

# MARAMUREȘ – A STILL DIVIDED REGION AT THE EASTERN PERIPHERY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

NICOLAE BOAR\*

**ABSTRACT-** Maramureș – a still divided region at the eastern periphery of the European Union. The modern period of European history lead to the formation of modern states, delimited by state borders. The installation of state borders, a necessary process at the time, had negative regional implication, dividing (brutally sometimes) well defined territorial entities. The formation of The European Union diminished the role of state borders between member states and it allowed the gradual recovery of territorial systems at a regional level and the regaining of regional identities previously affected by border fragmentation. During this process, the Euroregions type entities proved their effectiveness. The EU extension in 2005 and 2007 opened the possibility of repeating the same process in the new EU member states. However, regional entities fragmented by state borders remain at the new EU external borders, an example thereof being the Maramureș region at the Romanian-Ukrainian Border. Maramureș is a “tara”- type region (land, pays), occupying the Maramureș Lowlands in the Southeastern Carpathians, in the upper Tisa basin. It has a surface of 9 291 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 653 744 (2002 census). The Maramureș County, belonging to the Principality of Transylvania, had existed here for 600 years (XIVth-XXth centuries). After World War I, based on ethnical consideration, the sector south of the Tisa River, together with Transylvania united with Romania, while the Northern sector, ethnically dominated by Ukrainians (Ruthenians) belonged in turn to Czechoslovakia (1920-1939), Hungary (1939-1945), USSR (1945-1991) and Ukraine (1991 -). In the beginning of the 90’s, the Maramureș territorial system started to recover as a consequence of a spectacular improvement of the cross-border relations. Later, the process slowed down due to restrictions, which increased as Romania joined EU. An INTERREG-II-C questionnaire completed in Maramureș attested the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants over the level of cross-border relations, even if both sectors belong to the Carpathia Euroregion. Other Euroregions on the new EU Eastern borders did not exhibit the outstanding results in Western and Central Europe either. The new Eastern borders brought The European Union in direct contact with territories that experience the Soviet control since the 30’s. Compared to new members, which enjoyed significant democratic periods, the young democracies that split from the former USSR, do not have a consolidated democratic exercise and most decisions are still taken at central level. The new conditions request identifying new forms, structures and programmes for improving the cross-border relations and rebuilding regional identities. We consider that, at the present stage, the accent should be placed, in this region, on collaboration at a local level.

## I. The role of the natural environment of the Maramureș region in the cross-border relations

The studied space was delimited by looking at the hydrographic basin of the Maramureș Lowlands and the human usage of the space. The region mostly coincides with the former Maramureș Land and the former Maramureș County (10,354km<sup>2</sup>), except for the Dolha region in the Borjava valley, west of the volcanic mountains. The other exceptions were the localities of Lipcea and Lipetka Poliana, situated within the lowlands region, which were included into the studied space. Nowadays the southern sector is part of the Maramureș County, Romania (the historical Maramureș Land) and the northern one belongs to the Zakarpathia region (Ukraine): the Hust, Tiaciv, Mijghirea and Rahiv rayons and the city of Hust (city of regional importance, classified separately in statistics).

The total surface of the studied region is 9291 km<sup>2</sup>. It had only 9176 km<sup>2</sup> in the beginning of the century, the difference stemming from the present appurtenance of the village of Rokosiv, situated in the south-west of the Hust rayon, while at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century it belonged to the Bereg County.

The shape corresponds to an ellipse with the long axis along SE-NW, the short axis along NE-SW and an aspect ratio of 2/1 (200 km/100 km). The center is located in the small city Kobilețki Poliana, close to Dilove (Vișeu Valley), where in 1875 the Geographical Society of Austria-Hungary placed an obelisk denoting the geographical center of Europe. Based on this, the Maramureș Museum launched the tourist offer “Maramureș – Europe’s Km 0”, due to the close proximity to the city of Sighet.

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\* “Babeș-Bolyai” University, Department of Regional Geography, Faculty of Geography, Clinicilor Street, no. 5-7, 400006 Cluj-Napoca, Romania.  
E-mail: nboar@geografie.ubbcluj.ro

The *relief* reproduces the shape of a large amphitheatre with high mountains in the East, Northeast and Southeast and lower ones, of volcanic origin, in the Western, Northwestern and Southwestern parts. These mountains surround the hilly lowlands of Maramureş, which consequently became a well protected space from the point of view of history and climate, motivating its inhabitation since ancient times.

Major relief units are the mountains, grouped in two height levels, the hilly units, located at the contact with the lowlands, and the valleys, grouping the most numerous population and human settlements. Between these units, human and material fluxes flow, aspect well-caught by V. Mihăilescu (1963): “the Maramureş Land is not only a region of cultivated and well-populated hills, but also a framework of mountains with bridges, meadows, scattered farms and sheepfolds, complementary to the lower arable areas. Together they form a well balanced complex, with aspects and functions that complement each other”.

If the relief confers geographical convergence to the Maramureş space, *hydrography* supports the main axes for the concentration of fluxes, lending functional unity to the whole Maramureş space. The same V. Mihăilescu (1963) mentioned: “Tisa, via its affluents, connects in a single unit the complementary components of the relief, contributing to realizing the geographical region known in its broader meaning as ‘Maramureş Land’ “.

The Maramureş space is rich in rivers that create periodic problems. Floods take place annually, the most disastrous ones in recent years being those in 1970 and 2001. Their human usage was of greater importance in the past, while today only old water mills present a local importance as tourist attractions. Rika River, also receiving water from Terebla via a tunnel, is used for generating electricity, while at Mara springs a dam is being constructed in order to build an accumulation lake.

The region is rich in mineral waters that used to be exploited better in the past. Presently in the Romanian compartment they are used only in tourist units of local interest (Botiza, Crăciuneşti), while the salt waters of the old salt mines of Coştiui and Ocna Şugătag are used for therapeutic purposes. In the Ukrainian sector, the therapeutic usage is better developed (Soimi, Şaian, Bogdan, Kobileţka Poliana etc.). Moreover the mine salt of Solotvino is used for treating respiratory tract diseases. The salt lakes possess a basic tourist infrastructure. The glacier lakes in the Rodnei Mountains have similar counterparts in Ciornogora and Svidoveţ Mountains.

