

THE ROLE OF REGIONS OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN SPACE IN THE ENLARGING EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction

In the process of preparation for joining the European Union, the countries – candidates, from Central and South-East Europe, are also solving at the same time problems concerning the creation of regions for management of spatial development at the NUTS II level. The solution of this problem is not a simple one and is determined by the specificity of the corresponding country.

South-East Europe, as a space characterised by the greatest dynamics of transformation accompanied by conflict situations and emerging of new sovereign states, needs the creation of large territorial units – regions for planning. These regions should conform to the requirements of sustainable development in the context of the European regional policy on the one hand, and to create the territorial framework for national consolidation and transborder co-operation in the South-eastern European space on the other hand.

The present report will consider the prerequisites for the formation of the regions, the priorities of their development, the analyses of the regional schemes and the possibilities for their use under the conditions of future enlargement of the European Union.

In connection with the preparation of the report, the materials from the First Project Meeting in Thessaloniki (16–17 October, 1998) of the ESTIA¹ Project “Spatial Development Strategies and Policy Integration for the South-East Europe” from the INTERREG IIC Programme have been used. This project is developed by the Spatial Development research Unit under Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – Greece, with partners from Bulgaria (Institute of Geography with team leader – the author of the present report) and Rumania (Urban project, Bucharest). The regional spatial development schemes of the Serbian Republic and the Republic of Macedonia have also been used in the report.

¹ ESTIA – European Space and Territorial Integration Alternatives.

Prerequisites for the formation of the regions

The region of South-East Europe, as a part of CADSES² is used as a term for naming the countries from the Balkan Peninsula. The goodwill towards this region as a part of Europe is implied by this term. In a geopolitical aspect the use of the term “the Balkans” is a synonym of a region where local, regional and world wars in Europe originated during the passing 20th century.

Again, during the transition to democratic communities and market economy, repeated drastic conflicts occur during the disintegration of the Yugoslavian Federation since 1991 till now. They have an adverse effect not only on the region but also on the neighbouring countries from Central Europe, and even the world community has been involved in the face of the North Atlantic allies.

The historic reasons for the conflicts have been founded since the middle of the 19th century, and especially after the end of the First World War when the “sovereign” states on the Balkans were formed under the action of external forces.

The gradual liberation of the Balkans in the course of almost 90 years (1827–1918) from the suppression of the Ottoman Empire was the strategy of the Great Powers for the preparing the new division of spheres of influence in this region. At the same time the invasion of the Austrian–Hungarian Empire, which also collapsed during the First World War, started from the west.

The ethnic diversity of the Balkans was the main trump for the division of the zones of influence in combination with the different religious identity.

The tearing apart of the historically formed cultural-ethnic geographical regions into several neighbouring countries created the most permanent prerequisites for opposing contradictions between the states in the course of the rather long period of about 80 years.

In this way the mutual isolation between the countries was “founded” and efforts are made just now to overcome it. However, this is difficult to achieve because of the numerous obstacles and delay due to the historical factors of ethnic separation. At the end of the 20th century the Balkans, South-East Europe in particular, still does not represent a distinguished European region with economic and infrastructural consolidation.

From a regional point of view, three zones could be distinguished in the Balkans according to the geopolitical orientation and degree of regional integration:

² CADSES – Central, Adriatic, Danubian and Southeastern European Space.

