



**Description of initiatives of Harghita County Council  
and  
Cooperation proposals with the United States Embassy in Romania**

*Miercurea Ciuc, 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2016.*



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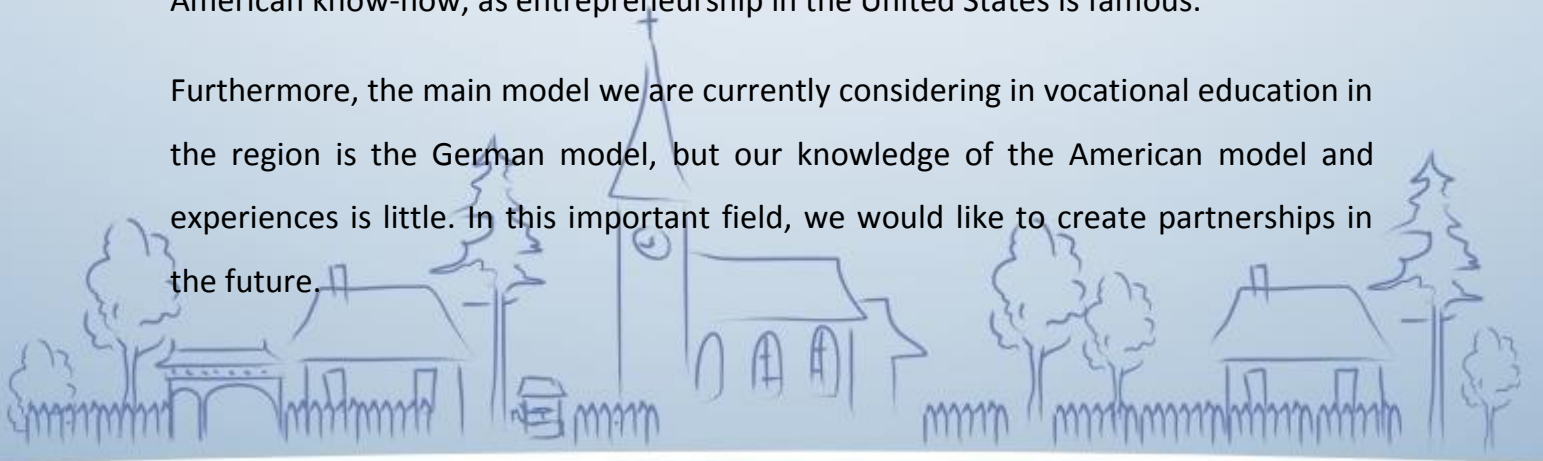
## ***Embassy of The United States , Bucharest***

In kind attention of Mr. Hans Klemm

Hereby it is my honour to welcome you in Harghita County and it is our great pleasure to have your kind of open-mindedness towards, programmes and cooperation proposals of Harghita County Council. The county council treats with priority the development of those international collaborations that support the realization of common interest for the well-being of the partners' sustainable development on economic and social level, based on the principle of reciprocity and open bilateral dialogue.

Our main goal is to create favourable conditions for the local youth to stay and work here in the region. Traveling and working abroad has a long tradition in the Sekler community, and we would be happy if the members of the young generation would be able to gather experience in the United States and other countries, but we would like them to use their experiences here, home. Moreover, we would like to contribute to the growing of the SME sector by spreading the spirit of entrepreneurship among young people. For this we will open our Incubator Centre at Odorheiu Secuiesc, intended to host innovative start-ups from the region. We would like to strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit in the region, therefore could use the American know-how, as entrepreneurship in the United States is famous.

Furthermore, the main model we are currently considering in vocational education in the region is the German model, but our knowledge of the American model and experiences is little. In this important field, we would like to create partnerships in the future.



We are also open to cooperate on the fields of innovation capacity, since it is not fully used in our region, especially on the fields of green energy and ecological sensitive agriculture. Last but not least, we would be honoured of promoting Seklerland as an untouched natural spot, as well as a touristic destination in the United States.

By this means, please be kind to accept this present documentation that aims to describe the county council's programmes and initiatives on local level, as well as the cooperation proposals with the United States Embassy in Romania.

We are waiting for your kind proposals, opinions and further cooperation possibilities based on your considerations.

Best regards,

Borboly Csaba

President

Harghita County Council



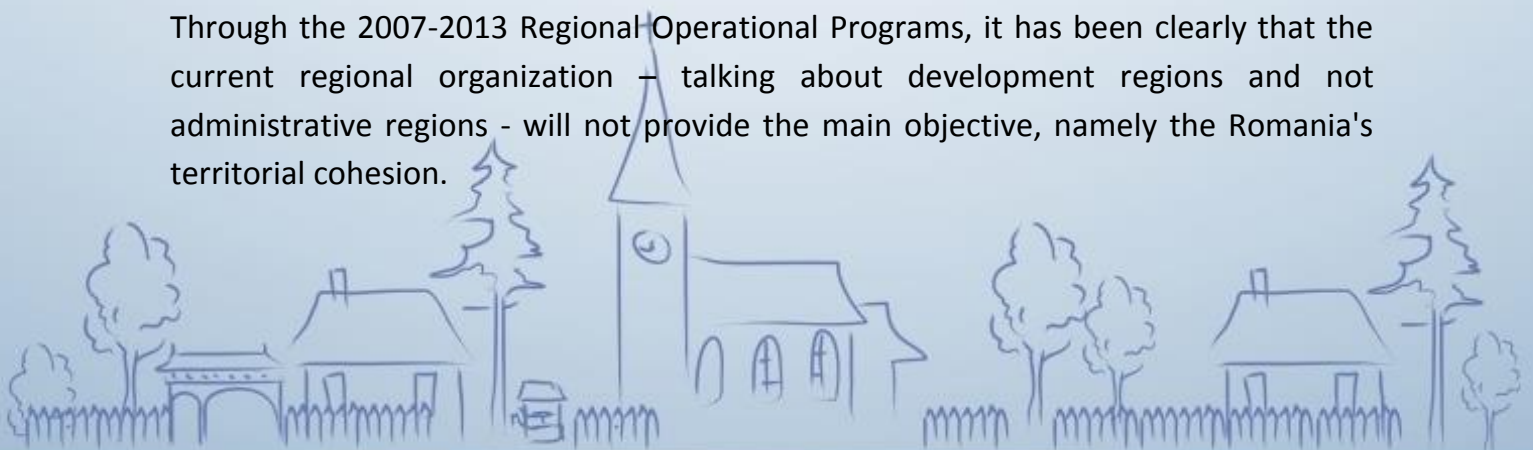
## **The process of regionalization and territorial-administrative reorganization of Romania**

Romania's economic and social problems of the 21st century lie in the wrong political decisions on territorial organization. It's hard to find an example of administrative-territorial reform in the country's history after World War I, after which the territorial structure have a direct beneficial effect on the development by channeling creative energies. In general, those initiatives were successful, which replaced the large structures with smaller ones, which have been closer to the people and the citizens.

Ponta's newly installed government in 2012 discussed again the subject of territorial reorganization of Romania, but after a facade process of public consultation, it remained in the drawer. But there are still many questions remained on the surface. The main question is still valid: Romanian political forces will opt for a modern development policy or will continue to pursue a strategy that presents characteristic of Latin American countries, which is specific to the current government policy decisions. This approach will eventually block cohesion and instead of a harmonic and stable development, this will lead to a situation dominated by social and economic problems, differences between rural and urban areas. In this context, political leaders should pay a greater attention to local leaders - mayors, presidents of county councils, local and county councilors, because the stakes are high: ensuring welfare development of the communities they run, the future of families and local entrepreneurs. To achieve these goals, it is imperative that this future dialogue to be significantly represented by the civil society's arguments, as well as by specialist and academics from Romania and abroad.

Before 2012 and during the debate of the draft project of Ponta government, the proposals from UDMR, also the requests of Hungarian community in Romania, the formation of a region in Covasna, Harghita, Mureş and possibly Bistriţa, were treated by political leaders and mass media as nationalist ideas, segregation and as an attack of the unitary character of the country.

Through the 2007-2013 Regional Operational Programs, it has been clearly that the current regional organization – talking about development regions and not administrative regions - will not provide the main objective, namely the Romania's territorial cohesion.



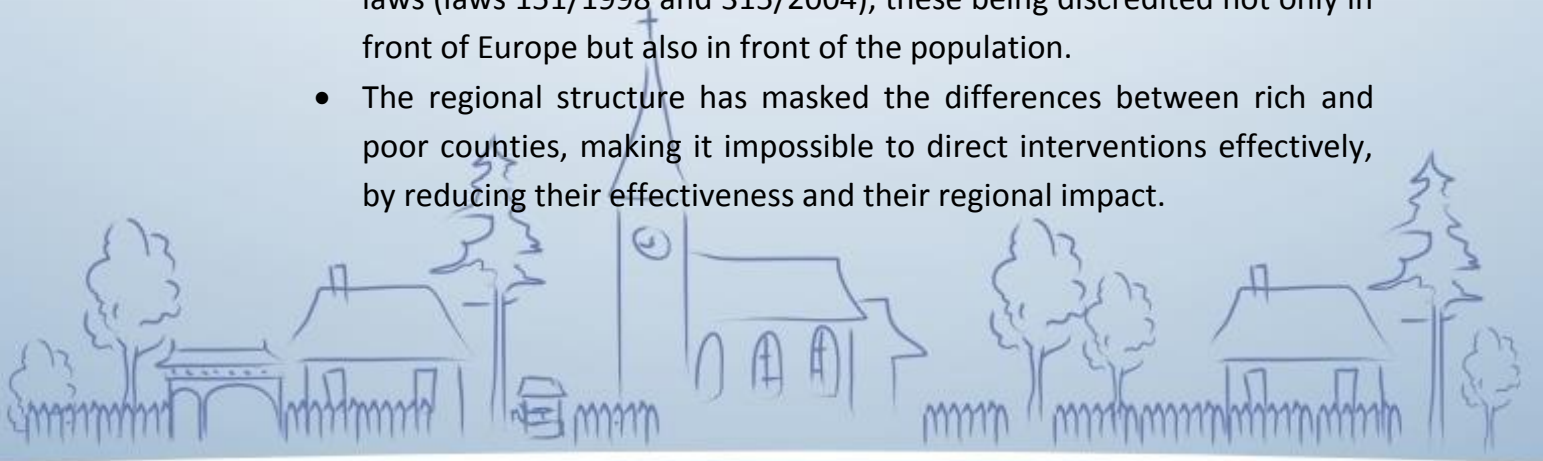
To analyze this situation, Harghita County Council implemented in 2012 the "Administrative capacity development of local government in Harghita County" with a clear objective: what is the most appropriate form of territorial organization for Harghita County in order to achieve a balanced and permanent sustainable social-economic development.

Our colleagues from the Office of Analysis and Synthesis have put on the table a new approach, by eliminating all ethnic and historical references in the analysis, their analysis being focused only on economic approach, and on the results analysis of Regional Operative Program 2007-2013, the development of Centre region. The conclusions are presented in the consultation document "Proposals for administrative-territorial reform and the formation of Romania's regions" document available to all political forces, local and central governments and to economic and academic sphere of Romania.

Within the "**Administrative capacity development of local government in Harghita County**" program, there were held several consultations on administrative-territorial reform and on the regions formation of Romania. One of the most important events of its kind was the workshop "Almost all about regionalization", held on 27 March 2013. In the workshop, the voice of the representatives of the Academic Society of Romania confirmed the conclusion of our colleges from the Office of Analysis and Synthesis, that the current development regions, and the operation program developed between 2007-2013 has not helped at all the territorial cohesion, but rather lead to deeper differences between counties in the same region of development. The main criticisms were:

#### **A. Criticisms about the development policy:**

- Without executive powers and budget, regional planning documents could not become instruments for regional development. The current regional structure has been unable to fulfill the tasks set by their own laws (laws 151/1998 and 315/2004), these being discredited not only in front of Europe but also in front of the population.
- The regional structure has masked the differences between rich and poor counties, making it impossible to direct interventions effectively, by reducing their effectiveness and their regional impact.



