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Flood of Resources and a Conceptual Change – A Decade of Changes in Territorial Development with an Outlook to the V4 Countries

Summary

Between 2007 and 2013, Hungary received resources from the European Union in the value of around HUF 8,000 billion, while the country is eligible to use funds of an additional 25 billion Euros (approximately equivalent to HUF 8,300 billion) up until 2020. Since the time of joining, Hungary has been one of the net beneficiary member states, since funds received from the EU budget exceed respective contributions. The positive balance adds up to around HUF 13,500 billion since accession. The drawdown of funds was a priority for the national government coming to power in 2010 and to this end; it initiated major changes in territorial development policies. As a prevalent practice, planning was adjusted to the EU's policies just as much as to the national strategic objectives, with the intent of promoting economic growth. Furthermore, the institutional background was centralized and expected to operate with improved efficiency. However, in governmental ex-post analyses, there are occasional sharp criticisms of the effectiveness of major structural changes. What were the major characteristics of the territorial development systems in the period between 2007 and 2013? What changes occurred in the subsequent 2014–2020 multiannual financial framework? This study analyses the main motifs of system change

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and modification. The aim of this study is to provide a fair and balanced assessment of the period through examining these key areas.

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Introduction

This study examines territorial development policy in Hungary between 2010 and 2013. Although no complex appraisal of the past decade can yet be made, the 2014-2020 programming period is also reviewed and comparisons are made with respect to the key thematic focal points (Operational Programmes). We strive to establish which tools of territorial development had the most significant impact on the definition and implementation of territorial development objectives. Macroeconomic processes, social tendencies and development policy have been simultaneously influenced in the period under examination by a number of factors, which naturally also had an impact on the opportunities and challenges presented by territorial development policies and measures.

This investigation did not extend to producing a general appraisal of territorial development performance during the given period; however, the aim is to pinpoint the focal points that had a significant impact on the result attained. We will focus on fundamental changes and shifts in emphasis, irrespective of whether they generate a positive of negative impacts with respect to the overall system and overall system effectiveness.

The appraisal of the given period, which has been examined in a number of previous studies of scientific rigour, will be compared to the results and practices of the four countries of the Visegrád Co-operation[2] (V4), and thus put into an international context. We will take a theoretical journey into the world of cross-border territorial development projects and international territorial development co-operation and comparisons.

Problem statement or excerpts from the appraisals of the use of resources during the 2007–2013 programming period

The period under examination, also taking the t+2 rule into consideration, corresponds, to a significant degree, to the 2007-2013 multiannual financial framework of the European Union[3], as well as the respective development programmes in Hungary: the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP) and the supplementary New Hungary Rural Development Plan (NHRDP), as well as the New Széchenyi Plan (NSP) outlining the 2010-2013 points of economic growth and economic development guidelines (Matolcsy, 2010).

During the entire seven-year budgetary cycle, Hungary received resources in a value close to HUF 8,000 billion (SAO, 2016), which had a significant social and economic impact, as pointed out by all appraisals. Any criticism may only be validly made regarding the results attained and the efficiency with which the sources were used. With respect to the use of funds received from the European Union, member states examine the attainment of objectives undertaken in both an advance *(ex-ante)* and subsequent *(ex-poste)* manner. Below, we examine some of the findings of these analyses.

In the course of the system audit concluded in February 2015 by the National

Development Agency (NDA) with respect to the 2007-2013 period, the State Audit Office (SAO) outlined the following main conclusions: (1) although funds drawdown efficiency improved, as compared to the 2004-2006 period, "the absence of concentrated strategic planning was prominent, as was a prolongation of pay-outs"; (2) "the primary objective of the bidders was centred on resources; their activities lacked a project approach; (3) "the operation of the institutional system conveying the EU resources was slow and complicated; it did not promote the quick and efficient conveying of funds to the beneficiaries" (SAO, 2016).

The ex-post appraisal by the Prime Minister's Office also makes a reference to conceptual weaknesses in this period: "For example, the fact that the developments financed using EU resources extended to the entire country was one of the most significant development results of the 2007-2013 period. The programme targeting the most disadvantaged micro-regions (SDMRs) was successful in significantly increasing the quantity of development resources received by the most disadvantaged regions. Amongst conclusions, the most important criticism of the system involved the absence of the overlapping of developments. A number of appraisals have also pointed out that insufficient attention is paid in the system to the sustainability of project outcomes" (Kele, 2017).

The ex-post analysis ordered by the European Commission with respect to the use of resources from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) also confirms that during the 2007-2013 period there was no reduction in the development gap between the different regions, with special regard to the that between Budapest and Central Hungary and the other, less developed regions. However, the report also stresses that, as a result of the use of resources (1) in overall terms, more than 100 thousand new jobs were created, of which 40 thousand were created in small and medium enterprises; (2) close to half a million people were provided the opportunity to connect to new or further developed wastewater treatment facilities; (3) 500 kilometres of new roads were built and an additional 2,521 kilometres of existing roads renewed (European Commission, 2016).

In the upcoming chapters we will examine the tools that significantly promoted or, on the contrary, significantly hindered the efficient implementation of territorial development and the related use of resources during the period under examination. Based on Rechnitzer and Smahó (2011), these tools include: (1) objectives and national and community plans; (2) organisational frameworks and any potential changes therein; (3) the financing environment; and (4) the management methodologies employed.

Community and national strategies, programmes and resources in territorial development between 2007 and 2013

In 2004, Hungary and another nine, predominantly former Socialist Bloc countries joined the European Union[4]. Although certain EU development resources (e.g. PHARE) were already available previously, the funds available from the proportionate part of the 2000-2006 multiannual financial framework and especially the resources available in the 2007-2013 period presented a significant development potential for the new member states.