Similarities induced by *climate, vegetation* and *soils* create two distinct sectors in terms of human usage and conditions: a central depressionary sector offering similar condition to the golf type depressions in the Apuseni Mountains (agricultural and fruit tree plantations, animal breeding) and a sector of peripheral depressions on the upper streams of rivers, with a colder climate, requiring an economy based on forestry and animal breeding. The high birth rate coupled with a reduction in mining and forestry activities induced very high emigration rates, leading to major problems for the human existence in this sector.

Maramureş has a high biodiversity that requires protection. Exactly 21 protected areas can be found in each sector (Romanian and Ukrainian). However the effective areas are higher for the Ukrainian sector. In 1999-2000, via a PHARE-CREDO program, a cross border reservation in the Maramureş Mountains was begun, by joining the Farcău-Mihailec reservation (Romania) with the Karpaţi national park (Ukraine). Lack of subsequent financing halted the initiative.

Characteristic to the natural environment is its obvious unity, due to its appurtenance to a single collecting river- the Tisa river. The vertical bio-pedo-geographical stratification imposes the orientation of the gravitational vectors towards the Tisa axis and the presence of complementarity fluxes between different bio-pedo-geographical strata. The placement of the national border on the thalweg of the collecting river is unfortunate, leading to an anthropic fragmentation of a unitary natural system. The prevention and the reduction the negative effects of excessive natural phenomena (floods, storms, etc.), the efficient capitalization of the natural potential, the protection of the environment and the conservation of biodiversity, they all require unity in the actions of the anthropic factor, even if this is fragmented in two different political structures. Consequently, a cross-border approach is needed, and the framework that would enable such an approach is a Euroregion type structure.

## II. The human component of the cross-border relations in the Maramureş region

### History and evolution of the human population

First proven human presence in these spaces belong to approximately XIII-X B.C. (Bronze Age), continued with *Dacian* presences (100 B.C. –100 A.D.). Both presences are also confirmed by Ukrainian historians. Some authors also identify a *Celtic* presence. The *Roman* occupation is doubtful, but massive traces (coins, jewels) were found scattered around the whole Maramureş space.

The relief protected the Maramureş space from the largest migration waves (Goths, Huns, Avars), which crossed the Carpathians West of the region (via the Dukla pass, of only 503 m height). In the plains West of Maramureş, the presence of “Slavs laboring the land” in the VI<sup>th</sup> to the IX<sup>th</sup> century was attested, but certain toponyms indicate their presence within this space too (Popa R. 1997).

The first attested reference of Maramureş dates from 1199, when the Hungarian king Emeric rewarded count Laurenţiu for helping him during a hunting accident “in Maramorosio tempore venationis”.

*Hungarians* and *Germans* start penetrating the region towards the end of the XIII<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the XIV<sup>th</sup> via the “royal guest settlements” of Hust, Visc, Teceu, Câmpulung and Sighet. This happened simultaneously with the Tartar invasion, so the increase in the influence of the Hungarian kingdom was seen as a protection and not as an invasion.

The historian R. Popa (1997) identified, based on documents from the period, 100 localities at the end of the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, out of which 84 were denoted as romanian villages “villis valachalibus” or owned by *Romanian* counts or voivods. Besides the guest cities, 5 *Ukrainian* villages were also identified, including the Ruscova valley enclave. Therefore the beginning of the Ukrainian immigration can be dated to the XIV<sup>th</sup> century. Successive immigration waves and the higher birth rates led to equal Ukrainian and Romanian populations by mid XVII<sup>th</sup> century North of Tisa River.

In the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century a group of *Germans*, originating from Zips (Slovakia) was colonized in the mountain regions (Vişeu de Sus, Borşa, Nemeţka Mokra, Ust-Ciorna) in order exploit the forestry resources.

Beginning with the XVIII<sup>th</sup> century, *Jews* immigrate in successive waves. In the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century their number reached 56,000, 18% of the total population. The last major demographic mutations took place in the second part of the XX<sup>th</sup> century: the Jewish population practically disappeared due to deportation during the Second World War and, afterwards, emigration towards the newly created state of Israel. In the same period the German population disappeared due to deportation and emigration and, after 1990, the percentage of Hungarians was reduced drastically due to a low birth rates and emigration.

In order to characterize the *demographic situation* of the Maramureş space, we chose the period of the last 100 years. The actual data was taken from the census of 1910, which also includes data for 1900, and from those of 2001 (Ukraine) and 2002 (Romania), also including the data of those from 1989 and 1992, respectively.

**Table I. Numerical evolution and the population density in Maramureş in the XX<sup>th</sup> century**

SECT	BEGIN XX <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY				END XX <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY				
	Surf. sm <sup>2</sup>	Dens loc/ km <sup>2</sup>	Total nr.		Total nr.		Incr. 1900/ 2001	Surf. km <sup>2</sup>	Dens loc/ km <sup>2</sup>
			1900	1910	'89/'92	'01/'02			
Rom	3381	42,7	124272	144513	226042	211608	170,2	3381	62,5
Ukr.	6973	34,2	175521	198424	428363	442166	251,9	5910	74,8
Total	10354	37,9	299793	342937	654405	653774	218,0	9291	70,3

The census of 1910 reflects the demographic situation that led to the fragmentation of the Maramureş space in two compartments integrated in different countries, while those of 2001 and 2002 reflect the demographic mutations taking place in the perspective of a steady recovery of the territorial unity via increased and more diversified cross-border cooperation.

In the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the population showed a steady increase due to a strong natural growth. Between 1900 and 1910 the population increased with more than 13%, from 301 793 to 342 941 people.

Based on census data, the ethnic map of Maramureş was compiled. Two large, ethnically homogeneous territories were present, a Romanian one in the South and a Ukrainian one in the North, each having a minority enclave (a Romanian one in the northern sector and a Ukrainian one in the southern one). The two sectors were separated by the ethnically diversified Tisa corridor, having a Hungarian and Jewish majority. Therefore placing the national border along the Tisa River made sense in a period when the national principle was dominant.

The most recent censuses show a population doubling compared to 1910, from 342.947 to 653.674 inhabitants. However, if the increase in the Romanian sector was only 170%, it exceeded 250% in the Ukrainian one. This is consistent with the large natural growth of the Ukrainian population (1.5-2 times the European average). The density also grew accordingly, from 37 to 70 inh. /km<sup>2</sup>.

