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RESEARCH ARTICLE

DEFINITION OF NEW SPATIAL REGIONS IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

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Abstract

The exhibition presents the problems of cross-border cooperation and opportunities for partnership. Within the European Union, conditions are created for regional development on the national territory, as well as for border and cross-border cooperation. In this direction, the article outlines the processes of building a number of Euroregions, which are designed to promote regional development. This report will clarify some of the reasons for their construction, their role and what model of cooperation is available within the European Economic Area.

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Introduction:-

The dynamic social and economic changes since the early 1990s have created the conditions for the further development of the countries of Eastern Europe. So at the same time there was the process of defragmentation (former Yugoslavia), the transition (Bulgaria, Romania), the rise and dynamic development (Turkey) and the special case of change (Greece) and others, which raised the need to break free. This was the beginning of regional development. On the other hand, the processes of enlargement of the European Union have brought to the fore the processes of regional integration. Its focus is on improving the situation in border regions or larger areas that have similar socio-economic characteristics. These are areas that need regional economic development or can be called disadvantaged areas. These are usually border areas, which are characterized by relatively weak economic development. This lag may be due to their peripheral location, the influence of natural and climatic factors, as well as a deteriorating demographic structure. Thus, the study of the processes of regional integration becomes a serious challenge for the regional sciences. The need to pursue development policies in peripheral areas appears to be a counterpoint to the interest in the ongoing processes in urban areas. On the other hand, regardless of the location of the territories at European level, they have similar problems. These are demographic problems, the functioning of markets, environmental problems and our adaptation to electronic technologies, as well as climate change and social polarization. In the peripheral regions, economic development and integration processes are slower, which requires looking for an integrated approach to their development. In this respect, building homogeneous Euroregions is one of the steps in this direction. At the same time, the construction of Euroregions is a prerequisite for creating real conditions for the harmonious development of all regions within the European Union.

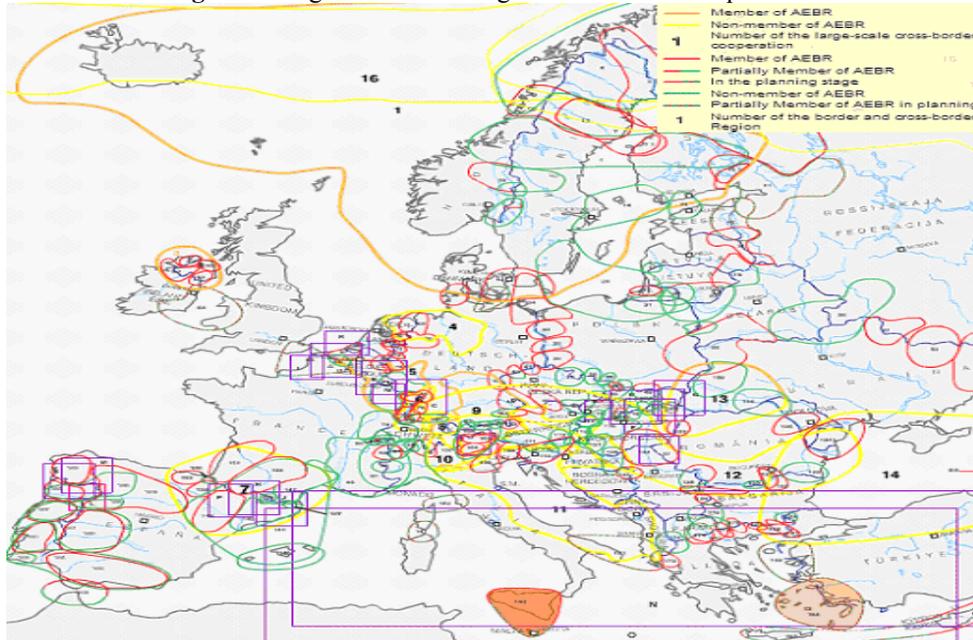
This has led to the need to focus research on regional development issues. Bringing regional development policies to the fore brought to the fore the need for programming and planning for the development of peripheral regions in the European space. This also determined a new priority of the European regional policy for the formation of new Euroregions. Thus, in order to overcome the regional problems and the tendencies for improvement of the regional connectivity, we focus our research on certain regions in Southeast Europe in order to bring out the problems of the separate territorial communities and their opportunities for development. The focus of our review will be on Southeast Europe, where the most dynamic socio-economic changes have taken place since the end of the last