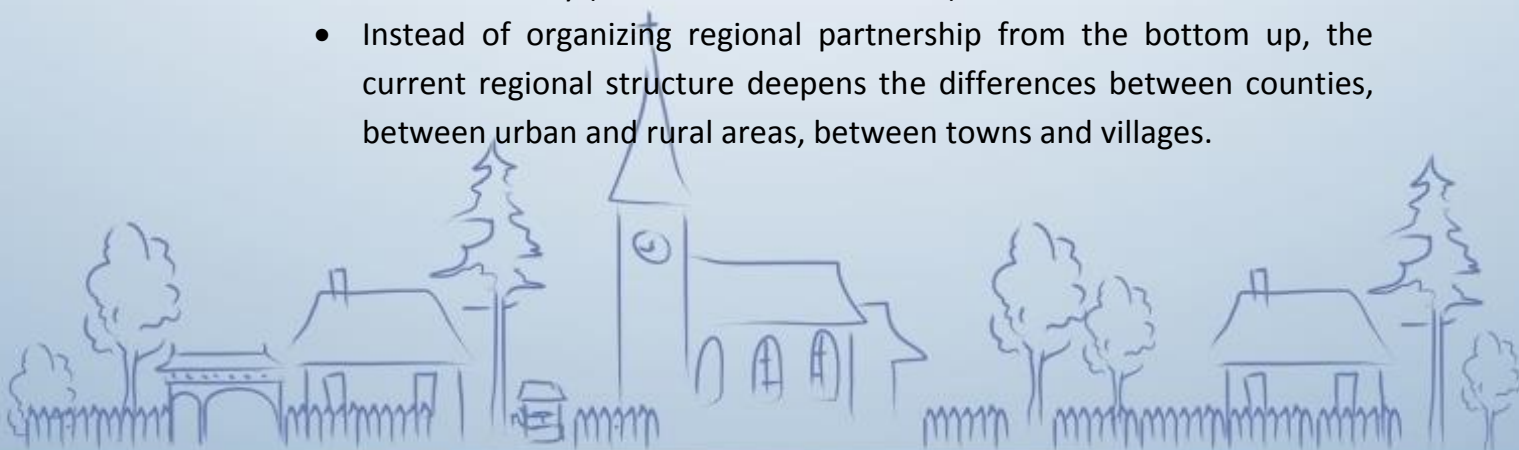
- The regional structure has generated a counterproductive competition with a negative effect: areas with less favorable conditions (with deficit of equity, lobbying power, etc.), did not benefit from additional resources, as other prosperous areas benefited.
- It is unacceptable that the decision-making bodies in Romania do not consider the examples and experiences of countries whose socio-historical evolution is similar and still not allocate more resources per capita for areas with weaker development.

#### **B. Criticisms concerning economic development:**

- Current regional organization made it impossible to stimulate internal regional economic processes, and the efficient use of internal resources.
- The regional structure produced no added value for people living and working in this region, no for economic operators.
- Due to inadequate structure it could not be noticed anything of the regional economic particularities, neither the regional support in the realization of economic agglomerations.
- The regional structure did not have a positive influence on deepening economic cooperation at regional level nor on the occurrence of internal networks designed to enhance competitiveness.

#### **C. Criticisms in terms of territorial cohesion:**

- According to official data, the differences between economic indicators rose in 2008-2012 by about 36% (GDP calculated without capital's data), and official projections suggest that by 2015 they will increase up to 66% (National Prognosis Commission economic report: Projection of main social-economic indicators in Territorial Profile in 2015).
- In terms of income, the differences grew too, so the difference between average gross wages in the regions (excluding Bucharest) in 2008 is 62 lei, and now this difference has reached the sum of 100 lei. The difference between average net incomes in the counties reached 600 lei recently (see the latest data of NSI).
- Instead of organizing regional partnership from the bottom up, the current regional structure deepens the differences between counties, between urban and rural areas, between towns and villages.



- Overall, it did not contribute to sustainable balanced development, and did not contribute to the optimal use of our existing regional resources (see Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion: Turning territorial diversity into strength {SEC (2008) 2550}).

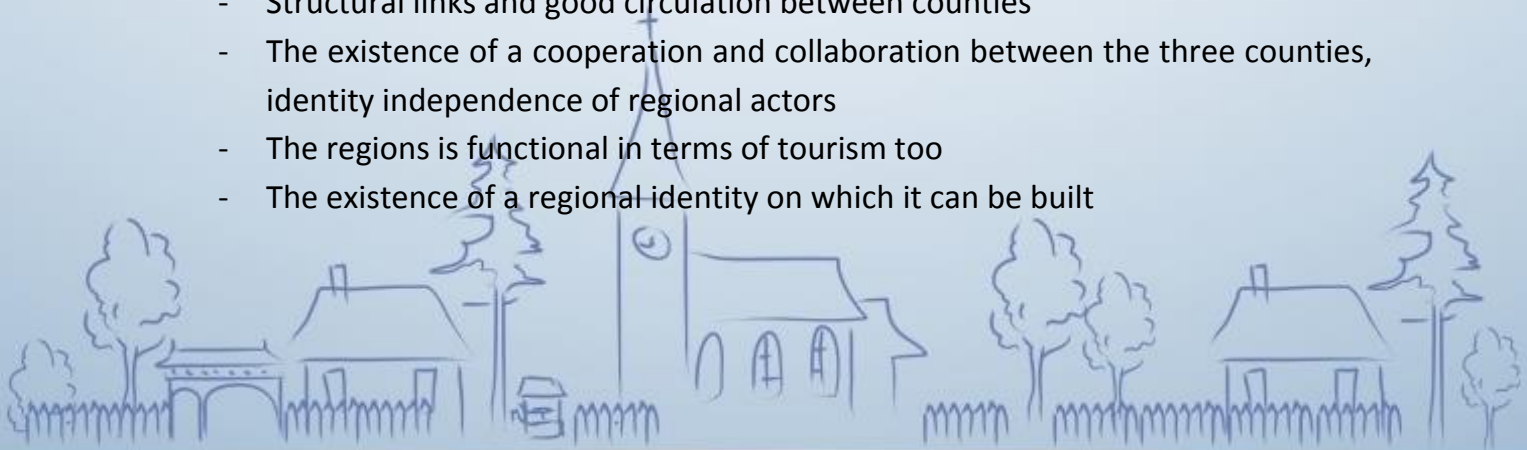
#### **D. Criticisms in terms of cultural aspects:**

- The regional structure was not based on historical traditions, it put in the same pot communities with different culture and mentality.
- Thereby this structure has not helped the formation of viable regional communities because it has been impossible to regional actors to auto-identify with the current structure.

Our analysis of the consultation document “Proposals for administrative-territorial reform and the formation of Romania’s regions” and the analysis conceived by external experts - Analysis of the impact of changes in administrative-territorial organization of Romania-, argue the necessity of setting up smaller and compact regions - the distances between current regions is too high (a shift from Miercurea Ciuc to Alba Iulia, "the capital of the region") in the absence of a modern infrastructure takes 5-7 hours, depending on traffic - and separating industrialized and economically developed counties from undeveloped ones that present another structure of the economy. Based on these economic arguments, the formation of a development region - with limited administrative powers - including the counties of Covasna, Harghita, Mureş and possibly Bistriţa, would provide the conditions needed for an economic and social development of these counties.

#### **The most important arguments in favor of this structure:**

- High degree of cohesion
- Homogeneous region in terms of culture and economy ( identical GDP, identic economy and culture)
- Viable domestic economic ties, on which may be based the development on the region
- Structural links and good circulation between counties
- The existence of a cooperation and collaboration between the three counties, identity independence of regional actors
- The regions is functional in terms of tourism too
- The existence of a regional identity on which it can be built





- The structure corresponds to European standards in terms of territory size and population number
- The region is functional, having a network of balanced cities: it has a regional center, Târgu Mureș, which appears as a center of education, health, communication and logistic, the cities of Sighișoara, Reghin, Luduș, Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, Gheorgheni, Toplița, Sfântu-Gheorghe and Târgu Secuiesc are micro-regional centers
- EU requirements about the need of territorial development and cities network development predestines the development of Târgu Mureș as a real regional center because in other terms it would be created a vacuum of urbanization in the center of the country and different regional poles would decrease the city's functions.

Of course, without a proper development policy, even in the case of this type of territorial structures, there will not be achieved a rapid and sustainable development. In this regard, under the "Administrative capacity development of local government in the county of Harghita" I started a series of actions under the finalization of the "Partnership Agreement between Romania and the European Union for the period 2014-2020", where I proposed to allocate appropriate development tools.

The study *"Territorial approach in the programming process: the condition of success in 2014-2020"*, produced as part of the program, shows clearly that in 2007-2013 period only three counties can identify elements of economic competitiveness - outside Bucharest-Ilfov: Timiș, Cluj and Sibiu. About the counties of Mureș, Harghita, Covasna (Transylvania), Mehedinți, Vâlcea, Olt, Teleorman, Ialomița (Muntenia) and Suceava, Botoșani, Neamț, Bacău, Vaslui, Vrancea, Galați ( Moldova without Iași) it can be identified a significant decrease of the economic weight in the national economy, as they are crisis areas. In this order, with the political support of the counties in the crisis areas, I proposed the insurance use of the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) tool, finally this instrument being approved only for Danube Delta, due to contractual obligations undertaken towards the World Bank regarding the development of the Delta.

In fact, throughout the process of discussion about the project draft of territories reorganization and the public consultation about the Partnership Agreement



between Romania and the European Union, our experience shows that Romanian governments, regardless of their political color, are making facade debates, and not with the interest of developing local communities, but only in electoral interest. These electoral interests about Szekler Land manifest itself by maintaining the political discourse of the so-called attack on the unitary character of the country, using central media.

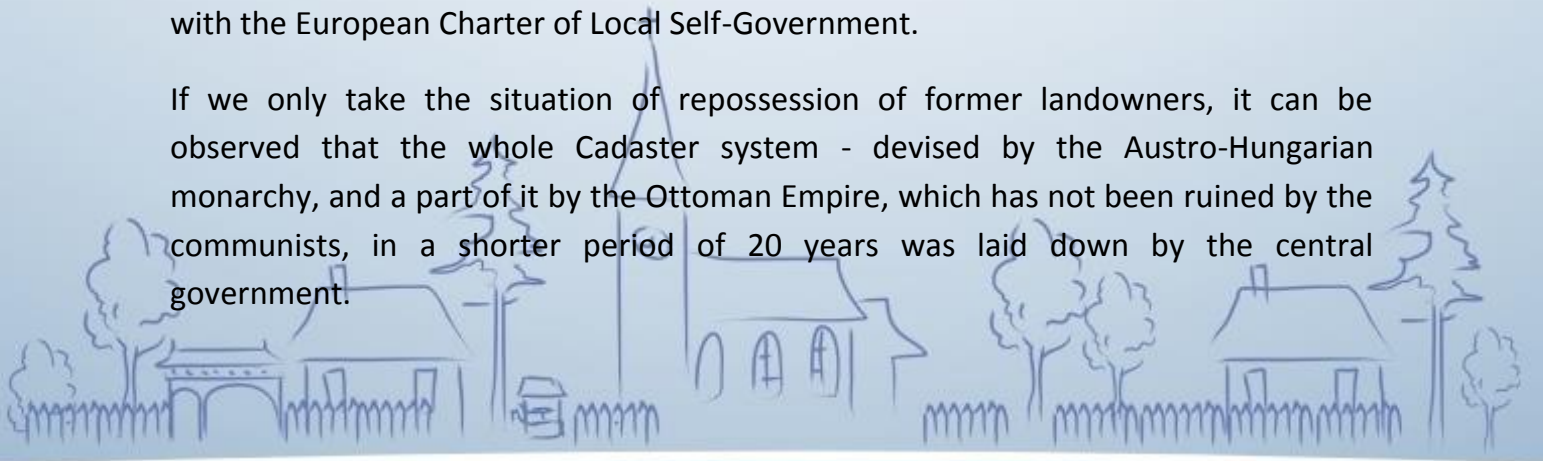
### **Final conclusions**

Making a modern administration should be the main objective, with or without regionalization. We must notice that all governments at ministries level spent sums of millions of euro for making their own e-administration systems, at this moment some of them being in function, and sadly unnecessary from the standpoint of the citizen. The neighboring countries, like Hungary, but also the countries from Western Europe, invested smaller amounts of money in developing an online e-government system ([www.magyarország.hu](http://www.magyarország.hu)). These systems are functional and drastically reduce the number of contacts between the public administration and citizen, providing online services for solving administrative issues, taxation problems, and they have a positive influence on the social and economic development of the respective country.