- 1) The *North-western-Western zone* in the framework of Slovenia and Croatia (and probably later the Moslem–Croatian Federation with restricted sovereignty) is directed to Central Europe. This represents a marginal zone, its borderline being expressed by Bosnia and Herzegovina after the agreement in Dayton in 1995.
- 2) The *Yugoslavian–Serbian zone* is represented by the new Serbian Republic (with restricted sovereignty at the territory of Bosnia) and Union Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Monte Negro). This is the zone of the conflicts caused by the national identification and keeping the integrity of the sovereign states. After the solution of the problem about autonomy or independence of the Albanian minority in Kosovo in future, the possibilities for regional co-operation between the regions connecting this zone with the rest part of the region will be displayed. This zone, and especially Serbia which occupies progressively the place towards Central Europe in the region, is of special importance for the European integration. Depending on the impending restoration of the damages (and especially of the transport infrastructure) and of the political relations with the neighbouring countries, the possibilities and trends for regionalism and connecting of the national spatial structures in the regional European co-operation will be delineated. Albania can be partially affiliated to this zone since it is adjacent to the Kosovo conflict area and is engaged to a greater extent in it because of the ethnic identity with the neighbouring Serbian province, dominated by the Albanian community. At the same time Albania exhibits solidarity and has an active position for regional co-operation in the framework of the transport corridor No 8, by means of which it is possible to consider this country in the regional formations of the third zone.
- 3) The third zone is the *zone of political and ethnic stability* and it incorporates the greater part of the territory and the population of the region. Processes of co-operation financially supported by the EU programmes take place in it, which are co-ordinated by Greece as a member-state of the EU. Regions for co-operation are formed according to the EU requirements in the framework of the INTERREG IIC programme between: Greece and Bulgaria, the including of the Republic of Macedonia being envisaged in the near future; Bulgaria and Rumania, or between the three countries – Greece, Bulgaria and Rumania. Formally, South-East Moldavia and Odessa district from the Ukraine should be incorporated in this zone since they belong geopolitically to the region. The zone belongs together with Eastern Thrace from the European part of Turkey to the Black Sea zone of economic co-operation and is an

important factor for the connection of the regional systems of the Danubian and Black Sea space.

The above-mentioned differentiation in three zones of South-East Europe reflects the transition character of the situation towards regional integration in the region as a whole. The proposed by us division should not be considered as the development of new spheres of geopolitical influence and opposing. The differentiation is rather due to temporary prerequisites occurring during the transition period, "residual" prerequisites from the unsolved national and ethnic problems.

The most important priority factor for the spatial consolidation of the region and its "opening" towards the whole European space is clearly outlined on the background of the historical and contemporary geopolitical prerequisites: the further construction of the objects and equipment of the European transport corridors No 8, No 4, No 9 and No 7. They are the most important condition for the integration of the region – the joining of the regions for co-operation is ensured by the connection of the national regional and local roads with these Euro-corridors.

Aims and principles for the use of the regions

The countries from the South-eastern European space as a whole tend to use the macro regions (regions for management and planning, programme regions) as a territorial framework for the spatial (regional) planning. Only in Greece these regions are administrative-territorial units. The situation in Bulgaria is similar to the operating one till 1998–1999 administrative-territorial units corresponding to the NUTS II level.

Greece is divided in 13 regions that constitute only administrative units with no legal personality. A General Secretary appointed by the Government heads each region. The General Secretary chairs the Regional Council, a collective semi-corporatist advisory organ comprising representatives of the local government and of the social economic partners of the region (*Gianakourou, 1998*).

At the present stage and according to the strategies of the national plans for spatial development of the countries in the region, the introduction of administrative-territorial units at the NUTS II level has not been envisaged in them.

The main purpose of the macro region creation is to use the spatial planning and to answer the requirements of the EU for incorporation in the European co-operation with the aim of joining the union.

Long-term tasks of the regional policy are being solved on the basis of these main regions for the objective identification of the compatible mosaic-like

structures of impact regions (zones), in which the differentiated regional policy is being applied in middle-term plan and with one-year parameters.

The regions are connected with the following three basic aims of the long-term national policies for spatial development:

- 1) Creation of prerequisites for sustainable development of the single regions;
- 2) Decreasing the differences between the regions concerning the employment and income of the population compared to the average parameters for the countries;
- 3) Realisation of regional and transborder co-operation and European integration.

The principles and criteria for the formation of the basic macro regions ensue from the above-mentioned three aims.

Having in mind the cited three basic aims of the regional policy, the following generally valid criteria for these aggregated in South-eastern Europe regions can be developed:

- Their size is balanced in the national spaces. The number of the administrative-territorial units included in them is optimal and favourable for the position of the country as a whole.
- The regions have a heterogeneous character and are almost compatible with respect to their natural and human potential. Their economic structure is diverse. This allows the definition of their common and basic priorities of development.
- All the regions comprise multifunctional big cities with a well-expressed system of middle and local centres, creating the connections for sustainable development of the common regional space.

