

## **Report on the East-West Cohesion II International Scientific Conference\***

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Since 2007, the University of Dunaújváros organises annual international scientific conferences with the title “Danube-area cohesion”. These events now considered as traditional have contributed to the establishment and operation of the European Danube Regional Strategy (EDRS).

Building on the results of the Danube area, the Eastern Opening Strategy unfolded at the University of Dunaújváros in 2014 has significantly contributed to the development of international cooperation, the strengthening of East-West relations and to socio-economic cohesion. With these thoughts in mind, the East-West Cohesion International Scientific Conference was organised for the second time on 16–17 November 2017. The aim of the event was to strengthen international cooperation between higher educational institutions, to promote modern forms of training, to establish scientific cooperation and to help the work of doctoral students and young researchers.

Participants of the conference came from 7 different countries and 20 different higher education institutions. The two-day event opened with a plenary session with comprehensive lectures linked to the main topics and continued with four parallel sections in the afternoon. On the second day, panel discussions were held providing an opportunity to hold multilateral consultations and exchanges of views, thereby facilitating the development of international partnership and the foundation of joint research projects.

The conference was opened by *István András*, Rector of the University of Dunaújváros, who gave a brief overview of the university and its operation. He then discussed the strategic possibilities expected from the Eastern Opening in the areas of research and development. Following the opening words of the Rector, *Antal Papp*, President of the Scientific Council of the National Directorate General for Disaster Management of the Ministry of Interior and patron of the conference greeted the participants.

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\* The papers in this issue contain the views of the authors which are not necessarily the same as the official views of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank.

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At the plenary session, renowned local and foreign speakers reported on their latest scientific research findings which contributed to the issue of East-West cohesion. The plenary lectures started off with a comprehensive academic lecture by *Lajos Veres*, College Professor at the University of Dunaújváros, Director of Danube Strategy, entitled "New challenges in the East-West cohesion in the global economic space". The speaker pointed out the changes observed in interpreting the concept of cohesion, which led to increased attention to economic, social and territorial disparities. The second part of the lecture focused on the transformation of European values and on new crisis phenomena. Last but not least, the third point dealt with the concept of security changing as a result of the growing financial and economic crisis experienced over the last decade and the need for creating economic security in the period ahead, as well as the wider interpretation of the security of supply.

In his lecture entitled "International economic challenges in the transnational sphere", *Csaba Lentner*, Professor at the National University of Public Service, outlined that the new economic policy responses to the 2008 financial and economic crisis were no longer formulated in the spirit of neoliberalism, but according to the new requirements of the post-globalisation era. The crisis of the European Union has shifted the focus not only to cooperation between macro-regions and country groups, but also to national economic policy responses that are stronger than seen up to now. In the developing geopolitical environment, economic policy ambitions that reinforce national popular opinion, monetary policy and public finance have gained importance. Finally, Lentner outlined the importance of the increasing role of the state in the economy.

In his lecture, *Ferenc Szávai*, Rector of the University of Kaposvár, focused on current and potential capital investments in the border area of Hungary. He talked about capital as an essential and intentional tool for economic modernisation and a factor needed for development. In many cases, the appearance and a larger inflow of foreign capital is vital to the development of the economy and the region. However, just as important is the reverse movement of capital. Hungarian firms have invested about one third of the foreign capital flows coming to Hungary into regional states, primarily in Slovakia, Poland and Romania. Besides their strategic significance and the fact that in certain cases they are proof of national policy impacts and advantages, these capital investments are an important item in the capital account of the country. The speaker emphasised that the breakdown of capital imports in Hungary by sectors and countries as well as the results of venture capital activities in Hungary provide important information to new investors.

*Attila Korompai*, Associate Professor at Corvinus University of Budapest, analysed the linkages between the export/import dependency of the Visegrád countries (V4) and the headline target of the EU cohesion policy for the reduction of territorial

disparities. By presenting the changes in GDP per capita between 1996 and 2015, he demonstrated that the V4 countries make for a dynamically growing region within the EU, although the speed of convergence differs by country and time period. A key factor in achieving growth is the strong dependency of the individual countries (except Poland) on foreign trade with the EU-15 countries, meaning an increasing dependency but on a declining path, including Poland after EU accession. Germany is the dominant foreign trading partner of each V4 country. However, in the period following the crisis of 2008, the dependency of these countries on the EU-15 was reduced partly by an increase in trade among themselves, and partly by an opening up to the world market, i.e. a shift in orientation towards the dynamic regions. Thus, the dynamism of GDP per capita growth continued to ensure that the cohesion objective of catching up is achieved.

*Andrea Keszi-Szeremlei* and *Katalin Kukorelli*, college professors at the University of Dunaújváros, delivered interesting lectures on economic security, the migration problem in Hungary and its impact on the state budget. Of the types of migration recently in the centre of interest of researchers and politicians, the issue of refugees fleeing from east to west, especially from war zones, was highlighted. Hungary as a country bordering the Schengen Area is among the target destination countries for refugees, however the country is mostly seen as a transit country. Migration of the population to Western Europe presents greater challenges both to Hungary and the other Eastern European countries. The increase in the number of citizens living abroad, the composition of migrants (most of them are young, i.e. belong to an age group ranging from 20 to 40, highly-qualified and single) may cause problems in the region. The lecturers analysed the positive and negative effects of migration, especially on the labour market and the state budget.

On the afternoon of the first day, the conference continued with panel discussions. The first point of this programme addressed the issue of the Chinese Silk Road in Europe. In the discussion moderated by *György Nanovszky*, former Ambassador to Moscow, the focus was on the traffic corridors of the European Union. The second discussion round addressing new university cooperation projects and partnerships was led by *Szilárd Simon*, Innovation Director at the University of Dunaújváros. With a panel moderated by *Attila Szabó*, Associate Professor at the University of Dunaújváros, new innovation opportunities and special capacities were presented.

During the panel forums, attention was centred on the Silk Road traffic corridor as a future key factor. *György Misur*, Director of the Korridor V Foundation, outlined the important role of the debate on the Silk Road in economic cooperation. *Federico Botto*, Vice President of the Foundation, stressed the importance of logistics relations between Central Europe and Italy as well as the entrepreneurial interest in it. The speakers agreed that it is necessary to exploit the potential of economic

relations, and higher educational institutions play an increasingly important role in this respect.

On the second day, the conference continued with 3 section meetings. The first section “Education and innovation” was led by *Csilla Szabó*, Associate Professor at University of Dunaújváros, Director of Institute of Teacher Training. *Antal Papp*, Fire Brigade Colonel and President of the Scientific Council of the National Directorate General for Disaster Management of the Ministry of Interior, led the “Safety” section, while *Géza Szabó*, Associate Professor at the University of Pécs chaired the “Cultural heritage” section. In the three sections, the attendants could listen to a total of 29 lectures in Hungarian and English.

The significance of the conference was confirmed through a number of new cooperation agreements. Of these, it is worth highlighting the agreement made between the Jan Amos Komiencki State School of Higher Vocational Education (Leszno, Poland) and the University of Dunaújváros on a mechanical engineering student exchange, the degree programmes of the University of Dunaújváros as well as traineeship and internship opportunities for Hungarian students in Poland. A further agreement was concluded between the University of Dunaújváros and the Ural State University of Economics (USUE), Yekaterinburg, Russia.

Based on agreements already concluded and the positive feedback from participants, the leadership of the University of Dunaújváros decided to organise the East-West Cohesion III International Scientific Conference on 12–13 November 2018.