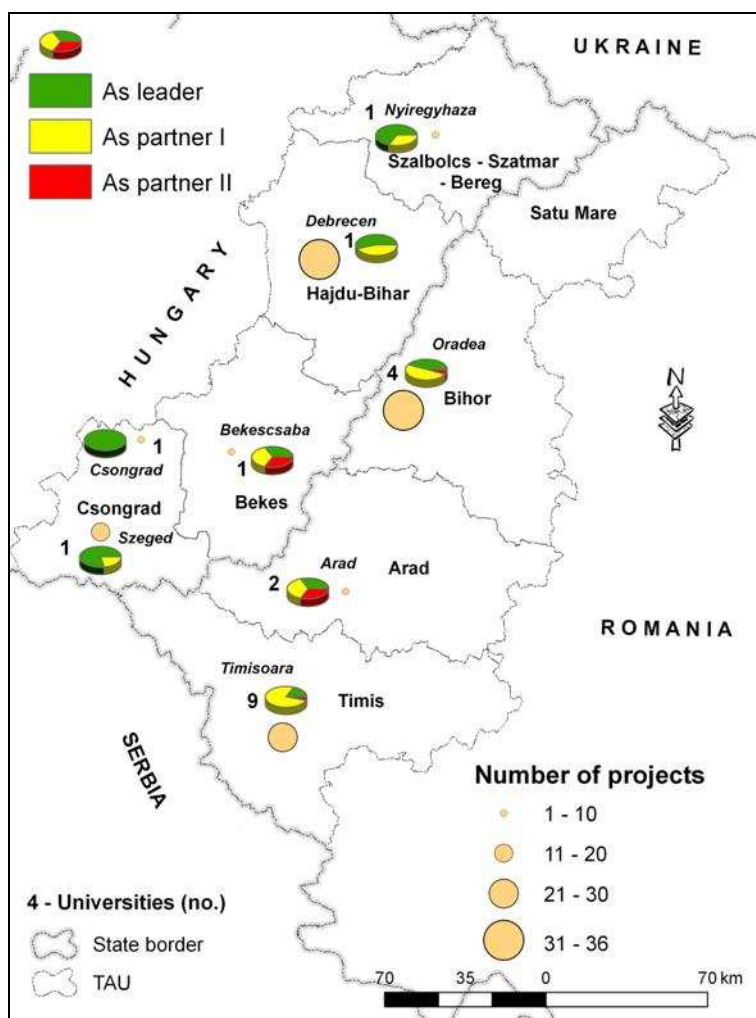


Figure 3. Distribution map of the number of projects undertaken by universities from the HU-RO cross-border area (Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

METHODOLOGY

The methods used while carrying out this scientific research have been the classical ones, namely: the statistical method, the GIS method, the comparative method, the inductive method, the deductive method, etc. This study is meant to present itself as a radiography for the role that the universities from the Romanian-Hungarian area have in promoting the cross-border cooperation. The emphasis on this issue was made possible through a systemic approach, from general to particular, from the higher education

cross-border system seen as whole to the Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning that is regarded as a functional unit of the above mentioned system. The main analysis indicators followed in this respect were those related to the number of projects undertaken, their value, their development period, the institution of implementation, the program's priority axes etc.