An analysis per rayon in the Ukrainian sector and per valley in the Romanian one revealed a tendency of population decrease in the whole Romanian Maramureş, while in the Ukrainian sector this was only present in the cities and Mijghirea rayon (mountain rayon). In the latter the emigration is still compensated by the high natural population growth.

**Table II. Ukrainians South of Tisa River between 1992-2002**

Nr.	Locality	Total 1992	Total 2001	Incr.	Ukr.	Rom.	Hun.	Other
1.	Bistra	4902	4423	- 479	4021	399	3	-
2.	Poienile de sub Munte	10561	10033	- 528	9696	256	61	20
3.	Repedea	4853	4761	- 92	4650	87	7	17
4.	Ruscova	5183	4854	- 329	4578	161	3	112
5.	Bocicoiu Mare	4681	4468	- 213	2631	1447	371	11
6.	Rona de Sus	4982	4698	- 284	4062	207	421	8
7.	Remeţi	3241	3058	- 183	2260	399	382	17
	Total	38403	36295	2108	31906	2956	1248	185

In the Romanian sector, the ethnic majority consolidated from 50.8% in 1910 to 77.6% in 2002. Moreover, Romanians have become majority along the Tisa corridor, where a few Hungarian nuclei still exist in Câmpulung la Tisa and partially in Sighet and Bocicoi. In Remeţi, Crăciuneşti, and Lunca la Tisa Ukrainian nuclei are present, while only a few traces still remain from the German nucleus in Vişeu de Sus and the Hungarian ones in Ocna Şugătag and Coştiui. The Jewish minority has almost disappeared.

The only minority showing a population increase is the Ukrainian one, which more than doubled from 16,686 in 1910 to 33,544 in 2002, corresponding to a percentage increase from 11.5% to 15%. No major territorial mutations have taken place, only a Ukrainian migration from the central villages to the belonging hamlets. There they replaced the regressing Hungarian minority (Teceul Mic, Coştiui).

**Table III. Ethnical structure of the Ukrainian sector (in percentage) in 1989**  
(O.V. Zastaveţka, 1996)

Nr.	Rayon	%					
		Ukrainians	Hungarians	Russians	Romanians	Jewish	Others
1	Mijghirea	98,6	0,2	0,8	-	-	0,4
2	Rahiv	82,6	4,1	1,4	11,2	-	0,7
3	Tiaciv	81,9	3,7	1,8	11,7	-	0,9
4	Hust	92,0	4,6	2,5	-	0,3	0,6

The ethnical structure of the Ukrainian sector as reflected in the 2001 census was not published; therefore the presented data is based on older statistics and field data gathering.

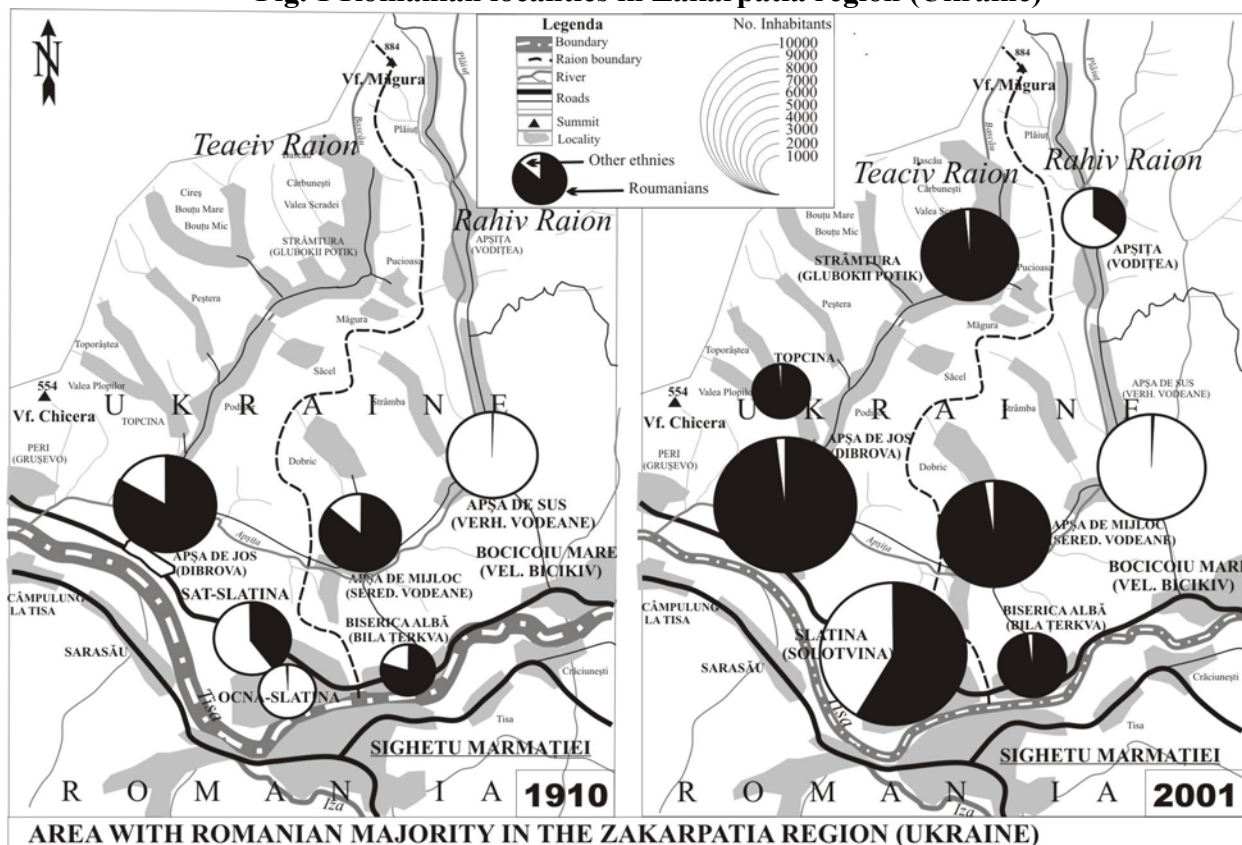
The ethnical map of this sector reflects a massive Ukrainian domination, including the Tisa corridor. The Romanian nucleus has maintained its presence, while the Hungarian presence reduced considerably and the others nationalities have almost totally disappeared. Among the newcomers worthwhile mentioning are the Russians, in a relatively small number in the cities, and the numerical increase of the Roma minority.