In Romania, the systems don't communicate with each other, even the registration in the system sometimes is conditioned by the movement of citizen to the public institution, but at the same time they didn't replace the paper-based administration - the financial statements of companies can be transmitted online, but at the same time must be submitted on paper to-.

Unfortunately the problem that will hinder the modernization of public administration will be the servility requested by the state from citizens, regardless of regions configuration. This system, where the citizen is put on his way, and is placed to testify the originality of documents issued by the state authorities, it is doubled by a nonfunctional rule of law, in contradiction with the principle of the rule of law and with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

If we only take the situation of repossession of former landowners, it can be observed that the whole Cadaster system - devised by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and a part of it by the Ottoman Empire, which has not been ruined by the communists, in a shorter period of 20 years was laid down by the central government.



By not applying the principle: „is allowed what is forbidden by the law”, a basic principle of the European Charter of Local Self- Government, and applying a contradictory principle: „is allowed only what is laid down in the law” by Courts and Supervisory Bodies of central government (Court of Auditors, General Directorate of Anti-fraud Tax) results on inactivity of the local administrations. Each institution of the central administration has its own interpretation of the laws and under these conditions any action of local government can be appealed and annulled.

The modernization of public administration cannot be done under these conditions, neither by drawing maps, but through by effective regulation of duties and ensuring legal, financial and human resources needed to achieve them.

I think the way how the concept of regionalization has been used in the Romanian politics is a huge mistake. On the one hand, there is nothing to talk about without constitutional amendment. On the other hand, the concept of regionalization has been used as a method of diversion, in a way to prevent any professional debate, analysis and joined-up thinking on how to handle and solve the issues of the Romanian public administration, namely how to modernize it. I consider that the concept of regionalization became a conceptual game, a catchy slogan used in the press, where the very essence is that everything should remain as it is.

Therefore I am skeptical about the whole thing, especially in what concerns the infringement of the international conventions on national minority rights ratified by Romania. Among the others, the impositions of these conventions state that in the territorial reform process any kind of practice or politics of states authorities are prohibited, which would have adverse effects on minorities.

There is a risk that despite its legislative responsibility, the parliament will take a decision, which will be disadvantageous for the Hungarian minority. If the central government had ignored the initiative of 6.206.011 citizen from 13 county regarding the development needs of crisis zones, what will guarantee that the minority rights and the needs of 1,7 million people will not be ignored?

Otherwise, without any circumlocution, the existing territorial division with eight regions would be acceptable from a minority point of view if, on the one hand, it meets the conditions of an efficient public administration and on the other hand, grants the use of Hungarian language and other specific minority rights in the public administration of Hungarian-inhabitated territories.

In other words, if Harghita, Covasna and Mures County already constitute a region with Sibiu and Alba County, the use of Hungarian language should be granted in the public administration of Alba Iulia and Sibiu too.

Otherwise multilingualism cannot be guaranteed at the regional level, which would be mandatory if the region would form a new administrative level.

The central government, namely the main political forces from Romania don't believe in the strength and ability of local communities to solve their affairs, to organize their life, and all the undertaken lawmaking steps aim to limit the space of action of local communities, and any kind of such wish is classified as an attack of the unitary character of the state and on the sovereignty. A state is sovereign if the citizens and the local communities are sovereign.

Perhaps it should be introduced as an obligatory reading for each politician from Romania the book named Democracy in America, written by Alexis Tocqueville.



## **The Code of Good Coexistence**

### **Romanian- Hungarian Cooperation in Harghita County**

#### **The general description of the Code of Good Coexistence**

Harghita County Council, in collaboration with the Department for Interethnic Relations and with the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, motivates the realization of a common programme, which aims the interethnic cooperation on several levels and by which the bilingual administration would be possible in the public institutions of the county. This cooperation would also serve in the future as a collaboration model for several national minorities and communities from social, cultural, administration and education levels.

The programme aims to realize a social model of which basis are elaborated on rational principles and values in the society, in the administration, as well as underlines the principle of cooperation among the population of Harghita County. Furthermore it aims to ease the interethnic tensions through events that assure the bilingual possibilities on economic, social, cultural, civil and institutional levels within the administrative units of Harghita County. Also, Harghita County Council in cooperation with local public administrations, mayor offices, governmental institutions and with those partners from abroad that work within these fields of activities, wishes to develop the above mentioned aims through the debate of the concerned issues and the elaboration of proposals.

In addition, Harghita County Council initiated the elaboration of the code of good coexistence of Romanians and Hungarians. This would manage several problems, including the issue of the use of mother tongue in public institutions also. Harghita county's population is 304 969, of which 258 615 are Hungarian and 40 431 Romanian. The rest of the population is Roma population or other nationalities. 102 036 persons of the 258 615 Hungarians live in cities, and 156 579 in villages. Out of the 40 431 Romanians, 24 040 live in cities and 16 391 in villages.

As it is seen from statistics, despite the fact that Hungarian communities are considered as minorities in Romania, live as a majority in Harghita County. In this matter, these rates are inversed and the Romanian communities are living in

minority in the county. Besides the economic issues, there is a need for a proper instruction which would help in the realization of peaceful coexistence, especially due to the fact that the two ethnic communities have a history of conflicting coexistence. Despite the fact that there is a proper legislative basis, the lack of efficient mechanism is merely sensed for an uninterrupted coexistence. In this matter was initiated the Code of Good Coexistence, which is elaborated in collaboration with specialists from Romanian and Hungarian institutions.

This Code would not serve as a compulsory legislative act, due to the fact that the existing legislative settlements offer a largely acceptable basis for the recognition of national minorities and in the matter of the use of their rights. We mention as example the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Law 282/2007), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National *Minorities* (Law 33/1995) and the *Local Public Administration Law no. 215/2001*.

The launch of the elaboration of the Code is justified by the fact that – besides the economic issues – there is a need for a proper instruction, guide that would help to develop concretely the peaceful coexistence of Hungarian and Romanian communities, especially because of their history full of conflicting events and points of view. In what concerns the approval of the government, at first hand the Prefect Institution of Harghita County considered this common initiative as being illegal, arguing that the cooperation between the Harghita County Council and The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities is illegitimate. Among the others mentioned above, the action of the government also proves and urges the need of the Code of Good Coexistence.

### **Possible solutions – The main elements of the Code of Good Coexistence**

The present Code's framework is based on the principle of proportionality and includes the soft, informal elements of the consociational model of democracy. Based on this the objectives of the Code are the followings:

- To ensure the proportional representation of the Romanian and other minorities in the consultative bodies of local public administration.
- To ensure the representation of the Romanian community in the executive bodies of local public administration.



- The positive discrimination of local minorities by granting seats in the legislature bodies of local public administration.
- The allocation of resources for ethnic groups has to rely on the principle of proportionality, especially in what concerns the domain of culture and civil society.
- The application of the principle of proportionality as regards to the personnel of the institutions of local public administration.
- Other required measures in order to present the civic and cultural activities of the Romanian and other ethnic groups.

### **Hungarian-Romanian cohabitation – Existing projects for the development of the Romanian community**

Principles which govern the present Code have always guided the activity of the Harghita County Council in what concerns the development of the Romanian community. Based on this the County Council established a commission, which's activity focuses on the elaboration of policies in order to create a framework of an efficient cooperation between the two ethnic groups. Furthermore, with the aim of the cultural and economic development of the Romanian people, several projects and initiatives have been launched, including the followings:

- **The Intercommunity Development Association Călimani-Giurgeu:** Based on the principle of equality and equity between ethnic groups, Harghita County Council has always paid a special attention to the areas mostly inhabited by Romanian people in order to support their socio-economic and cultural development. The Intercommunity Development Association Călimani-Giurgeu established by the Harghita County Council follows the sustainable development of the rural and urban communities from the north part of the region – which is mostly inhabited by Romanian people – according to the principles of solidarity, non-discrimination and equal opportunities. The main objectives of the Association is to increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sphere, tourism, environment and sustainable development of the areas of common interest of the northern area of Harghita County as well as, to increase of the absorption chances of the structural and cohesion funds.



- **Dialogue with the representatives of the Romanian press:** The aim of this project is to present the aspects of the Hungarian-Romanian cohabitation for the representatives of the Romanian press, focusing on good examples and practices regarding the minority-majority relations in Harghita county.
- **Presenting the culture of Romanians in the local press:** One of the columns and themes of the Comitatus press founded by the Harghita County Council focuses on the culture of Romanians and includes information about their activities (programs and events) launched on, but not necessary, on the north part of the county.
- **The civic education of Romanian students:** In order to familiarize the activity of the public servants with the Romanian students several visits have been organized in the institutions of local public administration in the past years.

**Agriculture without boundaries:** This initiative proposes the association of Harghita, Vrancea and Suceava County Councils to provide an opportunity of experience exchange for farmers from the three county.

- **Grants for cultural activities based on the principle of proportionality:** In what concerns the allocation of resources – grants and financial supports – for the activity of Romanian NGOs, the County Council take into consideration the proportion of the members of the community in the county. According to this, the County Council provides financial support for their programs, projects and cultural activities with the aim of promoting the Romanian culture and tradition.

### **Further measures that must be taken**

As mentioned before, the aim of the initiated programme is the realization of an informal guide, which would be useable for a proper environment of good interethnic coexistence of Romanian and Hungarian communities. This guide would also be useable in the future by local public administrations for the same purpose.

Furthermore, this guide would include the points of view, proposals of several recognized specialists in the field, such as: representatives of the economic, social, religious, civil and institutional spheres will present their opinion about the code of good coexistence. In the meantime, in collaboration with specialists (sociologists, jurists etc.), a surveys will be lead among the population of Harghita county regarding their opinion on the above mentioned issues. The survey will last at least one month because we will need every opinion on this. In order to underline the importance of the initiative's aim, online voting/signature programme will be also



launched also. Furthermore, for the mobilization and raise of awareness, campaigns will be lead also on social networks, and the promotion of the initiative will also be presented through media and press. Through all of the above mentioned activities, specialists will gather all of the information needed and then the final material, description will be presented.

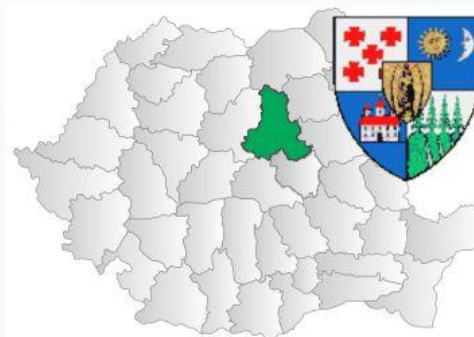
As a final remark, on the one hand, the present Code of Good Coexistence wishes to settle those good practices that were made on the principle of tolerance by the representatives of several nationalities, showing by this means an example for communities, institutions and localities in the same situation. On the other hand, it also wishes to settle a good example for those localities, where the Hungarians live in minority.



