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Transport Infrastructure and Political Factors as Determinants of Tourism Development in the Cross-Border Region of Bihor and Maramureş. A Comparative Analysis

Jan A. Wendt ^{1,*}, Vasile Grama ², Gabriela Ilieş ³, Andrey S. Mikhaylov ^{4,5}, Sorin G. Borza ⁶, Grigore Vasile Herman ² and Agnieszka Bógdał-Brzezińska ⁷

- ¹ Institute of Geography, Faculty of Oceanography and Geography, Gdansk University, 4 Bażyńskiego Str., 80-309 Gdańsk, Poland
 - ² Faculty of Geography, Tourism and Sport, University of Oradea, 1 Universitatii Str., 410087 Oradea, Romania; vgrama@uoradea.ro (V.G.); grigoreherman@yahoo.com (G.V.H.)
 - ³ Faculty of Geography, Extension of Sighetu Marmatiei, Babes-Bolyai University, 6 Avram Iancu Str., 435500 Sighetu Marmatiei, Romania; gabriela.ilies@ubbcluj.ro
 - ⁴ Institute of Regional and Geopolitical Studies, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, 14 Aleksandra Nevskogo Str., 236016 Kaliningrad, Russia; mikhailov.andrey@yahoo.com
 - ⁵ Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Staromonetnyy Str., 29, 119017 Moscow, Russia
 - ⁶ Faculty of History, International Relations, Political Science and Communication Sciences, 1 Universitatii Str., 410087 Oradea, Romania; sborza@uoradea.ro
 - ⁷ Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw, 26/28 Krakowskie Przedmieście Str., 00-927 Warsaw, Poland; bogdal@uw.edu.pl
- * Correspondence: jan.wendt@ug.edu.pl; Tel.: +48-58-523-65-17



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Abstract: This article follows two important interconnected aspects. On one hand, it investigates whether the political factors represented by the presence of ethnic minorities can be a catalyst for tourism development in cross-border regions, in addition to the development of transport infrastructure. On the other hand, it offers a comparative analysis and territorial diagnosis of the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar and Maramureş-Zakarpattya cross border regions, analyzing the main tourist indicators and the advances made in the development of the transport infrastructure with a role in the development of tourism. The paper is based on desk and quantitative research involving national and regional statistic data. Research on the literature regarding Hungarian–Romanian and Romanian–Ukrainian borderland was also realized, in order to conduct comparative analysis useful to identify and evaluate the factors linked with tourism development. Using a multiscale approach, the objective is to determine if there is a correlation between the development of the transport network and the increase in tourist traffic. The results show that transport infrastructure plays a critical role in ensuring the connections of border regions. Although the two regions are contiguous, there is an obvious difference in cross-border traffic due to the presence of two different types of border. The transport network and tourism situation in Bihor has improved in the last years, especially under the impact of cross-border cooperation, but the accessibility remains relatively low. In Maramureş, the development of cross-border connections is based on cultural exchange, and less on economic relations. Transport accessibility is a strong point of the Hungarian–Romanian borderland and represents an obstacle for the development of tourism in the Romanian–Ukrainian borderland.

Keywords: Bihor; Maramureş; cross-border regions; tourism development; transport infrastructure; ethnic minorities

1. Introduction

The development of transport is the basic—though not the only—factor determining changes in the intensity of tourist traffic [1] (p. 146), [2]. The development of the transport

network of any country is influenced by many factors, including demographic, economic, political and social. While the transport network within each country is characterized by a certain degree of cohesion in terms of means of transport and network density, transport accessibility in border areas is different. This differentiation results from the obvious influence of the border that separates the space (two states) shaped in different political, economic, legal, tax systems, etc. The very existence of a border influences a number of economic and social processes in the cross-border region, as well as the development of tourism. The importance of transport in tourism has already been the subject of many studies. In theoretical terms, they present the relationship between tourism and transport [2, 3], the importance of transport for tourism [4] or the issues of inequality and externalities [5]. Transport issues in cross-border regions also have a wealth of literature, especially on EU regions [6,7], communication links at the EU's external borders [8], and particular modes of transport [9] or local passenger transport development [10]. Nevertheless, the subject of transport in Romania's cross-border regions has not received too many studies. The existing ones focus on the development of trans-European transport corridors or logistics research [11]. One of the studies that is interesting in terms of the subject matter of the research is devoted to transport infrastructure as a factor of competitiveness in tourism [12], so the analysis of transport from the point of view of barriers and facilitations in the development of tourism may have a cognitive value. This is especially true because, so far, the relationship of tourism with the transport network is approached in terms of accessibility to the attractions and the respective corridors, mostly westwards and with interconnection to the Hungarian transport system [13,14].

However, not only the transport infrastructure has an impact on the development of tourism. In cross-border regions it is possible to demonstrate the influence of political factors on tourist activity [15] (p. 118), especially in the case of shopping tourism [16] (p. 15); [17] (p. 125); [18] (p. 116). In this paper, the political factors include the territorial consequences of historical processes leading to the division of historical regions of Bihor between Romania (RO) and Hungary (HU) and Maramures between Romania and Ukraine (UA), the consequence of which is the ethnic diversity of the population in the studied regions. Another politically determined factor is the different status of all three analyzed countries in terms of facilities (difficulties) in crossing the border for citizens of individual countries. Finally, another factor is the issue of the national (nationalist) policy of the Hungarian government [19] (p. 9), which, by granting Hungarian citizenship to Hungarians living among others in Ukraine and Romania, makes it easier for them to cross the border in their everyday life, both in cross-border traffic in the EU (Romania–Hungary) and on the external borders of the EU (Romania–Ukraine).

Research on cross-border tourism, as well as shopping, already has a rich literature. This research has focused mainly on the Canada–USA border, the USA–Mexico border, and the EU's internal borders [17] (p. 115). Subsequent works on cross-border tourism [20–23] focus on the political, social and economic aspects of the problem or its theoretical approach [24–27]. There is also a wealth of literature on cross-border cooperation, especially in the EU Euroregion [28–31] and at its external borders [16,17,32,33]. We also have a relatively large amount of research devoted directly or indirectly to tourism in Romania's cross-border regions. The analysis and effects of the implementation of national and European (EU) programs for the development of cross-border regions [34–37] and Euroregion [38] have already been presented. Subsequent studies present the economic aspects of tourism activity in Romania's cross-border regions [39–41], their political [42] and historical conditions [32], the potential effects of the development of transborder tourism [31], and more detailed research on shopping tourism in Romania's cross-border regions [18,43–45]. Similarly, the regions of Bihor-Hajdu-Bihar (RB-HB) and Maramureş (RM), due to their tourist potential, attracted the interest of numerous researchers. For RB-HB, the problems of tourism development [46], tourism promotion and information in the Romanian part of the region [47], as well as its development prospects [48] and shopping tourism [18] have already been described. The research on RM looked at the

threats and opportunities for tourism development in the region [49], the development of tourism from a cross-border perspective [50,51] and the values of the region's historical heritage [52]. Despite the relatively rich literature, no research has been undertaken so far to address the issues of ethnic/national diversity of the inhabitants of cross-border regions in terms of tourism activity in these regions. Considering the results of the research conducted so far, it seems important to supplement them with comparative studies of the impact of transport infrastructure on the development of tourism in cross-border regions, taking into account the ethnic/national diversity of the inhabitants of these regions.

The academic literature corpus available for the study area reflects the general image of the region. Most of the studies on the tourist attractions, infrastructure and flows are conducted symmetrically by the researchers in Romania, Hungary and Ukraine, starting around the year 2000 [11,34,51–53]. After the year 2005, studies focusing on the cross-border cooperation in Maramureş were carried out in Romania and in Ukraine, highlighting the role of the low-priced travel fares in Ukraine that increased the accessibility of tourism services and associated goods (fuel, food, local produce, etc.). Moreover, the results of people-to-people projects drawing from academic research have raised awareness of the tourist resources in both sectors of Maramureş, systematically increasing the travel distances, from the area around the border towards the more profound rural area of the bigger cities of Baia Mare or Cluj-Napoca [43].

Thus, the aim of the conducted research is a comparative analysis and assessment of changes in the intensity of tourist traffic in two border regions lying on the border of Romania with Hungary and Ukraine. At the same time, an attempt was made to answer the question about the potential influence of the ethnic and national diversity of the population in the analyzed regions on the volume of tourist traffic. Most often, the development of the transport network largely determines the growth and facilitates the diversification of forms of tourism. However, the analysis made an attempt to answer the question, in the case of RBH-B (border of Romania and Hungary) and RM (border of Romania and Ukraine), whether political factors play a greater role than the transport network. The adopted approach will allow us to study the role of transport in the development of tourism in cross-border regions.

There is a common belief in the literature that there is a correlation between the development of the transport network and the increase in tourist traffic [2,4]. Nevertheless, the study hypothesized that other factors had a greater impact on the increase in tourist traffic than transport connections. Of course, in both regions, transport, as always, is the basic factor enabling communication. As already indicated above [2–4,9,12], we have a lot of works in the literature in which the transport factor is considered a barrier or a supporter of the development of cross-border tourism in the studied regions; this paper mostly focus on one- or two-factor analysis, ignoring the holistic approach to the problem. With this in mind, a non-obvious hypothesis was formulated: (H) historical and political factors as well as a diverse ethnic structure affect tourism in cross-border regions to a greater extent than transport infrastructure. Its positive verification may lead to the redefinition of the role of transport in tourism in the studied regions. In order to verify such a hypothesis, it is necessary to achieve two research goals. In the beginning, a general analysis of historical and political changes is necessary to show the causes of the occurrence of national minorities in the cross-border regions of Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar (Romania and Hungary) and Maramureş (Romania and Ukraine). The second objective of the research is to analyze and assess changes in the transport network, including multiscale analysis of border infrastructure, from the point of view of changes and facilitation in tourist traffic. The analysis of changes in the transport network and tourist traffic will allow us to verify the research hypothesis on the impact of the development of the transport network on the volume of tourist traffic. A synthetic approach and analysis of historical factors and political changes will allow for the assessment of their impact on the development and types of cross-border tourism.