The principles for the formation and use of the regions for management and planning are reduced to the agreement and free will for the formation of the regions, for example in Rumania (*Dumitru*, 1998), or as is the case in Bulgaria – to the expert proposal and co-ordination with the district governors and the approval of the Interdepartmental Council for Regional Development of the Government. In the Union Republic of Yugoslavia (in the framework of Serbia) the principles are stated in the National Plan for Regional Development, but are still not used for management. Because of the restricted sizes of the territory of the rest of the countries from the former Yugoslav Federation, these countries are still under the process of preparation for the performance of radical administrative-territorial reforms. The Republic of Macedonia, which has accepted recently (in the beginning of 1999) its plan for spatial development, considers the problem of creating of three macro regional centres, several mezoregional

ones and corresponding micro regional ones, but the hierarchical system of regioning has not yet been outlined. Similar ideas exist in the National Plan of Albania, which is being under the process of preparation.

The plan of the Serbian Republic (founded as a result of the Dayton agreement), developed by the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning of Serbia, treats micro regions (several municipalities united by impact centres).

The responsibilities towards the region concern two more important trends, which are mutually interrelated:

- 1) National: implementation of the system for regional planning; development of programmes and proposals for the use of the national fund for regional development and of the other specific funds with regional importance;
- 2) Transnational and transborder co-operation: development of strategies and arrangement schemes of the border regions as a territorial framework for the development of the network for co-operation; use of resources from the prior-to-joining funds of the EU.

Analysis of the regional schemes

The greatest changes in the geopolitical development, that have taken place in the development of the South-eastern European space since the beginning of the 90-ies till the resent moment, are substantially reflected on the necessity of creation and adopting of regions for management and impact. From this point of view South-eastern Europe could be considered in the following manner:

- 1) Countries with unitary arrangement and traditions in regioning: Bulgaria, Rumania and Greece. Albania as a unitary state has no traditions in regioning.
- 2) The countries from the former Yugoslav Federation, whose territorial arrangement accepts each of the former 6 republics as a macro region of the federation. Even now, in some of the already sovereign republics exist cultural-geographical (historical-ethnographic) regions. These regions have also ethnic character only in Serbia, as is the case with Kosovo and Metochia, which are strongly dominated by the Albanian community, and, with Voevodina that has several basic ethnic groups but the Hungarian minority is the dominating one. For this reasons these two regions were autonomous ones till 1989. The Serbian Government cancelled this autonomy and this is probably one of the important causes for the Albanian separatism in Kosovo.

As already mentioned, as one of the three countries with a traditional unitary state system, Greece is divided in 13 regions with an administrative status, which correspond to the EU requirements. The specific spatial structure and the existing thousands of islands require the greater number of regions than the necessary number for a monolithic continental country. The regions in the continental part are relatively equal according to their spatial potential. They have a traditional historical character and have the names of the districts as Macedonia, Thrace, Athens, etc. In this respect Greece approaches the regions of most of the member-countries of the European Union, where these regions exist according to the federal principle.

The regions from the NUTS II type are widely used in Greece as a basic administrative regional level of management. In comparison with the regions of most of the EU member-countries, they could be accepted according to their functions as the so-called “deconcentrated regionalisation” with a transition to decentralisation. The separation of North Greece (Aegean Macedonia and Thrace) with the deputy of the Government (Minister of North Greece) in Thessaloniki strengthens the regional competence of the regions from this vast continental territory, which are the real contact zone for the transborder co-operation and the starting place for the enlarging of EU in South-eastern Europe.

After long consultations and iterations, the Bulgarian National Report for “Vision Planet” had accepted 3 regions, since in 1998 the 9 administrative districts with their approximate sizes of the NUTS II level still existed. The three regions in several modifications concerning their range and situation, as well as a version with four regions constituted the NUTS I level (Geshev, 1998). After the introducing of 28 administrative districts the concept of the regions was reconsidered again and the conclusion was that the country needs territorial units of the NUTS II type.

Bulgaria has extremely rich traditions in the regioning process and this is the reason for adopting of these particular units as integral regions or economic and later on – social-economic regions.

The extremely dynamic discussions on the macro regional schemes, carried out mainly in the Institute of Geography of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (since its foundation in 1950 till now), is imposed by the fact that in the case of Bulgaria it is impossible to rest on our historical-geographical regions, because the contemporary Bulgarian state includes only parts from Moezia, Thrace, Macedonia and Dobroudzha. But these particular historical areas in South-eastern Europe (and the European part of Turkey) can form the backbone of the transborder Euroregions in the more remote perspective of united Europe.