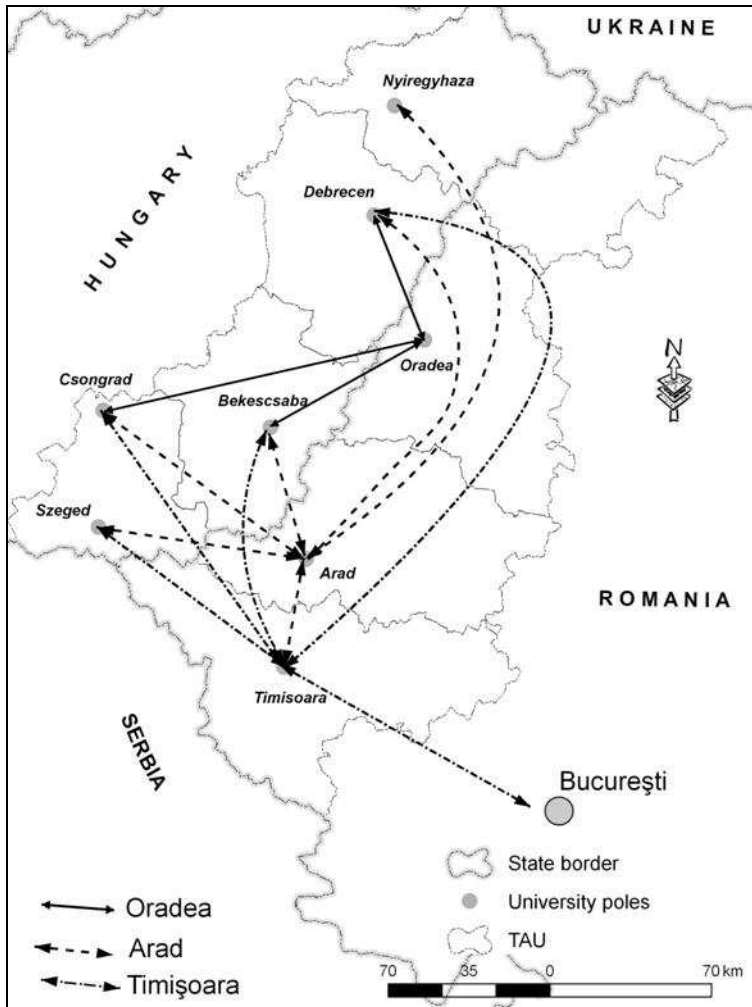


Figure 4. Map of universities.

(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ORADEA IN THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The University of Oradea, located in the city with the same name, is one of the most important factors that play a major role in promoting the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation. The Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area is defined by the existence of numerous universities (the University of Szeged, the University of Debrecen, the University of Nyiregyháza, the West University of Timișoara, Banat University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary

Medicine from Timișoara, Partium Christian University of Oradea, the University of Oradea, the "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, the "Vasile Goldiș" Western University etc.). Still, the analysis of figure 4 illustrates the poor cooperation between these higher education institutions.

For example, the University of Oradea, as a coordinator leader, has close cooperation connections only with the University of Debrecen as part of 10 projects (table 1) and with the Szent István University of Bekes as part of a project. As a partner, the University of Oradea cooperates with the University of Debrecen (12 projects), Bay Zoltán Alkalmazott Kutatási Közalapítvány Biotechnológiai Int. of Csongrad (1 project), Gyula Város Önkormányzata of Bekes (1 project), Halászati és Öntözési Kutatóintézet of Bekes (1 project) and Partium Christian University of Oradea (1 project) (Table 2).

Table 1. List of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation projects coordinated by the University of Oradea

(Data source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

Nr.	Title	Lead partner	Project partner 1	Project partner 2
1	Cross-Border Research Programme - Performance Indicators of the Economic Entities from Bihor-Hajdu Bihar Euroregion	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
2	Cross-border cooperation for sustainable regional development through joint training of researchers in non-linear dynamics	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
3	Collaboration for Equality of Chances in Multiethnic Cross-border Education	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
4	Joint Complementary Development of Hungarian-Romanian Doctoral Study Programs	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
5	Cross-border Development and Implementation of a Master Program in Advanced Mechatronics Systems	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
6	Joint development and integrated promotion of rural thematic tourism in the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
7	E-Laboratory Practical Teaching for Applied Engineering Sciences	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
8	Sustainable utilisation of geothermal energy in Sacuieni-Letavertes zone	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
9	Research on Engines is an Single Regime Running	University of Oradea	Szent István University	-
10	Contributions to efficient use of the renewable energies in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar regions	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	-
11	Romanian - Hungarian R&D Platform For Intelligent Building Research Projects Support	University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	Bihor County Council

Table 2. List of the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation projects developed in partnership with the University of Oradea

(Data source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

Nr.	Title	Lead partner	Project partner 1	Project partner 2
1	Realization of Hungarian-Romanian R&D Laboratory for the Development of Major Projects in Polluted Terrain Cleaning	Bay Zoltán Alkalmazott Kutatási Közalapítvány Biotechnológiai Int.	University of Oradea	-
2	Hungarian-Romanian bilingual database in Commercial and Consumer Law	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
3	Establishment of R+D programmes in the field of new public management between economic faculties of higher education in Hajdú-Bihar and Bihor Counties	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-