The same way as today, the national plans outlining the use of the EU resources had to strictly comply with EU structural policy in the period under examination. This implies, with respect to the development of the New Hungary Development Plan (NHDP) and the operative plans promoting its implementation, that these are not directly based on local needs, but on the EU's strategic goals (Faragó, 2016; Buday-Sántha, 2010). The operational programmes may thus be *de jure* used for assisting projects that simultaneously contribute to the attainment of EU objectives and reflect on local needs, which qualifies as centrally initiated, reverse-direction planning. National territorial development policies and territorial development practices fundamentally conform to the directions determined at a higher level of planning. The policies, priorities, methodologies and control mechanisms outlined by the EU influence the development objectives, processes, decision-making angles and opportunities of the member states. They thematise and, in certain instances, distort the above, disrupting local optimum efficiency.

European policies, community funds, domestic priorities, regional operational programmes

The European Commission's Cohesion Policy, as the community development strategy to which all national policies are linked and harmonized, outlined three priority objectives for the 2007-2013 period: (1) convergence, (2) regional competitiveness and (3) European territorial co-operation (European Commission, 2007). The financial funds allocated to these objectives, from which the development projects could be financed through bidding, were the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (Szabó, 2011).

"The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) are often jointly referred to as the Structural Funds, since they were created to provide resources throughout the EU for economic and social restructuring and to thereby reduce differences between the level of development of EU regions, for example in terms of infrastructure and employment" (European Commission, 2007).[5] These two funds, together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), make up the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) (European Commission, 2014).

In the interest of securing the resources and attaining national development objectives, the NHDP was harmonized with these policies and attuned with the dedicated funds (Jobbágy, 2015). The two primary economic development targets of the NHDP were to (1) expand employment and (2) lay down the conditions for long-term economic growth (Lehmann and Nyers, 2009). In the period under examination, the attainment of objectives was broken down into 16 operational programmes, which could be allocated to seven priorities, including the priorities involving implementation and communication (Table 1).

In the 2007-2013 period, six out of the seven regions of Hungary were affected by the Convergence target based on average GDP per capita, since the respective indicators fell short of 75 per cent of the average GDP within the EU.[6] Territorial development was listed as priority number 5, while the seven interlinked regional operational programmes accounted for close to a quar-

Table 1: Priorities and the operational programmes of the New Hungary Development Plan

Priorities	Operational programme (OP)	Resources allocated in the NHDP (in EUR at current rates)
1. Economic development	Economic Development OP – GOP	2,495,769,115
2. Development of transport	Transport OP – KÖZOP	6,223,429,149
3. Social renewal	Social Renewal OP – TÁMOP	3,482,518,044
	Social Infrastructure OP – TIOP	1,948,922,941
4. Development of the environment and energy	Environment and Energy OP – KEOP	4,178,846,341
5. Territorial development	Western Transdanubia OP – NYDOP	463,752,893
	Central Transdanubia OP – KDOP	507,919,836
	Southern Transdanubia OP – DDOP	705,136,988
	Northern Hungary OP – EMOP	903,723,589
	Northern Great Plain OP – EAOP	975,070,186
	Southern Great Plain OP – DAOP	748,714,608
	Central Hungary OP – KMOP	1,467,196,353
	European Territorial Co-operation OP	*
6. State reform	State Reform OP – AROP	146,570,507
	Electronic Administration OP – EKOP	358,445,113
Coordination and communication of the New Hungary Development Plan	Implementation OP – VOP	315,132,937

Source: NHDP, 2007, p. 130; www.palyazat.gov.hu/umft_operativ_programok

ter of the overall resources available with 5.77 billion EUR. Consequently, the territorial development priority was the one with the highest amount of allocated resources.

Based on the corresponding statement compiled by the European Commission (2016) (Table 2) with respect to the resources available, there is only a -11.2 million EUR gap between the 2007 budgeted and the April 2016 actual data, i.e. practically the entire 100 per cent of EU resources have been drawn down. At the same time, there was significant regrouping involving close to 2.000 billion EUR, primarily impacting R&D&I and environmental and transport infrastructure. These thematic areas received over a thousand billion less in terms of resources, while the highest net growth in funds was recorded by energy and other enterprise development. It is important to stress that the relatively low weight of the territorial dimension (4%) is caused by the fact that regional operational programmes financed developments belonging to different themes in a significant degree, for example, local road renewal.

Complex rural development

Assistance from the European Agricultural Rural Development Fund (EARDF), which was newly established on 1 January 2007,

Table 2: Division of financial resources in the 2007–2016 period and respective shifts per category (early 2007 and April 2016)

	million EUR					Percentage rate	
Category	**2007**	**2016**	**Increase**	**Decrease**	**Change**	**2007**	**2016**
1. Innovation and R&D	1,591.2	1,488.4	478.3	–581.0	–102.7	7.5	7.0
2. Enterprise development	298.9	375.9	77.0	0.0	77.0	1.4	1.8
3. Other enterprise development	1,583.4	2,035.7	452.3	0.0	452.3	7.4	9.6
4. ICT areas	749.5	654.0	0.0	–95.5	–95.5	3.5	3.1
5. Environmental infrastructure	4,567.6	4,191.8	1.4	–377.3	–375.9	21.5	19.7
6. Energy	359.1	1,042.2	708.1	–25.0	683.2	1.7	4.9
7. Broadband networks	0.0	20.8	20.8	0.0	20.8	–	0.1
8. Road	3,591.8	3,276.7	0.0	–315.2	–315.2	16.9	15.4
9. Rail	1,657.4	1,720.1	62.8	0.0	62.8	7.8	8.1
10. Other transport	1,944.3	1,681.8	0.0	–262.5	–262.5	9.1	7.9
11. Human resources	233.6	190.1	0.0	–43.5	–43.5	1.1	0.9
12. Labour market	82.8	52.6	0.0	–30.2	–30.2	0.4	0.2
13. Cultural and social infrastructure	2,926.1	2,832.9	4.6	–97.7	–93.2	13.7	13.3
14. Social cohesion	16.6	16.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
15. Territorial dimension	847.1	847.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
16. Capacity creation	4.3	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
17. Technical assistance	838.4	849.8	35.9	–24.4	11.5	3.9	4.0
Total	**21,292.1**	**21,280.8**	**1,841.1**	**–1,852.3**	**–11.2**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: European Commission, 2016