## Harghita County fact sheet

NUTS classification RO124

- Population: **330.000**
- Area: **6,610** sq km
- GDP / inhabitant: **4840** € (2011)
- Territorial organization:
  - **264** settlement
  - **67** administrative units
    - **9** cities (**4** municipalities)
    - **58** villages commune



### Population

*inhabitants*

	Census	1992	2002	2011	Evolution 2011/1992 (%)
1.	Romania	22.810.035	21.680.974	19.599.506	-14,08%
2.	Central Region	2.701.700	2.523.021	2.360.805	-12,62%
3.	<b>Harghita County</b>	<b>348.335</b>	<b>326.222</b>	<b>310.867</b>	<b>-10,76%</b>

### Ethnic structure

	Hungarian		Romanian		Roma		Other nationality	
Number / %	257.709	82,9%	39.196	12,6%	4.382	1,7%	9.607	2,8%



## Top 5 counties in Romania with the lowest rate of indebtedness

		Loans in lei and foreign currency (billions of lei)	Savings in lei and foreign currency (billions of lei)	Coverage of loans by deposits (%)
1.	Harghita	1,15	2,02	57,03%
2.	Covasna	0,80	1,22	65,45%
3.	Sibiu	4,69	7,15	65,51%
4.	Prahova	4,93	7,24	68,11%
5.	Mures	3,50	4,93	70,91%

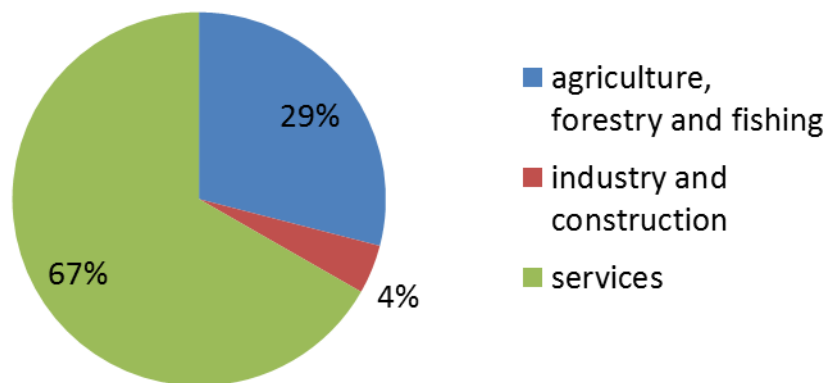
NBR statistics, March 2015

## Active economic sectors

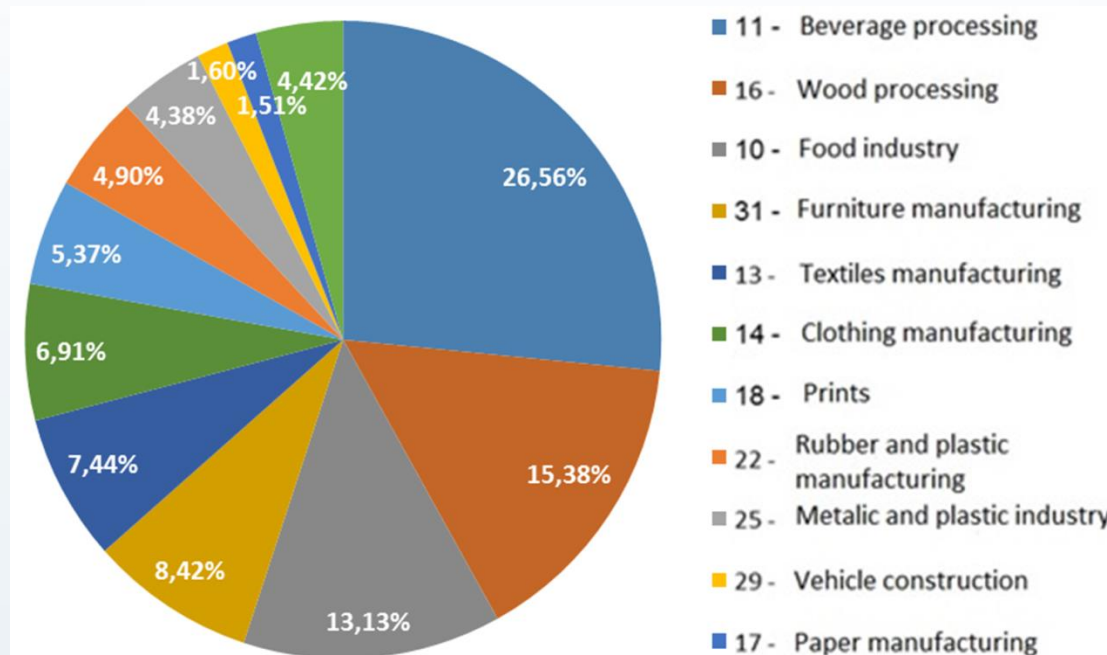
Harghita County	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	296	274	271	292	309
B Extractive industry	20	22	23	22	22
C Manufacturing industry	1.300	1.207	1.245	1.243	1.242
D Production and supply of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning	17	15	14	22	25
E Water distribution, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	40	45	44	47	51
F Construction	847	748	760	756	776
G Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	2.568	2.344	2.365	2.353	2.386
H Transportation and storage	405	369	371	382	403
I Hotels and restaurants	556	508	517	514	526
J Information and communication	207	180	184	193	212
K Financial and insurance activities	69	60	70	72	71
L Real estate transactions	118	108	110	102	111
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	608	547	564	574	595

N Administrative services and support services	228	215	226	237	251
P Education	48	42	46	42	43
Q Health and social care	61	62	69	71	71
R Arts, entertainment and recreation	68	53	59	69	77
S Other service activities	116	104	110	114	117

### Business environment structure



## Contribution of processing industries in Harghita County's economy



## Rural development

EAFRD European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Harghita county		
1.	Period	01.01.2008 - 30.06.2015
2.	No. of projects evaluated	3097
3.	Total approximate value	~ 402 million Euros
4.	No. of projects selected	2593
5.	Amount of payments	~142 million Euros

Harghita county received European fundings for numerous public and private investment projects, according to the presented statements at the end of 2015, the ADR Center's situation were the following:

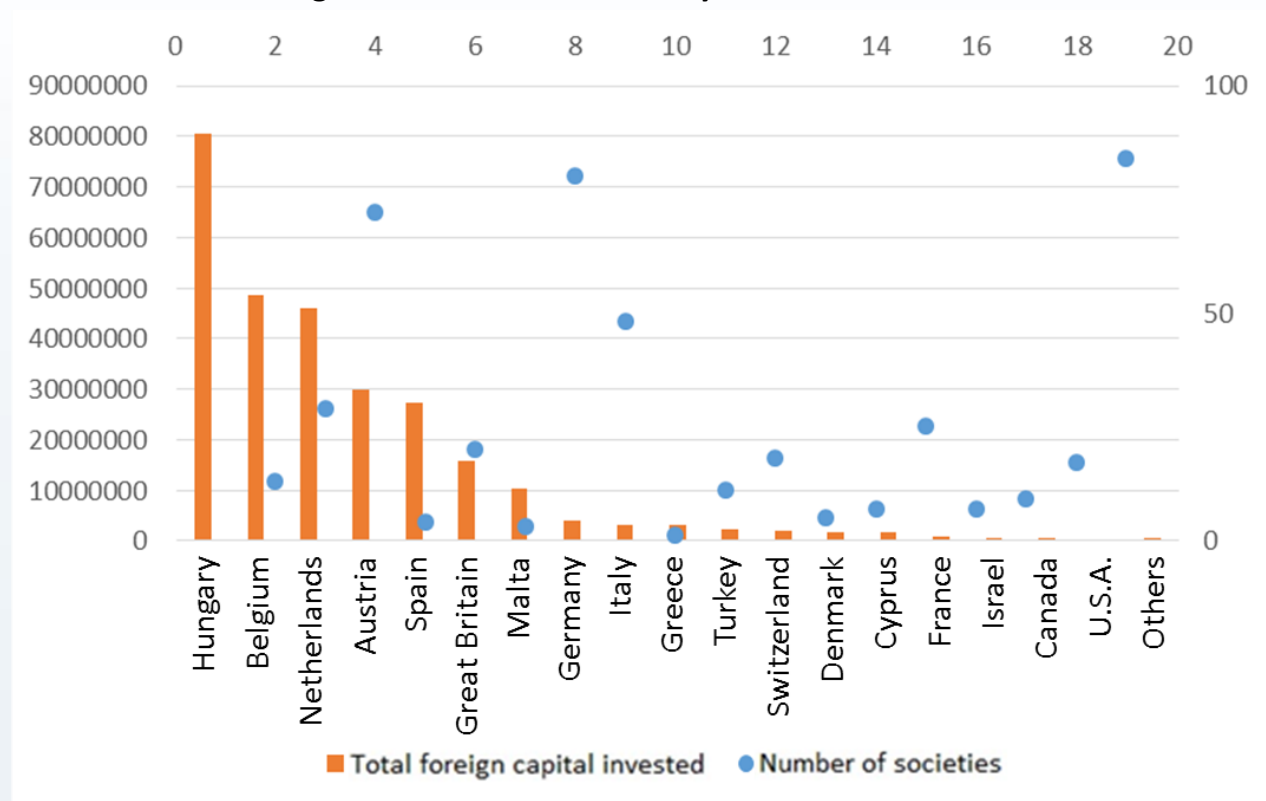
- The total value of projects undertaken by public and private in the Regional Operational Programme was 444.094.186 lei
- The total number of projects undertaken by public and private in the ROP was 87 projects.

### Investment contracted by the main measures RDP 2007-2013 in Harghita county

Measure of investment (domain)	Number of projects			Nonrefundable value of the completed projects (mil. Euro)
	<i>contracted</i>	<i>completed</i>	<i>ongoing</i>	
<i>Public investment</i>				
Measure 322 "Village renewal and development, improving basic services for rural economy and population and upgrading of the rural heritage"	161	128	28	48,62
Measure 125 "Improving and developing infrastructure related to the development and adaptation of agriculture and forestry"	29	20	9	28,90
<i>Private investment</i>				
Measure 121 "Modernization of agricultural holdings"	70	49	1	4,54
Measure 123 "Adding value to agricultural and forestry products"	43	28	3	4,04
Measure 312 "Support for creation and development of micro - enterprises"	144	117	-	12,19
Measure 313 "Encouraging tourism activities"	71	43	3	5,11



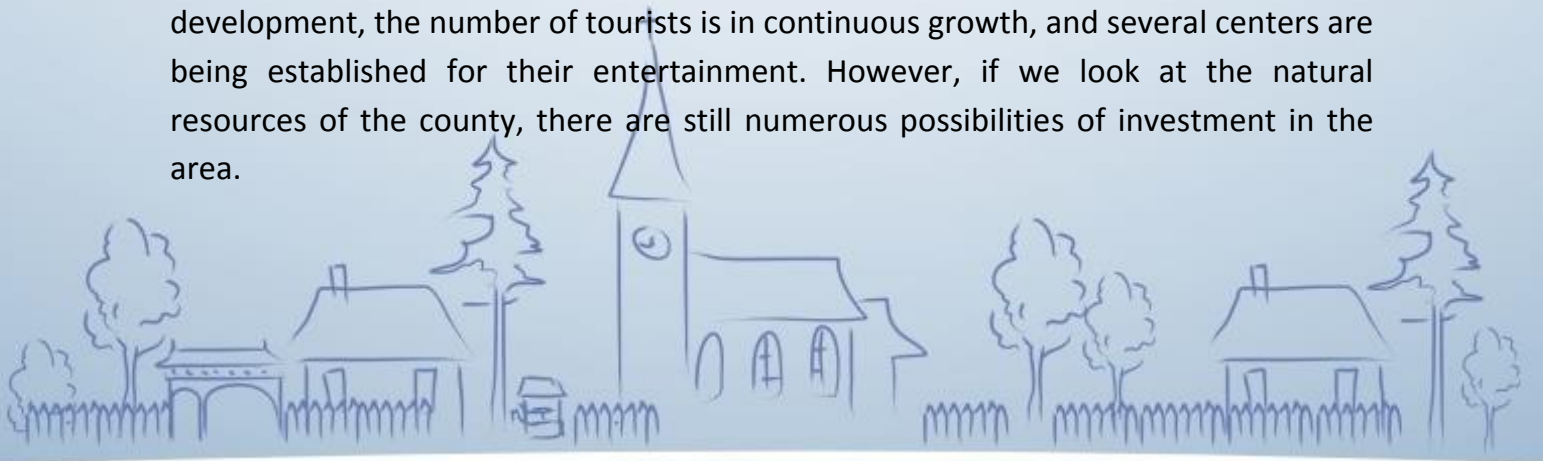
## The situation of foreign investment in the county, on 31.12.2015



## Tourism

Tourists who visit Harghita county may find enchanting sights and ancient cultural and historical monuments here. The breathtaking beauties of nature appear in various forms, such as the slenderest pine trees of the Carpathians, the most beautiful meadows of Europe, daffodil fields, peat-bogs, the biggest brown bear population in Europe, deers, wolves, trouts in the mountain streams, etc. There are 35 registered natural reserves and national parks in the county, some of them being unique in Europe, or maybe in the whole world.

From an investor's point of view, the rapid growth of the past few years in this sector is worth to be taken into consideration. Together with the infrastructural development, the number of tourists is in continuous growth, and several centers are being established for their entertainment. However, if we look at the natural resources of the county, there are still numerous possibilities of investment in the area.



## SUMULEU CIUC

The annual pilgrimage to Sumuleu Ciuc attracts, without any doubt, the most pilgrims and tourists in Harghita county. The estimated number of people visiting this event from all around the world is somewhere around 250-300 thousand. The preparation for accommodation and travel starts one year prior to the event in order to meet the needs of all visitors.