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century. In addition, this is the region in the European space, which is expected to be fully integrated into the European Union by 2030. To a large extent, regional integration and the formation of new Euroregions is one of the mechanisms to overcome a number of demographic and socio-economic challenges facing Southeast Europe.

Image 1:- Designation of Euroregions within the European Area.



Source: <http://www.aebr.eu>.

Structuring of developing regions in Southeast Europe

We can emphasize that a number of Euroregions have been formed in the European area, which are subject to regional development policies. In this direction, regional development is seen both as a process of planning and programming through which policies are implemented to improve the welfare of the region, as well as the connectivity between the settlements in it. Spatial development refers to the evolution of territories in all their dimensions. The monitoring of spatial development and the analysis of its trends and forecast studies are activities necessary for the development of spatial development policies. In this direction, when defining Euroregions, it is necessary to determine in spatial terms which countries they include. Here is the place to emphasize that the separate regional spaces are often located in more than one country. Within Southeast Europe, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Macedonia, Serbia and Albania are spatially related. To Southeast Europe we can often add one of the countries in the Western Balkans and these are Kosovo, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia. For its part, the Southeast Europe thus defined requires a more careful imposition of the integration processes due to the affiliation of some of the countries to the former Yugoslavia. The countries of the Yugoslav space experienced difficult processes related to their self-determination accompanied by a civil war. Thus, the possibility of integration in this part of Europe is very difficult. Our focus is on other regions of Southeast Europe that can form sustainable between state regions. In general, the creation of common regions is a step that can have a positive impact on the socio-economic development of all countries in the region. On the other hand, the integration of the community in Southeast Europe needs modernization and development. In practice, the region is not homogeneous, but it needs economic change and the promotion of development through regional cohesion. Over the years, separate initiatives for border development have been implemented, but they are not enough. Practically all countries in Southeast Europe are trying to support the development of border regions, but this process is very slow and unfocused because there is a lack of large investments and donor programs. It is necessary to impose a common European model of programming and financing of these regions. The analysis of the factors that will stimulate growth in the future suggests that greater importance should be given to supporting local business and services, as well as the development of interregional clusters and enterprises. Legal regulations are needed to make the border areas attractive for living. It is also stepping up the decentralization process in these regions. Creating conditions for business participation in the development and implementation of border development strategies. This will encourage the emergence of joint ventures and regional markets. In this respect, Bulgaria has the greatest opportunities to build