was conveyed to the people living in rural areas through the objectives and activities of the New Hungary Development Plan. Territories (settlements) eligible for assistance from the Rural Development Fund could be found in 165 from amongst the 168 micro-regions of Hungary (Sarudi, 2004).

In the framework of measure group III of the New Hungary Development Programme, more than 200 billion HUF were available between 2007 and 2013 for the practical implementation of complex rural development concepts. The authority managing the programme, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) set the objectives of improving the quality of life of the people living in rural areas and expanding rural income generation opportunities, with emphasis having been placed on this latter goal (Bodnár and Hortobágyi, 2007). In the course of resource utilisation, the rate of implementation was high, typically between 85 and 100 per cent. The al location of resources was the most successful for axis I,

Table 3: NHDP group of measures, resource allocation and resource utilisation, 2007-2015

Group of measures	Financial weight (compared to overall public expenditure *)	Financial budget, planned (EUR)	Financial budget, utilized (EUR) (% used)
Measure group I: Developing the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors	47%	2,278,420,186	2,252,218,694 (98.9%)
Measure group II: Environmental and rural development	32%	1,768,863,808	1,647,242,218 (93.1%)
Measure group III: Rural quality of life and rural economy diversification	17%	689,137,572	588,018,329 (85.3%)
Measure group IV: LEADER+	(5.5% = Subtracted from the amounts allocated to measure groups I to III in the ratio of 25-10-65%)	275,672,859	237,422,872 (86.1%)
Technical assistance	4%	205,860,358	201,594,640 (97.9%)

*Note: *As per Article 12 (2) of Regulation No. 1290/2005 EC*
Source: Bálint, 2009; www.palyazat.gov.hu/az-j-magyarorszg-vidkfejlesztsi-program-2007-2013-utlagos-ex-post-rtkelse

where a predominant part of measures recorded resource use in excess of 90 per cent. With respect to axes III and IV however, only 85 per cent of the available resources were used.[7]

Regional development between 2010 and 2014; system restructuring and respective consequences

Following the change of government in 2010, the EU funding system and regional development was fully revised, which impacted almost all elements of regional policy. As part of this process the following tasks were implemented:

– development of national economy and other policy strategies and plans;

– restructuring of institutions;

– modification of legal and management structures.

All elements were intended to speed up the implementation of measures and to improve the efficiency of processes, since the absorption rate of the available financial funds was extremely low, while the country's economic position also became fragile owing to the international financial crisis (Győriné, 2014b).

"The new government set up after the change of government in 2010 faced a significant dilemma with respect to the use of EU resources: either to fully reorganize the approved content and focuses of the NHDP and its operational programmes … or to use the resources in accordance with the approved plan documentation – if necessary, in a manner parallel to the creation and communication of a cover plan document. The government opted for this latter alternative and prepared the so-called »New Széchenyi Plan« (NSP), which was practically nothing more than a »cover story« i.e. the renaming of the operational programmes of the NHDP in line with the focus points announced by the new government" (Jobbágy, 2015, p. 96). The points of growth outlined in the NHDP were the following: (1) Healing Hungary Programme, (2) Green Economy Development Programme, (3) Home Creation Programme, (4) Enterprise Development Programme, (5) Science Innovation Programme, (6) Employment Programme, (7) Transport Development Programme (NSP, 2014). At the same time, programme implementation continued to be in accordance with the NHDP and the interlinked operational programmes approved by the European Commission.

Strategies and plans impacting regional development between 2010 and 2014

There were many other nationwide plans compiled in the 2010-2014 period, which impacted regional development policy. These were primarily plans of a domestic focus that were not compiled with the direct intent of drawing down EU resources. Although domestic plans also calculated with the use of EU funds, their structure and boundary conditions were significantly different to those of the individual operational programmes (Péti et al., 2014).

All of the plans referred to above were aimed at stimulating the economy and, in implicit terms, at territorial development. Plans were also bundled in a number of instances, for example the Wekerle Plan and the Mikó Imre Plan were also made part of the Hungarian Development Plan.[8] As opposed to the previous practice, a number of the plans were named after historical figures, which was new phenomenon.[9] The primary details of the plans examined are outlined in Table 4.

Results of the 2010-2014 plan preparation activities are implicitly summarized by the National Development and Regional

Table 4: The major figures of non-EU related plans between 2010 and 2014

Name of plan	Year of publication	Plan compiled/supervised by
Széll Kálmán Plan	2010	Government of the Republic of Hungary
Darányi Ignác Plan	2012	Ministry of Rural Development
National Rural Strategy	2012	Ministry of Rural Development
Széll Kálmán Plan 2.0	2012	Government of Hungary
Wekerle Plan	2012	Ministry of National Economy
Mikó Imre Plan	2012	Ministry of National Economy
Foreign Trade Strategy	2011	Ministry of National Economy
Hungarian Growth Plan	2011	Ministry of National Economy
National Tourism Development Concept	2014	Ministry of National Economy, Office for National Economic Planning
National Development and Regional Development Concept	2013/2014*	n.a.