The border region BH-HB is located in the eastern part of Hungary and the north-eastern part of Romania. Historically, it was for a long time at the center of the former Kingdom of Hungary. After World War I, the historic Crisis Land was divided by a border, leaving the Romanian minority on the Hungarian side. The period between the world wars and the socialist republics of Romania and Hungary was not conducive to the development of tourism or cross-border cooperation between these countries. The countries owe their new cooperation to the accession to the European Union, Hungary in 2004 and Romania in 2007 and the premises for real cross-border cooperation date back to 2002 when the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion was established [36] (Figure 1). Informal cooperative relations and the increase in tourism have occurred since the fall of communism, increasing with the accession of Romania to the EU.



Figure 1. The border region of study.

The second cross-border region is the historical region of Maramureș, situated at the northern border of Romania and Ukraine. It is limited in the research-based literature on two premises: (1) The territory is included in the larger administrative units, Maramureș County and Zakarpattya Province, but due to data availability, we only included the localities from Maramureș Land—Rakhiv, Tyaciv and partly Khust districts; (2) Although the border continues eastwards, the Ivano-Frankivsk Province was not included in the study area due to the lack of direct transport network (Table 1).

Table 1. The population of the study area.

Region	Area (km ²)	Population 2011 *
Bihar	7544	575,398
Hajdú-Bihar	6211	562,732
Bihar and Hajdú-Bihar cross-border region	13,755	1,138,130
Maramureş County	6304	478,657
Zakarpattya Province *	12,777	1,241,887 (est.)
RO-UA cross-border project region	19,081	1,720,554
Maramureş Land	3300	212,334
Rakhiv district *	2141	92,300 (est.)
Tyaciv district *	9155	175,200 (est.)
Khust district *	2141	123,500 (est.)
Maramureş cross-border region	9155	603,334

* for Ukraine estimation of data; there is no available data for Ukraine in 2011. Data source: [54–57].

From a geographical perspective, the study area is incorporated in the larger Maramureş lowland, and the adjacent mountain frame corresponds to the upper Tisza basin, with an area of 9155 km², of which 3300 km² is in Romania and 5855 km² is in Ukraine (Table 1 and Figure 1). Compared to the larger administrative units, it represents 47% of the territory and 42% of the total population. Being a natural stronghold, the transport network and the settlements are located along the main rivers, with a small number of mountain crossing points. That is why there are obvious disparities between the lowland areas and the regions at the outskirts of the mountain, in Romania as well as in Ukraine (Figure 1).

In the past, the region was part of the Maramureş Comitatus (county) or similar divisions within the borders of the Kingdom of Hungary. Now the presence of national and ethnic minorities in both regions is similar, as is the complicated history, the historical division of lands determined by political decisions and the high value of cultural heritage. They differ in geographic conditions, the degree of development of the transport network, and above all, their formal status in terms of border crossing possibilities. Hungary is part of the EU and Schengen, Romania is part of the EU but not Schengen, and Ukraine is not part of the EU or Schengen.

Despite the legal differentiation in the conditions for crossing the border, development of tourism is an important task in most of Europe's border regions. Despite the legal differentiation of border crossing conditions, the development of tourism is an important task in most border regions of Europe, which does not change the fact that tourism in the analyzed regions was and is largely one-day tourism related to shopping trips or family and sentimental visits [24]. In the first case, it was limited to the nearest, well-connected shopping centers of Debrecen (Hungary) and Oradea (Romania) as well as Uzhgorod (Ukraine) and Baia Mare (Romania).

2. Materials and Methods

In order to achieve the presented research objectives and verify the hypotheses, as well as understand the processes taking place in the studied border regions of Hajdu Bihar-Bihar and Maramureş, a multiscale approach was chosen [58], in which the analysis is based on the use of a multidisciplinary lens and generally has multidisciplinary features [59,60]. The multiscale analysis [61] allows us to combine the analysis of the development of the transport network at the decision-making level of the state (border crossings, national transport infrastructure), the region (regional infrastructure) and local (local infrastructure). On the other hand, the multidisciplinary approach allows the analysis of changes in tourist traffic to include historical factors (the development of both cross-border regions), political (relations within the EU and Schengen, relations between Ukraine-Romania-EU, different conditions for crossing internal borders in the EU, a relatively large number of residents of Romania and Ukraine with a Hungarian passport), global contexts (UNESCO

heritage in the Maramureş region) [49,62] and nationality (ethnic and national minorities in surveyed regions).

The system analysis method was also used. According to the requirements of the systemic analysis, in the conducted research, the system is understood as the cross-border region, and its components include political, historical, demographic and transport conditions, as well as the component variables characterizing tourism.

The research methodology was also based on a combination of integrative investigations including methods like analyzing the content of documents promoting territorial cooperation with a focus on tourism and transport networks, collecting the empirical data to identify and characterize the tourism industry of the territory, analyzing statistical data from the two cross-border counties and represent them as charts and maps. The analysis of the documents promoting territorial cooperation in the field of tourism included both the main scientific contributions on this topic of cross-border cooperation and the importance of the transport network in tourism development and the main documents of cross-border cooperation programs supported by the EU in the region. Tourist statistics analysis was made using data from Eurostat [63] and national statistics [54,55].

Statistical data for tourism flows and accommodation for the Maramureş cross-border region was retrieved from the Romanian and Ukrainian official sources. Both countries have witnessed major changes in data collection procedures after the years 2010 and 2012 respectively, meaning that several accommodation facilities were introduced later and the smaller units (below 5 bed-places) are not considered for the arrivals and overnights. Moreover, in Ukraine there is a significant delay in publishing the data; hence, the latest data is from 2017 and some indicators are not available. That is why the comparative graphs could not be extended before 2010 and beyond 2017.

In order to form a clearer image on the international flows at the RO/UA border, the data from the border police via published research shows the patterns of border traffic, in general and by district [52,53]. Regarding data for the ethnic structures of the population, the most recent data is from the census in 2001 for Ukraine and 2011 for Romania, and considering the evolution trend of the general population it is rather accurate for comparison.

The literature analysis in the study of tourism and quantitative methods based on the analysis of statistical data from databases of individual countries and regions was used. Furthermore, the authors participated in many in situ field studies and a number of participant observations, and conclusions resulted from personal observations and studies of the determinants of changes in tourist traffic in the studied regions. The conducted field research (2019–2020) made it possible to verify the official procedures related to the border crossing and to examine the actual conditions for the development of cross-border tourism in both regions.

3. Results

3.1. *Multidisciplinary Analysis of Historical and Political Changes in the Cross-Border Regions*

3.1.1. Historical and Political Changes and Ethnical Structure in Bihor and Hajdú–Bihar Cross-Border Region

The border between Romania and Hungary is an international border, 448.0 kilometers long, following a southwest-northeast direction. The border was drawn, successively, starting with the end of 1918 and completed between 1920 and 1923, after the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920). Currently, the Romanian–Hungarian border separates (from north to south) the Hungarian counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Hajdú–Bihar, Békés and Csongrád and the Romanian counties of Satu Mare, Bihor, Arad and Timiș. The cross-border territorial units of Bihor and Hajdú–Bihar are separated by 90 km of the international border having a total population of 1,138,130 inhabitants and a total area of 13,754.51 km² (Hajdú–Bihar: 562,732 inhabitants and 6210.51 km²; Bihor: 575,398 inhabitants and 7544 km²).

The proportion of the Roma population in the area exceeds three percent (3.22%-18, 132 in Hajdú-Bihar and 6%-34, 640 in Bihor). The proportion of Hungarian nationality inhabitants living in the Romanian side of the border area is significantly higher (24%) than that of Romanian nationality inhabitants on the Hungarian side (0.35%). Other minorities such as Serbians, Slovaks and Germans are represented, granting the region a multiethnic character (Figure 2).

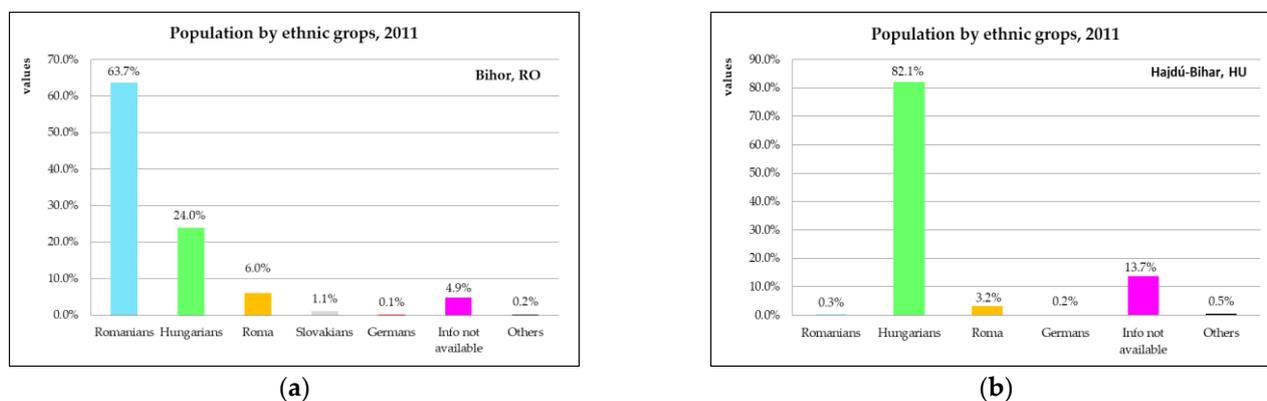


Figure 2. (a) Ethnic structure of Bihor County in 2011; (b) Ethnic structure of Hajdú-Bihar County in 2011; Data source: [54,55].