new Euroregions. The geographical location makes it possible to integrate with Greece and Romania as members of the European Union, as well as with Serbia, Northern Macedonia and Turkey. At the same time, the deterioration of the socio-economic development of Bulgaria and the poor international policy do not contribute to the development of regional integration. By 2020, opportunities for creating new regions open up for Romania, Serbia and Greece. Prospects for promoting regional integration are being delayed by rising levels of corrupt practices in Bulgaria and the effects of the coronary crisis on countries such as Turkey, Greece and Romania. We can also assume that in the countries of South-Eastern Europe we have demographic inequality and increased regional disparities within nation states, which is increasing the number of people living in underdeveloped regions. Overcoming these differences will undoubtedly be a long process - which is why the least developed regions are a top priority of regional development policy. At the same time, however, all regions face the need to restructure, modernize and promote the consistent application of knowledge-based innovation in order to meet the challenge of globalization. The policy is therefore based on a broad vision that recognizes the need to strengthen the competitiveness of all regions. Growth and development in a market economy undoubtedly mean that restructuring is taking place, often linked to unemployment and job creation, which are unevenly distributed and can lead to a territorial concentration of social and economic problems. In addition, increased population concentration and economic activity in the metropolitan area threaten economic growth in the long run, as negative extremes such as rising rents, lack of work space, congestion and pollution can damage their image and competitiveness. Secondary growth poles can help reduce the pressure on the metropolitan area and stimulate higher growth potential in general. In this regard, we can conclude that all regions face the need to restructure, modernize and easily implement a constant flow of innovation based on products of knowledge, governance and human capital in order to meet the challenge of globalization. Even with a background of impressive growth rates, the regions have an economic structure highly concentrated in sectors where competition from emerging Asian economies is high. The economic imperative for these regions will be to anticipate and facilitate change. This will help reduce the cost of change and will also be a contributing factor to change. For these reasons, this must be done early enough for these measures to be taken during the waiting period so that people and regions can be prepared for change. In addition to the provision of infrastructure, it is important that regions are considered in terms of their ability to access. The eastern regions have low access from roads and several highways, which reflects the fact that the highway network is not built quite rationally, the focus is mainly on serving the capitals and the most populated conglomerates. However, it should be noted that the existence of a peripheral region can never have the same level of access as a central region. There is a significant territorial decline in the regions, where low wages can be found, as well as deteriorating engineering infrastructure, limited electrification, poor road infrastructure and inefficient public sector. These areas therefore require improved development, including the reorganization of infrastructure and geography. However, the situation has improved in recent years with the commissioning of border regions as a result of investments in points to increase freight flows. Successful regional cooperation can be supported by the example of the results of Euroregions such as NEA (Hungary-Romania), Gorna Prut (Romania-Moldova-Ukraine) and others.

Euroregions in South East Europe

The territorial structure of the Euroregion consists of neighboring and culturally close territories of neighboring countries. Euroregions are a form of cross-border cooperation between two or more neighboring European countries (it is recommended that they be members of the European Union, but not required). Euroregions are created by local institutions or associations of neighboring countries and aim to improve the quality of life in the region. Cross-border territorial structures and Euroregions are not identical to the legal or administrative institutions of local authorities, although they are created by them and overlap to some extent. The institutions and structures of the Euroregions have functions and competencies limited to the borders of the Euroregion. The rulers of the Euroregion have no political power because they are not elected by a majority. The Euroregions "Black Sea", "Rhodopes", "Lower Danube", "Thrace" and others have a key place for Southeast Europe. The main goal of these regions is to promote regional cooperation and local self-government in them, as well as the development of the regional economy. The careful focus on the formation of Euroregions shows that they are essential for promoting regional development and the economic development of territorial communities. In this direction we will present the most important Euroregions in Southeast Europe. The Black Sea Euroregion is of strategic importance as a gateway to the European Union.

This is an Euroregion that covers the territory of two member states of the European Union - Bulgaria and Romania. The Euroregion includes the areas bordering the Black Sea. It was established on September 26, 2008 in Varna. The largest city in the Black Sea Euroregion, Varna, has approximately 343,000 inhabitants, and the largest port is Constanta. Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine are also partners in the process. An important issue is

the Lower Danube Euroregion, which includes all areas in Bulgaria bordering the Danube, Romanian side parts and parts of Serbia and Ukraine. The aim is to build cross-border relations and activities in the field of economy, tourism, culture and the unification of the people along the Lower Danube. It is strategically important to create the necessary legal framework for changes in a positive direction of development of the Euroregion. This should be linked to the simultaneous construction of 12 transport links in order to reduce the average distance for crossing the Danube downstream from 155 km to 51 km. The improved infrastructure will support approximately ten million people living on the Lower Danube, which will significantly improve their living conditions and regional development.

Image 2:- Euroregions in South East Europe.



http://www.aebr.eu/en/members/map_of_members.php

In 2004, the StaraPlaninaEuroregion was formed between nine and seven Bulgarian municipalities from Serbia-Montenegro. On the Bulgarian side, the following municipalities are members: Makresh, Chuprene, Belogradchik, Chiprovtsi, GeorgiDamyanovo, Berkovitsa, Godech, Dragoman and Trun. From the Serbian countries the municipalities are: Dimitrovgrad, Pirot, Boyana and Zajcar. The organization works to establish and maintain good neighborliness and cooperation for local sustainable development of the StaraPlanina region, through the development of infrastructure, culture, sports, tourism, agriculture and environmental protection. The aim is to attract the attention of international institutions in the region, thus increasing the chance of funding projects.