4	Computational support for the decision making of the cross-border SMEs	University of Debrecen	Partium Christian University	University of Oradea
5	Alternative Energy Based Heat and Electricity Production in the Border Region	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
6	Preparation of an Electronic Distance Learning Guidebook and the Ensuing Short-Cycle Pilot Training Packages based on Real Market Demands	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
7	Elaboration of Soil Strategy for the Nyírség Region and Bihar Mountains based EU soil directives	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
8	Cross-border expansion of the current Hungarian best practice in eHealth applications concerning common health	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
9	Joint Network Multimedia System of University of Debrecen and University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
10	HERD: Higher Education for social cohesion – cooperative Research and Development in a cross-boarder area –	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	Partium Christian University
11	Common development and running of a plant/health centre for urban green areas	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
12	High Speed Next Generation Network Integration Between University of Debrecen and University of Oradea	University of Debrecen	Univesitatea din Oradea	-
13	Improvement of image-based radiation rtherapy for cancers in Bihar–Bihar region	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea	-
14	Geologic Thermal Heating and Electricity with Romanian and Magyar Interregional Cooperation	Gyula Város Önkormányzata	University of Oradea	-
15	The examination of the accumulation characteristics of medicines and their derivatives in Körös ecosystem	Halászati és Öntözési Kutatóintézet	University of Oradea	-
16	European, National and Regional Identity - Theory and Practice	Partium Christian University	University of Debrecen	University of Oradea

Between 2009 and 2012, the University of Oradea's contribution in achieving the overall strategic goal of the Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border Programme resulted in the development of 27 cross-border projects of which 11 as coordinator leader and 16 as a partner.

The analysis of projects from the point of view of the funding priority axes reveals that two projects are specific to the priority axis 1, while the remaining 25 projects are specific to the priority axis 2. By carrying out the activities scheduled within the 27 cooperation projects, the University of Oradea contributed “to improving the main conditions for the joint sustainable development in the cooperation region (improving transport, communications and environmental protection in the cross-border region)” (PO-HURO, p . 35) and to “the consolidation of the economic and social cohesion within the cross-border area (cooperation in the fields of business, research and technical development, education, employment, health and risk management)” (PO-HURO, p 35). Achieving these goals was made possible through a resource consumption (material, human, informational, financial and time resources) worth 8,901,231.29 EUR, representing 14.54% of the funds allocated to all universities

from the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border area (Figure 5), respectively 7.05% of the entire Romanian- Hungarian cross-border cooperation program (Figure 6).

In order to obtain a clearer image, it is necessary to correlate the value of the projects developed by the University of Oradea as a leader and as a partner, with their total number. Thus, at the university level, an increase in percentage in terms of number of projects can be observed (20.61%), while their value is only 14.54% of the total (Figure 5, 7). A relatively similar situation can be observed by comparing the budget and the number of projects developed by UO with the number of projects and the total budget allocated for the HU-RO programme (Figure 6, 8). This emphasizes the low power of cross-border funds absorption by the University of Oradea, compared with other eligible beneficiaries like: county councils, county administrations, county development agencies, regional development agencies, chambers of commerce, the water management authorities, the road management authorities.

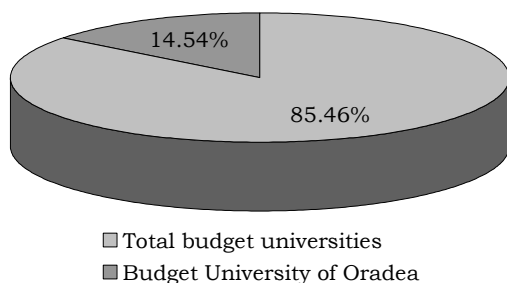


Figure 5. The UO budget percentage of the total budget allocated to eligible universities
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

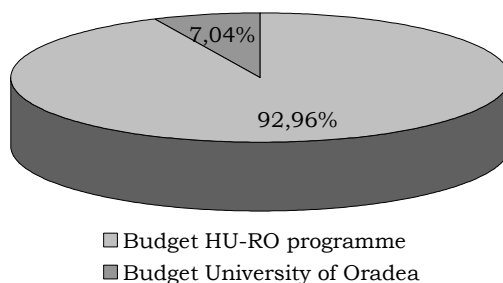


Figure 6. The UO budget percentage of the total budget allocated to the HU-RO programme
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

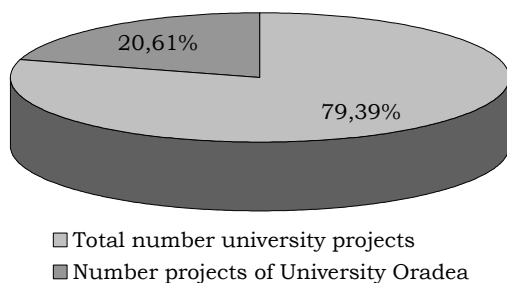


Figure 7. The UO budget percentage of the total budget allocated to eligible universities
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

