

Opportunities for the inclusion of less-favoured areas in the Northern Great Plain region

Beata Bittner

Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, University of Debrecen

Abstract: Agricultural economics and its part, rural economics plays a determining role in Hungary. Most rural families perform self-sufficient farm production for a living. In the present conditions of infrastructure and human resources, there are regions where the only rural alternative for employment is agriculture. There are significant differences among the regions considering natural resources and equipment available for farm production, and these differences affect potential income (Vörös et al. 1999). The primary aim of the European Union is to reduce such differences among the regions. The new research program of the University of Debrecen tackles the fundamental questions of regional development through the research and management of social asymmetries by using economic and other relevant tools. This program also provides suggestions for facilitating the development of less-favoured areas.

Keywords: less-favoured areas, small regions in the northern great plain

Introduction

The common characteristics of regions defined as “country” emerge among widening social differences. We could say that wealth and poverty create such an asymmetric situation, the acceptance of which violates human tolerance and welfare efforts improving living standards. The new research program would like to create a scientific bridge by means of research carried out at small area level and socio-economic models based on these explorations. This bridge would make the mechanism of theoretical knowledge and practical realization permeable. The aims of the program are the following: to improve the opportunities for income for families and education; to maintain and improve physical and mental health and conditions; to develop conditions for self-improvement, progress in economic and intellectual improvement for settlements; to keep local population, to show the attractiveness of regions, to create conditions for capital acquisition and operations. (Borsos et al. 2005). These aims correspond with the basic aims of rural development which are the followings: the improvement of living circumstances, income opportunities for rural inhabitants, the natural sources of energy, maintenance of the balance and quality of agricultural economy and that of healthy, natural living styles and standards.

Materials and methods

This paper presents the position and performance of the Northern Great Plain

region and its areas. In a further research study, I would like to analyze the resources and opportunities of the small areas in the region. On the basis of these results, I would like to create a model, which is practically applicable to increase the country’s support potentials and prevents the influx of the population into cities.

Results

The backwardness of the North Plain region is well-known; therefore, it is highly important to study. The region encompasses 17.729 square kilometres (it is 19.1% of Hungary); the population is decreasing, last year it was less

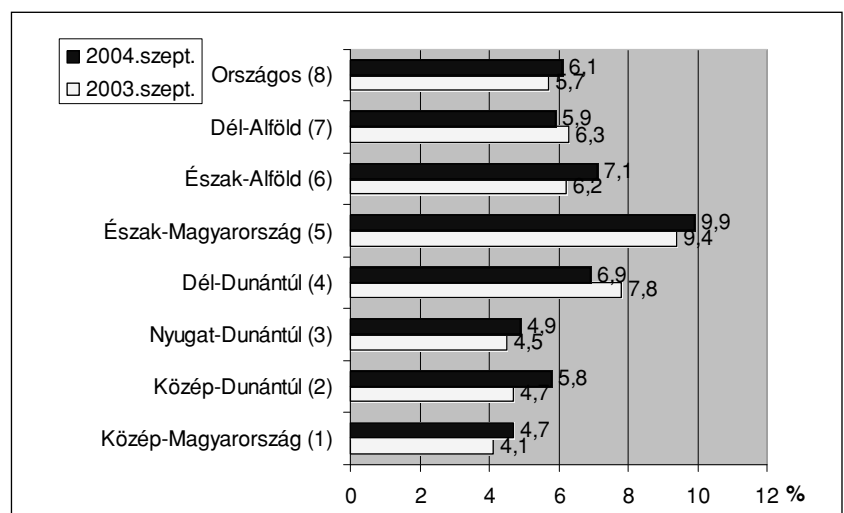


Figure 1: The unemployment rate in 2003 and 2004 (Source: APEH, 2004)

(1) (Central Hungary), (2) Central Transdanubia, (3) Western Transdanubia, (4) Southern Transdanubia, (5) Northern Hungary, (6), Northern Great Plain, (7) Southern Great Plain, (8) Avarege

than 1.5 million, 15% of the population of Hungary. The unemployment rate of the region is 7.1% (Fig. 1). This region provides 9.9% of the country's GDP per capita. Its GDP is 64.4% of the national average (APEH, 2004)

On Fig. 2 we can see the spatial distribution of gross domestic product in the average of EU 15 percentage. This figure represents the difference among regions well. The value of the GDP in the North Plain region is 35%.

Comparing the regions in the Northern Great Plain region, we can conclude that 31% of them are most disadvantaged areas. Efforts to include these less favoured areas have not produced tangible results, so differences among the regions have prevailed. We can state that significant differences are among the regions and within regions. The consequences of these differences – like migration from these areas – are serious and irreversible. Therefore, the primary aim of the European Union is to reduce the differences among the regions.