Touristic agencies have started to organize at least seven-day-long programs around this single event, guiding the visitors to wonderful, famous sights within the county not just in this period, but all year long. Here follow some of these breathtaking sights to capture the attention of investors:

**In Harghita County are 7 certified resorts:**

Resorts	
1.	Băile Tușnad
2.	Borsesc
3.	Băile Homorod
4.	Harghita-Băi
5.	Izvoru Mureșului
6.	Lațul Roșu
7.	Praid





Types of tourist accommodation structures		Total number in 2015
1.	Hotels	24
2.	Hostels	5
3.	Motels	5
4.	Villas	4
5.	Chalets	16
6.	Bungalows	10
7.	Campgrounds	2
8.	Tourist stops	1
9.	Tourist cottages	12
10.	Students and preschooler students camps	3
11.	Boarding houses	97
12.	Agro-tourism	178

## NATURAL RESOURCES TO EXPLOIT FOR TOURISTIC PURPOSES



**Cheile Bicazului-Hasmas National Park** near the legendary source of both River Maros and River Olt



**Red Lake is a unique natural formation: it was created as a result of a landslide in 1837, the tree trunks sticking out of the water are proof of this way of creation.**





Cheile Bicazului is a canyon also having an international fame as the paradise for cliff-climbers



Altar Stone, also known as Hell's porch, offers an extraordinary visual experience



Cheile Varghisului is one of the most spectacular and most visited karst regions in Transylvania



Cave Meresti hides discovered and yet undiscovered archeological values



The numerous peat-bogs in the region are the result of volcanic activities, the most outstanding being the one called Luci in Mountain Harghita.



Lake Sf. Ana has been formed at the bottom of a volcanic crater which is the only one in South-East Europe that remained intact.





The peat-bog Mohos, situated at an altitude of 1050 m, is one of Romania's most valuable botanical regions, part of the Mohos Natural Reserve.



The Daffodil field is also one of Europe's rarities, almost the biggest one in the country, with 180-200 star daffodils (Narcissus stellaris) in one square meter.



Sugo Cave is situated in the South-West part of the 1568 m high Sipos cliff in the Gheorgheni Mountains



Lake Jezer in the Caliman Mountains

## BUILDING AND OPERATING SKI-RUNS

Most of the land suitable for this purpose are owned by special associations called 'common proprietors', thus a cooperation between them and the potential investors is needed.

With reference to the number of ski resorts existing in the different counties of Romania,

Harghita county is on the top of the list with 23 certified ski-runs. This proves that this region is perfect for building and operating ski-runs. There are further possibilities to build new ski-runs in cooperation with the local 'common proprietors'.



## FANS OF DIFFERENT EXTREME SPORTS

Those who invest in tourism in Harghita county, have a lot of opportunities to attract visitors.

Thanks to the geographic characteristics of the region, fans of different extreme sports may also find the right ways to spend their time here: on the ground, on water, in the air, or underground, as they please. The steep chalk cliffs are ideal for climbing, parachuting and para-gliding, while caves offer a variety of marvelous worlds to discover.

The climate is optimal for winter sports: Harghita county is the cradle of ice-hockey in Romania; there are several ski resorts as well in the county, the most visited ones being in Harghita Bai, Harghita-Madaras, Izvorul Olt, Baile Homorod, Bucin, Ciumani, Toplita, Borsec, and Tusnad Bai.



## THE KING OF THE CARPATHIANS

Transylvania could be the key to saving the planet – said Prince Charles during one of his visits to Transylvania in August 2015.

According to him, society has put nature in the background for centuries, and exploited the environment without giving anything back to nature.

The facilities of the environment, traditional farming, and the relatively extensive wild areas have been able to provide a peaceful habitat for the king of the Carpathians.



This is the reason why this dense population of brown bears could survive.

The hunters' associations counted approximately 1300 brown bears in 2014.

Hunting tourism here is combined with other programs (rural tourism, ecotourism, etc.). Tourists who come here for hunting, usually spend double compared with the average tourists. When talking of hunting tourism, we do not only think of those who come here to hunt, but also of those who just make photographs, or want only to observe the woods, wild animals and the environment.

## INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As a result of the volcanic activities in the region, there are more than 2000 springs of mineral water in the county. Some world-famous bottling plants are functioning here, such as Hargita Gyöngye (the Pearl of Harghita), Tusnád, Borsec, etc. and many more springs of mineral water are still waiting for investors ([investinhargita.ro](http://investinhargita.ro)).

There are localities in the county famous for their medicinal spas, such as Tusnad Bai, Jigodin, Borsec, or Praid where there have been significant developments recently, so the conditions here correspond to the needs of the visitors who come here to rest and to be cured.

Investments in these locations turned out to be successful: the Tusnad Wellness spa opened in December 21, 2013 having *180 000 visitors* in one and a half year. Praid Wellness Center opened in July 2014 and it has been operating with full capacity since.

More of the localities are looking for investors in lack of local capital!

## EXPLOITING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE MOFETTAS

The evaporation of sulphur and carbon-dioxid can be used by so called mofettas which can be found in the following places:

- Harghita-Bai, where the mofettas and the strongly carbonated mineral waters rich in iron and magnesium are evidence for the existence of volcanic activity in the region.



- **Santimbru-Bai** is uniquely rich in mineral waters and mofettas, its

medicinal water contains mercury.

- The mofetta in **Baile Tusnad**, where the gases reaching the surface have a 85% (sometimes a 95%) density of carbon-dioxide.
- There is a mofetta in **Seiche** similar to the one in Jigodin where the gas is provided by a well of carbonated mineral water.

## **BORSEC, IS LOOKING FOR INVESTORS**

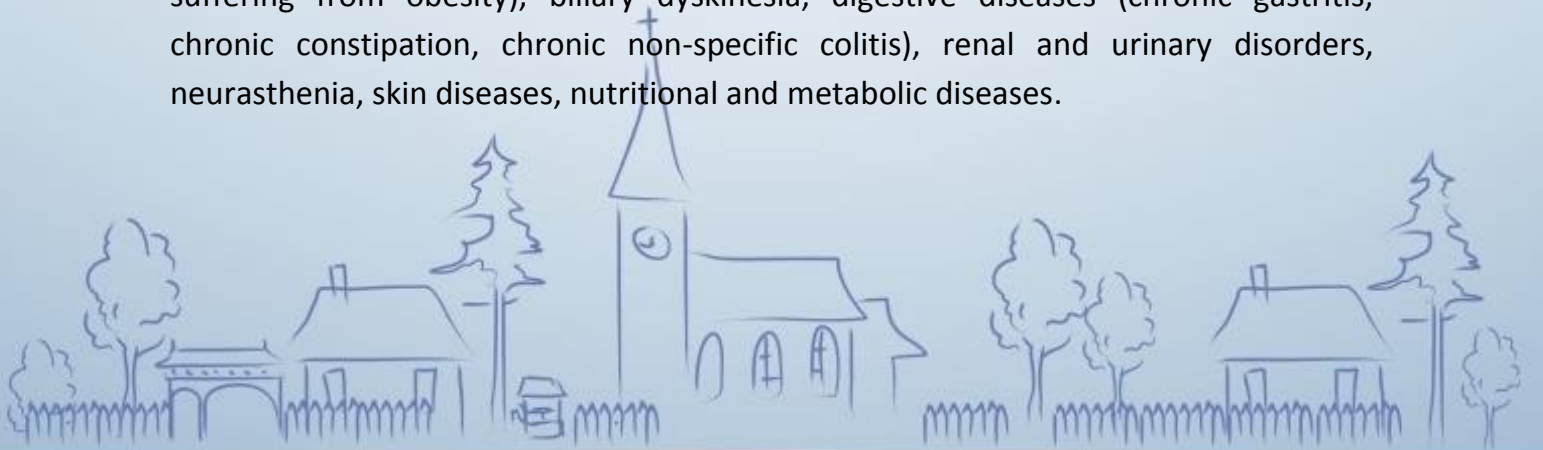
Borsec (Borszek) is situated in the Eastern Carpathian Mountains of Transylvania, and is one of the most renowned curative spas in the subalpine, windless, peat-rich county of Harghita. Bottling of Borsec commenced over two hundred years ago.



The curative properties of the water were already known in the 1600s, and for centuries it was transported by carts in wooden casks to be served in the Royal Court in Vienna. It was Emperor Franz Josef who dubbed Borsec the "Queen of Mineral Waters".

The paradise of health tourism started the construction of a Multifunctional Wellness Center. It does not have, however, enough financial sources to build the four-star hotel planned next to the Multifunctional Wellness Center with a direct connection between the two buildings. Therefore, the spa town is now looking for investors to carry out this plan.

Borsec is a spa town recommended for curing diseases of the heart and the circulatory system (compensational mitral insufficiency, heart failure, high blood pressure, and varicosity), endocrine diseases (hyperthyroidism, Basedow, teen-agers suffering from obesity), biliary dyskinesia, digestive diseases (chronic gastritis, chronic constipation, chronic non-specific colitis), renal and urinary disorders, neurasthenia, skin diseases, nutritional and metabolic diseases.



Under optimal circumstances the planned daily capacity of the Multifunctional Wellness Centre can be 700 people in winter-time and 1000 people in summer-time. With a 12-hour/day program and an average number of 700 visitors/day the wellness centre can have 255 500 visitors per year.

Thus, building a hotel next to the wellness center is definitely a good investment.

## **EXCELLENT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY: SPRING WATERS AND MINERAL WATERS IN HARGHITA COUNTY**

Harghita county has a rich hydrographic network of surface water (lakes and swamps) and important groundwater reserves. Water sources are of very good quality in the county, not affected by industrial pollution.

### Mineral waters

The most important mineral springs in Romania can be found in: Govora, Tuşnad, Borsa, Borsec, Covasna, Călimăneşti-Căciulata, Slănic-Moldova, Herculane, Moneasa, Biborţeni, Sângeorz-Băi, Lacu-Sărat, Amara, Zăcământul Casin, Staţiunea Ziziu, and Sâncrăieni. There are 26 companies in Romania which produce and bottle mineral water. In 2012 approximately one billion liters were sold, 70% of which was carbonated mineral water and 30% was non-carbonated (still) mineral water.

### Spring waters

Based on a recent quality analysis of mineral waters and spring waters in Romania and Harghita county, we may conclude that mineral waters in Harghita county are much healthier than most of such waters existing in Europe. Experts warn consumers regarding the regular consumption of carbonated mineral water with too high levels of sodium, calcium and magnesium, or with an inappropriate pH level.

### An ideal solution for everyday consumption

An ideal solution for everyday consumption must be non-carbonated water, rich in calcium and magnesium ions but poor in sodium, chlorine, nitrate and sulfate. The majority of carbonated and non-carbonated mineral and spring waters in Harghita county meet these quality criteria.



## **Sustainable forrest economy**

According to data for the year 2013, the National Bureau of Statistics (hereinafter referred to as NBS) forest area in Romania covers almost 6.4 million hectares, of which 1.244 million hectares of forests are the size of the region forests, which in turn represents approximately 19.5%. Harghita county covers 259 400 hectares of forest.

In this region most coniferous trees are harvested (54% in 2013). Harghita County holds the majority of coniferous species of which 835 300 m<sup>3</sup> were extracted in 2013 and represent three quarters of county's forests. The other three species such as beech, oak and other types of hard and soft wood, complete the remaining of 260 200 m<sup>3</sup>.

The founding effect of a working unit of a multinational company in Harghita County or in the nighboring areas on the labour market

In Harghita county industrial woodworking and furniture production sub-branches represent an important economic activity in the entrepreneurial sphere which manages to establish profitable businesses. Being an activity with a considerable tradition in the area, here can be found skilled workers and experts in harvesting and wood processing. Therefore, many companies in this sector are able to find here the necessary human resources to operate profitably.

Through our analysis we presented a possible hypothetical situation where a foreign investor with a higher production capacity than the existing one in the county enters the wood processing sector in the county. After the estimation of this analysis we can conclude that the entry of such firms in the area could abolish 2,300 jobs and undermine the activity and profitability of local companies, local businesses and would halve the number of firms in this sector.

Harghita County Council has been involved in various fields of effectively forestry management in county. Many of these programs have already been launched or are in progress in fields covering local wood industry and forestry:

1. Sustainable forest management program
2. The „Trees Forum” program
3. The „County wood market” program





4. The „Build wood” program
5. Programs to encourage the processing of wood
6. Berries programs
7. Other programs:
  - Programs that support the use of biomass
  - Clarifying the legal status of public interests holders
  - Ensuring the compliance of local access to raw materials for wood processors
  - Informing residents

The INTERREG IV C "Robinwood PLUS" is a Miniprogramme between Liguria Region (Italy, project leader) and Regional Council of Limousin (France) Regional Council of Kainuu (Finland), Regional Council of Harghita (Romania), Regione Calabria ( Italy).