3.1.2. Historical and Political Changes and Ethnical Structure in Maramureş and Cross-Border Region

Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border relations fall within a territory defined through a political-administrative, historical and European development project perspective. From an administrative point of view, the territorial reference units located in the border area of Maramureş County are part of the Zakarpattya province in the north, along the river Tisza, Ivano-Frankivsk in the east, beyond the ridge of the Maramureş Mountains, and to a much lesser extent, Chernivtsi, at the eastern end, towards Bukovina. Of these, only the eastern districts of Zakarpattya province (Rakhiv, Tyaciv and part of Khust) are significant for the present study, the rest being the hard-to-reach mountain area, without actual cross-border traffic. From the perspective of the project regions, Maramureş County is part of the Carpathian Euroregion, along with Satu-Mare County, Zakarpattya Province and Ivano-Frankivsk Province, participating in good neighborly cooperation projects (with their various names over time: PHARE-CBC, ENPI, etc.). Older studies propose the delimitation of a cross-border region of Maramureş to cover the area corresponding to the most intense economic and cultural exchanges, delimited by historical, ethnographic and natural criteria, the Maramureş depression and the surrounding mountain frame, to the gate of Khust, on the Tisza [51]. The positioning of the power centers outside this area (Baia Mare, Uzhgorod and Ivano-Frankivsk) and beyond the obvious orographic barriers focused most European-funded development projects on partner entities located outside the historic Maramureş. Therefore, the areas of interest include economic cooperation, infrastructure development, education, communication and tourism branding, cultural events and nature protection [53]. Due to the fact that these do not materialize in cross-border tourist flows, in the present study they are taken only as a benchmark in terms of public policies.

Maramureş was always a borderland, and the natural location favored the preservation of its territory. From the Middle Ages (1368) to 1920, it was integrated as such within different structures, mostly Transylvania and the Hungarian Kingdom as one of the largest and most stable counties [42]. After World War I, the border was established along the Tisza River, on a 62 km line, cutting the region into two separate systems, dissembling the transport network and isolating the Romanian part from the significant economic flows until after WWII, when a connecting railroad was built. The communist era increased the distance between the two banks of the Tisza when all the bridges were demolished, and

flows were oriented towards Halmeu (Satu Mare County) and Siret (Suceava County). In Romania, the isolation factors are credited for the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage assets [53]. Nevertheless, the bridge that unites the banks of the Tisza River was the focal point of the cooperation policies because it was perceived as essential for economic growth and for reconnecting the two separated systems through family tourism and eventually, after 2007, for shopping [52]. Similar studies were carried out for the cross-border regions at the Polish, Slovak and Hungarian border, revealing the patterns of the tourist flows connected to the most frequent types of tourism [44,64,65]. Nevertheless, strong outbound migration flows were encouraged in order to contribute to the industrial development of the bigger cities and to mix the communities. This situation weakened family ties and personal identity. In the post-socialist period, the economic and social relationships were slowly reconnected, with contributions from EU funding, pre-accession funds and ENPI CBS joint cooperation programs [34,53].

The ethnic structure of the population in the two border areas is much more complex than the whole region (Figure 3). Nevertheless, the crisis ended with the reopening of the border on the Tisza River, reuniting families and contributing to new tourist flows (family tourism, shopping tourism, sentimental tourism), as well the usual forms of tourism (nature, heritage, urban and balneal).

In terms of ethnicity, there are three distinct groups: Romanians, Ukrainians and Hungarians. The Romanians make up the majority (78%) in the Maramureş border region and in nine of the localities in Ukraine, forming compact communities. These are located in the districts of Tyaciv and Rakhiv: Bila Tserkva, Solotvîno (8861–57%), Nîjnea Apşa (7727–97.7%), Hlyboky Potik (5531–98.6%), Topciino (2238–99.1%), a total of 31,877 inhabitants.

The Ukrainians are forming majorities on the Ukrainian territory (80%) and a large minority in Maramureş County, 60% of the Ukrainians from Romania, within a compact group of localities in the border area, counting almost 31,000 inhabitants (5.9% of the population of the county and 15.6% of that of the border area RO-UA).

The Hungarians are distributed relatively evenly on either side of the border, with close values in absolute figures (8002 in RO and 11517 in UA), but with greater weight difference at the county/province level (between 12.1% in UA and 7% in RO).



Figure 3. (a) Ethnic structure of Maramureş County in 2011; (b) Ethnic structure of Zakarpattya Oblast in 2001; Data source: [56,57].

The three ethnic groups located on either side of the border contribute to alleviating language barriers up to the border with Khust district, in the localities situated on the main axis of east–west communication, meaning that the three languages are commonly used in everyday activities and in tourism. Moreover, given the main tourist flows, there is a wide variety of other spoken languages such as Polish, Slovak, German and Russian.

3.2. Transport Net as the Factor of Tourism Development in Cross-Border Region

3.2.1. Transport Problem at Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar the Cross-Border

The multiscale analysis takes into account the degree of development of transport networks at the international level (cross-border connections and border crossings), at the level of the country and the studied region. The critical role played by the transport infrastructure in ensuring the connections of border regions and the advantages of good connectivity on regional, urban or local development is well acknowledged [6]. In the Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar cross-border area, the main roads crossing the border have gone through significant development in recent years. Hungary is famous for the speed in developing the motorway network, being very close to complete in all connections to the east and north. The development of motorways in the Romanian area is slower and it could hamper the joint and balanced economic development. The significant development of the major transport routes on the Hungarian and Romanian side of the border area gives us hope for a better future and more cohesion, especially because the TEN-T corridors are very close. Current border crossing infrastructure is a positive fact and is still under rapid transformation, though there are still bottlenecks in border crossing, maybe mostly due to Schengen regulations. The two international airports in Oradea and Debrecen provide relatively good international accessibility and may contribute to increasing the attraction of the area for potential investors and tourists.

EU financial support stimulates territorial development and reduces a lot of border barriers in EU border regions imposed by the administrative boundaries [7,30]. For the Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar cross-border area, the main focus of PHARE CBC programs was set on establishing key facilities in the border area, the modernization of border crossing points and roads and business infrastructure. The Cross-border Cooperation Program 2004–2006 included one specific measure to be supported, named 1.1 Improving cross-border infrastructure. The following programs, PHARE-CBC Program, Hungary-Romania Cross-border Cooperation Program 2007–2013 (18 projects with a total value of 34,861,824.55 euro) and the Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Program 2014–2020 strengthened the cross-border cooperation [35–37].

The motorway network has been continually and recently extended in Hungary; (September 2020) the Romanian A3 motorway (Biharia/Oradea North-Borş II) connects Oradea with Debrecen on the M4 and then M35 Hungarian motorway (Nagykerek-Berettyóújfalu-Debrecen-Görbeháza) with a link to Budapest through the M3 motorway (Görbeháza-Polgár-Füzesabony-Hatvan-Budapest). The other link which will be open soon is directly from Oradea on A3 (Oradea-Borş II) to Budapest on M4 motorway (Nagykerek-Berettyóújfalu-Püspökladány-Szolnok-Budapest) (Figure 4).

The European roads that cross the two counties and connect the two sides of the border and the major cities are represented by E60, E79 and E671 (Figure 4).

The total length of railway lines is very similar in the two counties: 473 km in Hajdú-Bihar and 500 km in Bihor with no specific increase in the last 20 years. The main characteristic is the asymmetry between the two counties—while the connections from Oradea to the north and south with the major Romanian urban areas (Satu Mare, Arad, Timisoara) parallel to the border are ensured, in Hajdú-Bihar we can notice major seclusion that Debrecen is facing in ensuring the links with the major Hungarian urban areas parallel to the border (Nyíregyháza, Békéscsaba, Szeged) (Figure 4). There are three railway connections through the border: Gyula–Kötegyán (HU)–Salonta (RO)–Oradea, connecting Békés County with Bihor; Püspökladány–Berettyóújfalu (HU)–Episcopia Bihor (RO)–Oradea; Püspökladány–Debrecen (HU)–Valea lui Mihai (RO).

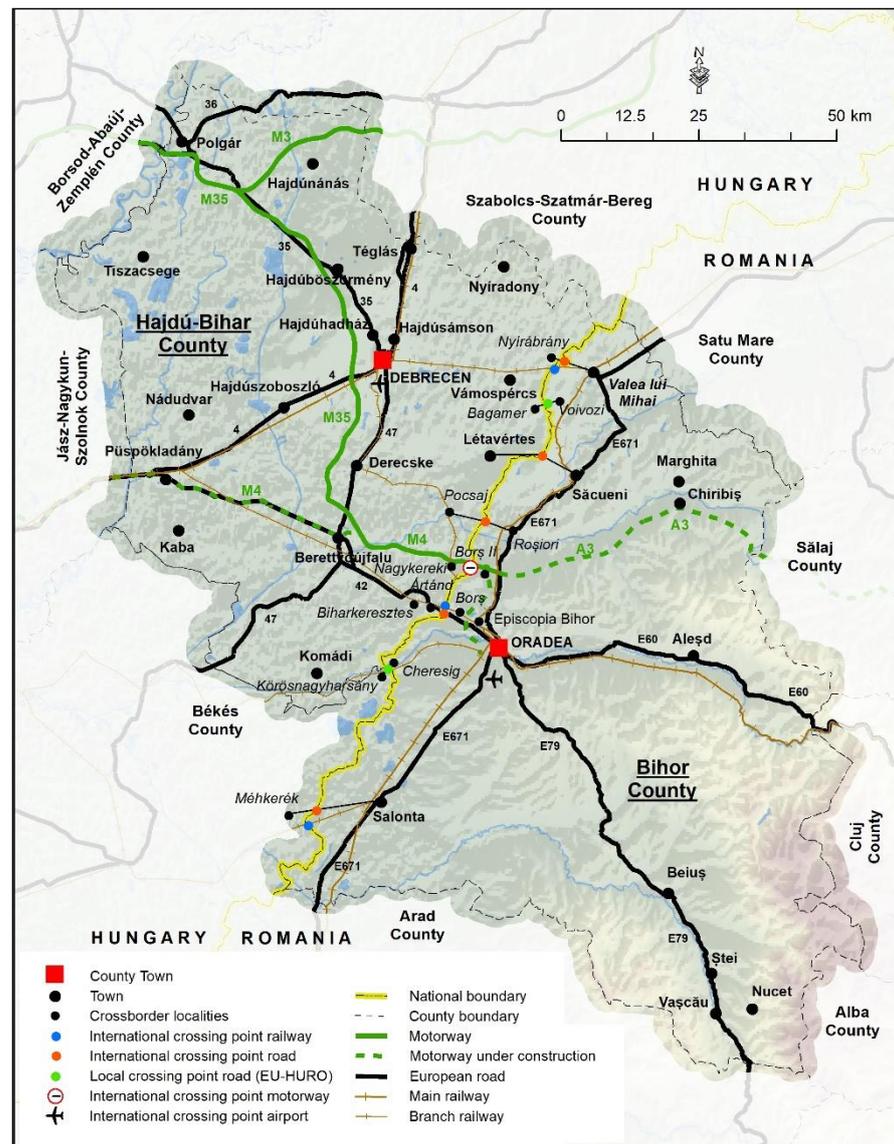


Figure 4. Cross-border infrastructure in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar County.