The several exhaustive academic studies published in the collective monographs (published in one, two and three volumes) “Geography of Bulgaria” in

1961, 1989 and 1998, substantiate and present the schemes of the macro regions.

The analysis and assessment of these schemes according to the above mentioned criteria have led to the 6-part macro regional scheme (three regions in North Bulgaria and three regions in South Bulgaria), which proved to be the scheme with the longest existence in the country. One unconventional solution is the transfer of the Rousse city with its affiliated district to North-Central Bulgaria, which corresponds to the corridor No 9 and to the respective border region in Rumania.

The accepted on July 15th, 1998, Law of Regional Development in Rumania implies the association of the districts (judez) according to their free will in 8 macro regions, which correspond to the NUTS II level. The macro regions in Rumania are not based on historical-geographical regions, since they also cannot be used as a basis for balanced sustainable development. According to the law, their basic functions consist in the following:

- To define and implement the regional development programme;
- To obtain necessary funding from the National Board for Regional Development;
- To manage the Regional Development Fund for tasks that can be best solved on local level.

Undoubtedly their strategic destination is to use them in the territorial planning system.

From all the countries in the second group – from the former Yugoslavian Federation, only Serbia uses 6 regions in the National Plan for Spatial Development. Except these regions corresponding to the NUTS II level, in the analyses of the countries the three historical regions are also used: Central Serbia, Voevodina and Kosovo. In our opinion these regions are only fixed ones, but are not used in the regional policy, probably because of the drastic situation in the country in the present moment.

The National Plan of Macedonia, as already mentioned, shows the centres which could be used in delineating of three regions: Skopie, Shtip and Bitola. The creation of administrative-territorial level of management in the country will be performed in the near future, since only the municipal structures represent the administrative-territorial arrangement at present. The constantly growing number of the municipalities however (which are already about 120), imposes the necessity of this process.

The regions in Bulgaria during the period prior to joining the European Union

The regions for planning (planning regions) are presented in this report as a new level of the management of regional development. Their creation is determined mainly by the substantial changes in the administrative-territorial arrangement of the country and by the necessity of a suitable level of planning and of corresponding governing authorities, which can directly use financial resources from the prior-to-joining funds of the European Union. The consideration is focussed on the arguments for the creation of the planning regions, the existing normative basis, the approach to their creation, the proposed scheme of regions with their basic characteristics, as well as, the regions for impact within them.

Types of regions in the regional development

The performing of a regional development policy presupposes the presence of two types of regional units – regions for management of the spatial development and impact regions. These two types of regions differ in their essence, in the extent of covering the territory of the country, as well as in the essence of the regional development policy carried out in them.

The regions for management of the spatial development cover the whole territory of the country, while the second type of regions are defined to cover only a part of it, so that selective, oriented towards certain priorities spatial development policy could be carried out.

The regions for management of spatial development are used for performing of more or less independent (decentralised) policy, while the regions for purposeful impact represent in principle an object of the national policy of regional development – by the identification of the regions themselves and their announcement, and by national financial support and frequently controlled national programmes for their development.

The impact regions are first of all objects of regional policy, while the regions for management are subjects first of all.

The development of the scheme for the territorial range of the planning regions is performed by society with the intensive consulting with specialists from the Institute of Geography of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, from the Department of Geography of the Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski” and from the Department of Geoeconomy of the University of National and World Economy. The contribution of the consulting aid related with the EU programme for support of regional development has been of extreme importance.

At the end of April this year, the Supreme Council approved the developed scheme for Territorial and Settlement Arrangement and by the Council for Regional Development of the Government.

Criteria and requirements

The determining of the territorial range of the planning regions is based on a number of criteria, the more important of them being as follows:

- The number of the regions should be sufficiently small and they should be sufficiently large and diverse from the point of view of their natural-resource potential and social-economic development, so that the realising of greater programmes and projects will be possible;
- The regions should not be too large, so that they could be “managed” – i.e., the number of the district-partners is not so large to hamper the interrelation between them and to lead to difficulties in the functioning of their councils, the territory of the region allows the realising of intensive direct (personal) contacts between the partners from the different districts, etc.;
- The regions should have common (uniting) problems and there should be a desire for joint work on the side of the local subjects of regional development;
- The basic natural-geographic units and the historical traditions should be considered during the formation of the regions;
- The delineated regions should have a comparatively well developed network of urban centres, including well expressed growth centres;
- The existing in the past schemes for the regional development of the country should be taken under consideration for orientation in the process of distinguishing of the planning regions;
- The planning regions should include whole administrative-territorial units (districts).