The Romanian nucleus north of the Tisa River has increased numerically, consolidated in territory and developed politically and administratively. Compared to three Romanian villages and a minority presence in Solotvino (Slatina) (1910), nowadays Slatina is dominated by Romanians (60%), two new Romanian villages have been formed (Topcina and Glubokii Potik), the number of Romanian villages increasing to five and the Romanians have a sizeable presence in Vodița(35%). In all this time, they maintained their national identity while remaining loyal citizens of Ukraine.

**Table IV. Romanians North of the Tisa River between 1989-2001**

Nr.	Localities	Ierarchy	No.population at the end XX century			
			1989	2001		
				Total	romanians	
No.	%					
1.	Apșa de Jos (Dibrova)	village	7177	8539	8522	98,00
2.	Topcina	village	2382	2238	2233	98,7
3.	Strâmtura (Glubokii Potik)	village	5130	5531	5520	98,5
4.	Slatina (Solotvino)	town	9651	9276	5532	59,6
5.	Apșa de Mijloc (Seredne Vodeane)	village	6038	6781	6768	97,5
6.	Apșița (Vodița)	village	2438	2758	964	34,9
7.	Biserica Albă (Bila Terkva)	village	2873	3029	3024	98,8
8.	Apșa de Sus (Verhne Vodeane)	village	6314	6539	-	-
Total			42013	44691	32.563	72,8

**Fig. 1 Romanian localities in Zakarpattia region (Ukraine)**



Presently, stronger and more diversified cross-border relations are facilitated by the specific ethnic structure. On each side of the border there are two large areas with a clear majority and two smaller, compact minority areas that maintained relations with the mother country and with a Hungarian presence on both sides of the Tisa River, community that maintained its traditional strong relations, including cross-border marriages.

A demographic phenomena specific to both sectors is the strong *territorial dynamics* of the population.

In Romania, the Maramureş inhabitants are known for their *seasonal agricultural work migration* towards Banat or the West Plains. They take payments as percentage of the production in order to compensate for cereals deficit in their native region. The same phenomenon is present in the Northern sector, where seasonal migrations take place towards Poltava region or the Asian sector of Russian Federation. Other seasonal migrations, characteristic to both sectors, target hard, intensive but well-paid labor: forestry, mowing, heavy construction works or commercial activities in the bazaars or markets of big cities. This phenomenon is also specific to both sectors.

*Emigration* is reflected in the negative population change rates in all administrative subunits. The directions follow seasonal migration patterns, supplemented with rural to urban migration. Moreover a rural to rural migration towards cheaper agricultural regions and an urban to rural migration of unemployed and retired people are also present.

Recently, *international work migration* tends to replace internal migrations, mostly for the low-educated people. The fluxes from the Romanian sector are directed towards the Latin EU countries due to ease of communication, while the Ukrainian ones target Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Russian Federation, where the stable economy creates enough work opportunities.

*Cross-border migration within* Maramureş shows a balance between Romanian and Ukrainian fluxes. The number of border crossing that remains relatively constant in time hints that these involve the same persons. Most border crossing involve trains, with a clear unbalance between the western (Câmpulung la Tisa- Teresva) and the eastern part (Valea Vişeuului – Dilove). This imbalance attests the underlying economic motivation: the western crosses correspond to Sighet market fairs (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) the same as Teresva fair days. The eastern direction involves much smaller fluxes, mostly for non-economical purposes (visits, study, and tourism).

In January the 15<sup>th</sup> 2007 the Sighetu Marmăției (RO)-Solotvino (UA) customs is opened for pedestrian and car traffic. Thus, the reconstructed “historical bridge” is given to proper use and the frequency of cross-border traffic increases fiftyfold.

*Human settlements* consist of 263 units, grouped in 16 cities (3 Romanian and 13 Ukrainian) and 126 village groups (31 Romanian and 95 Ukrainian). Worth mentioning is that both sectors show a high rate of administrative changes: some belonging hamlets becoming independent villages. The given number reflects the status during the two censuses.

The territorial distribution of cities attests the polarizing role of the Tisa corridor, 75% of the population in this sector living in the urban area. A second alignment is given by the peripheral ring of the Maramureş region, represented by cities and SMT’s polarizing the depressions and valleys from the upper courses of the other rivers. Koloceava village on upper Terebla river and several other localities in the upper Iza basin should be considered as belonging to this ring. With respect to the Iza basin, although the Dragomireşti village has the centrality function, it was Săliştea de Sus the one being declared city. We believe that in the long run, unifying the two in a single urban center is the optimal solution.

Maramureş still has a rural society, the rural population representing 60% of the total in the southern sector and 75% in the northern one. Villages are generally located in valleys and the lowlands at confluences, and rarely in flat plateaus. Generally they have a linear structure, but several have spread and even scattered sectors climbing the hilly or mountain domains. Their main economic functions are agricultural (plants, animals) in the lowland part. For mountain villages mining and forestry functions are also added. The tourism function, previously limited to curative branch, is steadily gaining importance by development of rural tourism.