The Rhodope Euroregion is also important for regional development. The total area of the Rhodope Euroregion is 9486.83 sq. Km (including 8542.83 square kilometers on the Bulgarian side and 944 square kilometers on the Greek side), and the population is 526,466 inhabitants (including 446,793 Bulgarian side and 79,673 - from Greek). On the Bulgarian side, the Euroregion covers the municipalities of Asenovgrad, Bani, Batak, Borino, BratsigovoVelingrad, Devin, Dospat, Zlatograd, Kirkovo, Kardzhali, Lucky, Madan, Momchilgrad, Nedelino, Rakitovo, RodopiRudozem, Smolyan, Chepelare - and Strelcha. Xanthi, Avdira, Keramoti, Chrysupoli, Orin, Mickey and the Xanthi Chamber of Commerce. The aim is to promote the regional development of the municipalities in the Rhodopes.

In recent years, efforts have been made to form a "Thracian Euroregion" in the geographical region of Thrace. The Euroregion will be differentiated as an economic and tourist area within the European Union, which covers the territory of three countries - Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. The aim of this region will be to develop economic cooperation between the three countries. At the same time, this co-operation could be beneficial in the event of Turkey's future accession to the EU. Integration can take place through pre-accession funds and other mechanisms that the EU has provided to Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece. The three countries use EU funds and programs to implement various projects of common interest in the region.

In recent years, work has been underway to strengthen a new Euroregion on the three countries of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia. The new Euroregion is called the Morava-Pcinja-Struma Euroregion. Its members are 12 Bulgarian border municipalities, six Macedonian and nine Serbian municipalities. Meetings are held regularly in cities in the three countries to discuss opportunities for cross-border co-operation. Several cross-border cooperation projects have also been implemented. An important contribution to the improvement of cooperation can be made by the highway in the direction Nis-Sofia, as well as the construction of Corridor 8.

Important for the development of regional economic relations is the establishment of the Nishava Euroregion, which included municipalities from Serbia and Bulgaria, as follows: Pirost, Babushnitsa, Dimitrovgrad, Bela Palanka, Kostinbrod, Bozhurishte, Dragoman, Slivnitsa, Godech and Svoge. The Nishava Euroregion is recognized by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), a leader in this part of Europe for promoting and developing cooperation and establishing partnerships between municipalities in the Republic of Serbia and Bulgaria. Through this region, municipalities are given the opportunity to exchange information, experience and best practices, develop and implement joint activities and projects and the opportunity to solve common problems. Its importance is even greater with the opening of new opportunities for financing cross-border cooperation projects.

Opportunities for Bulgaria for cross-border cooperation

The change in the geopolitical situation, as well as the geographical location of Bulgaria and Turkey, was sent not only to pre-improve the migratory pressure, but also before expanding the supply chain, which is used in cross-border increase of goods and their management. However, there is an increased exchange of goods and transport services with the near and remote areas of Turkey. That is why the opening of new border checkpoints between Bulgaria and Turkey is envisaged. Currently, agreements are being reached at Rezovo, Strandzha - Malkochlar and Belevren - Ahmetler, through which to create opportunities to ensure a smoother flow of people, vehicles and goods at the borders without reducing the level of security within EU. For the improvement of the cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Turkey, it is good to consider the construction of the border checkpoint in the village of Golyam Dervent (Bulgaria) - the village of Hadjilar (Turkey). In this region there are differences in the infrastructure of both countries, and Bulgaria has a greater interest in investing in infrastructure.

