

Euroregions – new potential Destinations

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Abstract

Europe as a destination seems to be in a critical stage. There is more competition than cooperation between European nations and regions. Our continent needs new solutions and patterns of tourism development. As new initiatives take place in transborder regions it is important to analyze opportunities for transborder tourism development. Several euroregions function only as "umbrellas" facilitating tourism development in national components however some of them are becoming attractive transborder destinations. The author tries to compare regions and euroregions as destinations. The paper shows the role of structural funds (e.g. Interreg), in transnational cooperation and to describes examples of good practice in transborder tourism. According to Association of European Border Regions, "the border regions themselves would not be able to overcome their problems without being granted assistance from the UE. The Oresund is one of the first euroregions promoted as transnational destination. The creation of a transborder destination is a long term process. It requires stable partnership between national components that leads from alienation to integration

1 Destination "Europe"

For over half a century Europe has been the most attractive tourist destination. In the beginning of the 21st century our continent is still a leader in the global market however other parts of the world become serious competitors and have higher annual growth of tourist arrivals. (fig. 1).

In 2004 415,2 mill. tourists visited Europe. It was still more than in 2003 but the annual growth 2004/2003 seems to be poor in comparison to other continents:

- Europe – 4,9 %,
- Middle East – 20,5%,
- Asia and Pacific – 27,8%,
- Americas – 11,1%,
- Africa – 8,2%.

As far as inbound tourism is concerned the share of Europe in global market has

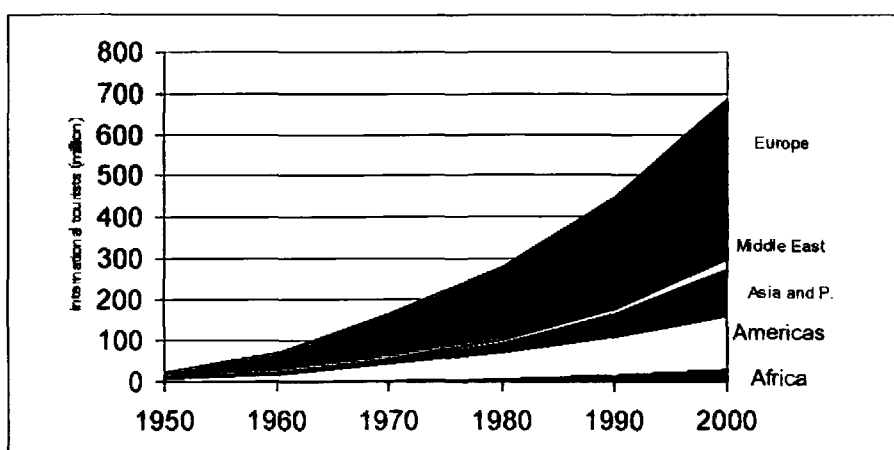
been systematically decreasing: 72,6 % in 1960, 68,2 % in 1970, 65,6% in 1980, 62,1% in 1990, 56,8% in 2000. In 2004 it was only 52,4% (WTO, 2005, on: http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/eng/pdf/historical/TA1950_2003.pdf).

This is not a crisis yet but one of the signals that Europe as a destination is in a critical stage

2 Transborder tourism development

The majority of European tourists still spend their holidays in Europe but it will change when tour operators introduce new tourist products outside Europe. Competitiveness in

Figure 1: International tourist arrivals in the second half of 20 th. Century



Source: own concept based on WTO data

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the tourism market requires new concepts and solutions that would rejuvenalize old destinations (fig. 2) or create new ones (fig. 3). According to author European tourism needs a wind of change. We call ourselves Europeans but we are very “nation” oriented: Polish, German, Slovenian, Serbian etc. The state- and nation-building which occurred in Western

Europe, predominantly during the 19th century, was not just an integrative process. “More than merely seeking to unite often disparate territories, economies and societies, state-building frequently also implied the disintegration or simply the division of previously united territories, economies or societies” (Christiansen, 1999, p.4).

