

# THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY IN KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF BORSOD-ABAÚJ-ZEMPLÉN COUNTY

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## SUMMARY

*In the first part of the essay I am dealing with the achievements, concerning employment, of the European Union, in the second part I am trying to answer the question whether to what extent it is possible to utilise the knowledge and expertise, accumulated in the European Union, in solving the problems of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County being in the most critical employment crisis. In the process of the accession of Hungary to the European Union, it is becoming important to take over the stock of knowledge accumulated in the European Union and the ‘Community achievements’. The European Employment Strategy, that is built on the common and co-ordinated influencing of the economic and employment processes, is an achievement of this kind for the Hungarian employment policy. The guidelines of the employment policy, which serves as a basis for that co-ordination, have appeared in the set of goals and means of the Hungarian employment policy as well.*

*The economic situation of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County has been characterised by structural problems and an employment crisis for more than a decade. The Labour Market Fund provides centralised and decentralised budgets through its sub-fund of employment. I have also looked into the use of financial means. I found that the knowledge transfer is to be developed and the preparation for receiving the Social Fund of the European Union should be continued.*

Human history is nothing else, but a process of knowledge-production and knowledge transfer. The most prominent event of European history in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the Roman Contract in 1957, which established today’s European Union.

The half a century long history of the EU is a constant process of learning. The EU got to the point of today’s development from the custom’s union, the economic integration, the common market, the European Monetary System to the strengthening of the social dimension through several steps of development phases. There are a lot of integrations working today in the world, but European Union is the most developed of them, it has gone furthest in cooperation. The key to all this is the knowledge, the spiritual capital, which was accumulated by the European culture through the centuries. The fact that the economies of the western European countries could compete with the USA after being damaged in world war II. is due to the knowledge creation, the high quality research and development, the usage of knowledge, the efficient knowledge transfer that works on higher and higher levels in the regional integrations, and to the European spirit, which tries to reach its aims through raising the less developed member states and decreasing the differences in development.

The progress of Hungary’s joining the European Union, the negotiations suggested it would be necessary to take over the stock of knowledge accumulated in the Community, the Acquis Communautaire. For our homeland the taking over of the European Employment Strategy to the Hungarian employment policy can be regarded as such an achievement, in order to secure increasing employment and economic activity and decrease unemployment.

The European Union treats the employment policy not independently, but as part of the social policy. The definition of social policy went through a lot of changes during the development of the European Community. These changes show the how the relationship between the social and the economic sphere changed. The broader definition of social policy includes: territories beyond the welfare benefits as labor law, social dialog, the equal chances for men and women, security at work, health protection, the rights of the disabled persons and finally employment policy. So employment policy is part of the social policy. The social issues belong to the competence of the member states basically. The initiatives of the Community play only a supplementary role, though we can experience a more and more self-confident behavior on Community level in the last decade, which can be explained by the increasing problems of employment and labor market in the EU.

## I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE'S EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Before we discuss the questions of the application of "European" or as it is called recently, the "Community Employment Strategy" in Hungary or in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, we have to take a look at its antecedents and meaning to be able to evaluate its domestic realization in the country and in the county.

The employment policy of the European Union has three steps of development:

- From the Roman Treaty to the Parisian Conference (1957–1972)
- From the Social Action Program to the Maastricht Treaty (1974–1992)
- From the White Book (growing, cooperativeness, employment) to nowadays (1993–)

When the European Union was established the main aim was to create an economic integration, every other aims (such as social politics) were subordinated to this. They thought that if economic circumstances get better, then the circumstances of life will develop as well, and the well-operating European competitive economy will solve the social problems automatically. This view is shown in the way the Roman Treaty defined the aim of the Community: "The aim of the Community is to realize a common market and harmonize the policies of the member states to help develop the economy over the territory of the Community, stability, the standards of living go up and making the relations stronger between the member states.". The paragraphs 117–128 of the Roman Treaty include social issues that can be generally used: "The member states agree to help develop the workers' life and work circumstances, and decrease the differences among them by maintaining the development."

In the first phase of Europe's employment policy history Social (and employment) policy was only important to the extent it helped the economic integration. That is the reason why the *free motion of labor force* was of great importance, which caused the differences among the member states to decrease, and the conditions of competition come into balance. Supporting migration helped decrease the shortage of labor. At this time the second priority was *education* and training.

*The second, two decades long phase* of Europe's employment policy started with the first enlargement of the Community (United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland) and last until the beginning of the 1990's, until the Maastricht Treaty. In this period the social dimension came into the foreground. It was realized that integration can not be strengthened without harmonizing the social regulations, and the new agreements were signed in this spirit. It was experienced in the countries of the Community that balanced economic development is just a condition of the development's increasing, but it does not solve the problems of the labor markets. Big changes had to be made in the field of social politics. The most important steps of this period were:

→ The *Social Action Program* in 1974, which had principals such as full, or at least higher level employment, improving life and work circumstances and taking part on a higher level in the decision making of the Community.

→ In 1986 the *Single European Act* altered the Roman Treaty in several important questions. With the second enlargement of the EU (Greece-1981, Spain and Portugal-1986) the number of the members increased to 12, so the institutions and the decision making mechanisms had to be adjusted to these changes. The social legislation became less difficult with the introduction of the majority voting. Economic and social cohesion, solidarity and the development of underdeveloped regions came into the foreground.

→ *Community Charta on the social rights of employees* (1989) it was an adoption of the European Social Charta (1961) to Community law. The Economic and Social Committee of the European Economic Community publicized a communiqué on the protection of the social rights. The Charta on the social rights of employees was a consequence of this. The document was vetoed by Brits so it had only been a political Communiqué for a long time, and could not become part of the regulation.