The lack of clearly distinguished regional communities with stable traditions and identity, which are the basis for determining the regions on the NUTS II level in the other European countries, was a serious obstacle for the determination of the territorial range of the regions.

After their formation the planning regions conform to the following two basic requirements:

- 1) They should be used only for the purposes of their creation – i.e., for the purposes of the regional development (planning and carrying out of programmes for regional development);

- 2) They should be stable in the course of time – i.e., no changes of their borders should be allowed for a considerably long period, at least one planning period of the National Plan for Regional Development.

The last requirement should be explicitly recommended for including in the agreements between the district governors.

Territorial range of the planning regions

The discussed number of the regions during the consultations versions varied from 3–4 to 8–10 regions. The proposed scheme (*Tables 1, 2*) with 6 planning regions turned to be the most acceptable one from the point of view of the above mentioned criteria.

The adopted version is characterised by the following main features:

- 1) The regional breakdown of the country into 6 regions, with minor modifications, is accepted for use during a long time period.
- 2) The number of districts in one planning region varies between 3 and 6 and can be considered acceptable from the point of view of interactions and communications between the partners from the single districts.
- 3) The regions are comparatively well balanced in terms of their territory (for an average area of 18495 sq. km, only two regions have a greater deviation from the average value – the North-western [57%] and the South-Central one [149%]).
- 4) The differences are greater when the population is concerned. The deviations are explained to a considerable degree by the influence of the big city situation in the South-western and the South-Central region.
- 5) All of the regions with the exception of the North-western one, have well expressed growth centres (regions) (according to the distribution of the regions of purposeful impact).
- 6) All regions contain diverse in their problems territories, which can be assessed on the basis of the determined various types of impact regions. The only exception is the North-western region where no growth centre has been distinguished.

As seen from the brief comments, the basic problem of the proposed scheme of planning regions is the Planning-planning region. It has been determined mainly on the basis of the criteria for available common problems and desire for co-operation of the local subjects of the regional development.

Table 1

Planning regions for the national and district plans for regional development

Names of the regions and of the districts included in them	Territory, square kilometres	Population (1.1.1997)	Number of municipalities (1.1.1999)	Number of settlements	Density of population, people/sq. km
<i>North-western Region</i>	<i>10,588.04</i>	<i>603024</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>57.0</i>
Vidin district	3,034.67	144061	11	141	47.5
Montana district	3,617.64	197513	11	130	54.6
Vratsa district	3,935.73	261450	11	127	66.4
<i>North-central Region</i>	<i>18,023.71</i>	<i>1,251,148</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>1,044</i>	<i>69.4</i>
Pleven district	4,333.54	327,576	10	119	75.6
Lovech district	4,132.44	180,275	8	150	43.6
Veliko Turnovo district	4,666.69	308,565	10	336	65.1
Gabrovo district	2,107.28	155,522	4	356	73.8
Rousse district	2,783.76	279,210	8	83	100.3
<i>North-eastern Region</i>	<i>19,895.85</i>	<i>1,361,507</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>943</i>	<i>68.4</i>
Varian district	3,834.01	446,711	12	158	116.5
Dobrich district	4,711.44	227,848	8	215	48.4
Shoumen district	3,306.81	217,318	10	151	65.7
Targovishte district	2,533.15	146,652	5	188	57.4
Razgrad district	2,646.07	167,233	7	113	63.2
Silistra district	2,844.37	155,745	7	118	54.8
<i>South-eastern Region</i>	<i>14,645.10</i>	<i>834,367</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>486</i>	<i>57.0</i>
Bourgas district	7,753.14	431,513	13	257	55.7
Sliven district	3,536.58	231,795	4	120	65.5
Yambol district	3,355.38	171,059	5	109	51.0
<i>South-Central Region</i>	<i>27,552.71</i>	<i>2,089,272</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>1,513</i>	<i>75.8</i>
Plovdiv district	5,975.92	729,516	16	215	122.1
Stara Zagora district	5,146.86	389,388	11	205	75.7
Haskovo district	5,524.53	298,108	11	261	54.0
Pazardzhik district	4,458.00	321,062	11	117	72.0
Smolyan district	3,231.87	148,845	10	243	46.1
Kurdzhali district	3,215.53	202,353	7	472	62.9
<i>South-western Region</i>	<i>20,269.76</i>	<i>2,143,882</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>956</i>	<i>105.8</i>
Sofia-city district	1,326.13	1,190,547	1	38	897.8
Sofia district	7,020.21	272,558	22	284	38.8
Blagoevgrad district	6,450.75	350,327	14	281	54.3
Pernik district	2,388.36	156,561	6	171	65.6
Kyustendil district	3,084.30	173,889	9	182	56.4
<i>Total for Bulgaria</i>	<i>110,975.16</i>	<i>8,283,200</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>5,340</i>	<i>74.6</i>