Figure 2: National destinations

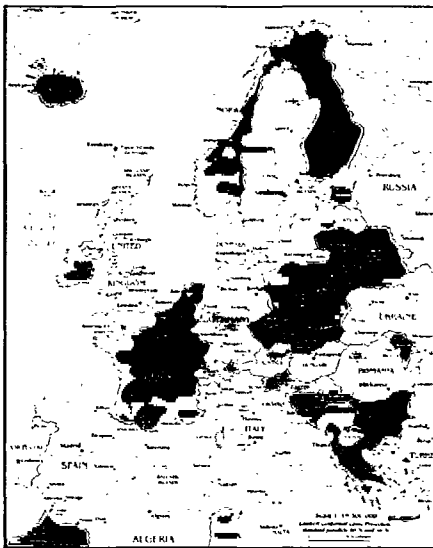
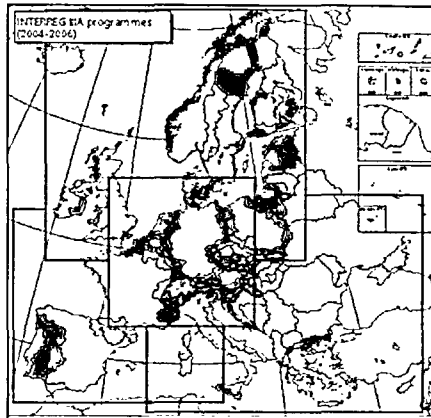


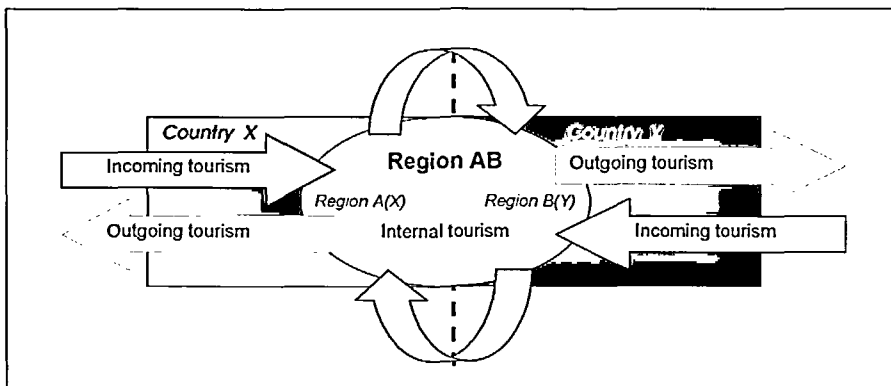
Figure 3: Potential transnational destinations



Source: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps>

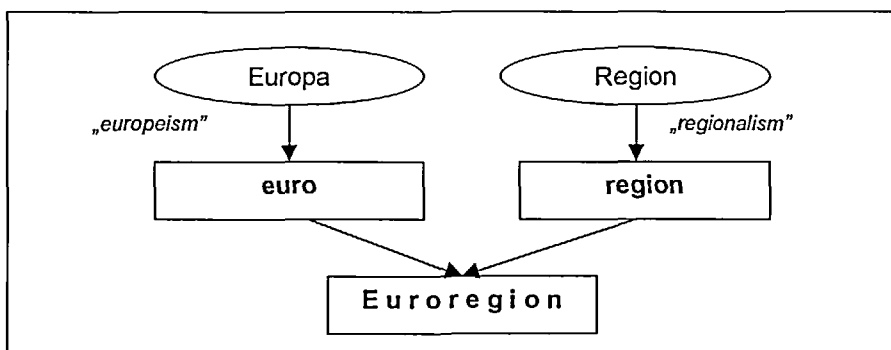
Source: <http://europa.eu.int>

Figure 4: The concept and typology of transborder tourism



Source: own concept

Figure 5: The ideological and etymological concept of euroregion



Source: own concept

European Union is a big family. Unfortunately only some nations belong to that family. Frontiers (especially UE external borders) have become barriers of tourism development. One of the ways to solve this problem is development and promotion of transborder tourism (fig. 4).