## Human Settlements

**Table V. Cities of the cross-border region of Maramureş**

Cities in the Romanian sector of Maramureş									
Loc.	Valley	Type	Atest.	Decl. city	Populaþion (x1000 inh.)				2002-1992
					1956	1978	1992	2002	
Sighetu M.	Tisa	Mun.	1334	1352	24.2	39.0	44.2	41.2	-3.0
Borþa	Viþeu	city	1365	1968	13.6	25.4	27.4	27.0	-0.4
Viþeul de Sus	Viþeu	city	1365	1956	14.0	20.6	19.2	16.8	-2.3
<b>Total</b>					<b>51.8</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>90.8</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>-5.7</b>
Cities in the Ukrainian sector of Maramureş									
Localit.	Valley	Type	Atest.	Decl. Oraş	Populaþion (x1000 inh.)				2001-1989
					1959	1979	1989	2001	
Hust	Tisa	mun.	Xth cent.	1329	20,9	27,5	34,3	32,3	-2,0
Rahiv	Tisa	city	1447	1958	10,7	14,5	15,8	15,2	-0,6
Tiaciv	Tisa	city	XIIIth cent.	1329	9,7	9,4	12,3	11,3	-1,0
Bustino	Tisa	SMT	1373	1957	4,5	6,7	8,1	8,5	+0,4
Dubove	Teresva	SMT	XVIth cent.	1941	-	7,8	11,4	11,0	-0,4
Solotvina	Tisa	SMT	1409	1947	6,9	9,2	9,6	9,2	-0,4
Teresva	Tisa	SMT	1373	1957	5,9	6,2	7,2	7,4	+0,2
Ust-Ciorna	Teresva	SMT	XVIIIth cent	1957	6,6	1,4	1,5	1,4	-0,1
Velikii Bicikiv	Tisa	SMT	1373	1947	6,7	8,7	8,9	9,4	+0,5
Kobileþka Poliana	þopurka	SMT	XVth cent.	1971	-	2,9	3,0	3,3	+0,3
Iasinia	Tisa	SMT	1583	1947	6,8	7,6	8,5	8,8	+0,3
Viþkova	Tisa	SMT	1271	1976	-	7,9	11,3	11,6	+0,3
Mijghirea (Volove)	Rika	SMT	1415	1947	6,5	8,5	11,6	11,1	-0,5
<b>Total</b>					<b>85,3</b>	<b>118,3</b>	<b>143,5</b>	<b>140,5</b>	<b>-3,0</b>

SMT=selite miþkovo tipu (small town)

The network of settlements has been created in an earlier period of territorial unity of the Maramureş space. The placement of the national border along the Tisa River had a clear negative impact to the development of the system.

Several localities were 'cut into two' by the national border: Teceul Mare- Teceul Mic ; Bocicoiu Mare-Bocicoiu Mare (the same name was kept on each bank). Sighetu Marmatiei, the old capital of Maramureş has lost the northern part of its hinterland, and the northern sector remained without a major city. The bridges between localities along the Tisa River were destroyed naturally or antropically. After 1989, the process of rebuilding the connections between the two sectors has started, but it is still a very slow process.

We believe that a a cross-border cooperation structure of the Euroregion type would facilitate the process of rebuilding connection between the network of Maramureş settlements and their inhabitants.

**Table VI. Grouping of Maramureş villages according to population**

Valley/ Rayon	Total nr		Population								
	Ham lets	Vill	901 1000	1001 1500	1501 2000	2001 3000	3001 4000	4001 5000	5001 7000	7001 10000	> 10000
Tisa V.	15	8	-	-	-	4	2	2	-	1	-
Iza V.	16	10	-	1	-	1	3	2	3	-	-
Vişeu V.	10	8	-	-	-	2	-	3	1	2	1
Mara V.	16	5	-	-	-	1	3	1	-	-	-
Rom Sect. Total	57	31	-	1	-	8	8	8	4	3	1
Mijghirea	40	22	7	5	7	1	-	1	-	-	-
Rahiv	25	17	-	2	2	5	3	3	2	-	-
Tiaciv	53	31	1	-	1	8	7	5	7	1	-
Hust	52	25	-	2	3	6	4	5	5	-	-
Ukr sect. Total	170	95	8	9	13	20	14	14	14	1	-
Total	227	126	8	10	13	28	22	22	18	4	1

#### **IV. The economic functions of the cross-border relations in the Maramureş region**

The fragmentation of the Maramureş territory by imposing the national border along its major functional axis forced the system into a prolonged critical state. As mentioned by Prigogine and Stengers (cited by Ianoş I., 2000): “the critical state of a system is the highest when internal communication is most difficult”. The fragmentation imposed a different evolution of the two subsystems, which have maintained even in this condition certain common elements.

In order to illustrate specific economic effects from a cross-border perspective, a SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/ threats) analysis was performed. In each subsystem, key components and the relations among them, the ratio between the development potential and its degree of valorization in Maramureş were identified.

*Underground resources, forests and forestry, soil and agriculture, textile industry and workforce, transport facilities, commerce and tourism* were all analyzed thoroughly. Firstly, for each domain, the strengths, the weaknesses, the risks and the opportunities were identified. Next their importance/magnitude was evaluated and represented on a scale from 1 to 10 on the SWOT diagram. The concentration of or, correspondingly, the lack of points in each of the four quadrants indicate the suitability degree of each subsystem to sustainable growth, and also the risks and opportunities that each sub-domain has. In both subsystems, the most points were obtained in quadrant A, of steady, sustainable development. However several risks are present, that may hinder the development or even stop it.

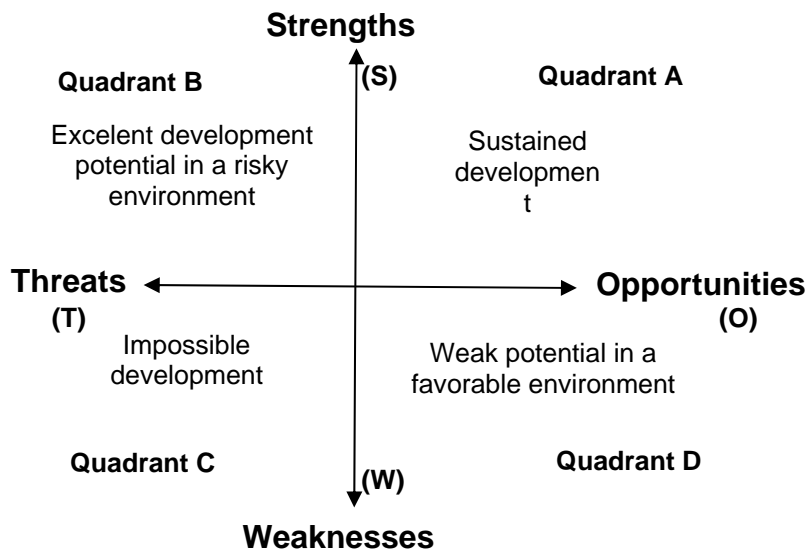
One major functional distortion came out most clearly out of the statistics: the territorial fragmentation into two weakly interacting sectors. Their attachment to administrative units whose command center lies outside led to a peripheral position of the two sectors not only at national level but also within their own administrative unit (county/region). Consequently, this led to a poor development of the basic economic branches (industry, agriculture) and lags in development of profitable branches like commerce and tourism.