In the field of cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Greece, common agreements have already been reached or are being reached on various regional initiatives. In this case, the large border mountain system - the Rhodopes - should not be a limiting factor for transport, economic and cultural connections. It could even play the role of an integrating axis - as the largest ecological park in Europe with extremely rich natural diversity. The formation of the Rhodope Euroregion has begun. In the current 2020, the construction of the Rudozem-Xanthi border checkpoint will start. The checkpoint is being built in implementation of the agreement signed in 1995 between Bulgaria and Greece for the opening of three border checkpoints between the two countries. Through it, a direct road connection will be created in the direction Plovdiv - Smolyan - Rudozem - Xanthi - Northern Greece, as part of the Cross-border Corridor №9.

The Euroregional cooperation between Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia is related to the construction of new border checkpoints and the stimulation of small and medium enterprises in the border municipalities. The two countries must focus their efforts on the implementation and construction of the Klepalo border checkpoint near Strumyani, or the expansion of the Logodazh border checkpoint between Stanke Lisichkovo and Delchevo. However, this is not enough for the regional development of the border regions between the two countries. For most analysts and experts, the construction of several new border checkpoints is key to achieving effective results in improving connectivity between Northern Macedonia and Bulgaria. On the other hand, one can think about building another border checkpoint between Bulgaria and Northern Macedonia in the direction Skopje - Kumanovo - Probishtip - Kochani - Laki - Budinartsi - Berovo - Berovo Lake - Bachilo Pankovski (Northern Macedonia border checkpoint) - Gorna Ribnitsa (border checkpoint) Bulgaria) - Goreme - Vrakupovitsa - Karpelevo - Kamenica - Kresna, which will facilitate the connection with Thessaloniki and Petrich and Sandanski of the northern Macedonian cities of Probishtip, Kumanovo and Berovo and improve the connection with Kresna. The construction of this border checkpoint opens a great perspective for future development of the municipality of Kresna, including new investments, creation of more jobs.

Over the last 15 years, the opportunity to improve connectivity between Bulgaria and Serbia seems to be in the background. Cross-border cooperation between the two countries can be aimed at increasing entrepreneurial cooperation, cooperation in the fields of transport, communications, energy, environmental protection and the fight against natural disasters, as well as in the field of preservation of cultural and historical heritage. is working on the opening of the new border checkpoint (BCP) between Bulgaria and Serbia "Bankya-Petachintsi".

Over the last decade, there has been a gradual increase in the use of land connections between Bulgaria and Romania, mainly at the Silistra, Kardam and Durankulak border checkpoints, and more recently at Kaynardzha and Krushari, which are new checkpoints but unable to pass. heavy transport. The problem is somewhat that these checkpoints are only for road vehicles up to 3.5 tons, which greatly hinders the free movement of goods and organized tourism on both sides of the border. Joint efforts to improve transport connectivity and spatial integration are recommended. This implies considering the construction of new transport corridors to stimulate regional development.

Conclusion:-

In Southeast Europe, with the participation of Bulgaria, many Euroregions have been created and the creation of new ones is still planned. For example, in the summer of 2010, Vratsa and JudetDolj (Romania) planned to create a joint Euroregion. So far, however, there is no indication that such a structure has emerged. There are great reservations regarding the construction of Euroregions along the Lower Danube.

Over the years, there have been established but poorly functioning Euroregions Belasitsa, Danube 21, Euro-Balkan (Sofia-Nis-Skopje Euroregion), Euros-Maritsa-Merich (Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey), Middle Danube Iron Gate, Danube-South Ruse-Giurgiu, Danube, small Danube Euroregion, Mesta-Nestos and others. The implementation of cross-border cooperation enables the implementation of measures including regional aid for critical areas and the implementation of specific policies. This means supporting and prioritizing the development of areas that can become locomotives of progress and development, as well as life projects in areas with extreme difficulties in the proper dosing of infrastructure, economic and social measures. In this sense, European spatial development requires an increasing focus on the development of border areas, highlighting the relevant needs of local specific policies in the creation of new inter-state economic spaces. In the context of regional development, it is difficult to prove the extent to which these Euroregions are achieving results. As an additional testament to spatial development is the need to strengthen Euroregional cooperation and this is a step in the right direction. The processes of regionalization are a necessary condition for achieving the processes of integration and cohesion of the European peoples, in order to build a "pan-European home".

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