Transborder tourism is an interesting phenomenon which deserves more interest and research. The problem is particularly important in Europe where two parallel processes occur. These are:

1. European centralization resulting from integration and globalization
2. decentralization based on and regionalism and local initiatives.

The above mentioned processes have created Euroregions (fig. 5).

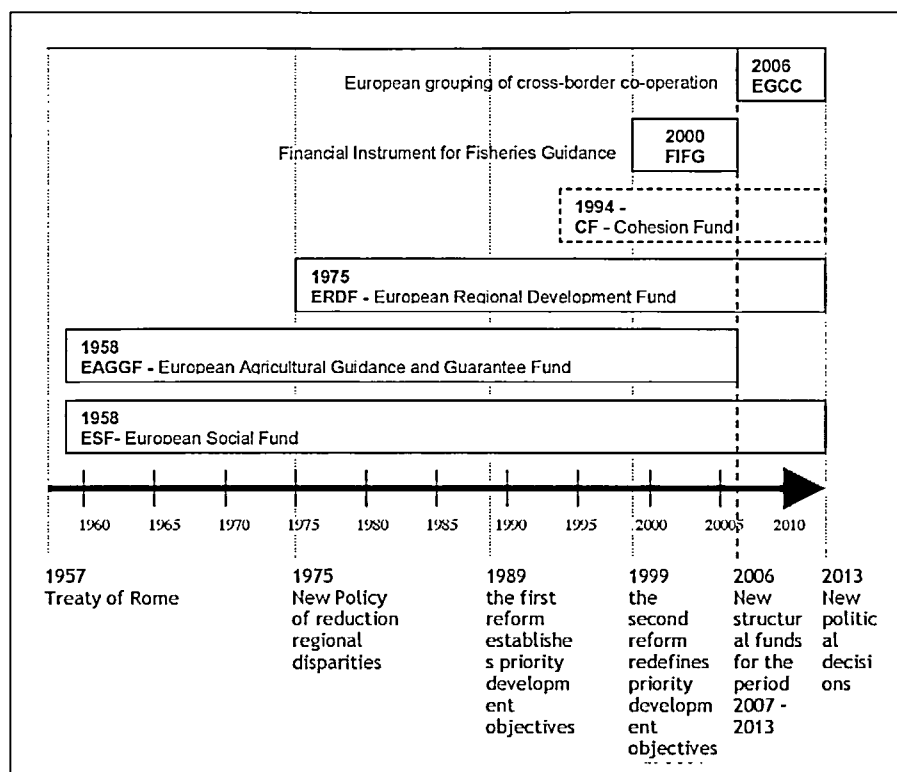
Tourism is influenced by both of them. Centralization has created a huge “destination” called EU. That “region” is becoming bigger and bigger but the image of the product is less and less clear

On the other side as a result of decentralization process the number regional destination is rapidly increasing. It theory “Structural changes occur in the twilight zone between competition and co-operation.” (Introduction letter of Aiest Congress In 2005). But in practice very few regions are able to work out the model of co-operation. This similar problem occurs in transborder regions. Only some euroregions worked out the image of destinations other euroregions invest a lot of money in transborder tourism and have poor results. Even if they do not offer a separate product they work as umbrella organisation creating synergy effects for national border components which usually are parts of already existing destinations. It is possible because of EU policy supporting border and transborder destination