The number and density of border crossings between Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar counties is quite suitable for cooperation—there are 11 border crossing points, out of which 1 is only the railway, 2 are road and railway, and 6 are only roads (Figure 4 and Table 2).

The current network of border crossings has sufficient capacity, but the state of the infrastructure and the quality of services is still poor in some cases.

Many Romanian settlements in the cross-border region suffered from a low degree of accessibility and the discontinuity of networks, which increased travel times between different destinations. Fortunately, with the financial help of the EU (Program 2007–2013 Hungary-Romania HU-RO), three new local border crossing points between Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar were built through cross-border projects between border communes (total value of 10.2 million euro). Taking into account the number of road border crossings, it can be concluded that the border in this region does not constitute a barrier to car traffic, neither locally nor internationally.

Table 2. Border crossing points between Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar County.

Crossing Point	Traffic Type	Means of Transport
Episcopia Bihor (BH)-Biharkeresztes (HB)	International	Railway
Valea lui Mihai (BH)-Nyírábrány (HB)	International	Road and railway
Salonta (BH)-Méhkerék (Békés)	International	Road and railway
Borş (BH)-Ártánd (HB)	International	Road
Săcuieni (BH)-Létavértes (HB)	International	Road
Bors II (BH)-Nagykereki (HB)	International	Road-motorway
Voivozi (BH)-Bagamer (HB)	Local	Road
Roşiori (BH)-Pocsaj (HB)	Local	Road
Cheresig (BH)-Körösnagyharsány (HB)	Local	Road
Oradea (BH)	International	Airport
Debrecen (HB)	International	Airport

Data source: Own elaboration based on [66].

3.2.2. Transport Problem at Maramureş Cross-Border

The transport network in Maramureş is underdeveloped due to natural and political factors [11,42]. The most important obstruction is the natural confinement of the roads and railways, along the rivers, and the “bottleneck” formed by the only border-crossing point at Sighetu Marmatiei, the historical bridge (Figures 1 and 5). Road traffic over the bridge is carried out alternately on a single-lane structure; with tonnage restrictions, the maximum capacity for transporters is of an 8 + 1 minibus. Therefore, there are no official passenger carriers across the bridge. The study area is connected to two international airports, Baia Mare and Uzhgorod, within 80 km of the border crossing.

The transport system is therefore separated into two networks, with only one connection point (Figure 5).

The network of Romanian national and county roads follows the hydrographic network and is tree-shaped, with an important hub at Sighetu Marmatiei. The European road runs parallel to the orographic barrier Oaş-Gutâi, without a connection to the RO/UA border. Within Maramureş Land, national roads DN18 and DN19 reach the only border crossing area at Sighetu Marmatiei, connecting with Satu Mare County (the west continuation of the border with Zakarpattya) and serve the entire northern part of Maramureş County. They have not undergone changes in route or road quality, except for the occasional new asphalt layer.

In the eastern part of the region, there are no crossing points, from Poienile de sub Munte to the localities in Ivano-Frankivsk district, although in the past there was a road that passed over the mountain due to frequent floods, it has not been maintained since the interwar period. Due to the orographic barrier, the traffic through the high mountain passes of Maramureş has several particularities. The Mara-Baia Sprie route through the Gutâi pass was modernized in 2019–2020 by widening the lanes to avoid winter blockages and traffic flow. No new lanes or tunnels were added. The routes through the Huta and Şetref passes have not been targeted by modernization projects but are in an acceptable condition. They do not get blocked in winter and are good alternatives in crowded or difficult periods for routes to Cluj-Napoca, Baia Mare, and the rest of the country.

The route through the Prislop pass, to Moldova, was for over 10 years in a very degraded state. The average speed was around 20 km/h due to the asphalt carpet. In 2019, the situation was partially improved, under the pressure from the inhabitants of Borşa. It is also the main transit route of small cars to the west from Moldova. Freight traffic takes place south of the mountains, on the European road. The route through the Rotunda pass is shorter, but it is not practicable in winter. It has benefited from frequent maintenance work. Asphalt connecting routes in the last 10 years, following older forest or mining roads: Botiza-Poiana Botizii, Dragomireşti-Fiad, etc.

Moreover, rural areas considered isolated are frequently included in tourist programs. Penetration routes, close to the mountain ridge, without mountain crossing, are paved and maintained by local communities for resource access. As a side effect, they have made

the high mountain area accessible and have favored eco-tourism. Routes that connect the villages considered isolated or head-of-line, on the upper courses of the rivers secondary to the valleys of Iza and Vișeu, have been asphalted, and some were arranged for cycling tourism. It was thus possible to connect the villages in the circuit. A major obstruction, from a road system perspective, is that the traffic is slower because roads pass through localities (specific speed restrictions) or over the mountains (tight serpentines), most of them having only one lane per direction. Moreover, there are no reliable bypass belts around the town's centers, but as a side effect, all localities have access to passenger transport companies, with regular bus and minibus trips. Summing up the analysis of the road transport network in Maramures, it is necessary to point out its dependence on orographic and hydrological factors and its poor development. A barrier to local and international transport is the insufficient number of border crossings.

The Romanian railway system has a mainline along the valleys of Vișeu and Tisza, 150 km, within the Maramureș Land. In the southern part of the Maramureș County, the line 4 Bucharest-Satu-Mare connects the region with the capital and other major cities in Transylvania, and the most western border crossing to Ukraine (at Halmeu). In terms of length and density, there is an obvious discrepancy between the inner and the outer railway network.

The present situation is the result of several factors from an economic and political perspective. The first: in the 1980s, the former wood-rearing narrow-gauge railways were discontinued and disassembled, except for the one on the Vaser Valley, followed by their transformation into road infrastructure (where it was possible). That was an opportunity for the tourist train to run as the most lucrative business in the area, with over forty thousand tourists per year. The second: the opening and then the closing of passenger traffic on the wide gauge railway; the Russian train, between 1990 and 2004, reconnected the communities on both banks of Tisza River because the crossing allowed only small frontier traffic. Before the grand opening of the road bridge, that was the only crossing possibility. Because of smugglers, the line was interrupted and there have been no projects for reopening the RO-UA cross border railway bridges, on the wide gauge line at Câmpulung la Tisa and Valea Vișeului. Thirdly, the suspension of traffic on certain sections: Sighetu Marmăției–Câmpulung la Tisa, Vișeu de Jos–Borsa, made the railroad completely incapacitated and in the need of investments for their rehabilitation. Nevertheless, the Romanian railroad company (CFR) has been accounting for continuous losses, due to the decrease in travel speed on the entire Dealu Stefanitei–Sighetu Marmăției sector and due to the degraded infrastructure and landslides, followed by long periods of road transshipments of passengers. As a consequence, there is a decreasing number of gaskets serving the Sighet-Salva sector to Cluj, Timisoara, Bucharest, with some optimization attempts with the introduction of seasonal trains to Budapest and Constanta.

The Ukrainian system has an important westbound line (to Mukachevo, Uzhgorod, Lviv) and on the east side (Rahiv-Ivano-Frankivsk), with good connections to Prague, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Odessa and Moscow. The main drawbacks are related to the lack of connections between the two lines between Solotvîno and Rahiv, low travel speed inside the region, frequent maintenance work between Solotvîno and Teresva delayed, difficult to schedule, the lack of first-class train coaches for some long-distance trains and the impossibility of online ticket reservation.