Natura 2000. Protected areas play as well an important role in decreasing the vulnerability of communities to disasters and reducing their physical exposure to natural hazards, often providing them with livelihood resources to withstand and recover from crises. There are a number of studies which recognize the importance of Natura 2000 sites for natural hazards prevention.

### **Damages caused by wild animals**

The vast wooded areas in Harghita county offer many environmental advantages and possibilities for the population. In addition to the colourful flora, there are numerous wild animals living only in these areas. People in Harghita are coexisting with these wild animals - be they bears, wolves or wild cats. This cohabitation often presents less pleasant aspects, the living areas of both bear and man are intertwined, generating conflict situations. These conflicts are growing significantly, respectively the number of damages caused by wild animals – bears – has increased significantly.

According to official statistics, 40% of brown bear population can be found in Romania. It may be ascertained that most of the brown bears can be found in Romania, approximately 35-40%, which represents 80% of all Europe's Carpathian bears. The number of personal injuries registered has increased drastically.



Harghita County Council gives particular attention to limiting the damage done by wild animals, and according to its legal skills tries to assist the responsible authorities and affected citizens, by providing a systematic communication procedure and inventory of problems and by their transmission to the governmental decision makers and by fundraising through projects.

- In february 2009 the county council established a working group in order to address the damage done by wild animals and in order to coordinate prevention activities. The main purpose of this working group was to gather information for citizens about the damage report methodology and about necessary documents for reimbursements.
- In september 2010 the Minister of Environment and Forestry, László Borbély visited Harghita county and participated in debates with the representatives of forestry shareholders associations, where the participants discussed the damages done by wild animals and the facilitation of damage reimbursement processes.
- In march 2013 – Call of proposals addressed to the representatives of land owners associations for the installation of electric fences – continues the call for proposal addressed to the land owners associations in order to install electric fences. The total amount for this call was of 45 thousand RON.
- Between 2015-2016 Harghita County Council has undertaken more efforts in order to raise public awareness from the county, Romania and Europe on this serious problem that not only our county is facing. Lately our efforts were concentrated on involving the County Inspectorate for Emergency Situations in managing these attacks by bears. I have had several discussions in the form of letters, mostly with the Prefect of the County, for including on the list of "emergencies" the frequent attacks of bears. For now the answers that we received in this respect were limited only to the fact that this problem, namely the attacks of wild animals, does not fall under the competence of the Inspectorate.



## Promoting local and traditional values: The Sekler Product Trademark



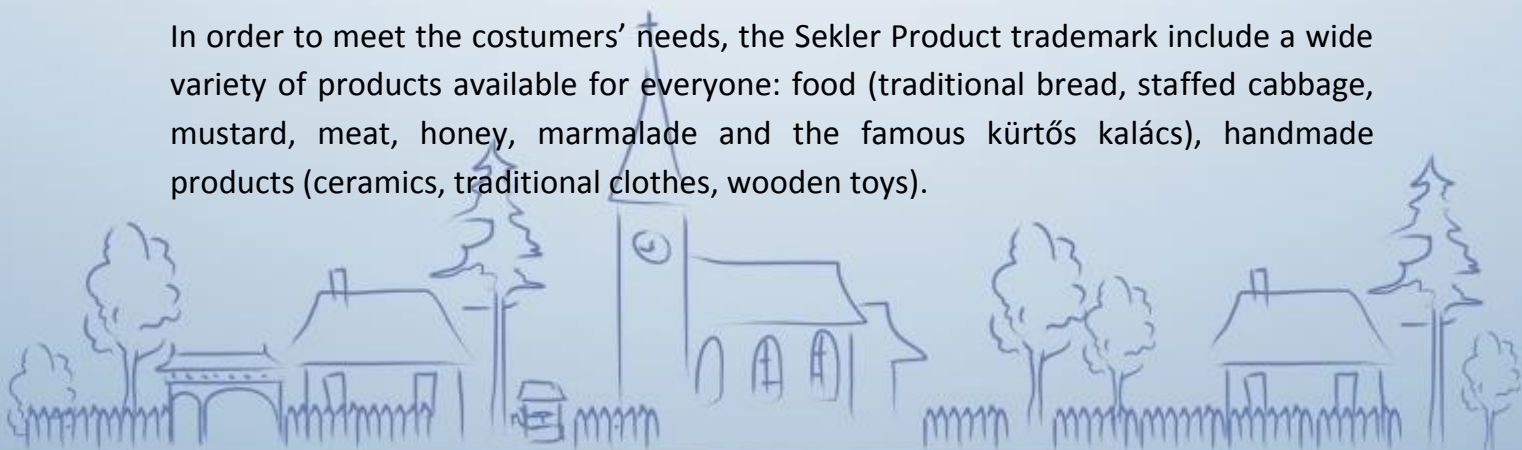
Harghita County Council considers as one of its most important duties to promote and preserve the rich culture, traditional cuisine, catering and peculiar handcraft products. In the course of its work one of the priorities falls on helping and supporting people living in rural territories and local producers, contributing by this means to the creation of jobs and the preservation of the rural tourism.

For reaching the set goals and objectives regarding the mentioned priority, Harghita County Council initiated and developed the Sekler Product community trademark, efficiently representing and protecting the interests of local producers for their future well-being and promoting among citizens the benefit of consuming local and healthy food.

Harghita County Council's initiative regarding the Sekler Product trademark is a good example of how people in a community can overcome unfavourable global processes by creating a common and unique trademark for the products produced at local level.

To this end, in 2009 Harghita County Council has started the programme entitled as The Promotion of the Sekler Products, in the course of which we have organized more such events that offered a possibility on the one hand for local producers to promote their products and on the other hand for the population to consume and buy local and healthy food and products. Within this programme several local and traditional fairs are regularly organized each year and each month, as well as the local products are also brought to international fairs and exhibitions, with the aim of developing successful international partnerships.

In order to meet the costumers' needs, the Sekler Product trademark include a wide variety of products available for everyone: food (traditional bread, staffed cabbage, mustard, meat, honey, marmalade and the famous kürtős kalács), handmade products (ceramics, traditional clothes, wooden toys).



By the Sekler Product movement, the County Council has empowered hundreds of small farmers to become entrepreneurs, and to become competitive with their traditional products on the local and regional markets. So far in total there were 99 registered producers and 759 products. Furthermore, the elaboration of the methodology regarding the use of Sekler products in catering services is also being processed.

Past experiences show that the Sekler Product brand has a positive impact not only on the local economy, but on interethnic relationships too. By the Sekler Product movement we managed to reduce the anti-Hungarian tone of the press from Bucharest by organizing product exhibitions and fairs in several Romanian cities and in partnership with the cultural representation of different countries, mainly in intellectual circles.

**With the aim of continuing this tendency, we are prepared for the invitation of the Embassy of the United States: on the one hand, to participate on product exhibitions and on the other hand, to present our traditional and quality products on smaller events, such as cultural and other type of events.**



## Communal work (bee) for our children in Harghita County

*The meaning of communal work: “a communal and voluntary work to help each other, which is followed by a revelry”.*

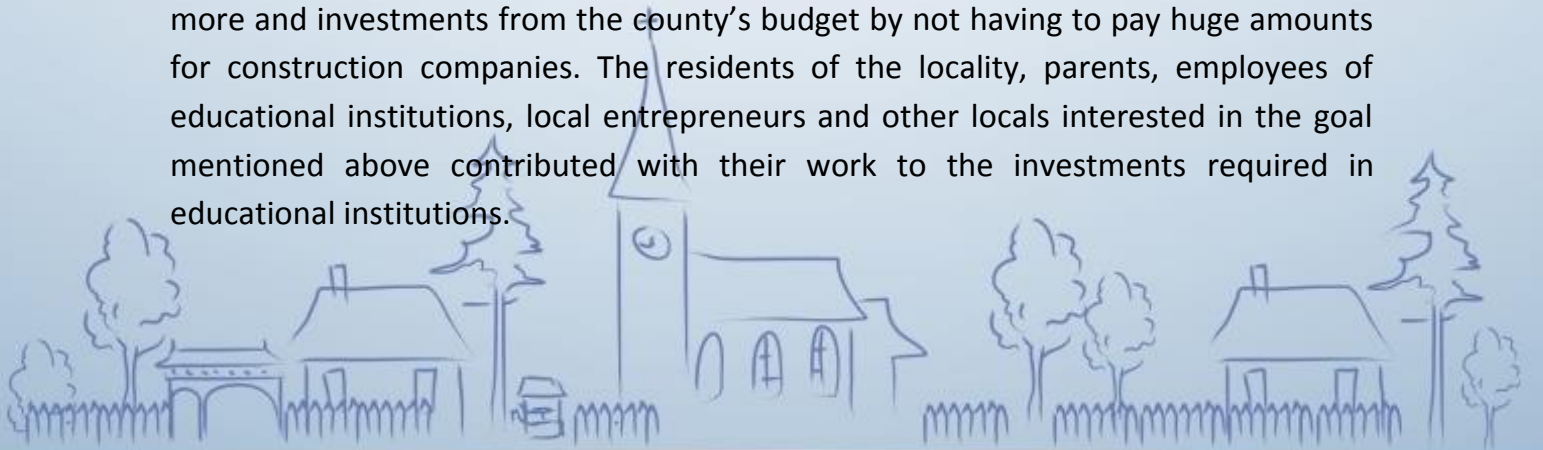
At the beginning of the 2013/2014 school year it became clear that many educational institutions from Harghita County do not guarantee the basic hygiene and operating conditions for the proper education of children. These educational institutions operate without any certificate: according to the Harghita County Department of Public Health, 31, 9% of kindergartens from communes and villages do not own an operating certificate. Therefore we have to resolve these issues with a joint effort in order to provide proper conditions for the education of children.

In 2013 the Harghita County Council launched a new program/movement, which aim is to support educational institutions – schools, kindergartens and day care centers – unable to carry out the necessary investments to obtain an operating certificate.

We were able to provide financial support from the County Council’s emergency budget. Because financial resources available for supporting the program were finite local contribution was indispensable. Therefore, we managed to support other local communities too.



Furthermore, the works were executed through communal work in order to support more and investments from the county’s budget by not having to pay huge amounts for construction companies. The residents of the locality, parents, employees of educational institutions, local entrepreneurs and other locals interested in the goal mentioned above contributed with their work to the investments required in educational institutions.





### **About the communal work in Strassbourg**

One of the two chambers of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Chambers of Regions held its 26<sup>th</sup> Session at 25-26. March 2014. As the president of the Harghita County Council on behalf of the Committee of the Regions I had the opportunity to participate on the session and to present our achievements within the *Communal work for our children in Harghita County* movement.





## **Harghita County Council's funding and collaboration with different churches of the county**

Faith and religion have been since the dawn of history, an important part of humanity. The formation of the churches and their influence accompanied the evolution of the human civilization. Even nowadays the churches still play an important role in society. This is precisely why the Harghita County Council is following with attention the existence of churches, cooperates continuously with them, giving to churches as much moral and material support as possible. No religious community is exception, neither the orthodox community from the county. The County Council acknowledges that congregations are the basis of the durability of a society, therefore churches and religion communities are important also for Romanians living in the county. In this regard, Harghita County provides funding for church constructions, repairs, whose number is steadily increasing both in number and value.

### **Description of programs**

There are two programs of Harghita County Council which focuses mainly on financing the churches. Law 489/2006 enables the collaboration, within the legal framework, between public and religious institutions. In this respect the county council has included in its budget since 2009, funding of various events in collaboration with churches. The second program relates to funding of the churches recognizes by Romania in various fields such as building or renovating churches, buildings annexes, mortuary chapels.