3. EU financial support for transborder cooperation

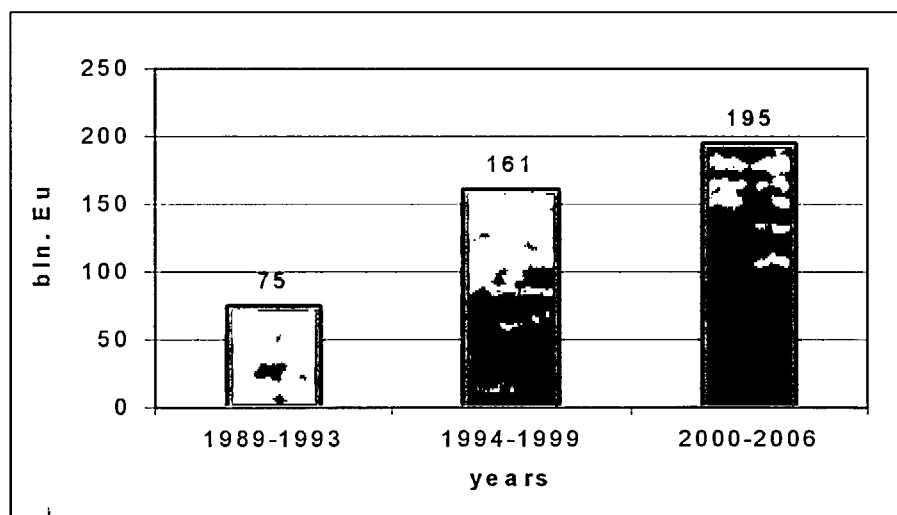
The Structural Funds were crucial financial instruments created for the implementation of the European policy of economic and social cohesion. Their objective was to “reduce the gaps in development between the regions and to reduce disparities in the standards of living for inhabitants” (EU, 2005 on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/funds/prord/prords/history_en.htm)

Figure 6: The history and future of European structural funds



Source: own concept based on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/ns_en.htm

Figure 7: The development of European structural funds 1989 - 2006



Source: own concept based on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/ns_en.htm

Since its beginning in 1957 this objective has been one of the priorities of the European Economic Community. The milestones of structural funds development correspond to the major stages of European integration. The two first funds were created in 1958 but introduction of European Regional Development Fund in 1975 was the turning point in European regional policy. It was a successful tool which fostered development and border regions (fig. 6).

The European Regional Development Fund enabled "correction of the main regional imbalances in the community particularly those resulting from the preponderance of agriculture and from industrial change and structural underemployment" (Regulation EEC, (1975). No 724/75 of the Council of 18 March 1975 establishing a European Regional Development Fund, Regulation (EEC) No 724/75 of the Council of 18 March 1975 establishing a Euro-

pean Regional Development Fund, Official Journal L 073, 21/03/1975 P. 0001 - 0007, art 1 Official Journal L 073, 21/03/1975 P. 0001 - 0007, art 1). The poorer regions gained the opportunity to be financed from the incomes coming from richer regions (W_s_u_bie regionom, 2004, p.5). The document clearly stated that frontier regions belong to eligible areas

In 1989 structural funds were improved. The reform "reinforced the principle of multiannual programming, established priority development objectives, and put in place a system of partnership with the Member States and the economic and social actors"

(EU 2005, on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/funds/prord/prords/history_en.htm).

Since that reform the total budget of structural has been increasing (fig. 7).

One of the most important initiatives financed from EU structural funds was The Interreg program intended to prepare border areas for a Community without internal frontiers. Cross - border cooperation was a priority of Interreg I, and a main strand (A) in next editions (Interreg II, interreg III).

According to Association of European Border Regions, "the border regions themselves would not be able to overcome their problems without being granted assistance from the UE. Only with the implementation of INTERREG were funds specifically spent on border areas and thereby bound by national co-financing. With termination of INTERREG such funding will inevitably vanish" (30 years of..., 2001, p. 24) successfully European grouping of cross-border cooperation will enable further development of border and transborder regions (fig. 8).

It is important to admit that since 1989 under The PHARE program and since 1991 under TACIS program the UE financial support for cross border cooperation has included also non- EU members.