Although major political and economic changes have taken place in both countries, specific juridical implementations at the border of the two Maramureş sectors made impossible a level of economic exchanges comparable to the real need of the population. Presently, travel between Romania and Ukraine is regulated by the Agreement between Romanian Government and



Ukrainian Board of Ministers, signed in Kiev on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2003, approved by the Romanian Government by decision no 179/12.02.2004.

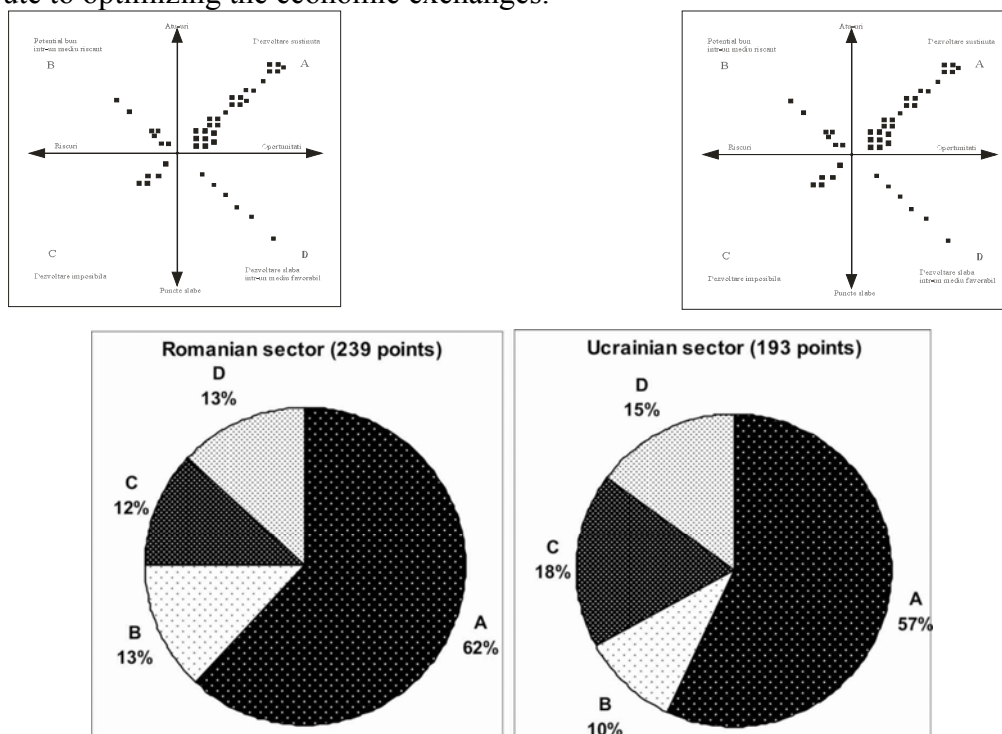
**Fig. 2 The SWOT Diagram (after Ianoş I. 2000)**



In essence, the agreement introduces a visa regime between the countries and the old “permits” for citizens residing in border regions are replaced by passport requirements. However, residents from border regions have the right to obtain multiple entry visas, valid for up to one year, from the embassies and/or consulates of the two countries (art 8). Therefore the travel facilities these residents enjoyed, based on the Ismail Convention (1996), were maintained.

On the positive side, the border-crossing points of Câmpulung la Tisa –Teresva and Valea Vişeuului – Dilove were named as international railroad crossing points for traffic of passengers and goods, and that of Sighetu Marmăţiei – Solotvino as international crossing point for pedestrians and traffic of passengers and goods. This decision paved the way towards the recovery of the functional unity of the two Maramureş subsystems via intense, diversified cross-border cooperation.

The main players of the economical cooperation are the private companies, but the creation of an institutionalized structure such as an Euroregion that would facilitate the cooperation would also contribute to optimizing the economic exchanges.



**Fig 3 The distribution of points over the four quadrants**

## V. The optimizing of the geographical space organization through cross-border relations

In a cross-border region, the organization of the geographical space has always been and will be influenced by the political and administrative changes in time. In order to illustrate this, the main steps of the organizing of space under the *influence of the political and administrative factors* were followed.

A long period of unitary functioning was present until the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, favored by the unity of the natural geographic environment and by the functioning as a unique political and administrative structure. Independent of the name (Terra Maramorosiensis, Maramureş Country, Maramureş County) or appurtenance (Hungarian Kingdom, Transylvanian Principality, Habsburg Monarchy, Austria-Hungary), the Maramureş space has always had a unitary organizational structure. In this period a functional, single structure of the territory was developed. Among its components both horizontal relationships between its various territorial subunits (organized in “plase” on the hydrographic basins), or vertical ones, between different bio-pedo-geographical levels based on the complementarity of the resources, were formed.

The natural and anthropic organization of material and human fluxes and administrative center role that Sighetu Marmăției had for centuries imposed a territorial system corresponding to an anisotropic region, having the central axis on the middle valley of Tisa River. Here, the concentration of the population and economical life took place in a series of urban centers, from which the most important administrative center that polarized the whole Maramureş space imposed itself. Towards this axis fluxes of smaller importance converged on the North-South direction, along the valleys of its affluents and polarized locally by hierarchically inferior centers. The general orientation of the main fluxes followed that of the collecting river (Tisa) on the East-West direction, towards which the lowest exit was located and towards which the most intense economical exchanges were taking place.

Gradual demographic mutations prepared the 1918 moment when, on the background of profound changes affecting Europe after the First World War, the territorial system of Maramureş was fragmented in two subsystems by placing the border on the thalweg of the Tisa River. The Southern sector, having a Romanian majority, followed Transylvania in joining Romania, and became one of the 62 counties of Romania. The Northern sector, having a Rutenian majority, together with Ugocea, Bereg and Ung counties from the ex- Austria-Hungary, all having the same majority, were united in a single political and administrative structure named Karpatska Rus and attached to Czechoslovakia based on the criteria of linguistic similitude. In that period the Rutenian minority was known under the name of “Russin”, therefore the name Karpatska Rus.