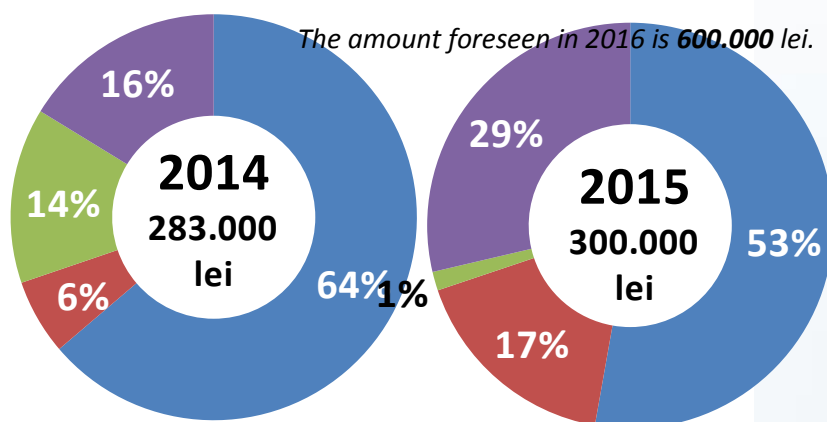
### **Financing the protection of national monument religious buildings**

In the framework of this program are funded programs for design and execution of construction works, restoration, conservation or interventions already authorized with valid building permit for monuments and sites classified as A and B, which are used for sociocultural, education, health, religious, charitable activities or other similar activities, or housing.





## Amounts allocated to financing the protection of national monuments (2014, 2015, lei, %)

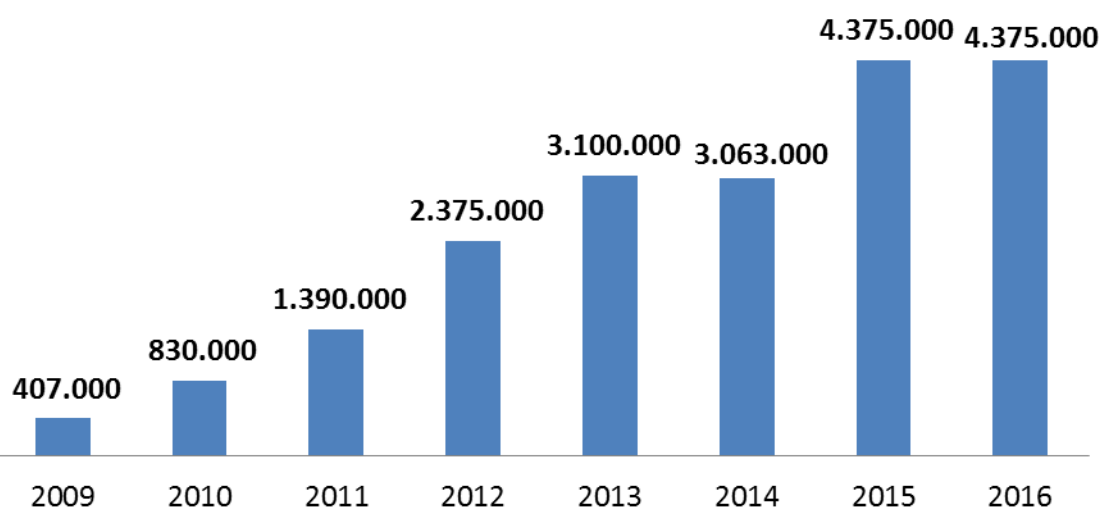


■ Roman Catholic ■ Reformed ■ Unitarian ■ Individuals

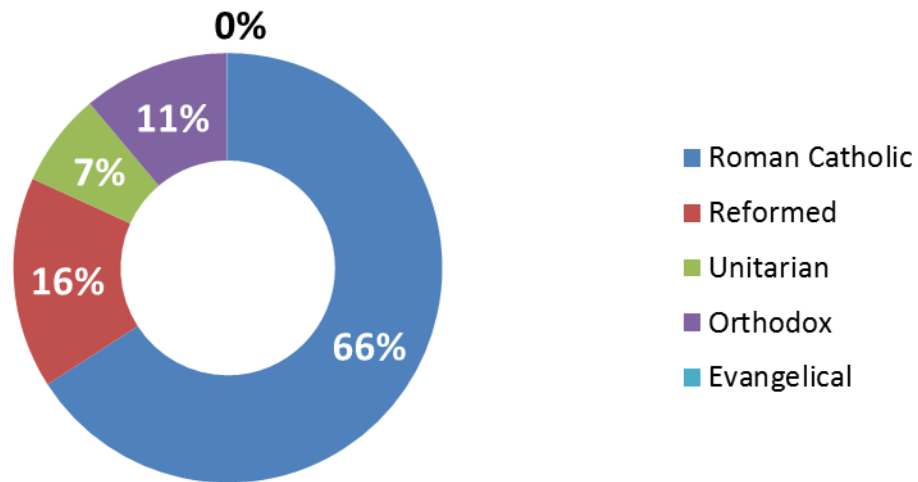
### Financing of churches

Harghita County Council funding aimed primarily the construction, repair and modernization of buildings in several localities. There were built and renovated churches, mortuary chapels and community houses. We are proud of our results in collaboration with the churches. It has been said many times that priests from other counties are envious of our county because the programs offered for churches by Harghita County Council.

### Amounts allocated to support churches in Harghita County (2009-2016, lei)



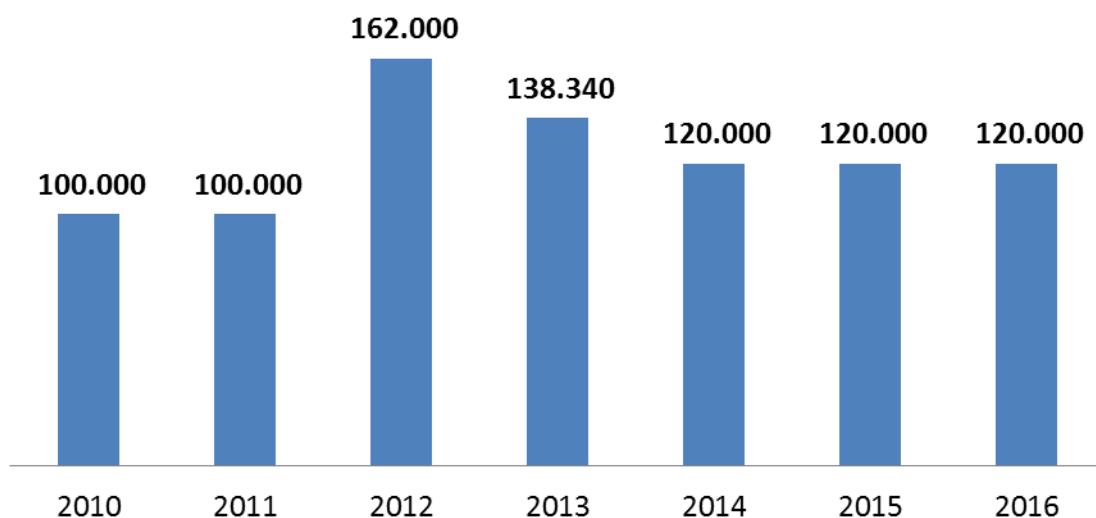
**Amounts allocated to support churches in Harghita County  
by cults (2016, %)**



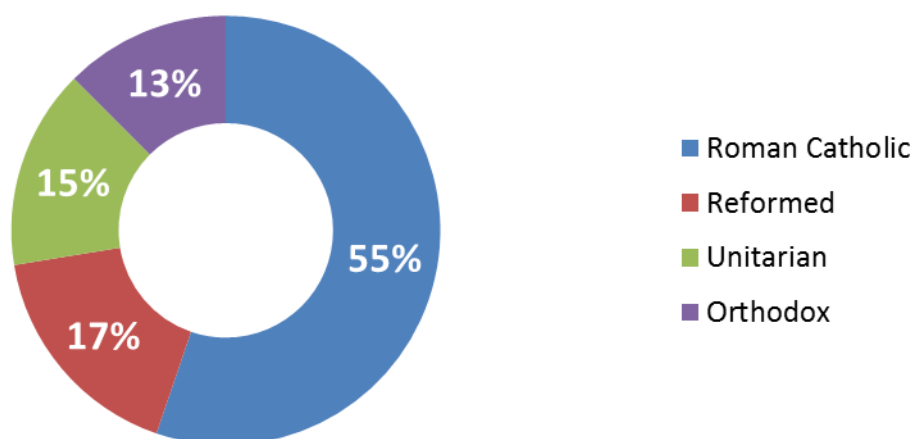
**Collaboration program**

Each year the county council has provided and provides funding for the development of joint programs. Within these activities are highlighted benefits of a life lived by the principles of Christian doctrine, a life with God. A model of Christian life is offered to children and young people - in addition to spending useful time - in which learning, work and play is interlocking, and also the development of religious and moral principles. A moral value which unfortunately lacks today's society.

**Amounts allocated under the program of cooperation  
with religious institutions (2010 - 2016, lei)**



### Amounts allocated under the program of cooperation with religious institutions by cults (2016, %)



#### Conclusions

Through joint efforts with representatives of historic churches, including the Orthodox Church we managed to lay the foundations of a good coexistence between citizens of the county. Cooperation with religious institutions is intended as an open road in their efforts for the protection of cultural heritage and modeling approaches to community.



## The flag of Harghita county

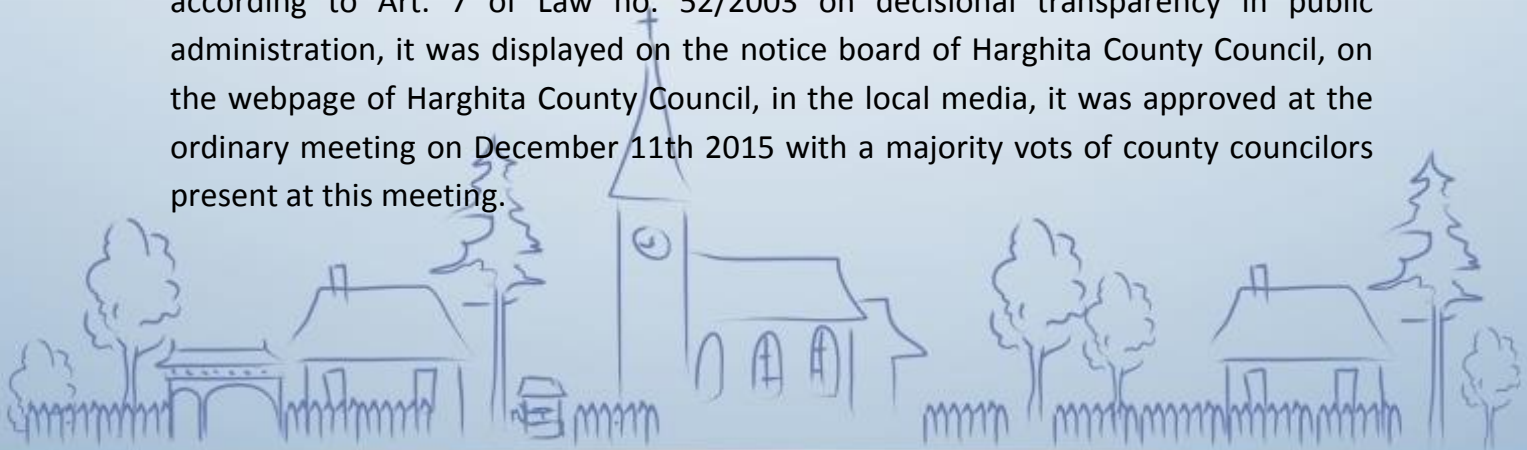
Before adopting the flag of Harghita county, many simple persons, citizens without any political involvement have been fined just because they hoisted the Sekler flag on their home. In 2009, to stop these situations we adopted the flag of Harghita county.

In January 2010, three civil organizations from Harghita county along with physical person have submitted a complaint to The National Council for Combating Discrimination, because in their opinion this flag discriminates the romanians who live in the region. In November 2010, NCCD has published its resolution that this flag is not discriminatory, referring to the Government Decision 137/2000, article 15., Decision of The National Council for Combating Discrimination dated December 13th 2010, regarding to the decision of Harghita County Council dated November 26th 2009, concerning the adoption of the blue and gold flag, considers that this flag does not discriminate romanian population from the region. On March 14th 2012, in connection with the complaint which aimed at flying the Sekler flag at the events on March 15th 2010, the NCCD once again decided that the blue and gold flag it's not discriminatory. So we have two final judgments that the flag is not discriminatory.

After this, a second lawsuit was filed, which argued that there is no legal basis for adopting the decision about the flag of Harghita county. Then the Court of Appeal annulled the decision of Harghita County Council, in the reasoning it is written that is not a legal basis by which a county to have its own flag.

However, in present we have an undisputed legal basis, a law adopted by the Romanian Parliament, precisely to resolve this situation by Law no. 141 of June 10th 2015 regarding the hoist and use by the administrative-territorial units of their own flag.