PHARE was one of the pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist Poland and Hungary (Council Regulation, 1989) and then other applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The programme covered 10 countries: the 8 new Member States: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as Bulgaria and Romania, assisting them in a period of massive economic restructuring and political change. Until 2000 the countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegov-

ina and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) were also beneficiaries of the initiative (EU 2005 on: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare>)

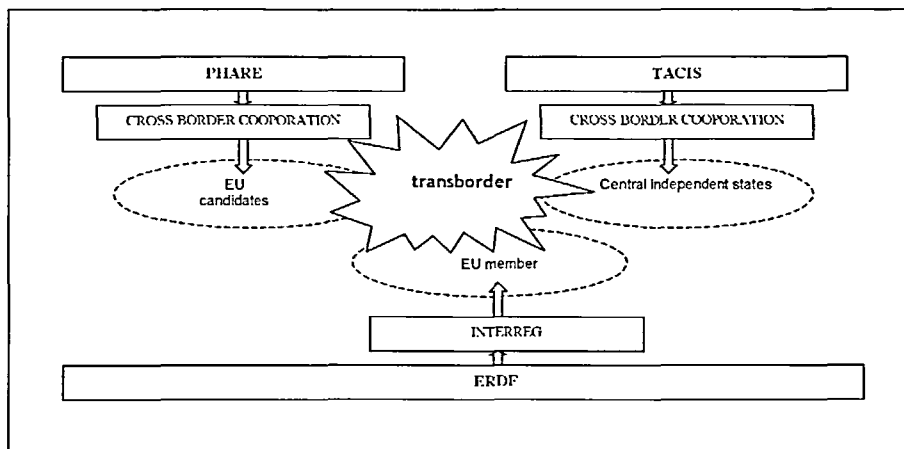
In the framework of PHARE the Cross border Cooperation program (parallel to INTERREG initiative) was created to:

1. promote cooperation of border regions in countries in central and eastern Europe with adjacent regions in a neighbouring country as defined in Article 1 and thus to help the border regions in central and eastern Europe to overcome the specific development problems which may arise, inter alia, from their position within the national economies, in the interest of the local population and in a manner compatible with the protection of the environment;
2. promote the creation and the development of cooperation networks on either side of the border, and the establishment of links between these networks and wider Community networks" (Commission Regulation, 1998).

Tacis Programme (Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States) provided financial assistance to 13 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan), and aimed at enhancing the transition process in these countries.

Under TACIS the Cross-Border Cooperation program has been created in 1996 to improve the economies and social links between border regions. It worked mainly through:

Figure 9: The concept of UE financial support for transborder region



Source: own concept

1. Small Projects Facility (SPF) supports projects with a duration of up to 18 months (maximum grant 300.000 EURO/project).
2. Micro Projects Facility (MPF) supports small scale and potential projects with a duration of up to 6 months (maximum grant 50.000 EURO)

(EU 2005 on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis_cbc_spf/index_en.htm)

Concluding, EU financial support for cross border cooperation was a long and complex process accelerated in 1989 after introduction of Interreg initiative. At the very beginning the CBC funds were available for UE (EEC) members then candidates (PHARE) and finally other selected European countries (TACIS). The regulations, objectives and budgets of funds

changed several times. Theoretically the "European Union has a clear model of crossborder cooperation projects involving partners on the both sides of future borders , designed to multiply connections, improve trade and secure EU borders physically and it support that model with cash necessary to implement those goals (Merrill, 2001) but practically the process of financing cross border cooperation has been imperfect.. The INTERREG and PHARE programs were not compatible. The applications, management and report procedures were and bureaucratic and not clear. Even if "Crossborder cooperation suffered from failure to harmonize INTERREG and PHARE programs" (Arnaud, 2001) the UE initiative created pioneer financial instruments and gained the knowledge to introduce improved model in EGCC.

Figure 8: The evolution of Interreg initiatives

Strands programs	A	B	C
Interreg I) 1990 to 1993	The imitative to develop and promote of cross-border co-operation,		
Interreg II 1994-2006 a total budget of 3,519 billion ECU in 1996 prices	Crossborder cooperation (1994-1999)	Complementation of energy networks (1994-1999)	co-operation in the area of regional planning , in particular management of water resources (1997-1999)
3,3 billion ECU in 1994 prices	2, 4 billion ECU in 1994 prices	0,5 billion ECU in 1994 prices	0,4 billion ECU in 1994 prices
Interreg III 2000-2006 a total budget of 4,9 billion euro in 1999 prices.	Cross-border cooperation Cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions aims to develop cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies.	Transnational cooperation Transnational cooperation involving national, regional and local authorities aims to promote better integration within the Union through the formation of large groups of European regions.	Interregional cooperation Interregional cooperation aims to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments through large-scale information exchange and sharing of experience (networks).