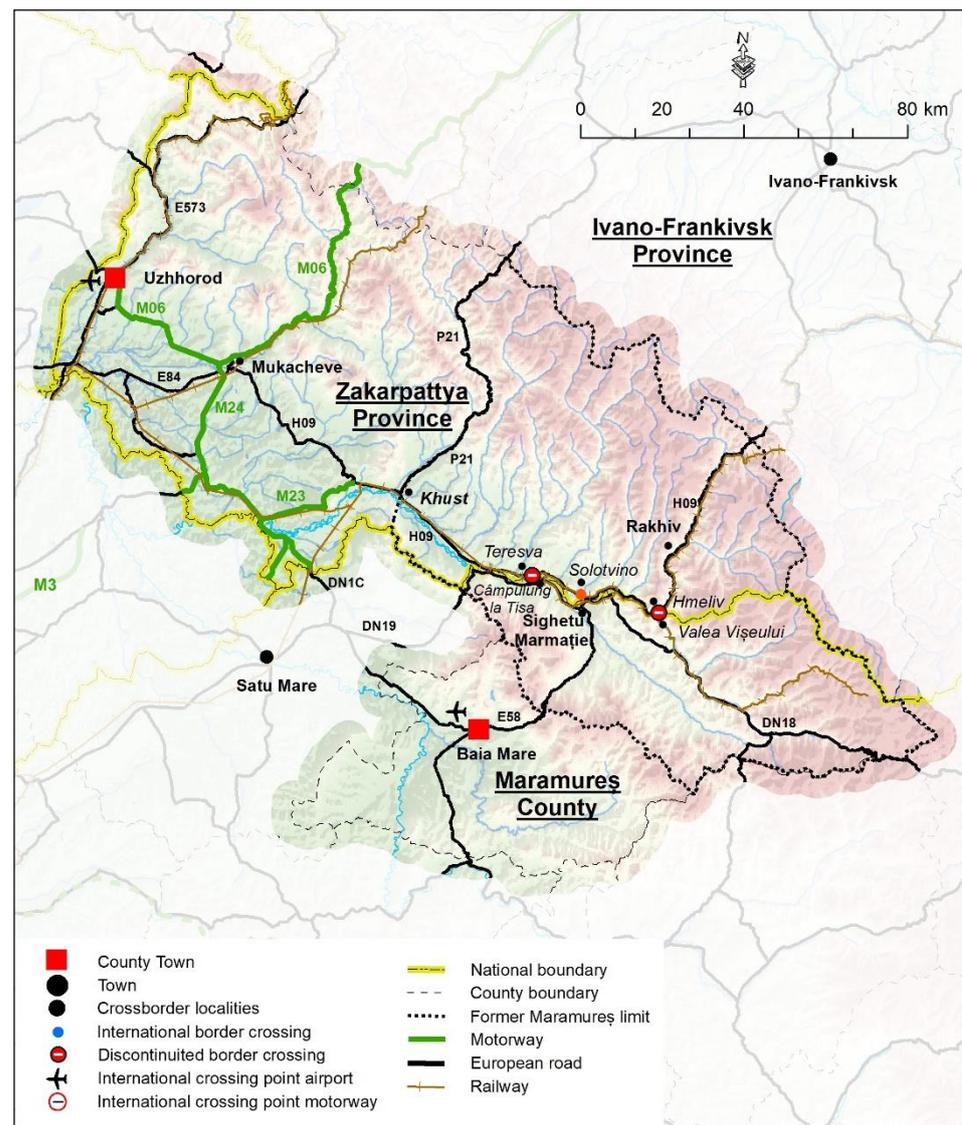


Figure 5. Border crossings at Sighetu Marmatiei.

The road network in the Ukrainian sector is similar; it follows the hydrographic network and has several important crossings over the high mountain passes of the orographic barrier from the north and northeast. The European roads E50, E573 and E471 pass in the western part of the region, beyond the Maramureș depression. They connect with the main border crossing points with Hungary and Slovakia and with the capital Lviv. They have two lines each way and separators. National roads H09 and P21 connect important localities in the region and are well maintained. There are connecting roads between all the localities in the region, tributaries of national roads, with a few exceptions. On the other hand, the connecting roads are narrow and degraded, and those that reach the high mountain area are dangerous in some places. From an international tourism perspective, road traffic monitoring by police crews and mobile radars was considered negative, when frequent unfair traffic fines and police abuse were reported for several decades. Public transport services are available within the region and over long distances to Lviv, Odessa, as well as international transport services only to Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, and the Republic of Moldova [11].

General border crossings, including small international traffic and tourism, at the Sighetu Marmatiei-Solotvyno Border Crossing Point (Figure 5) are formed by Romanian and Ukrainian citizens, representing 97.33% (counting 1,965,108 individuals—80.79% Ro-

manian and only 402,181 individuals—16.53% Ukrainians) [52]. Besides the two, the most frequent border crossings are related to Hungarians (18,014 indiv.) and Moldovans (5650 indiv.). Statistically, citizens of other European Union countries come from Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, Germany, France, and Spain. The high number US citizens (3049) at the RO/UA border can be explained by the rather numerous Ukrainian diasporas.

3.3. *Tourism Background in the Cross-Border Region*

3.3.1. Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar

As a background for tourism, the area is very rich in high quality therapeutic thermal water, available across the entire cross-border area. Some spa resorts acquired international reputation like Baile 1 Mai and Felix Spa in Bihor, Debrecen and Hajdúszoboszló in Hajdú-Bihar. Romania is a crucial destination for Hungarian visitors and reciprocity is true [11,42,67]. Membership of the EU of the two countries and all the common projects developed between Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar led to the intensification of the tourism movement after 2007.

A significant part of the border area is covered by either national parks or landscape protection areas. Due to EU membership of the two countries, a more integrated approach was taken in the establishment of joint areas, design of joint management procedures and common actions. Bihor County has a large number of protected areas, with the delimitation of sites and under the Natura 2000 Program (64 areas and the Apuseni Mountains Natural Park) and very good cross-border cooperation agreements and projects in this field. Hajdú-Bihar County includes the most significant area of Hortobágy National Park (World Heritage site since 1999).

Hajdú-Bihar County is a direct rivalry for Bihor County in three of the six competitive tourism products identified in the area—health and wellness tourism, rural tourism and city breaks—and could offer some differentiation for the tourists if they will be developed in the competition in an individual manner for each of the two counties. The active and adventure tourism, wildlife and natural parks tourism and cultural routes are the tourist products complementary to Hajdú-Bihar County, and they offer the possibility of developing joint thematic tourist packages for future development [68,69]. Tourism has been a field of common interest for both counties of Bihor (Romania) and Hajdú-Bihar (Hungary), due to the potential and traditions. The creation of the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion at the end of 2002 brought new opportunities for cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism. Partnerships (more than 131 projects) have been developed on the basis of common work within the framework of the projects financed by PHARE Cross-border Cooperation Romania-Hungary Program 2004–2006 (four projects with a total value of 540,000 euro), Hungary-Romania Cross-border Cooperation Program 2007–2013 (nine projects of 5,951,552.94 euro) and by Interreg V-A Romania-Hungary Program 2014–2020 [70,71].

3.3.2. Maramureş Cross-Border Region

Natural resources for tourism—salt (and saltwater), snow and protected sites (Natura 2000, natural parks and reservations)—are the premises for the traditional forms of tourism in Maramureş, within both of the sectors. The salt mines that operated in the area until the 1950s in Romania and the 2000s in Ukraine left a lot of environmental problems and generated two of the tourist resources, the salt lakes and the saltwater, for the resorts. In Solotvîno, an underground sanatorium and a research unit were functioning. Besides the salt waters from the mines, in Maramureş there are several types of mineral springs, linked to post-volcanic activities. In the higher mountains, the snow layer is consistent every year. This is exploited by ski resorts as Borsa, Cavnic, Suior and Dragobrad, Ust-Ciorna, Rahiv. Maramureş has a well-preserved natural setting with more than 30% of its surface being protected, both in Romania and Ukraine. Maramureş Natural Park is one of the examples of cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian.

Heritage tourism as part of cultural tourism was encouraged during the last 20 years, forming the baseline for communities to reconnect through common cultural activities; most of the development programs have a people-to-people section and a cultural exchange section. This was relatively easy to organize due to the low language barrier between the respective ethnic groups.

Tourism has favorable development conditions in Maramureş due to several specificities: firstly, the significance of local resources in the tourism services, as local producers, gastronomy, building materials, etc., which is less important for the statistics, though very relevant for the communities and individuals. Secondly, in Maramureş, the foreign investments in tourism are low, with the development being triggered by local capital, with a better insight on the sustainability goals compared to other similar destinations, such as Bukovina where most of the capital comes from investors without emotional ties with the region. The obvious interest of the national governments in the protection of natural sites is not always translated into eco-tourism, but there are signs of improvement in this sector.

3.4. Tourist Traffic in a Crossborder Region

3.4.1. Bihor and Hajdú–Bihar Cross-Border Region

In the system analysis, the number of tourists, hotel facilities and accommodation places were included in the component variables characterizing the tourist traffic. Analyzing the tourism statistical data in Bihor and Hajdú–Bihar, we can notice a rising trend for most of the indicators for the period 2000–2019 (Table 3 and Figures 6–8). What follows are the lower conclusions:

Table 3. Main tourism indicators investigated from Bihor-Hajdú–Bihar cross-border area (2000–2019).

Indicator	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Accommodation capacity								
Bihor	10,472	10,455	9152	11,690	12,283	12,848	14,203	13,552
Hajdú–Bihar	15,521	17,330	16,470	17,211	17,452	16,942	16,829	15,536
Number of total tourist arrivals								
Bihor	218,236	216,019	194,100	344,059	411,823	478,258	549,171	540,398
Hajdú–Bihar	253,492	299,730	348,880	445,398	468,678	505,039	545,614	546,105
Number of overnight stays								
Bihor	1,093,811	1,131,164	885,500	1,137,018	1,388,857	1,295,257	1,523,648	1,546,521
Hajdú–Bihar	1,044,581	1,073,564	1,140,429	1,296,392	1,364,537	1,426,807	1,533,843	1,541,427
Average length of stay								
Bihor	5.01	5.24	4.56	3.30	3.37	2.71	2.77	2.86
Hajdú–Bihar	4.12	3.58	3.27	2.91	2.91	2.83	2.81	2.82
Number of arrivals of foreign tourists								
Bihor	24,269	35,111	29,804	58,767	67,395	62,617	71,281	67,384
Hajdú–Bihar	86,375	74,882	89,726	122,890	129,177	141,569	156,513	159,744
Number of overnight stays of foreign tourists								
Bihor	92,740	82,150	79,510	106,567	135,458	134,770	151,334	141,773
Hajdú–Bihar	537,922	407,915	357,222	432,921	465,158	492,369	540,025	558,054

Data source: [55].