Table 2
 Statistical characteristics of the planning regions – 1997

Parameters / Planning regions	NW Planning region	N Central Planning region	NE Planning region	SW Planning region	S Central Planning region	SE Planning region	Republic of Bulgaria
Territory (% of the territory of the country)	9.54	16.24	17.93	18.27	24.83	13.20	100.00
Arable land (% of the territory of the region)	58.05	53.13	58.67	24.26	33.73	43.97	43.30
Population (% of the total for the country)	7.28	15.10	16.44	25.88	25.22	10.07	100.00
Urban population (% of the total for the region)	57.72	65.41	62.18	80.35	62.62	67.68	67.71
Average rate of population growth (%) 1992–1997	-0.89	-0.86	-50	-0.30	-0.36	-0.41	-0.49
Net migration for 1000 persons	0.33	-0.28	-1.23	2.44	-0.11	-3.80	0.00
Density of population (people/sq. km)	57.00	69.00	68.00	106.00	76.00	57.00	75.00
Employed persons per 1000 people	218.00	250.00	229.00	289.00	235.00	219.00	249.00
Coefficient of economic activity (%)	44.71	46.00	47.3	45.40	46.60	46.40	46.20
Coefficient of employment (%)	21.90	25.90	22.90	28.90	23.50	21.90	24.87
Level of unemployment (%) – 1998	19.63	13.34	15.54	7.77	12.96	12.77	12.58
Annual income for a household (\$) – 1996	2706.00	2335.00	2307.00	2036.00	2373.00	1938.00	2239.00
Income from activities (thousand leva/person)	1879.76	30.37.26	3568.60	69.39.47	3285.25	5651.69	4376.21
Income from activities (%)	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.000	100.00	100.00
Including: Agriculture and Forestry	7.85	7.21	9.30	0.94	4.46	5.09	4.14
Including: Industry	57.39	52.06	37.53	26.77	54.92	60.67	41.56
Including: Services	34.77	40.73	53.17	72.28	40.62	34.24	54.30
Direct foreign investments – average for the period 1992–1997 (% from the total for the country)	3.69	10.04	21.94	55.03	6.94	2.35	100.00
Own municipal income for 1 person (thousand leva)	70.33	66.70	81.27	110.32	75.52	80.52	84.27
Share of the own income from the total municipal	59.45	62.61	65.48	81.08	65.29	68.98	69.50

Continuing Table 2

Parameters / Planning regions	NW Planning region	N Central Planning region	NE Planning region	SW Planning region	S Central Planning region	SE Planning region	Republic of Bulgaria
Density of road network (km/sq. km)	0.317	0.346	0.359	0.331	0.322	0.294	0.330
Telephone posts per 1000 people	339,00	412,00	373,00	448,00	339,00	349,00	385,00
Water supply (litres/hour/day)	110,00	138,00	120,00	200,00	117,00	169,00	139,00
Employed in the tertiary sector (% of the totally employed in the region)	45,36	42,77	49,67	58,27	42,54	49,03	49,14
Regions for purposeful impact Territory (% of the territory of the region)							
Regions for transborder co-operation and development	45,72	29,30	23,31	42,050	24,07	18,30	29,45
Undeveloped rural regions	57,03	17,13	46,06	13,59	20,38	10,47	24,33
Regions with industrial decline	13,51	5,22	-	11,40	7,67	3,02	6,52
Regions of development	6,39	7,60	10,08	3,05	5,69	8,95	6,06
Regions for growth	-	14,84	2,00	10,69	14,32	5,99	9,07
Population (% of the total for the region)							
Regions for transborder co-operation and development	44,17	32,72	14,88	19,67	13,25	5,43	19,58
Undeveloped rural regions	42,90	8,54	21,90	2,75	11,66	4,94	12,17
Regions with industrial decline	7,64	4,89	-	8,46	6,36	2,00	5,29
Regions of development	15,30	13,12	17,56	3,78	4,83	14,76	9,67
Regions for growth	-	31,33	23,96	57,68	37,87	26,91	35,86