Source: own concept based on: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/ns_en.htm

Figure 10: Examples of good practice in transborder tourism

Category	Title	Objective	Countries	Coordinator	Budget
Research, studies, strategy development	"Border fortification – cross border meeting points"	Development a route linking the fortifications existing along the western border of the province of Salamanca and the centro region, taking the the city of Rodrigo as the central reference and meeting point	Spain - Portugal	Foundation for Historical Heritage of Castilla and Leon	420.000 Euro
	Hospitality Ireland	The program is targeted as 20 tourism leaders from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland who will be drawn from private and public sectors and will run on a pilot basis in the North West.	Ireland - Great Britain	Joe Allen Economic and Co-operation Programme	200.000 Euro
Development and Integration of Tourism Structure	Kingfisher cycle trail	The innovative project provides a cycle trail through the border counties of Fermanagh, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, the first of this kind in the region.	Ireland - Great Britain	Fermanagh Tourist Information Centre	507.895 Euro
	Ferry Link	The establishment of the ferry link between Schoena and Hernskretchen/Hrensko in Bohemia has led to the closure of a missing link, which had resulted from the division of Europe in 1945.	Germany- Czech Republic	Euroregion Elbe/Labe	770.000 Euro
	Village redevelopment	The recreational Village of Oybin the pearl of Zittau mountains needs better better acces to border crossing and cross border hiking route.	Germany- Czech Republic	Commune Oybin	2.717.000 Euro
Networks/ Cooperation Structures between Tourism Operators	Collaboration between the Regional Tourism Federation of Languedoc-Rousillon and the area of Garrotxa	The main results of the collaboration are: 1. joint access to nearby tourism markets in Barcelona, Montpellier and Toulouse. 2. development of a common tourism product 3. exchange of good practice and technical expertise	France - Spain	Generalitat de Cataluna	No data
Joint marketing and promotion	The north west passage	To utilize a brand name to to link a number of visitor attractions towns and other facilities that previously have not been recognized as holiday destination	Ireland - Great Britain	The North West Passage In Tyrone	430.000 Euro
	Tourist map Galicia /Norte	Promoting joint tourism in the cross border region through a joint marketing and promotion strategy. Design and production the tourist map of Galicia and Norte	Spain - Portugal	Comunidad de trabajo Galicia/Norte de Portugal in Santiago de Compostella	21.750 Euro
	Centres of tourism services and Computer Network information	The aim is to improve access to to information on tourism products and natural attractions in the cross-border region by opening kiosks, production od booklets, CD -ROMs etc.	Poland - Latvia	Suwalska Izba Rolniczo – Turystyczna in Suwalki	311.800
Developments of cross-border tourism products/services	Riding facilities' improvement	Creation of comprehensive network of bridle paths, organization of package tours and promotion of events focusing on all aspects of wine.	Austria - Slovenia	Landesfachverband Reiten & Fahren in Graz	60.175 Euro
	Skandland summer tourism	The aim is to use the knowledge in the area with regard to winter tourism in order to develop the summer tourism season	Denmark – Sweden	Skandland ek. Forening Sweden	730.000 Euro
	Livonian pearls development of the potential oF Estonian and Latvian Cross – Border Municipalities	The project will establish o modern network of tourist routes in the area of historic Livonia	Estonia Latvia	Helme local authority	110.728 Euro

Source: own concept based on Practical guide to cross – border cooperation. AEBR, Gronau 2000

4. Good practice in transborder tourism

Structural funds, especially INTERREG programs facilitate tourism development in transborder areas. The research done in Poland (Studzieniecki, 2004) proves that all of 16 regions located along Polish borders find tourism as one of their objectives. It means that tourism is indicated in euroregions regulations (statutes), a commission or working group is set up, tourism activities are financed from CBC funds. Tourism is such a broad phenomenon that often its development is financed from "small projects fund" for other activities:

- Economy (information system)
- Culture (film festival)
- Education (youth exchange)
- Local democracy (support for women)
- Sport (international championship)

Association of European Border Regions promotes tourism development in border and transborder regions.