In 2019 accommodation capacity reached 13,552 beds in Bihor County and 15,536 beds in Hajdú–Bihar County, which means 12.09% more for the Hungarian side (Figure 6). Compared to 2000, the indicator registered an increase of 22.72% in Bihor County while Hajdú–Bihar County kept almost the same value. It is obvious that the gap between the two counties in regard to the accommodation capacity diminished from 2000 to 2019 from 32.5 to 12.09% (10,472 beds in Bihor County and 15,521 beds Hajdú–Bihar County in 2000). The growth was interrupted between 2010 and 2013 in both counties as a result of the economic

crisis and registered a sharper growth trend over the last years at the level of Bihor County. Both counties faced a decrease in accommodation capacity from 2018 to 2019 because many of accommodation units invested in higher accommodation standard—standardization of room size, services and facilities—which led to a decrease in number of beds.

From the data showing changes in accommodation capacity, it can be concluded that there is an almost constant increase from around 10,000 in 2000 to over 14,000 in 2018 (Table 3). The decline in 2017–2019 in Hungary and in 2019 in Romania is related to the economic downturn that started earlier in Hungary. The total number of tourists in the analyzed period (2000–2019) shows an almost 2.5-fold increase in Bihor and a little over 2-fold in Hajdú–Bihar. The differences in favor of the Romanian part of the cross-border region can be explained in part by the introduction of a tourist voucher in Romania, which can be used to finance a tourist stay in hotels that joined the governmental system of supporting the development of tourism. Along with the increase in the number of tourists, the number of overnight stays also increased. However, this data does not allow for a complete analysis for family travel and shopping (visitor) tourism. Compared to 2000, in 2019 the average length of stay was shorter, which seems understandable given the large number of travels as part of shopping tourism and the increase in average accommodation prices after the accession of both countries to the EU. An interesting increase is shown by the data on the number of arrivals of foreign tourists. For the analyzed period, it is approximately 270% for Bihor, and 185% for Hajdú–Bihar. The initial difference between the number of foreign tourists in Hungary compared to Romania (3.5 more) decreased in 2019 to 2.4. The greater increase in the number of tourists in 2000–2019 in Bihor (by 180%) than in Hajdú–Bihar (by 85%) was due to the greater recognition of Romania after joining the EU, which requires additional research to overcome some of the negative stereotypes related to this country and all region of the Balkans with which it is associated.

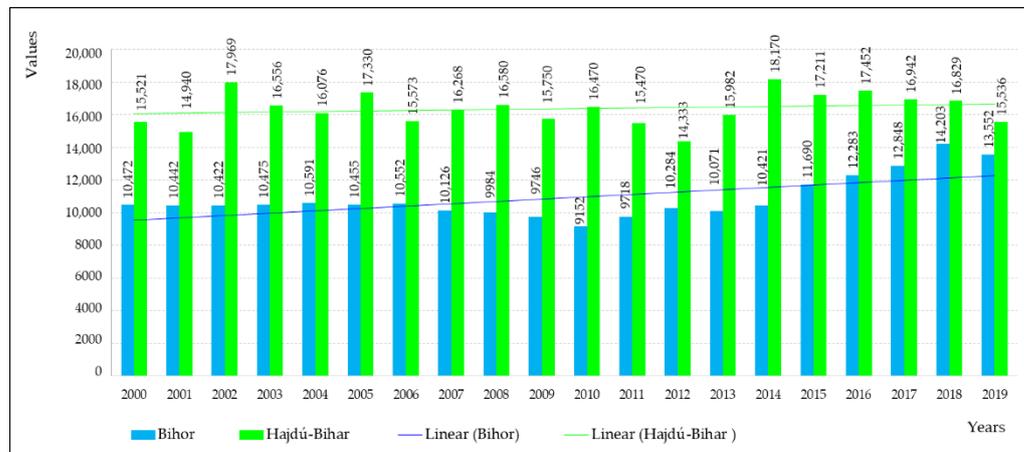


Figure 6. Touristic accommodation in Bihor and Hajdú–Bihar between 2000 and 2019. Data source: [55].

The number of tourist arrivals increased by 147.6% in Bihor County in 2019 compared to 2000 and with 121.9% in the case of Hajdú–Bihar County (Figure 7). The most difficult period was between 2009 and 2010 in Bihor County which was followed by a quick return from 2014 that led to 549,171 tourist arrivals in 2018, overrunning Hajdú–Bihar County which registered 545,614 tourist arrivals in the same year.

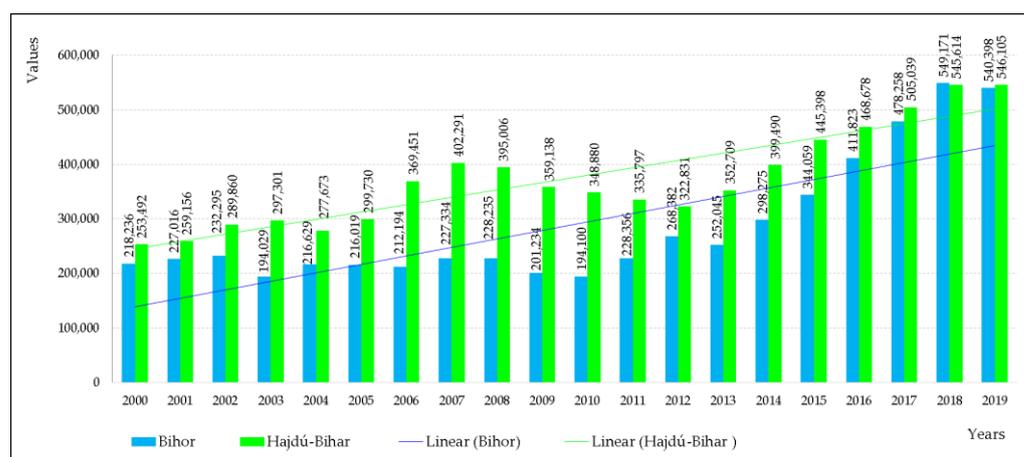


Figure 7. Total tourist arrivals in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar between 2000 and 2019. Data source: [55].

The number of overnight stays has also increased in the year 2019 compared to 2000, but on a much smaller scale, i.e., 41.38% in Bihor County and 47.56% in the case of Hajdú-Bihar County. The growth was interrupted in Bihor County for a longer period, from 2009 till 2015, compared to a lower and shorter decrease in Hajdú-Bihar County during 2009 and 2012. Although the values of the tourist overnight stay indicator do not show big differences between the two counties, again we can say that there are still very accelerated dynamics of Bihor county after 2016, reaching to equal or even exceeding Hajdú-Bihar county. The average length of stay has decreased in both counties, with 78.09% in the case of Bihor County and with 46.09% in the case of Hajdú-Bihar County (Figure 9). Until 2016, Bihor County registered higher value for this index based mostly upon the diversity of natural tourism resources, but the relatively spectacular increase in the number of tourist arrivals (147.62%) happened to the detriment of the nights spent in the area. Hajdú-Bihar County is out to a big lead in both chapters, with 159,744 arrivals, 2.37 times more than in Bihor County, with 67,384 arrivals (Figure 8).

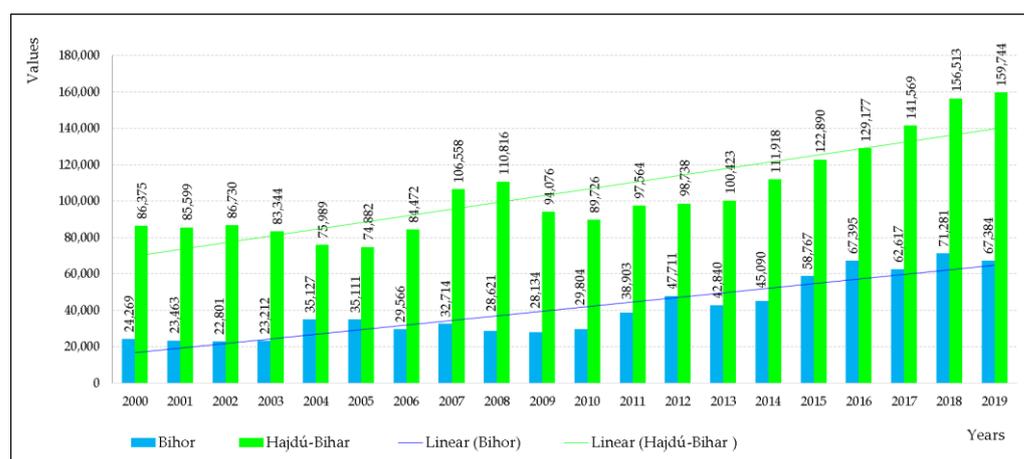


Figure 8. Foreign tourists' arrivals in Bihor and Hajdú-Bihar between 2000 and 2019. Data source: [55].

The situation is even sharper when we talk about the overnight stays of foreign tourists, Hajdú-Bihar County standing out with 558,054 overnight stays, almost four (3.93) times more than Bihor County. There are many explanations, but they focus mainly on the favorable geographical position of Hungary in central Europe and the EU membership status since 2004—especially the status of Hungary as a member state of the Schengen Area and of course promotion and advertising of tourism purposes.

