



FACTS ON HAJDÚ-BIHAR COUNTY

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

There are 19 counties in Hungary, the country is divided into 7 regions. The regions are comprised of 3 counties, except for the Central Hungarian region, which consists of one county, the area around Budapest, the capital city.

Hajdú-Bihar County is situated in the east of Hungary, near the Romanian and Ukrainian borders. There are 83 settlements in the county.

Population

More than 15 % of the Hungarian population lives in the region. This is the only region in Hungary where the population has not decreased.

Another significant factor is that the Northern Great Plain has a far higher percentage of school age children than the national average. It also has a higher percentage of retired people. However, its percentage of working age people is far below the national average. This indicates that the region suffers from substantial outmigration of its working age population (especially with high qualifications).

Analytical description of the current situation

The region is relatively poor in natural resources, the arable land, which could be considered the most important natural resource, gas fields, thermal water are relatively significant.

There are several reservation areas of 6.2 % of the total regional territory. The Upper-Tisza region and the Tisza-lake constitute a holiday area representing significant tourist values and potentials. The most visited city of the Northern-Great Plain region is Hajdúszoboszló, which is famous for its outstanding thermal - health tourism potential.

The economic structure of the region shows some special characteristics. Industry has the biggest contribution to the GDP followed by agriculture with almost 11,2% which is twice bigger than the national average.

Education, employment, unemployment and the labour market

The unemployment rate is significantly above (16.3%) the national average (9.6%) There was a decline in employment in almost every sector other than public administration [which is the region's largest employer].

As for equal opportunities, the disadvantageous groups in the region comprise: long-term unemployed, unemployed school-leavers, Roma minority , disabled pensioners below retirement age.

The economy

The Northern Great Plain is characterized by the dominance of SMEs, but there are significantly fewer SMEs in the region than the national average.

The main measures to be taken are: increasing the number of SMEs, increasing the efficiency of co-operation between SMEs

However, a well established banking system exists and a network of industrial parks is developing to service investors and enterprises.. The improved telecommunications infrastructure enables rapid information dissemination both for economic companies and public institutions. At the same time lack of professional advisory difficulties for entrepreneurs to start their business..

Tourism

Regarding tourism, the Great Plain is the most special Hungarian area that is extremely rich in values with international attractive force. In spite of this crucial problem of the regional tourist capacity is deriving from the inappropriate accessibility of the region. The quality of the road network is behind the European average. The region is not served by a motorway connection.

The region is clearly an important border crossing region with around 12% of the entire border traffic (Romania and Ukraine) - although the region is poorly served by transport networks to connect this border traffic to the major motorway networks of Western Hungary.

II. ADMINISTRATION

There are basically three levels of public administration: the national level, which means several ministries; the secondary level, that is, county governments and local communities (villages and towns) with their own local governments. The county level and local level self-governments are in co-ordinate position with each other, which means that the county government cannot supervise the operation of the local governments.

Each governments has its own budget, part of which is given by the state (normatives), another part comes from applications, property management and taxes.

The county government is a legal body, its tasks are decided on by the assembly, which is represented by the chairman. The decisions are prepared and implemented by the office of the government. The chief administrative person is called the county notary recorder, who is elected by the assembly for an indefinite time and is a public servant.

The county government has compulsory and not compulsory tasks. The county government must fulfil tasks which can not be fulfilled by local governments (e.g.: the majority of the population which make use of a certain service is not the residents of the settlement where the institution is kept up. It is so, because in that case the given settlement can not be obliged to provide a service for people who are not its residents). Other compulsory tasks emerge when a service must be provided for the whole area, or majority of the area of the county. Other compulsory tasks are: maintenance of museums, monuments, historical documents, enforcement of the rights of children and youth, organization of sports activities, environment protection, maintenance of health and social institutions, touristic affairs.

The Assembly

The assembly consists of 40 members. It has at least 6 meetings a year. There are 9 committees (Committee of health care and social issues, tourism, education and culture, youth and sports, EU integration, financial affairs, property management, territorial development, agenda). (see: Table on the organization of the assembly, Table on the organization of the office).

III. NUTS II LEVEL: The regions

The county level equals to NUTS III level in the EU. The regions, each comprising three counties, are the NUTS II level of administration. The borders of the regions are the same as the borders of the three comprising counties. These are called planning-statistical regions. However, the law on regionalism also speaks about developmental regions, which may go beyond the borders of the counties depending on the aim of development.

The regional work is co-ordinated by the Regional Council, which has 20 members in the Northern Great Plane Region. In the council we can find the mayors of capital cities of the three counties, representatives of the different ministries, and chairmen of the three county councils.

The regional council has an administrative body, called Regional Development Agency, which is a non-profit organisation.

The role of the regional council and agency is to plan, co-ordinate and assist in the implementation of programmes based on fund arriving in the region from national and EU (especially SAPARD, PHARE, ISPA) budgets.