



(Re)Integration and Development Issues in Multicultural and Border Regions
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Topic: **Development of higher education networking in multiethnic border region of North Vojvodina**
(Dissemination of research project IMIG-SCOPES 2009-2012)

The proposal summarizes the first year research results of the applicants within the project: *The Integrating (trans)national migrants in transition states (IMIG)* – joint research project in the framework of the co-operation programme SCOPES (2009-2012), submitted to the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), coordinated by Prof. Dr. Doris Wastl-Walter (Department of Geography, University of Bern).

The border region “Severna Vojvodina” - Serbia is considered in this proposal. It should be emphasized that this border region is „divided” by two states, EU (Hungary) and not EU members (Serbia), although there are natural, cultural (national – Hungarian minority), linguistic and economic contacts among the closed borders. The institutional cooperating capacities were analyzed according to the question of social, linguistic and cultural cohesion of border region (emphasizing the permanent mobility and diversity of its inhabitants). The most important cooperation-channel is higher education and cultural institutions. The high motive and number of emigrating/commuting Hungarian students towards Hungary began in 1990. In 2010, 1 385 Hungarian students (from Vojvodina) studied in HU, and 3 152 in SRB. *There is high concentrated student mobility between HU-SRB.* It causes a very low returning rate of educated young elite (approximately 30%). So, the future of the Hungarian minority is becoming questionable in Serbia, in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, where their percentage within the whole population is remarkably decreasing (1991: 16.9%, 2001: 14.3%). The local-regional (academic and political) elite of minority, as the “changing agents” should initiate educational, cultural, linguistic and economic cooperation in the border region (for example, establishing a multiethnic university, organizing common (multilingual) educational programs). The establishment of multilingual universities could facilitate cooperation as well as enable minority youngsters to be more competitive on labor market. The role of local-regional elite was considered in processes of cooperation between Serbia and Hungary (empirical research).

The research interest is focused to answer questions: What kind of cross-border relationships could help to develop and reorganize the institutional network in the border region of North Vojvodina? The level and development of cross-border relationships indicate the preparedness of the inhabitants and institutions for the EU membership, competitiveness (labor force, institutions of knowledge transfer, entrepreneurs) social, cultural and economic cohesion. The focus is on the intra- and interregional relationship network of „near-border” state institutions (educational and cultural co-operation, their embedment). Does the region have enough capacities for minority governance? How could the establishment of multilingual universities help regional development, minority status and have practical benefits for students? How do students think of multilingual universities?

Research methodology: statistical data comparisons in the border region, literature (Hungarian, Serbian). Empirical background: 25 interviews have been completed on the topic of cross-border relationships of the institutions (leaders of institutions from North Vojvodina and South Hungary).

Subotica, April 10, 2011