Based on this law it was initiated the draft resolution on which during the approval, according to Art. 7 of Law no. 52/2003 on decisional transparency in public administration, it was displayed on the notice board of Harghita County Council, on the webpage of Harghita County Council, in the local media, it was approved at the ordinary meeting on December 11th 2015 with a majority votes of county councilors present at this meeting.



By adopting the flag, we wanted to resolve the situation of those tens of thousands citizens of our county who have purchased sekler flags for many years and they hoist it on their homes or they use it during the pilgrimage from Sumuleu-Ciuc, and after the approval of the county flag they will be no longer persecuted or fined. And do not forget about the mayors and other leaders of institutions, for example school principals, which were reported to the prosecution, and summoned before the courts, dragged into lawsuits, and these kind of situations that they have not deserved. The goal was simple, to defend all that citizens or non-governmental organizations of our county who want to hoist the sekler flag.

In March 2016 the Prefecture of Harghita County filled a complain in court against the decision of the county council, which establishes the Sekler flag as the official flag of Harghita County, arguing that the decision is against the law.

Meanwhile, I had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, Vasile Dîncu and requested his support in the resolution of the situation in order to create a climate of peace and good understanding. I also highlighted the fact that the Sekler flag does not offend anyone and it is not against anybody.

In April we filled a contestation in the Harghita Court, requesting the rejection of the actions of the Prefecture. At this point we are waiting for the decision of the Harghita Court and we truly hope that it will be a positive one and in the favor of all the residents of Harghita County.



## **More work, less drama**

### **We need a strategy to combat immigration**

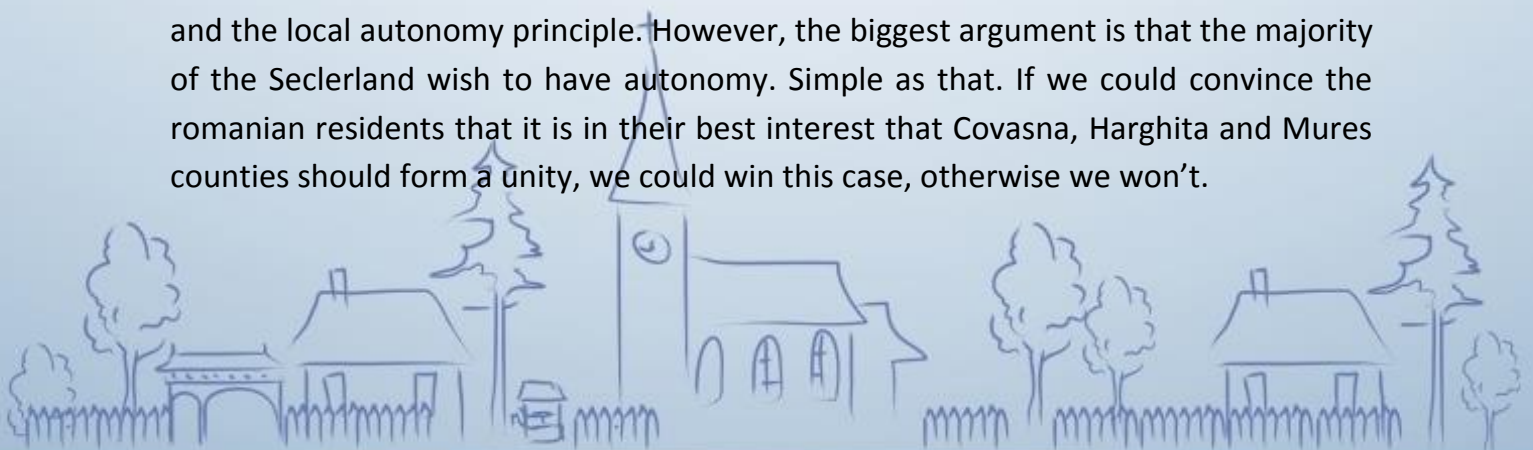
Sadly, many young people from all over the country seek work abroad. Fortunately only a small percentage of young people from Seklerland go abroad, compared to other regions of the country. The reasons for emigration are well known: the prospect of a decent life leads young people to go elsewhere.

The autonomy, as the guarantee of the keeping on one's identity, is being built by businessmen who create workplaces, the families who raise children, the teachers who educate these children, by state workers who responsibly do their jobs even if they are underpaid, and not by the ones who fight with us nor by those who create autonomous projects from a television studio or newspaper office. We better focus on our job rather than wait for a miracle to happen. Our job will not be done by anyone else.

### **Politics has exhausted its resources**

Let's face the facts: in the last few years our the biggest enemies of this community were in fact, the very members of this community. I could bring a number of examples to prove my point above. And let's also not pretend to look the other way when we address the European Union and European Institutions in a bad manner, we have and we always had much to gain from Romania's adherence to the European Union. Harghita County is the first one in Romania in terms of funding requests and in terms of the amounts of funding for agriculture. In one year, our farmers – over ten thousand, not just a few- have benefitted of more than 6- million euros that came from European funds, the same amount as the payment in the Dacia factory for a year.

Of course, there are many arguments that we could bring to support the creation of a region, some of which might also be accepted by the European institutions, these arguments stem from the principles of the European Union, the subsidiary principle and the local autonomy principle. However, the biggest argument is that the majority of the Seclerland wish to have autonomy. Simple as that. If we could convince the romanian residents that it is in their best interest that Covasna, Harghita and Mures counties should form a unity, we could win this case, otherwise we won't.

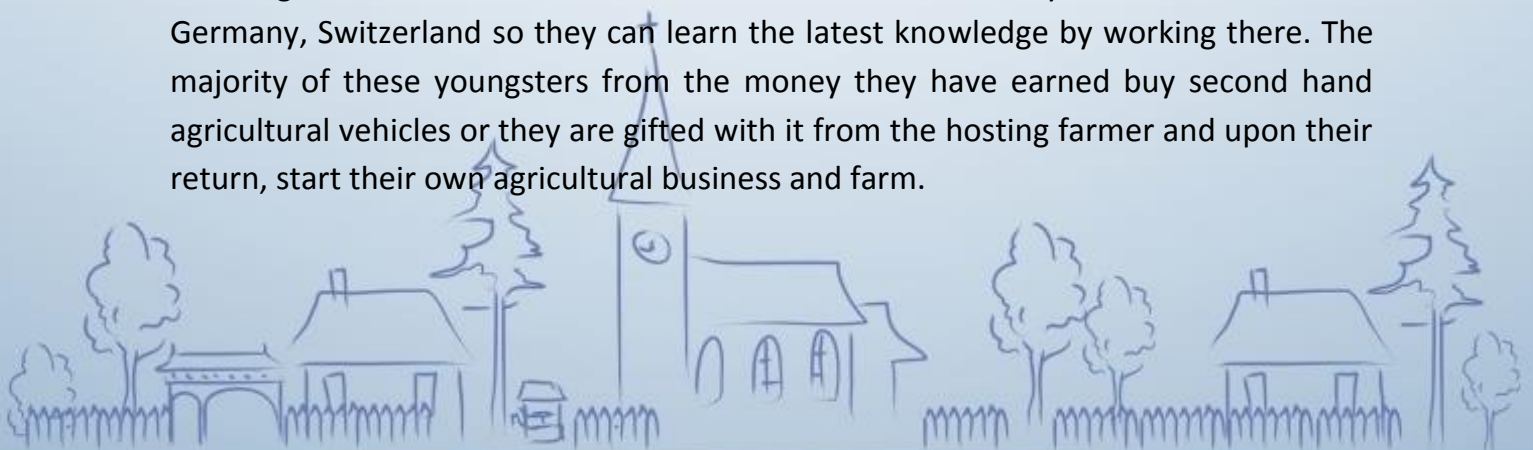


The history, as well as the recent events have proved that the basic institutions that our hungarian community can count on in their battle to preserve their identity, are the hungarian historical churches. All the evil in the politics and in the public life is due to the fact that we have distanced ourselves from the religion. Politics has exhausted its resources. The people supporting the political parties is dropping by the minute, the presence at the vote is getting smaller, and so we are losing even more ground. We could stop this phenomena and we could kickstart the UDMR ascendance by involving the hungarian historical churches in the solving of the everyday issues of our community, making it clear that without love no such thing can happen.

The Transilvanian historical hungarian churches support the social protection systems- without significant budgetary contributions, like the foundation led by the franciscan priest Bőjte Csaba, who looks after and educates thousands of abandoned children or those coming from needy families.

The Foundation „Sf. Francisc” was established in 1993 and it leads an activity that is supported by the social assistance domain and it consists of: identification of children who are under social risk; providing in the frame of this institution a normal living condition (food, accommodation, and a Christian education) at social family groups and in dorms; helping of the families whose children are having a hard time re-entering into their families; supporting the youngsters who have graduated school or university to integrate into society. The benefits of the services of the foundation are selected at the request of the parents, relatives, taking into consideration the risk factor and the social needs. In these institutions the age is between 3 and 18. The Foundation, with its 36 family type dorms, day centres or dorms we offer the children: school necessities, clothes and proper shoes, a daily 3 meals. Of these 36 institutions, 16 are functioning in Harghita county.

Agrocaritasul based in Harghita County belongs to the Roman Catholic Archideocis from Alba Iulia among many others, has a social program for youngsters interested in the agriculture- and after an intensive German course – they are sent to farmers in Germany, Switzerland so they can learn the latest knowledge by working there. The majority of these youngsters from the money they have earned buy second hand agricultural vehicles or they are gifted with it from the hosting farmer and upon their return, start their own agricultural business and farm.



This program was attended by about 2 thousand youngsters in Harghita county, many of them still being active in agriculture to this day. They have a good knowledge of German, they have had a taste of another culture and this entire program happened based on the relations of the Catholic Church, without any budgetary contribution.

I could also mention the Social Assistance and Medical Care At Home program realised in collaboration with the Caritas Organization of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese Alba Iulia and the Harghita County Council. The created network is still working to this day in many counties, and offers comfort to the suffering and to those who are home-caring someone ill.

I could also name tens, or even maybe hundreds of programs in the rural areas where priests are supporting social protection programs, of instructing the youngsters into finding a workplace or other types of programs, useful to the local community. The professional reconversion, the social protection, the helping of the elderly in need, the education are all domains where the hungarian churches of Transylvania have an active participation and proved to be more efficient than the initiatives supported by the state or by the local authorities.

This is the reason why i said politics has exhausted its resources, it needs support, a new energy that can be assured by a more active implication of our churches in the handling and the solving of some everyday problems that we are dealing with on a daily basis, locally or in the entire county.

There is no reason why we should copy the models from other countries, we have our own resources and own models, that are functional and that have been working with high efficiency. In the Bőjte Csaba institution 5 thousand needy children have entered and as a result came out well-educated, and developed mentally and physically. This institution is sponsored by donations, the state funding being secondary in its functioning. I don't believe there is a such institution on the West-Europe that would have similar performances.

More work and less drama- said by the priest Bőjte Csaba. I loved this phrase so much that whenever I have decisions to make i ask myself the question, is it work or is it drama. If it is drama, i leave it aside because we do have possibilities for work and the expectations of our voters is that we should work. This is the only way to reach our goal, namely to decrease the language barrier from 20 to 10 percent, since that way the use of native language would be guaranteed to hungarian minorities.



## Restitution of the Ciuc Private Estates

The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) has several times claimed at national and international forums and authorities the acceleration of restitution of Hungarian church properties in Transylvania.

UDMR, since its establishment, has campaigned for restitution of confiscated and nationalized properties, faced very often with a strong current of political opposition. Today, thanks to the efforts of the Union, many church and private property is again owned by their initial owners, but the restitution process has not ended entirely.

An eloquent example in this regard is the case of the Private Estates of Ciuc. By Decision no. 11 of 26 February 1923 on the application of the Agrarian Reform of 1921, the total assets of the Private Estates of Csík were turned over to the Romanian State. The decision was executed during the period 24 March to 1 May 1923.

Based on the law nr.765 / 1946 on the return of expropriated property, Regia Publică Comercială "Bunuri Private din Ciuc" was established, whose legal successor is the association of property-owners for Estates of Ciuc.

The properties owned by Estates of Ciuc have been classified as state property in 1950 when "Ciuc private Estates" has ceased operations.

Harghita County Council has no direct competence in resolving this situation persisting in the last 20 years, but in my capacity as chairman of the county council, allow me to address you in solving this issue in a favourable manner.