The democratic regimes and the good relations between Romania and Czechoslovakia in the interbelic period permitted a regime of intense cross-border exchanges and the effects of the fragmentation were partially avoided. Between the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1940 and 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 the functional unity of the Maramureş territorial system was recovered by political dictate, as both Karpatska Rus (1938) and the Northwestern part of Transylvania (including the Maramureş county) were given to the Hortyst Hungary via the Vienna dictate (1940). On the background of these political mutations a short-lived attempt at independence of the Ruthenian dominated territory took place: the “ One Day Republic” (15<sup>th</sup> of March 1940). Now, during the leadership of pro-Ukrainian leader Augustin Voloşin the pro-Ruthenian orientation changes to a pro-Ukrainian one, as well as the name Karpatska Rus into Karpatska Ukraina. Between September 1940 and October 1944 the Maramureş County was re-formed, followed a short period of Romanian administration after the German-Hungarian army retreated (September 1944).

On the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1945, supported by the presence of the Russian troops, a few Ukrainian representatives, especially from the Sighetu Marmăției nucleus of the Romanian Communist Party members, organized a pseudo popular meeting where they declared the joining of the Southern sector of Maramureş to the Autonomous Republic of the Carpathian Ukraine in order to change “the non-natural geographical state through which Maramureş is cut in two pieces” and “ why wait more if we can enter now the socialist era” (Gherghes, 2002). The new authorities, led by lawyer Ivan

Odoviciuc, imposed a series of measures, including the declaration of Ukrainian language as the official one.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1945 at Vadul Izei took place a confrontation between the protestant movement of the Romanian population from Iza and Vișeu Valleys and the police of the new authorities, sustained by the soviet army. The protestants that came to show their disapproval of integrating Maramureș into a territory that desired unification to USSR also demanded their own leaders, arrested by the Ukrainian authorities, to be freed.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, after an initial agreement between Moscow leaders and the pro-soviet government imposed to Romania, the communist leader Vasile Luca, representing the Bucharest authorities, removed Ivan Odoviciuc and installed a Romanian prefect and administration. After this date the cross-border relations between the two sectors of Maramureș reduced drastically.

The Southern Romanian sector became part of administrative units of different extent (region, county), however all having the administrative center outside the Maramureș space. The Northern sector remains part of the Carpathian Ukraine, renamed Zakarpatia in 1946, a component of RSS Ukraine and with Ujgorod as its administrative centre, at large distance from Maramureș.

The two sectors became peripheral regions both within their own administrative units and within their countries, leading to a modest evolution of the economic and social life and strongly sensing the negative effects of the border presence along Tisa.

After the 1989/1991 political changes in Romania and Ukraine, the perspective of a gradual recovery of the functional unity of the Maramureș territorial system through cross-border relations reopened. After the beginning moment, when cross-border legislation was missing and the number of border-crossings showed a sharp increase, a gradual introduction of cross-border regulations and the reintroduction of some cross-border trains permitted a more rigorous control of the entrances and exits while improving the civility of these relations. After Maramureș County adhered to the Carpathian Euroregion (1997), the relations at a county/regional level improved steadily, the rebuilding of the “historical bridge” between Sighetu Marmăției and Solotvino being a good example. Another project for a cross-border reservation of the biosphere in the Maramureș Mountains was started but not finalized due to insufficient funding.

An INTERREG-II-C questionnaire proves the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants from the Maramureș space connected to the institutional framework, represented by the Carpathian Euroregion, which does not insure a level of cross-border relations to the possibilities and expectations of the local population.

Consequently, a separate structure of the Euroregion type that would represent and act in the interest of the inhabitants of Maramureș is required. An example of such structure would be a Maramureș Euroregion which would comprise (on associative basis) the local and rayonal administrative structure within the Maramureș space.

A **SWOT analysis** of the cross-border relations in the studied spaces revealed the main *strengths (S), weaknesses (W), threats (T) and opportunities (O)*.

The analysis revealed a major functional distortion that affects the intensity and the variety of the cross-border relations: *the lack of a “Euroregion” type structure*. These happen sporadically, have a low intensity and target especially social and cultural exchanges, leading to a negligible economic impact in the area.

Based on the SWOT matrix (after Verboncu I., 1999), four types of strategies for the development of the cross-border relations were identified.

The *SO strategies* are based on using the strength for valuing the opportunities. A long term development at a steady rate requires attracting large financial funds. Knowing private investors’ reticence in investing in a cross-border region, the required funds can be obtained only via programmes targeted at the three possible financial sources: European, national and regional (the opportunities). A Euroregion of Maramureș may manage programmes attracting much larger financial resources than the local authorities from each side are able to attract now. Moreover, it is well-known that one of the criteria establishing the level of European funding is the number of the

persons that will benefit from them. The difference between the population of a single locality and the population of Maramureş is obvious.

**Fig. 4 The SWOT Matrix**

	<p><b>S (Strengths)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. rebuilding of the cross-border infrastructure;</li> <li>2. lack of intra-Maramureş conflicts;</li> <li>3. development of Sighetu Marmatei as higher education center;</li> </ol>	<p><b>W (Weaknesses)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. poor knowledge of each other between sectors;</li> <li>2. the low spontaneous level of cross-border relations;</li> <li>3. peripheral position with respect to European transport corridors;</li> </ol>
<p><b>O (Opportunities)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the Structural Funds of EU</li> <li>2. the Neighbourhood Programme Funds</li> <li>3. Development Funds of the Carpathian Euro-region;</li> </ol>	<p><b>SO strategies (max-max)</b></p> <p>Attracting finances through programs from the three possible financial sources</p>	<p><b>WO strategies (min-max)</b></p> <p>Attracting goods and passenger fluxes from the XI<sup>th</sup> European Corridor through the Maramureş space</p>
<p><b>T (Threats)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. halo effect of poor Romanian-Ukraine relations;</li> <li>2. legal and administrative differences;</li> <li>3. smuggling and mafia networks;</li> </ol>	<p><b>ST strategies (max-min)</b></p> <p>Inter-Maramureş meetings for reciprocal knowledge and finding solutions to overcome legislative and organizational differences</p>	<p><b>WT strategies (min-min)</b></p> <p>Joint fight against penetration of smuggling and/or mafia networks in the region</p>

The proposed programs may target all fields of cross-border cooperation, and their implementation may benefit from the common experience gained by the University College of Sighetu Marmatei and the „Maramureş Land” Association, the two having already obtained and unfolded together two projects. These available intellectual resources can also be valued in the domain of cross-border cooperation, especially as the Ukrainian sector of Maramureş lacks specialists in implementing feasible projects.