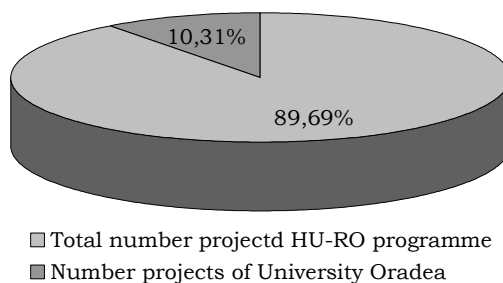
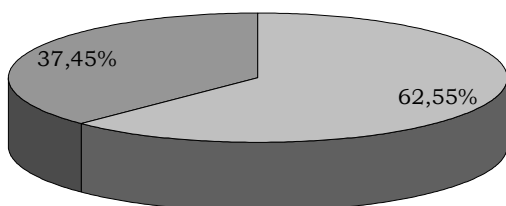


Figure 8. The UO budget percentage of the total budget allocated to the HU-RO programme
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

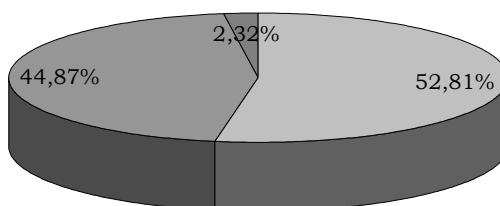
The budgets of the projects developed by the University of Oradea are between 1,700,000 EUR (“Improvement of image-based radiation for cancers therapy in Bihar - Bihor region” coordinated by the University of Debrecen) and 20,223.24 Euro (“Hungarian - Romanian bilingual database in Commercial and Consumer Law” coordinated by the University of Debrecen).

Out of the total budget of 8,901,231.29 EUR, the University of Oradea received 3,333,866.1 EUR, which represents 37.45% of the total budget (figure 9). In terms of leadership or partnership quality, the budget allocated for the Romanian – Hungarian cross-border cooperation projects developed by the University of Oradea can be classified into: budget for coordinated projects (1,760,606.9 EUR, 52.1%), budget for projects in partnership 1 (1,495,925.2 EUR, 44.87%) and budget for projects in partnership 2 (77,334, 2.32%) (Figure 10).



- University of Oradea partner budget
- Budget of the University of Oradea

Figure 9. The UO budget percentage of the total budget allocated for projects in development
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)



- Budget University of Oradea as leader
- Budget University of Oradea as partner I
- Budget University of Oradea as partner II

Figure 10. The percentage distribution of the UO budget according to the UO's coordinator leader-partner status
(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

Therefore, the number of project partners (7), the 27 cross-border cooperation projects developed between 2009-2012 and the large budget allocated to the University of Oradea (3,333,866.1 EUR), transform this university in one of the most important poles involved in "uniting the people, the communities and the economic agents existing in the border area, in order to facilitate the joint development of the cooperation area, based on the key advantages specific to the border region" (PO-HURO, p 34).

THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, TOURISM AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING IN THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

The history of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning is closely linked to the history of the University of Oradea. Thus, the Pedagogical Institute of Oradea was founded in 1963, and within it, a Department of History - Geography was established a year later, in 1964. Over 46 years, "Geography" was part of the following university structures: the Department of History-Geography (1964-1981), Faculty of Social Sciences (1990-2001), Faculty of History-Geography (from 2002 to 2006), Faculty of History, Geography and International Relations (2006-2011), Department of Geography, Tourism and Sport (2011-present)¹.

Following the development and growth recorded, the Department of Geography turns in 2002 in a department known as DGTAT. In time, through the steps and the activities developed in the didactic field and in terms of scientific research, DGTAT behaved like one of the most dynamic and functional departments of the University of Oradea. All this is proved by: the bachelor,

¹ <http://geografie-uoradea.ro/prezentare.html>

master and doctoral programs, the large number of specializations (three for the bachelor's degree, three for the master's degree), the large numbers of professors and auxiliary staff (24 titular professors, 4 auxiliary professors), of students (554), of master degree students (244), of doctoral level students (46) and of the projects in development.