*Note: *NDRDC was prepared in 2013, but only adopted by Parliament in 2014*
Source: Compiled by the authors

Development Concept (NDRDC). We wish to highlight three features of the NDRDC[10].

(1) As opposed to earlier traditions, instead of separate National Regional Development Concept and National Development Concept documents, an integrated concept was compiled.

(2) Justification for the different developments was given in the NDRDC, therefore the concept was developed in a manner integrated with all of the plan documents. Since the primary source of financing were the 2014-2020 operational programmes, this also implied that everything was ultimately centred around the EU2020 strategy, the superior plan for the OPs.

(3) Some of the approved plans (e.g. National Rural Strategy, Wekerle Plan) were subordinated to the NDRDC as specialist and overall policy strategies, while others (e.g. Széll Kálmán Plan[11]) were not mentioned in the NDRDC and not updated.

Review of the 2014-2020 programming period from the aspect of territorial development

The territorial development concept for the 2014-2020 period was simultaneously impacted by external and internal factors. The EU 2020 strategy outlines three fundamental priorities: intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. The primary objective is to formulate a more resource efficient, more environmentally friendly and more competitive economy based on knowledge and innovation, in a manner that also enables a high level of employment, as well as social and territorial cohesion (European Commission, 2016). Cohesion policy strategy outlines 11 goals of thematic concentration that promote business investments. Instead of a regional approach, a local and settlement level perspective is favoured, for which new tools were also made available by the EU, in the form of integrated regional investments and community-led local developments (CLLD). Additionally, the EU favours the quality use of funds, i.e. solutions that enable the joint measurability of expected/attained results and expenditures (Győriné, 2014a). In the interest of better and more thorough accountability, one of the primary tasks was the compilation of measurable and clear-cut targets. Additionally, the overcomplicated and cumbersome administrational burdens characteristic of the previous cycle had been simplified, therefore a uniform regulatory framework was introduced for all 5 funds, with a system of conditions that allowed for disbursements to be made subject to special preconditions. Another important condition included in the regulatory framework was the provision that the Commission is entitled to decline disbursement, if a member state fails to comply with the rules set by the EU regarding the economy. In addition to all of the above boundary conditions, the domestic conditions necessary for implementation also had to be established. Accordingly, economic development was also made the primary target amongst domestic objectives and additionally, based on experiences from the previous cycle, the efficient and fast drawdown of resources became an emphasized objective. Also, fewer operational programmes of more flexible usability were compiled. The institutional framework had already been restructured prior to the commencement of the cycle, with respective roles having been given to the counties and the towns of a county rank, instead of the regions, while the supervising authorities were allocated to three ministries and the Prime Minister's Office (Tipold et al., 2016). The centralisation intent became evident with the transformation of the institutional framework. With respect to regional development, the related planning tasks were given to the 8 regional development councils still operating today, while the development guidelines were determined in 10 operational programmes that were outlined in the NDRDC and were in accordance with the EU targets. Implementation was concentrated in the hands of the member of government responsible for territorial development related strategic planning, which is currently the Minister of Finance. In the case of RDOPs, the Hungarian State Treasury was also made an implementer. The Cabinet likewise set up the framework of Széchenyi Programme Offices, which had the role of facilitating, in operative terms, the use of resources in the interest of supporting the line of potent beneficiaries (Simó, 2019).

The medium-term priorities of the NDRDC are in accordance with the targets outlined in the Ministry of Finance and are therefore also equivalent to the goals laid down in the Europe 2020 strategy. National regional development targets were compiled by the different ministries and state secretariats, and they are usually not implemented separately, but linked to a number of tasks. The primary territorial policy and territorial development goals of the NDRDC are the following: urban development, the development of the metropolitan area of Budapest and rural development

Table 5: Comparison of the 2007-2013 and 2014–2020 planning periods

Resource	1 OP, 1 Fund	1 OP, resources from both the ERDF and the ESF
Thematic focus	competence of member states	mandatory ERDF thematic focus (energy efficiency, SMEs, R&D&I, ICT)
Support from specialist fields	competence of member states	competence of member states, but *ex-ante* conditions (strategy formulation)
Thematic focus points	15 OPs	9 OPs, more focussed planning at an EU and domestic level (11 thematic objectives, EU2020 strategy)
Focus	Economic development – 16 %, Employment as a social issue	Economic development – 60%, Employment as part of economic development
Tools of local co-operation	– LEADER-community initiative for developing local economies, – Integrated Urban Development Strategy (IUDS)	– ITP (Integrated Territorial Programmes) – closely interrelated with each other, enable developments of better substantiation with more visible links and synergies – ITDS (Integrated Territorial Development Strategy)
Territorial levels	Regional OPs (7), Planning level: statistical region	– Territorial and Settlement Development OP – Competitive Central Hungary OP – Planning level: county, town of county rank
Outcome expectation	Inspection of indicators upon conclusion of OP	Liabilities linked also to performance framework and partial results

Source: Gere et al., 2014, p. 23

programmes. The most important tasks to be implemented include reducing differences and enhancing convergence among regions and stimulating the economy. The objective of cross-border programmes (ETC, border-region and transnational programmes) is to strengthen the macroeconomic role played by the country. In addition to these, it is also important to mention the Common Spatial Development Strategy and the Carpathian Basin Spatial Co-operation (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

The following table describes the major differences between the 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 planning periods.