The *ST strategies* target to use the strengths in order to avoid the threats. In the Maramureş space, a Euroregion of Maramureş would facilitate meetings of political and administrative authorities, of economic agents, of opinion leaders, to facilitate a deeper reciprocal knowledge. The problems stemming from different legislation, different political and administrative organization, or from different financial possibilities could be identified.

The impact of misunderstandings due to Romanian-Ukrainian disagreements on issue not related to Maramureş space could be reduced at local level. The consciousness of belonging to the same geographical and mental space -“Maramureş”- and especially the fact that the separation in two different sectors was not the result of an internal conflict, but externally imposed, could both be valued. The consciousness of a common destiny, the helping atmosphere and the reciprocal tolerance characteristic to the Maramureş space are strengths that must be efficiently used.

The *WO strategies* target diminishing or eliminating the impact of weaknesses by properly using the opportunities. A Euroregion of Maramureş may facilitate the implementation of a strategy to attract north-west passenger and goods fluxes between Romania and Ukraine flowing outside the Maramureş space. The newly upgraded from simplified to rail or road border-crossing points of the borders cannot bring benefits if common Romanian Ukrainian strategies of attracting the fluxes from the XI European transportation corridor through the Maramureş space are not implemented. The fragmented relief, with a surrounding mountain ring and high altitude passes at the entrance and exit of Maramureş is not suited to attract the fluxes, especially goods fluxes. Common strategies must be thus elaborated to attracting them through facilities aimed at transporters.

The *WT strategies* try to the minimize weaknesses in order to avoid threats. In the Maramureş space, this would mean unified border policies and actions in order to prevent the formation of smuggling or mafia networks that may profit from the new quality of the border-

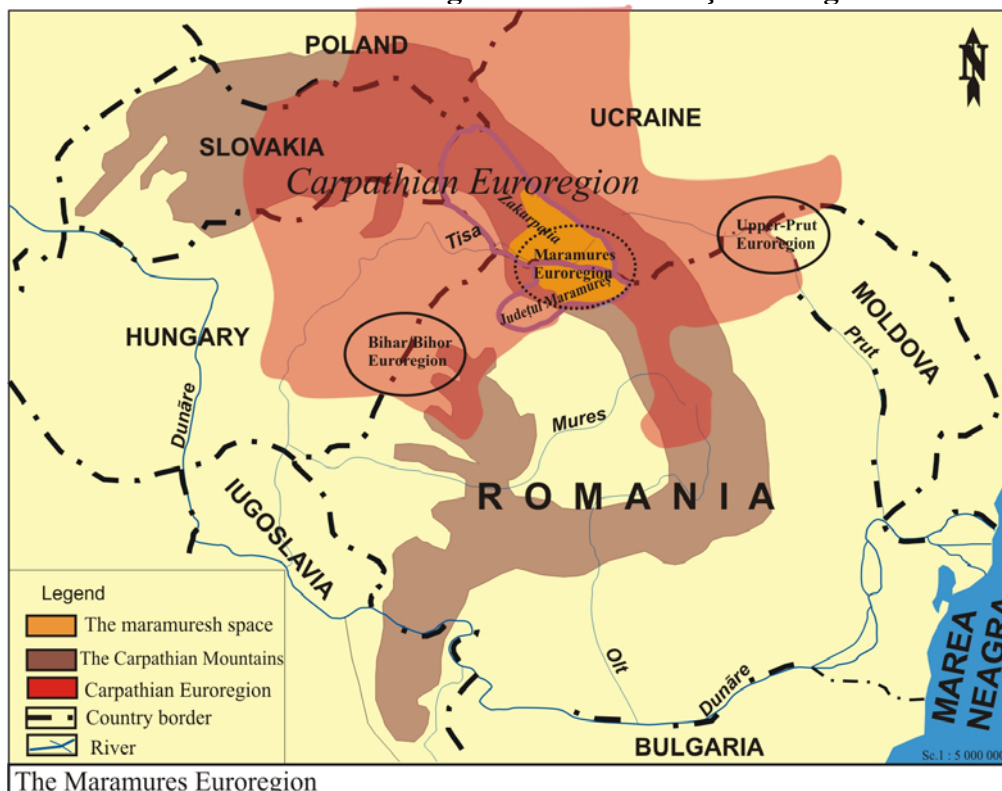
crossing points of from the insufficient experience of the border and police forces. A Euroregion of Maramureş would constitute the ideal environment to elaborate common strategies to avoid these threats.

In the long run, the border sector of the Tisa River may become part of the external border of the EU space starting from 2007. Not capitalizing on this position would mean losing a real chance for development and progress, the perpetuation of the peripheral space condition and even amplifying the already existing demographic problems. Without well-defined organizational structures, the cross-border relations will remain spontaneous and their effects unpredictable.

Therefore the creation of an institutionalized structure, representative for the whole Maramureş space is necessary. Its goal would be the gradual recovery of the territorial system through cross-border relations as an efficient solution for social problems (e.g. poverty, accentuated ruralism, isolation, beginning of population aging), felt in both compartments and manifested through massive emigration. A potential structure is a future Euroregion of Maramureş. For Maramureş, being a member of Carpathian Euroregion improved the cross-border relations, but to an insufficient degree compared with the real needs and possibilities in this space. A Euroregion of Maramureş, grouping all the administrative units at local/raion level, would facilitate the identification of new ways and possibilities for cross-border cooperation. Consequently, decisions would be taken internally, reflecting accurately the key interests of its habitants, freeing the Maramureş space from its „peripheral” condition from three points of view: - at a regional level being situated at the periphery of the Maramureş County (RO) and Zakarpattia Region (UA);  
 - at a national level being situated on the Romanian-Ukrainian border;  
 - at a macro-regional level ( Kollosov and O’Laughlin, 1998) being situated on the EU - former USSR border.

A Euroregion of Maramureş in the cross-border Romanian-Ukrainian space of Maramureş is not only a possible option, but a real necessity. Via improving cross-border relations this structure would facilitate optimizing the organisation of the geographical space and help rebuilding the Maramureş territorial system. In time, Maramureş would evolve towards an anisotropic region superimposed on the Tisa River axis "that would append (analogous to secondary faults on transformant faults) discharge ramifications of smaller potential" (Cocean P. 2002) from affluents' valleys.

**Fig.5 The Maramureş Euroregion**



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