Source: Calculated by the author.

Impact regions

The fulfilment of the regional policy priorities is realised in the mosaic-like situated regions for purposeful impact in the framework of the 6 planning regions:

- 1) The growth regions cover 10630 sq. km of the national territory or 9.07% with a population of 2970561 people or 35.6% from the total for the country. In fact these are the fields of influence of the cities of Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Bourgas, Varna, Rousse and Pleven.
- 2) The regions for development cover 6721.4 sq. km of the national territory or 6.06% with a population of 800677 people or 9.67% from the total for the country. The fields of influence of the towns of Blagoevgrad, Haskovo, Yambol, Dobrich, Shoumen, Veliko Turnovo and Vratsa refer to them. They are situated in almost all planning regions (one in each region) and only the Northeastern region contains two – the towns of Dobrich and Shoumen.
- 3) The regions with industrial decline on the national territory are about 8. They cover 7238.4 sq. km or 6.52% with a population of 438294 people or 5.29% from the total for the country.
- 4) The declining rural regions occupy 27001.2 sq. km or 24.33% with a population of about 1007655 people or 11.2% from the total for the country. They are concentrated in a compact manner mainly in the North-western and North-eastern region. Their situation is connected with the available natural conditions and resources and traditions in the development of Bulgarian agriculture.
- 5) The regions for transborder co-operation and development coincide with the territories of a number of the above mentioned regions and estimated to have a territory of about 32685.8 sq. km or 29.5% from the total for the country with a population of 1615298 people. These are mainly territories along the western, southern and northern borders of the Republic of Bulgaria and they are directly related with the national policy for “opening” of the physical space.
- 6) The European transport corridors are tangential to or cross almost all of the planning regions. For example, corridor No 8 crosses the South-western, South-Central, South-eastern and North-eastern regions. Corridor No 4 crosses the North-western and the South-western region. Corridor No 7 is tangential to the North-western, North-Central and North-eastern regions, and corridor No 9 crosses the Northeastern and South-eastern regions. The role of the North-Central region in North

Bulgaria and of the South-Central region in South Bulgaria as connections between corridors No 4 and No 9 is very important.

The fact that all the regions are densely covered by fields of influence of regions for growth and for development of important infrastructural corridors, provides the ground to consider that the territorial framework basis for trans-border co-operation has been created in the South-eastern European region, as a prerequisite for the EU enlargement.

*Possibilities for the use of the accession funds of the European Union
for regional development*

The practical realisation of the regional development policy is directly connected with the chosen policy of Bulgaria for joining the European Union. During the accession period the specially created for the candidate-member countries instruments which allow the possibilities for financial support of measures in areas of crucial importance for the joining of EU, are specially relied upon. The ISPA and SAPARD instruments have been developed as analogues correspondingly of the Cohesion Fund (concentrated on the measures in the field of transport and environment) and of the Agrarian Fund (concentrated on the measures in agriculture and rural regions). The intentions of the European Commission are to make the PHARE programme functioning as an analogue of the European Fund for Regional Development and of the European Social Fund.

The resources of the EU for regional development are principally directed to two main levels – regions at the NUTS II level (according to aim 1 – to support the development and structural adapting of regions lagging behind in their development) and at the NUTS III level (according to aim 2 – to transform regions seriously affected by industrial decline, and according to aim 5b – to encourage the development and structural adapting of rural regions).

There are several countries whose whole territory is considered as a region according to aim 1. Such will be the approach to Bulgaria in the process of joining and after the joining the EU. According to aim 1 programme for spatial development in regions corresponding to the NUTS II level are worked out with the national plans for development in the member-countries. The member-countries, which do not have administrative-territorial units at this level, develop planning regions (Ireland, Portugal and Greece).