Euroregions are new actors in the European political scene. They were created for other reasons that tourism development, however, the majority of them finds tourism as one of the priorities.

The leaders of euroregions are just gaining the experience in the tourism management. It is quite possible that some of them would become future destinations. The experiment made by Oresund region should be examined by other transborder regions. In many cases the euroregion should not become a destination like euroregion Baltic.

Creation of transborder destination is a long term process. It requires stable partnership between national components that leads from alienation to integration (fig. 11).

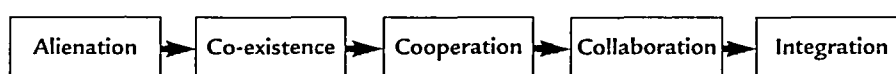
The analysis of outputs of above mentioned transborder tourism projects proves that there is cooperation between selected border regions. Presumably in some euroregions intensive collaboration would become integration but it is also possible that "formalization of cross-border partnership may encumber and lead to bureaucratization of certain processes instead of

allowing them greater freedom to develop" (Bramwell, 2000, p. 23).

To conclude we should compare determinants of tourism development of national and transnational destinations (fig. 12).

Presumably in future several euroregions will become destinations especially if their existence is based on clear and stable basis. It seems that transborder regions set up on common heritage basis (Pomerania) or geographical units basis (Tatra) are in a better position to become destinations than regions based only on political agreement (Baltic). Often the authorities of euroregion only declare that transborder product exists but tour operators are not willing to promote it. However the success of Euroregion Oresund proves that it is possible to promote "One destination – two countries". The famous bridge connecting Denmark and Sweden has become a symbol of a transborder destination. It is one of a few transborder destinations managed by a professional marketing agency that offers differentiated tourist products. In order to promote them several guides have been produced within the project called "Visit Oresund". All guides serve as an inspiration to the two main cities, Copenhagen and Malmö with a wide range of attractions, as well as suggestions on some of the activities that can be experienced elsewhere in the Oresund region. The goal for the new project is to "maintain and strengthen the existing platform for the targeted tourism businesses' sales of the region's tourist products, using the current efficient project set-up and the strong image-creating branding, marketing and sales platforms." [<http://www.visitoresund.info>].

Figure 11: Levels of cross-border partnerships in tourism



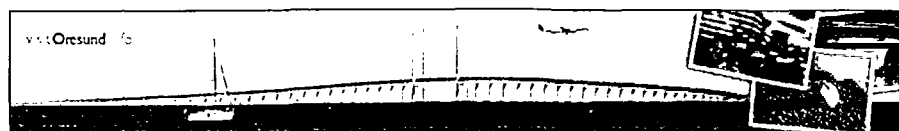
Source: B. Bramwell, B. Lane, 2000

Figure 12: Regions and euroregions as destinations

Regions	Euroregions
1. Quite long tradition and history	1. Relatively short existence and experience
2. Quite predictable future	2. Rather unpredictable future
3. Socio – economic priorities	3. Political priorities
4. Clear legal status	4. Differentiated and unclear legal status
5. Private – public partnership orientation	5. Administration orientation
6. Quite stable budget	6. Rather unpredictable budget
7. Domination of hard projects	7. Domination of soft projects
8. National support	8. International support
9. Fixed image and marketing concept	9. Image and marketing concept in process
10. Product promotion philosophy	10. Attractions promotion philosophy
11. Institutionalized tourism management	11. Not institutionalized tourism management
12. Tourist leadership emerged	12. Lack of tourist leadership

Source: own concept

Figure 13: The Oresund bridge a symbol of a transborder destination



Source: .” <http://www.visitoresund.info>

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