3.4.2. Maramureş Cross-Border Region

Tourism infrastructure in the Maramureş cross-border region is developed in an asymmetrical system due to the political context of the last century. The Romanian sector is capitalizing on the local natural and heritage resources, and in consequence, the infrastructure has not evolved towards an international destination. Meanwhile, Zakarpattya became the first mountain and balneal tourism destination for Ukraine. Nevertheless, the number of units, the arrivals and the overnights are very similar and on an upward trend. Several factors impacted more the evolution of the numbers: the accession of Romania to the EU in 2007, the European Football Championship in 2012, and the military conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

Data for the period 2000–2019 for Maramures (Table 4) show a significant increase in accommodation capacity. The Maramures region is in one of the economically underdeveloped regions; the development of tourism started from a lower level of infrastructure development. With the inflow of EU funds and the attractiveness of natural and anthropogenic values, the increase in the accommodation base was high. To this must be added the funds sent to families by the inhabitants of the region working abroad. Data for Ukraine allow for the analysis of changes in a shorter period of time, until 2017. However, in this period (until 2015) we are dealing with an impressive increase in the number of nights. This growth, as shown by the data, has been halted since 2015, when the uncertainty of economic development increased significantly and Ukraine lost Crimea (2014) and the eastern part of the country was occupied by separatist troops. From the analysis of the available data (2017), it can be concluded that the average number of tourists' overnight stays in Zakarpattya (2.49) was slightly longer than in Maramures (1.77). As in the case of the western cross-border region of Bihor, and for the same reasons also on the eastern border, the number of foreign tourists almost doubled in the period 2010–2019. In the Ukrainian part of the region, in the years 2005–2017, a decline in the number of foreign tourists in 2010 due to the economic crisis is clearly visible, followed by a slow increase until 2015, after which, again, due to the country's political problems, a decrease in the number of tourists is recorded. However, unlike in the case of infrastructure development, a certain stabilization of the situation in the country (after the loss of Crimea, the announcement of a truce between separatist troops in the east of the country and the government troops, and the election of a new president) allowed the number of tourists to increase in the following years.

Table 4. Main tourism indicators investigated from Maramureş cross-border area (2000–2019).

Indicator *	2000	2005	2010	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Accommodation capacity								
Maramureş	3398	2873	4368	5614	6451	7157	7223	7213
Zakarpattya	2839	3147	5380	10,160	10,658	10,169	NA	NA
Number of total tourist arrivals								
Maramureş	74,369	91,348	92,500	154,633	188,988	217,028	255,812	276,064
Zakarpattya	84,200	105,300	203,540	230,000	269,250	237,900	NA	NA
Number of overnight stays								
Maramureş	216,283	208,729	200,693	281,027	338,511	384,092	468,165	518,696
Zakarpattya	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	593,000	NA	NA
Number of arrivals of foreign tourists								
Maramureş	NA	NA	19,151	29,170	33,548	35,403	37,546	36,217
Zakarpattya	NA	34,500	15,300	21,000	15,300	29,800	NA	NA

* during 2011–2020 period Ukrainian data available only until 2016. Data source: [72,73].

In terms of total units, the accommodation sector is very similar on both sides of the border, differing only in the type of unit, in Maramureş the dominant structure is the B&B pension and in Zakarpattya the hotel (Figures 9 and 10).

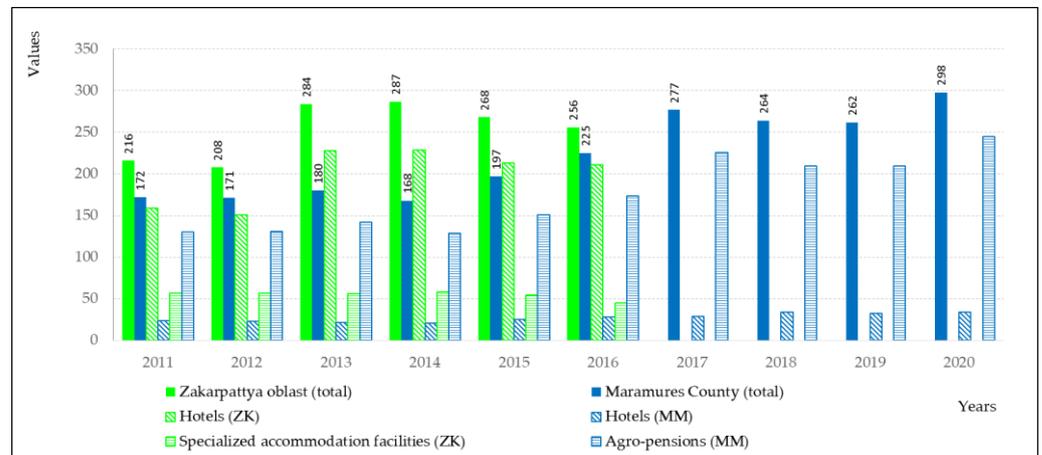


Figure 9. Tourist accommodation units, in Maramureş and Zakarpattya, during 2011–2020 period. Ukrainian data available only until 2016. Data source: [72,73].

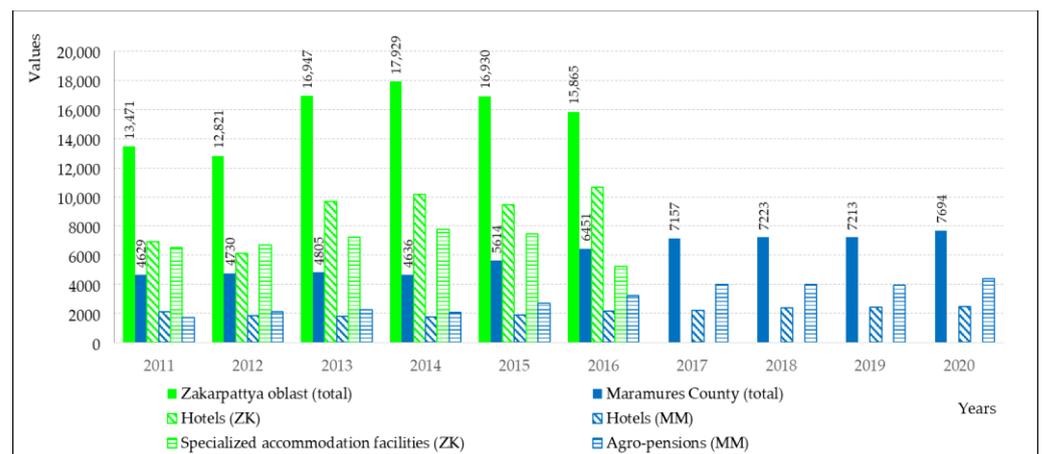


Figure 10. Tourist accommodation bed-places, in Maramureş and Zakarpattya, during 2011–2016 period. Data source: [72,73].

When analyzing the number of bed-places, there is a wider discrepancy, 1 to 3 ratio Maramureş to Zakarpattya, due to the smaller units in Maramureş. For decades, Zakarpattya was the first mountain destination in Ukraine, so the infrastructure is more developed.

Figure 11 shows a dynamic evolution of tourist flows. The year 2012 saw the European Football Championship, with an important venue at Lviv. This caused an increase in the tourist flows related to the competition, accommodated by the newly built infrastructure. Nevertheless, in Maramureş an increase in the number of guests in B&Bs has tripled. Within the reference period, 2011–2019, in Maramureş the number of arrivals in the rural area increased four times, while in Ukraine it remains constant. The total number of guests was 458,238 tourists in 2016.

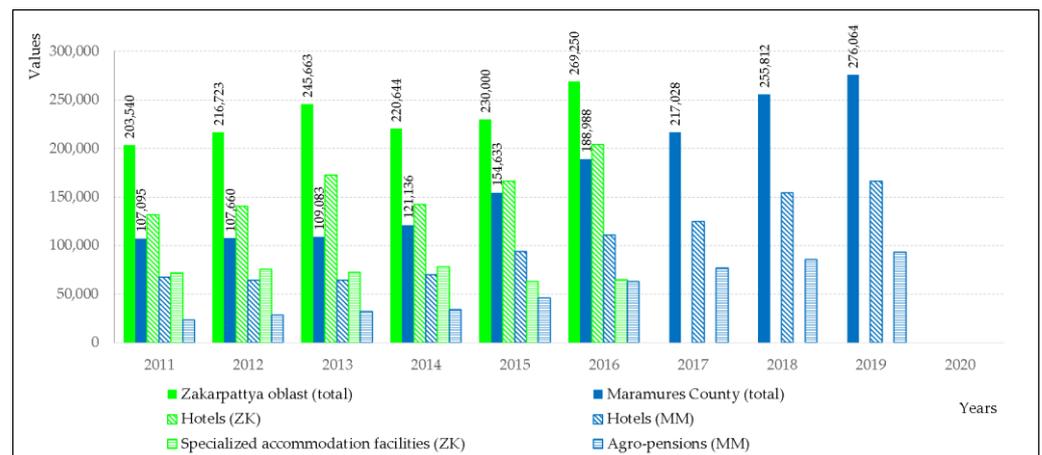


Figure 11. Total tourists' arrivals in Maramureș and Zakarpattia during 2011–2016 period. Data source: [72,73].

4. Discussion

Tourism in cross-border regions is often captured in at least two spatial terms [17] (p. 124): as a self-contained border tourism and as tourism that develops due to the emergence of borders and does not focus directly on them. The second of these intakes is important for the studied regions of Bihor–Hajdu–Bihar on the border of Romania and Hungary and Maramures on the Romanian–Ukrainian border. The emergence of a border dividing ethnic Hungarian lands after WWI and the collapse of the Soviet Union and Romania's accession to the EU created family tourism in the Bihor region and increased the attractiveness of shopping tourism in the case of Maramures.

The conducted research and analysis of the collected data allowed for a critical look at the spatial differentiation of the dynamics of the movement and development of tourism. Although in Romania an important element without which one cannot talk about tourism accessibility is the degree of development of the transport network [74], in cross-border regions an important factor influencing tourist traffic is the ethnic diversity of the population on both sides of the border and political problems (internal and external), especially in the case of Ukraine. With this in mind, it is possible to discuss the influence of two factors: ethnic diversity and transport accessibility on changes in the volume of tourist traffic.