According to the summary published in 2018 by Századvég Economic Research Zrt, based on 2016 end of year results, Hungary fell short (47-50%) of the economic development undertaking announced by the EC, which should have at least reached the targeted 60 per cent of the overall resource amount. Since the tender invitations had all been published during the first two years of the EU cycle, these data still qualify as consistent.

The V4 have, together with Bulgaria and Romania (V4+2) developed a Common Regional Development Strategy, with the intent of enabling the development of the region based on the priorities outlined in the strategy and effectively representing their common interests within the EU. The document emphasizes the necessity of cross-border development and co-operation (Guti, 2014).

Changing institutional framework

The division of EU resources and the restructuring of the institutional framework managing regional development involved the centralisation of functions and tasks in the 2010-2014 period. As we have already mentioned previously, there were two underlying, partially overlapping problems. On the one hand the drawdown and disbursement of funds was slow (Table 3), which posed a risk to the full absorption of funds, on the other hand the restructured, centralized institutional framework enabled the concentrated, efficient use of resources (Jobbágy, 2015).

Table 6: Progression of the Operational programmes per funding phase based on performance indicators expressed as a percentage of the 7-year appropriation, 2011

OP/Priority	Announced/OP (%)	Awarded/OP (%)	Contracted/OP (%)	Paid/OP (%)
ROPs in total	56%	54%	48%	24%
SROP	58%	34%	34%	17%
EPAOP	66%	43%	43%	20%
EDOP	63%	54%	51%	21%
EEOP	42%	35%	31%	5%
TOP	87%	72%	64%	17%
SROP	55%	41%	41%	19%
SIOP	84%	61%	53%	12%
IOP	49%	49%	53%	39%
Total	64%	54%	49%	17%

Source: Jobbágy, 2015, p. 112

From the point of view of territorial development management, by means of the December 2011 amendment of the Act on Spatial Development, the government made a significant decision impacting territorial development planning by allocating territorial development policy issues to the counties, i.e. to county governments (Gálosi-Kovács and Haffner, 2017). Although in line with the EU's regional focus, earlier professional preparatory activities recommended the favouring of regionalisation and the roles of regions, with this step the regional breakdown characteristic prior to EU membership was quasi revived.

"The allocation of the tasks of territorial development to county governments required the significant restructuring of the institutional framework and the tools of territorial development. The impacted county governments became the legal successors of the regional and county territorial development councils" (Gálosi-Kovács and Haffner, 2016). Their tasks equally extended to concept development, to planning, to the inspection of implementation, to decisions related to the use of resources and to coordination.

The modification of the institutional framework of EU funds practically brought about the separation, within the state administrational organisation, of the development and the traditional governance functions. The new and uniform development policy institutional framework operating semi-independently from the traditional administrative structures was primarily in accordance with the logic of receiving and using EU funds. "The creation of an institutional framework for EU funds in a fully separate manner from the institutional framework for territorial development had an impact that was contradictory to the decentralisation process announced by government, and it strengthened the central administrational level. While creating parallel structures, it increased uncertainties related to the division of tasks and competences, it increased the number of government officials and it created new tasks of coordination and new administrative tensions, not to forget the division of available capacities" (Perger, 2010).

The institutional framework for ROP implementation remained centralized and the only Managing Authority, centralized in a manner similar to the sectoral managing authorities (MAs), became part of the NDA. At the same time, however, the centralized structure was mitigated by the fact that local stakeholders were given a bigger say with respect to development decisions (effectively regarding operative planning and project selection) through the Regional Development Councils (RDCs) and the more prominent role played by the RDCs in monitoring also had a similar effect.

Institutions and respective tasks

Many organisations were given a role in the implementation of territorial development tasks. Below we introduce first-level and second-level NUTS organisations.

National level administrational institutions (NUTS 1) were the following: Parliament, Government and the responsible ministries. The central management of territorial development was entrusted to 3 ministries. During the period under examination, the Ministry of National Economy was responsible for developing territorial development concepts.

The Ministry of Interior was responsible for coordinating issues related to territorial development with local governments. The National Development Ministry was responsible for harmonizing Hungarian development policy with EU development policy.

National professional and partner institutions also played an important role in territorial policy during the period under examination. During the 2007-2013 funding period, *VÁTI* Hungarian Regional Development and Urbanistic Ltd. (which ceased operations on 1 July 2014 with the successor being Széchenyi Programme Office Consultancy and Services Non-Profit Limited Liability Company, which came under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office) managed the human infrastructure priorities of the 7 regional Operational programmes of the NHDP, the State Reform Operational programme and the Electronic Administration Operational programme. Prior to its cessation, VÁTI became the principal professional background institution of territorial and development policy. Since 2012, the national territorial development and spatial planning information system has been operated by *Lechner Non-Profit Ltd*[12].

The *National Development Agency* (NDA) was established by Government Decree no. 130/2006. (VI. 15.) as a legal successor to the National Development Office. The Agency's responsibilities in the 2007-2013 period included the tasks of development and planning, the preparation of the plans and operational programmes necessary for the drawdown of EU funds and the formulation of the institutional framework necessary for the funds thus received. Pursuant to Government Decree no. 475/2013. (XII.17.) the NDA ceased, with the Prime Minister's Office becoming its general legal successor (SAO, 2015).

The *National Spatial Development Council* was created by means of Act XXI of 1996 on Territorial Development and Spatial Planning. The high-level interest reconciliation council participated in the tasks of governance and in the formulation of territorial development policy. Its tasks also included ensuring consultation between sectors and regions. The council eventually ceased operations on 31 December 2013 and the *National Territorial Development Interest Reconciliation Forum* was created, as of 1 January 2014, pursuant to the amending decree[13].