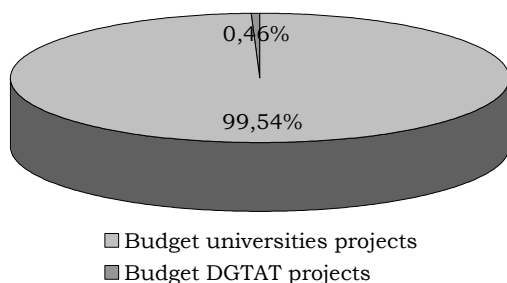


Figure 11. The DGTAT budget percentage of the total budget allocated to eligible universities

(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

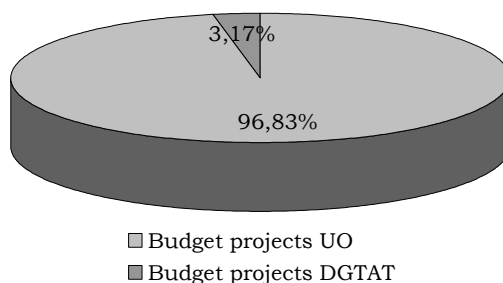


Figure 12. The DGTAT budget percentage of the total budget allocated to the University of Oradea

(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

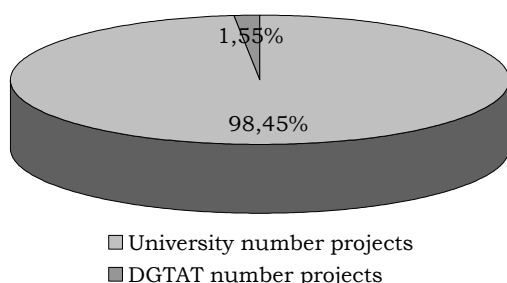


Figure 13. The DGTAT project percentage of the total programs of the eligible universities

(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

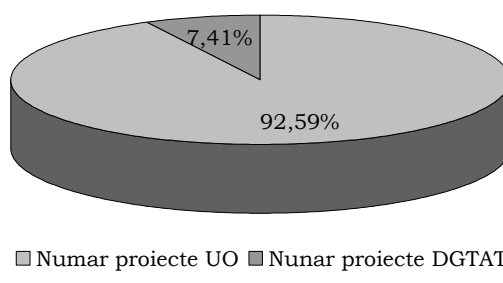


Figure 14. The DGTAT project percentage of the total University of Oradea projects

(Source: http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects)

In what concerns the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation, the efforts of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning resulted in its participation as leader in two projects of this type (Joint Complementary Development of Hungarian-Romanian Doctoral and Study Programs and Joint development and integrated promotion of rural thematic tourism in the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion), in cooperation with the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development Planning of the University of Debrecen.

In order to emphasize the role and the importance that DGTAT has in promoting the cross-border cooperation, it is necessary to analyse the number of projects and their related budget in comparison with the number and the budget of projects implemented by all universities from the border area, namely the University of Oradea.

Thus, the percentage of the budget allocated for the projects developed by DGTAT has a value of 0.46% related to the university system (Figure 11),

respectively 7.4% related to UO (Figure 12). In what concerns the percentage of number of projects developed by DGTAT, it is 1.5% related to the university system (Figure 13), respectively 7.4% related to UO (Figure 14).

The general objectives of the two projects developed within DGTAT were for the project "Joint Complementary Development of Hungarian-Romanian Doctoral Study Programs". Their achievement was possible by carrying out Romanian-Hungarian joint activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning of the University of Oradea "is the functional academic unit" ² that had two cross-border cooperation projects developed in cooperation with the Department of Social Geography and Regional Development Planning of the University of Debrecen. The departments, by what they represent, constitute the foundation stone for the cross-border cooperation initiated by the universities located on both sides of the Romanian-Hungarian state border. They are a good example for promoting the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation.

The role of universities in the cross-border cooperation has been studied directly or indirectly in numerous studies and researches conducted by several authors including: Altbach, G., Knight, J. (2006), Bienefeld, S. (2003), Catherwood, V. & Taylor, L. (2005), Council of Europe / UNESCO (2007), Gänzle, S., Meister, S. and King, C. (2008), Hussain, I. (2007), Knight, J. (2005, 2006), McBurnie, G., & Ziguas, C. (2007), Verbik, L. & Jokivirta, L. (2005) and Wilson, L. & Vlăsceanu, L. (2000).

Unlike the contribution of the University of Oradea to the promotion of the cross-border cooperation that was described indirectly in the annual research reports conducted by the institution with the same name, the role of the Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning is not found in the specialized literature. Despite the low percentage of the number of projects and their budgets (Figure 11-14), DGTAT's contribution to promoting the cross-border cooperation is particularly important, contributing to the achievement of the major objective illustrated by the slogan "Two countries, one goal, joint success!". In order to shape a clearer picture of the important role that DGTAT plays in the Romanian-Hungarian relations system, a future study is needed, a more detailed study on the potential of the university system from the eligible area to develop and promote this type of projects.

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² Art. 33, alin. 1 din legea Educației Naționale, 2011

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