In the Romanian part of the cross-border region of Bihor, Hungarians were the largest in 2011, being indigenous there. This is similar to the Maramures region, where their share in the ethnic structure of the population (6.8%) is similar to that of the Ukrainian minority (6.4%). From the point of view of the influence of the ethnic structure on the development of tourism, the participation of national minorities in the ethnic structure of the Ukrainian part of Maramures is also important. In this region, Hungarians constituted as much as 12% (2001), and the Romanian population 2.6%. From the perspective of Romanian parts of both cross-border regions, it seems legitimate to say that greater national diversity (Romanian population in Bihor–63.5% and in Maramures–78.2%) resulted in greater growth in international tourism. Probably national diversity in the studied regions, known for the religious and traditional character of Maramures [75] and in Bihor, which is still inhabited by over 20% of the Hungarian minority, along with traditionally strong family relations (Romania, Ukraine, Hungary), could translate into more frequent visits to relatives, which could have contributed to an increase in tourist traffic in terms of family and companion tourism and shopping tourism. According to Studzińska, Sivkoz and Domaniewski (2018), from research on the Polish–Russian and Russian–Finnish border, cross-border shopping has become more “Western European” and has become a pleasure shopping experience for some buyers, which also applies, to some extent, to the purchases of Ukrainian citizens in the Romanian part of Maramures. Determining its size requires additional survey research. Despite this, it seems legitimate to say that Ukraine's political problems contributed to the reduction in the growth rate (in 2005–2015) of the entire tourist traffic and to the decrease

in the arrivals of foreign tourists. The differences in the percentage share of individual ethnic groups clearly translate into the population number, which, given the higher level of economic development, prefers tourism to and from Hungary compared to Ukraine. The issue of ethnic diversity in the surveyed regions is related to the phenomenon of dual citizenship, which creates problems when studying the size of foreign tourist traffic. On the other hand, it makes it easier for Hungarian and Romanian citizens of Ukraine, if they also have a passport of an EU country, to cross the border, and it is similar for Ukrainian citizens of Romania.

If we look at the steps taken in both regions to develop the transport network and tourism, we can say that there is significant improvement, but there are still inequalities in transport accessibility. The Bihor region continues to have low cross-border connections in its transport and communication infrastructure, and it suffers from mismatched planning [76]; the transport network and the tourism situation in Bihor have improved over the last twenty years as a result of the cross-border cooperation. Nevertheless, despite recent efforts to invest in infrastructure, accessibility remains relatively low and the region continues to be seen as a peripheral area. Similar results were obtained in later publications on the Hungarian–Romanian border [40,46].

Taking into account the results obtained during these studies, we can conclude that transport in this cross-border area remains a serious problem that requires the implementation of sustainable solutions in the future, despite many important steps that have been taken over the last 20 years. The spatial dimension of accessibility has large implications for the economic and social development of the area under study and can be significantly influenced and improved by transport projects [77] provided by the existing Romania–Hungary INTERREG; additionally, all the beauty and resources of small settlements and rural areas are seriously endangered and may be in vain (currently, for tourists, reaching the mountainous areas of Bihor-Padiș, Stâna de Vale, Cetățile Ponorului, Pădurea Neagră or Meziad and Roșia Caves).

In Maramureș, tourism is considered to be one of the few economic activities that could contribute to the achievement of the development goals at the regional level. The given natural resources of the region are no longer exploited as such (brine and mineral springs), which limits the possibilities of local communities to practice balneological and balneological-climate tourism. Therefore, this form of tourism is developing on both banks of the Tisza, with transport infrastructure at the national level in Ukraine and at the local level in Romania. The transport network of the region is at the same time an advantage for sustainable tourism practices—with picturesque routes and low speed—and a barrier to its development. Only one border crossing in Sighetu Marmatiei, with additionally limited vehicle capacity, effectively limits the region's transport accessibility for potential tourists. Until the long-designed, larger four-lane bridge is operational, the situation will not change. However, even after the implementation of this project, a single border crossing point will still effectively inhibit the development of tourism in the region.

5. Conclusions

In cross-border regions, tourism in the classic sense (travel with a stay, recreation) occurs simultaneously with shopping tourism [12,44,45], family and sentimental tourism [24]. Its main forms include rural tourism with the predominance of sustainable forms of tourism. The comparison of the regions selected for the study on the borders of Romania and Hungary, Romania and Ukraine showed a large share of minorities in the population structure.

The application of the multiscale analysis made it possible to attempt to assess transport accessibility at the international, national and regional levels. Here it should be clarified that border crossings in the studied regions, function both on an international scale and for the so-called small cross-border traffic typical for, e.g., classic shopping tourism or multiple border crossings for commercial purposes (e.g., legal purchase of cigarettes in Ukraine and their illegal sale in Romania).

In the region of Maramureş, we have shopping tourism [18], and partly, as well, smuggling of, for example, cigarettes prevails in the region [78]. On the other hand, in the region of Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar, family tourism and sentimental tourism are more important than shopping tourism, which confirms previous research [40,46]. This is confirmed by the personal observation and the diversity of the population in this region (Figure 2a). Maramureş is characterized by a similarly large national and ethnic diversity (Figure 3a). In Maramureş, apart from the Hungarian minority, we also have the Ukrainian minority, as in Zakarpattya (Figure 3b), where the ethnic mosaic includes not only Hungarian and Romanian minorities but also Russian and Roma. The latter, however, does not significantly affect the volume of cross-border traffic, which is also confirmed by the results of studies of the Roma minority in Slovakia, Hungary and Ukraine in Transcarpathia [64]. The Hungarian region of Hajdú–Bihar (Figure 2b) with a large Roma minority [79] is relatively little diversified in this respect. As it has been previously mentioned, it does not significantly affect cross-border tourism, preferring, similarly to Roma from Romania, trips to Western European countries [44,65]. From social-geography perspective, the ethnically driven movement across the border is not depending on the quality of the transport network but on the terms and conditions of the border crossing, mainly the waiting times, the approach on the smuggling suspects and the visa system [34]. In terms of sustainability, studies on the pressure of tourism on the protected areas and within the rural environment show that the lower number of visitors and the local resource valorization concepts have determined a unique community resilience capitalizing on the complementarity of the two systems [14,41].

The transport network and the communication accessibility of each tourist region determined by it, especially the cross-border region, plays a key role in the tourist system [13,14,41], which is clearly visible when analyzing the number of border crossings (Figures 4 and 5, Table 2). The comparison of the degree of development of the transport network and the number of border crossings clearly shows that transport accessibility is a strong point of the Hungarian–Romanian borderland, what has been confirmed as well by previous research and report [36,37,39] and weak, even the obstacle, for the development of tourism in the Romanian–Ukrainian borderland [31,45].

The analysis of the volume of tourist traffic in the analyzed regions indicates a clearly greater number of tourists in the cross-border region of Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar than in the cross-border region of Maramureş (Figures 7 and 11). Such a wide variation, when we take into account political and economic factors, is comprehensible. Although Romania is not yet a signatory to the Schengen Agreement, crossing the Romanian–Hungarian border is much easier than the Romanian–Ukrainian border, not only due to the number of border crossings but also due to the necessity to use a passport when crossing the Ukrainian border.

The analysis of demographical potential showed the degree of ethnic and national diversity in the studied cross-border regions. The analysis of changes in the volume of tourist traffic, both in total and abroad, in relation to the size of the national diversity of the population, allows for a plausible statement about the influence of the Hungarian minority on greater tourist traffic in the Romanian part of Maramureş than in the Ukrainian part. In turn, the clearly greater tourist traffic in the Hungarian part of Bihor–Hajdu–Bihar can be explained by the more frequent trips of Hungarian Romanian citizens to Hungary (to relatives, to work, to study). Analogous studies on the trips of Poles/Ukrainian citizens to Poland confirm the presented conclusions [27,80].

Tourism, especially family, due to its nature, is largely in the shadow economy and is difficult to quantify. This is the first of several limitations of the conducted research, when examining barriers and facilitation in the cross-border region [45]. Political issues should also be added, e.g., the problem of double citizenship for Hungarians outside the country [81,82], or more broadly, representatives of numerous national minorities in the studied region [83]. Another limitation is resignation from the analysis and discussion of economic factors, including differences in the purchasing power of the inhabitants of

Ukraine and Hungary and differences in the prices of tourist stays in the analyzed regions. The disregard of economic factors results from two reasons. Firstly, it was assumed that with a GDP per capita of 4.5 higher in Hungary than in Ukraine (2019) [84], the average income of Hungarian tourists is much higher than that of Ukrainian tourists. In the case of cost and purchasing power analyses, the purchasing power parity should also be taken into account. Secondly, due to family tourism, some of the people coming to the studied regions bear significantly lower costs of travel (accommodation and meals) due to staying with their families. The exact magnitude of this phenomenon still requires additional research and deserves separate, detailed research. The last limitation of the analysis is the problem of the lack of some data for Ukraine for 2017–2019. It was found that in this case the analysis will be partial, as far as the corresponding data allow it. This is an obvious drawback of the chosen method that assumes data analysis, but the data for the period 2011–2016 allow us to indicate the direction of the changes taking place.

Based on the analysis of the collected data, in theoretical terms, it can be concluded that the ethnic diversity created along with the new borders (the influence of historical and political conditions) is an important factor influencing the volume of tourist traffic in cross-border areas. The undertaken research confirmed the role and significance of transport accessibility in the development of tourism on the example of Maramures. From the research undertaken, a practical conclusion can be drawn about the necessity to develop the transport network. In the analyzed case, it is necessary to build the already designed bridge in Sighet Marmatie and to restore at least two new border crossings in this region (Teresva-Campulung de Tisa and Hmeliv-Valea Viselului).

To summarize, the assumed aim of the research was to present the above comparative analysis of barriers and facilitation factors for the development of tourism in the cross-border region surveyed. It is possible to confirm to a large extent that the hypothesis about the influence of political conditions (borders, minorities) and the diversified transport border crossings for the development of tourism are necessary in order to develop tourism traffic. From the analysis of the national structure of the population in the analyzed regions, it can be concluded that greater tourist traffic is most likely associated with family visits and shopping tourism of the Hungarian minority. To complete the research, it would be advisable to investigate the impact of other political and economic factors, such as the hostilities in eastern Ukraine, Russia's accession of Crimea, economic changes, including the economic crisis in Hungary, or the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic lasting from 2020 for the development of tourism [85]. However, these issues, due to the degree of complexity and their importance, deserve separate research.

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