At the NUTS 2 level *Spatial Development Councils* and *Regional Development Councils* were given a role in the hierarchy of territorial development. Spatial Development Councils[14] were set up, if the tasks in question crossed into another county or another region. In the period under examination 8 spatial councils were in operation, of which two is mentioned in exact terms in the act: the Balaton Development Council and the Tokay Wine Region Development Council. These Councils directly received funds from the National Development Ministry.

The role of the Regional Development Councils was to compile the given region's development concept and regional operational programme, as well as all related activities, such as site appraisal, division and allocation of the resources available for spending on the respective measures, coordination, as well as the preparation of financial plans. Pursuant to the December 2011 amendment of the act on territorial development, the councils ceased and, as of 1 January 2012, the respective tasks were taken over by county governments

(Gálosi-Kovács and Haffner, 2017). From 1 January 2012, the regional development agencies were taken into state ownership, and then from 2014 onwards, into the ownership of county governments.

Based on the above, a multi-layered and hierarchic, but, as far as the distribution funds is concerned, a uniform and centralized institutional framework emerges, as a consequences of significant changes compared to the earlier structures: a radical reduction in the number of Intermediate Bodies (IBs), the reorganisation of the division of tasks, the standardisation of the procedural rules and the introduction and application of new procedures (Jobbágy, 2015). These changes diverted a significant amount of energy away from conceptually harmonized development and interest representation focussed on professional considerations. "A certain part of the substantial modifications impacting the organisational framework was in line with, while others fell short of respective expectations. The radical reduction of the number of IBs and the redistribution of tasks between MAs and IBs significantly improved implementation efficiency. The concentration of IBs under the NDA also had certain advantages, however this did not improve coordination activities or the level of coordination. The IBs acted with extreme autonomy from the very beginning, co-operation between the IBs and the OPs was of a very moderate level and the competent organisational units of the NDA (President's Office, coordination IB) did not adequately fulfil their expected role of coordination. The involvement of the ministries, as the depositaries of the respective policies, in operative planning and implementation was suboptimal, which resulted in the inadequate representation of professional considerations in both phases" (Jobbágy, 2015, p. 132).

Tools of the development policy institutional framework

The tools of development policy management can be broken down into planning and implementation elements. The management tools employed were, in overall terms, characterized in the period under examination by a well-thought-out balance and an intent to look for intervention opportunities and achieve standardisation (Molnár, 2006). The methodology includes elements like impact studies, the preparation of analyses, the processing of trends and data, the formulation of a target hierarchy, the definition of priorities, the involvement of stakeholders and the preparation of financial tables. Planning was also supported by a line of monitoring benchmarks and indicators. The plans ran through all levels of development policy, from political decision-making to actual projects, naturally, with the intent of retaining the consistency and hierarchic structure of the plans. (Hamarné et al., 2006). Planning methodologies were to a significant extent similar to the complex project management methodologies of large corporations (Sági, 2007; 2018). Their application gave support to the people involved in planning in terms of making prudent and detailed analyses and producing detailed plans.

The tools of implementation were formulated in line with the dimension of control. The system of rules simultaneously included limits and opportunities. Monitoring and control were important elements of implementation, in the form of separate (independent) organisations and public databases, as in line with the respective procedural rules (Monitoring Committees, EMIR, OTMR), with some included within the processes and others being of an ex-post character (Hamarné et al., 2006).

Reference points and comparisons – practices and results in countries of the Visegrád Co-operation in the field of territorial development

The V4 countries embarked on the period examined in this study from similar initial positions, but with different specific characteristics, and they have likewise followed different trajectories during this period. The similarities included the heritage of their socialist past with respect to their economic structures, as well as the timing, characteristics, conditions and speed of their rapprochement towards the EU. Differences, on the other hand, resulted from the varying characteristics and different levels of economic development of the different countries (Losoncz, 2017).

The main motifs of territorial development are very similar in the case of all 4 countries: from a conceptual aspect they can be regarded as resource-centred. Resources became available in the form of EU funds, consequently all V4 countries implemented resource-driven (top-down) territorial development. The guiding principles, objectives, priorities, as well as planning and tendering methodologies are all in tune with this. However, the results are different, as are the development trajectories: "Poland and Slovakia achieved better results; in Hungary and the Czechia there was no real increase in the level of development" (Bajusz, 2015). Competitiveness however, could not be improved, in material terms, in any of the V4 countries (Hetényi, 2014). This is true despite the fact that "according to the model calculations of the European Commission, the investments implemented from EU resources, as part of the 2007-2015 cohesion and rural development policy, increased GDP in Hungary by 5 per cent, in Poland and the Czechia by 4 per cent and in Slovakia by 3.5 per cent, as compared to circumstances in which no such resources would have been made available" (Losoncz, 2017). In other words, territorial development resources significantly contributed to the prosperities of all of the countries during the financial year of 2008 and the period of the subsequent economic crisis. However, it is important to add that between 1995 and 2017, the basic economic trajectories of the countries and the EU resources, even if taken together, failed to result in the real term closing of the GDP gap between the 8 new Central and Eastern European EU member states and the former EU member states (Cieślik and Wciślik, 2020).