Possibilities for the use of the regions during the future enlarging of the EU

Strategies, initiatives and projects of EU related to the perspectives of the spatial development of the South-Eastern European space

The preparation for the enlargement of the EU towards the direction of South-East Europe is based on the development and implementation of the Spatial Development Strategies and Policy Integration, as a part of the common European strategies and initiatives with programmes for transnational co-operation, accepted by the member-countries of the EU.

The basic reference documents of the European Communities are: "European Spatial development Perspective" (ESDP) and "Agenda 2000: for Stronger and Wider Union", as well as CEMAT's "Sustainable Spatial Development Principles for the European Continent".

On the basis of these documents the INTERREG Initiative (Strand A and B) accepted the new version "C" for the period 1997–1999.

INTERREG IIC is an Operational Programme for the Central, Adriatic, Danube and South-Eastern European Space (CADSES). Two parallel projects, financially supported by the Operational Programme are being developed within the framework of this initiative:

- "VISION PLANET", initiated by Germany, Austria and Italy for the Danube space;
- "ESTIA" is the acronym for European Space and Territorial Integration Alternatives: Spatial development strategies and policy integration for the South-East Europe (*Kafkalas*, 1998) developed under the auspices of Greece.

The CADSES area is presented in the map-scheme with the member-countries participating in both projects.

Except these projects, the conclusions of the Expert Group of "VISION PLANET" from the 2nd meeting in Ulm (Germany) held on 11–12th December 1998, have been used for the assessment of the possibilities of the regions for the enlargement of the EU.

Summary and conclusions about the role of the prospects of the spatial development of the South-Eastern European space

The described standpoint is motivated by the participation in the ESTIA project and in the “Vision Planet” Expert Group.

The Kosovo crisis, which was transformed into a military conflict against the Union Republic of Yugoslavia, exerts its impact on the wholesome destabilisation of the region. The possibilities for overcoming the isolation and the including of the countries in the European integration will be more clearly outlined depending on the outcome of the conflict, the returning of the refugees back home from the neighbouring countries of Kosovo (Albania and Macedonia) and the political situation for restoring the destruction and the indirect losses. The role of the regions in this respect is not debatable.

According to the “VISION PLANET” Expert Group several key elements for sustainable development actions could be recommended to find their expression in the regions:

a) Transport Infrastructure Networks

This is the decisive and most important priority element of the spatial structure of the South-eastern European Space for the future structure localisation. The interregional and international accessibility to the regions determines their attractiveness for investments and generally for their economic development. In this context, special attention should be paid to two aspects:

- Transfer of the concept for the large European Transportation Corridors in concrete proposals for improvement of the inter-regional transportation infrastructure (“TINA” project) in the Southeastern European region.
- Initiation and development of multi-modality transport systems contributing to the internal and external accessibility to the space of the regions in South-eastern Europe as:
 - Construction of bridges across the Danube (in the Bulgarian-Rumanian section): structures that have acquired great actuality for changing the transport direction after restrictions and breaking the connections through Serbian territory;
 - Creation (construction) of Ro-Ro system for major connections between the Black Sea and West Europe in order to reduce the heavy freight traffic on the overburdened international roads;
 - Considering intra-urban accessibility improvements as necessary means for securing the functioning of the existing major urban centres.

b) *Cross-Border Co-operation*

The identification of “Priority Cross-Border Development Areas” for active connections between two and more countries. This first priority category should comprise those regions where future “external” borders of the European Union (resulting from the envisaged first round of accession) will encounter particularly difficult situations in at least two neighbouring countries.

Four of the seven pointed out in CADSES “Priority Cross-Border Development Areas” (zones III, V, VI and VII) are situated in the Southeastern European space.

This example of the “VISION PLANET” Expert Group conclusions should be considered carefully and it does not exhaust the possible conclusions for similar zones in the region.

The proposed idea for “overlapping” macro regions within the CADSES space gives the main trends for the EU enlargement from Central to South-eastern Europe in three target geopolitical spaces:

- Carpathian;
- Danube and Adriatic Sea.

All these target spaces (CADSES macro regions) can be used as cultural historical structures, connecting Central and South-eastern Europe.

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