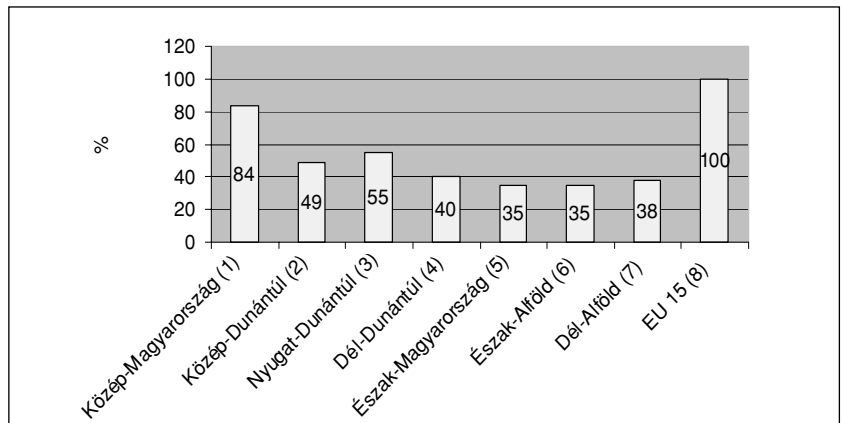


Figure 2: The spatial distribution of GDP in the average of EU 15 percentage (1) (Central Hungary, (2) Central Transdanubia, (3) Western Transdanubia, (4) Southern Transdanubia, (5) Northern Hungary, (6), Northern Great Plain, (7) Southern Great Plain, (8) EU-15 Average (Source: Harsányi et al., 2005) Regions (1), Percentage(2), GDP per capita(3)

centre; it is without doubt the cultural, economic, transportation and conference centre of the Northern Great Plain. Its many historical monuments and architectural heritage provide visitors with ample reason to come and experience its variety. (Dusek, 2000)

These favourable endowments are just potentials because the shortage of cash hinders development.

The EU accession is a good chance to finance these developments. It is important that we should exploit the financial resources which could help to solve economic problems.

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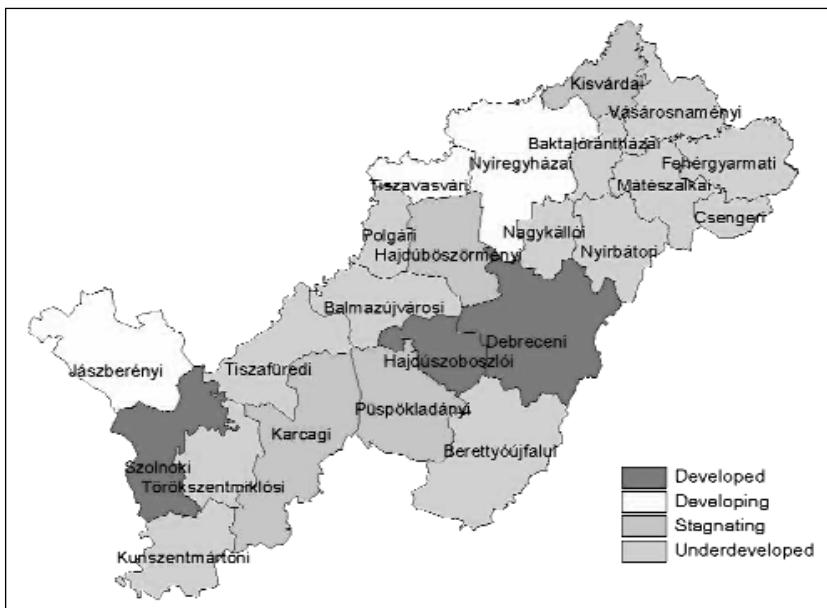


Figure 3: Small regions in the Northern Great Plain region according to development (Source: Faluvégi 2004)

As the Fig. 3 shows among the small regions of the Northern Great Plain region there are not dynamically developing areas. Among the 23 areas of the region 12 are under-developed.

Favourable natural endowments facilitate farm production, attract industrial output and tourism. The region is famous for its healing waters that are utilised in the thermal baths of Hajdúszoboszló and Hajdúnánás. The level, swampy areas and the „puszta” provide the characteristic face and natural assets of the Tiszahát and Hortobágy. The region is supervised by the Hortobágy National Park and it is a centre of rural tourism. The region is famous for its folk traditions. The area around Debrecen is renowned as an educational