The (rule abiding) use of funds from the Structural and Cohesion Funds represented a learning curve for the new EU member states. The rate of utilizing resources was far from consistent in the 2007-2013 period. In the first five years of the budgetary period, not even six member states reached the average EU absorption rate (35.6%), and even up until 2015, six new member states were still below the average EU rate (90.3%) (Incaltarau et al., 2020). Taking the n+2 rule into account, according to the data of the European Commission the absorption rates of 8 member states, including 4 new member states (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania and Croatia), fell below (98.29%) the average for the EU 28 member states. Although there were a number of instances of overspending in

Hungary, i.e. out-payments exceeded the appropriation available (Boldizsár et al., 2016), according to the data of the European Commission the final absorption rate of the multiannual financial framework eventually fell below 100 percent (99.64%).[15]

Incaltarau and co-authors (2020) analysed the factors impacting the absorption rate of EU member states using an econometric model. Their findings show that increasing government efficiency and cutting back on corruption has a positive effect on the absorption rate. Although this impact is valid for both old and new member states, the impact is more significant for new member states. According to the standpoint of the authors, this implies that numerous factors hindering the efficient spending of public funds could still be identified in the new member states during the period under examination (e.g. irregularities surrounding public procurement, election campaign spending, exploiting of political advantages, etc.) However, one of the surprising findings of the model was that, in a manner contradictory to the EU's objectives, political decentralisation is not a significant causal factor, i.e. assuming that all other factors are constant, decentralized and centralized countries use EU resources with the same level of efficiency.

Nyikos (2012, p. 7) also came to a similar conclusion based on her findings, in that "there is no practical experience to suggest that there is a direct relationship between the level of decentralisation and the quality of governance. There is no rule, as to whether the governance and administrational regimes of decentralized or centralized states are of a higher quality". These results are all the more surprising since, according to a theoretical approach, one of the major features of cohesion policy is a decentralized implementation system, owing to the fact that implementation is carried out at territorial and local levels. The effectiveness of regional policy depends, to a significant degree, on the effectiveness of the governing and managing organisations (Sági and Engelberth, 2018).

With respect to the use of cohesion funds, the governments of the V4 Countries laid down the objective of maximizing the absorption rate during the period under examination. This is also made evident by the fact that transport, energy and environment related projects accounted for approximately half of the funds used (Boldizsár et al., 2016). The acquisition costs of these investments (e.g. road and rail development, water treatment equipment, waste related infrastructure, etc.) is typically high, but the investments only contribute to the development of a country's innovations environment in a negligible extent.

Table 7: Comparison of the V4 countries according to institutional framework, 2007-2013

	Institutional co-operation	Government management	Territorial management
Hungary	Parallel/Coordinated	centralized	mixed then centralized
Slovakia	Integrated	dispersed	centralized
Czechia	Integrated	dispersed	mixed
Poland	Integrated	centralized	mixed
Romania	Integrated	dispersed	centralized

Source: Nyikos, 2013, p. 48-49

Regional territorial co-operation between V4 countries and cross-border projects

Strategic territorial development related co-operation between the V4 and also between the V4+2 (including Romania and Bulgaria) intensified during the period under examination. The participants of the cooperation agreed to collaborate in the interest of developing the identified shortcomings of the ties between the participating countries along a common strategy, which, in the long term, may be the key to the strengthening of the territorial and geopolitical weight of the V4. The respective plans are characterised by transport corridors and cross-border energy infrastructure investments. The origins of the co-operation date back to 2007, when the V4 made a joint stand, in opposition to the countries of the Mediterranean region, in the interest of securing resources promoting the closing of the gap (Bajusz, 2015). The Common Territorial Development Strategy was finalized in 2010, which identified, with the involvement of the V4+2 countries, the axes broken by country borders and the critical paths (Jusztin and Guti, 2014).

It is important to note that the cross-border territorial development projects also funded by the EU by means of independent programmes (INTERREG, ESPON, URBACT, INTERACT) constitute a subplot of Hungarian territorial development efforts not without historical roots, which are primarily intended to strengthen territorial integration within the EU (Pupek, 2008). Co-operation between nations, the direct and metaphoric dismantling of borders and the strengthening of economic ties with the Carpathian Basin also have a local significance, as a result of the Government's minority policy. Observed from a Hungarian aspect, the pragmatic, idealist EU funds intended to strengthen federalism provide funds for supporting the everyday lives of Hungarian minorities living in the severed territories, for advancing the underdeveloped infrastructure, for increasing regional competitiveness and for strengthening the identities of Hungarians living abroad (Hungary–Slovakia Cross-Border Co-operation Operational programme 2007–2013).

Summary and conclusions

Based on the findings of this research it can be concluded that the period between 2010 and 2014 may primarily be considered as a period of change in territorial development. The period is characterised by a multi-layered structure, a diverse system of objectives, numerous actors (stakeholders), the restructuring of the institutional framework, a flood of programmes and national economic plans, as well as the principal guideline typical of the period relating to the intent that available resources must under all conditions be spent (Faragó, 2011).

According to the professional literature relating to the period under examination, it cannot be considered as the most successful period, despite the fact that it was in this period that Hungary became eligible for the highest amount of EU development funds. The use of EU resources did not produce the expected improvements, as far as the major goals, such as growth, gap reduction and complex regional development are concerned (SAO, 2016). At the same time, however, based on medium term appraisal, a positive evaluation may be produced based on the same target functions and results and the major objectives and aspects determined:

(1) In the 2007–2013 EU programming cycle impacting the governmental period, assistance in the record amount of 8 thousand billion HUF was available to Hungarian for-profit and non-profit actors, primarily from EU and, to a lesser extent, from domestic sources (NHDP 2007). By the end of 2013 resource drawdown rate reached 115 per cent, which made Hungary the third most successful amongst EU nations (KPMG, 2017).

(2) If we expand the focus of investigation to the 2014–2020 period, we can observe a fast rate growth in the economic performance of Hungary. On the one hand, the primary goal of the NHDP relating to "the expansion of employment and the establishment of conditions for long-term growth" was attained (NHDP, 2007), since the rate of unemployment fell in 2019 to a record low of 3.4 per cent, while employment grew to 70.2 per cent, a level not seen since the systemic change. In the meantime, real GDP also grew in a continuous manner. This development curve cannot be exclusively accredited to the economic growth following the 2007–2008 global financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis characterising the first years of the 2010s. The more efficient drawdown of EU resources, the significant volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) and the repercussions of these factors also played a significant role.

Naturally, the scope of the study does not allow for the exact econometric measurement of the rate of contribution to growth of the different impacts, however, their analysis produces a clear picture of the optimisation of the use of EU resources. Criticism may be valid with respect to the fact that although the domestic institutional framework speeded up the use of resources, it downgraded professional considerations. At the same time, the resource absorption compulsion resulted, in many instances, in a local (sub-) optimum of resource spending, as opposed to a complex territorial/regional optimum. This is indicated by the circumstances that the funds used did not contribute, in significant terms, to cohesion within the country (see Table 8, for example), the that differences between the network of cities and the revenues thereof remained unmodified in the period under examination with only minor reallocations being detectable (Rechnitzer et al., 2014) and that the economic growth of the different counties was primarily determined by FDI (Lengyel and Varga, 2018).

Differences in revenues are therefore unmodified within the network of settlements over the long-run, which is also true for the entire spatial structure, and these may, in turn, augment socio-political tensions on a regional level in the future (Sági, 2019). In terms of revenues, differences between the territories have fundamentally returned to the levels characteristic of the pre-crisis period or, as far as the period ex-

Table 8: The dynamics of unemployment compared to GDP, 2007-2019

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unemployment rate (%)	7.4	7.8	10.0	11.2	11.0	11.0	10.2	7.7	6.8	5.1	4.2	3.7	3.4
GDP volume index (y/y, %)	0.2	1.1	-6.7	1.1	1.9	-1.4	1.9	4.2	3.8	2.1	4.3	5.4	4.6

Source: Compiled by the authors based on KSH

Table 9: Spatial differences based on GDP, 2007–2018
(GDP per capita as a percentage of the national average)

Description	2007		2013		2018	
Capital City of Budapest		214.7		210.9		203.6
Richest county	Győr-Moson-Sopron	119.0	Győr-Moson-Sopron	120.8	Győr-Moson-Sopron	121.8
Poorest county	Nógrád	44.4	Nógrád	43.8	Nógrád	44.5
Average of the three richest counties	1. Győr-Moson-Sopron 2. Komárom-Esztergom 3. Fejér	107.5	1. Győr-Moson-Sopron 2. Komárom-Esztergom 3. Vas	106.7	1. Győr-Moson-Sopron 2. Fejér 3. Komárom-Esztergom	107.8
Average of the three poorest counties	1. Nógrád 2. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg 3. Békés	52.2	1. Nógrád 2. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg 3. Békés	53.0	1. Nógrád 2. Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg 3. Békés	53.6
Ratio of the average of the three richest counties to the average of the three poorest counties		2.06		2.01		2.0
Ratio of the Capital City of Budapest to the average of the three richest counties		1.80		1.75		1.7
Ratio of the Capital City of Budapest to the average of the three poorest counties		4.84		4.82		4.6

Source: Compiled by the authors based on CSO data

amined in this study is concerned, those characteristic of the starting point of the budgetary cycle planning period.

In terms of the spatial changes in revenues therefore, a structure practically identical to that of the past has evolved, i.e. EU funds on the one hand contributed to the correction of negative trend swings, while on the other hand they failed to support closing the gap between territories or to result in an upswing in revenue conditions.

Notes

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2 Poland, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia; hereinafter referred to as V4 or Visegrád Countries

3 Multiannual financial framework (MFF) and EU budget will hereinafter be used in the study as synonym expressions.

4 www.europarl.europa.eu/external/html/euenlargement/default_hu.htm

5 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/structural_cohesion_fund.html?locale=hu

6 www.palyazat.gov.hu/kohezios_politika_celkituzesei

7 www.palyazat.gov.hu/az-j-magyarorszg-vidkfejlesztsi-program-2007-2013-utlagos-ex-post-rtkelse

8 www.innovacio.hu/download/allasfoglalas/2011_12_28_mnt_konzultacios_anyag.pdf

9 The plans were predominantly named after prominent figures of the dual Austro-Hungarian Empire. Names of certain prominent figures from the Reform Era, from the period between the 1848-49 freedom struggle and the Austro-Hungarian compromise and from the period between 1920 and 1944 were also used.

10 National Development and Regional Development Concept 1/2014. (I. 3.). annex to the parliamentary resolution

11 http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/4/d1/20000/Sz%C3%A9ll%20K%C3%A1lm%C3%A1n%20Terv.pdf

12 www.terport.hu

13 www.terport.hu

14 Pursuant to Article 15 (1) of Act XXI of 1996 (ATDSP) the 8 spatial development councils are: 1. Danube-Tisza Interfluve Homokhátság Spatial Development Council, 2. Danube Bend SDC, 3. "Highway 8" SDC, 4. "M9" SDC, 5. Lake Velence Region – Vál Valley – Vértes Highlighted SDC, 6. Lake Tisza SDC, 7. Szigetköz – Upper Danube SDC, 8. Balaton DC, + Tokaj Wine Region DC (created in 2014). All of these development councils are still in operation today.

15 https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/2007-2013/Total-Percentage-of-Available-Funds-Paid-Out-by-th/w8x7-cqjd

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