→ *The Maastricht Treaty* (1992) the documents created in the first years of the decade treated the social issues as equal to the economic sphere. They emphasize that investments in human capital has a definite role in view of the future of the Union. The Protocol of Social Politics and the Social politics Agreement are part of the Maastricht Treaty. Especially the last one is of great importance as it makes majority voting possible on several fields, extends social dialog and the taking part of social partners in the preparation of decisions.

*The third period of development* began in the first years of the last decade when unemployment and the low rate of employment became an important problem in politics. The lasting depression caused the rate of growth to stabilize on at about 2% instead of the 4% it used to be. Unemployment increased above the critical level (10%), there were 18 million workers unemployed in the EU, and employment balanced at about 60%. The main aim of the Maastricht Treaty was to realize the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) to be able to treat the economic shocks and employment problems more efficiently.

The period after the Maastricht Treaty, the main stations of lifting up the social- and employment policy of the European Community:

→ *The White Book (growing, cooperativeness, employment)* 1993, which includes the strategic assets to reverse the unfavorable processes in the labor market. It searches for the answer how market comparativeness and social solidarity could be fitted.

→ The Essen Conference where *The Strategy for employment in the Community* was published. The so called Essen priorities put emphasis on the development of qualification, help increase employment, decrease indirect labor costs and support those who are most likely to become unemployed.

→ The *Amsterdam Treaty* (signed in 1997.) was a real breakthrough. The main priority of the Amsterdam Treaty that came into force in 1999 was employment policy. The Roman Treaty was enlarged by a chapter about employment, what lifted the employment policy to Community level.

According to the Amsterdam Treaty the member states and the Community bring their employment policy in harmony, and try to realize it harmonized, as employment issues are of great importance for each member state. At the same time the Community has to help make the cooperation among the member states better, and lift up the level of employment.

## 2. FROM THE EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYMENT TO THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN

The Employment policy Agreement of the Community, which was accepted in 1997 became the middle run policy of treating the problems of employment and unemployment in the last years. The “employment” chapter of the Amsterdam Treaty includes the following priorities:

- The member states and the Community endeavor to develop a harmonized employment strategy.
- The sharing of competence among the member states and the Community, and the subsidiary principle prevails.
- Community issues, but the practice has to fit the national specialties.
- The member states coordinate their social and employment strategy with the Council.
- The Community encourages and supports the cooperation among the member states.

The most important things to do according to the *order of the procedures defined in the chapter of employment*:

- The European Council overlooks the employment situation and the things to do every year.
- The European Council gives advices on the directions of employment every year. policy issues every year.
- The European Council examines how the member states considered the given directions.
- The European Council consults with Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions in questions of employment policy.
- Provisions for development of employment cooperation and getting to know the best practice.

The employment strategy accepted by the European Council is being built on the harmonized, common influentation of economic and employment processes. The **Employment policy directions** that establish the coordination is being built on the pillars of four objectives: increasing employability, the encouragement of becoming entrepreneurs, the development of adaptability and increasing the equality of chance. [4]

1997 was the first year when Employment Policy Directions were accepted at the Luxembourg Conference. Since then 4 directions were publicized, the in 2001. Hungary considers the European issues of employment policy as an associate member from the “Essen priorities” to the employment directions. The documents of the concrete provisions are the alterations of law on increasing employment

and treating of unemployment, and law on labor, just as the Hungarian National Employment Action Plan.

At the same time the European Union is occupied in the labor market situation continuously. There are three ways to continue work on the European employment strategy:

- The European Employment Pact, which had an aim to strengthen macroeconomic connections.
- Recommendations of the Council to treat the specialties of the member states.
- Regional Employment Pacts to solve local and regional problems of employment.

The Regional Employment Pact announced on experimental levels in 1998-98, then generally in 2000 is qualified for strengthening the realization of the Luxembourg process, made to help carry out the European Employment Strategy. The harmony of the developments realized in the framework of Structural Funds and employment Directions (lifting up the underdeveloped regions) can be secured this way. A bigger support can be given to carry out the European Employment Strategy then the sources of the European Social Fund could afford.

The main objective of the Regional Employment Pact is to help realizing the employment directions, increase the creation of workplaces, coordinating and integrating the efforts of regional, local and others involved in the issue. The practical aim of the Regional Employment Pact is to work out a program including provisions creating new workplaces, which is in harmony with the region’s general development plan.

The Regional Employment Pact is such a strategic document for treating employment problems that include the main objectives, cost and expectable results, definition of the aim-groups and the main characteristics of the chosen region.

How deep the Regional Employment Pact is worked out, the form of the document, the circle of those who take part in the work can change according to the regional specialties. It is unique that such important involved ones as regional and national authorities, representatives of the business sector, social partners, banks, nonprofit organizations chambers, educational institutes and corporations that control the usage of the Structural Funds have to take part in the work. [4]

Following this I will examine considering the last point of view how the accumulated knowledge and practice can go to the place where it is most needed in Hungary, to Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County.

## 3. THE EU-CONFORM TREATMENT OF EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS IN BORSOD-ABAUJ-ZEMPLÉN COUNTY

Economic and social cohesion, regional processes and the situation of regions are a very import part of Hungary’s accession trials with the EU. [5] In the Northern region of Hungary Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is of great importance looking at the territorial and population questions.

### 3. 1. THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION IN BORSOD-ABAÚJ-ZEMPLÉN COUNTY

The labor market of the county has been in disequilibria for about a decade now. The unemployment rate was the highest in 1993, above 22%, and the number of the registered unemployed reached 75 000. In the middle of the decade, in 1995–96 the measure of the unemployment rate (15-16%) let us hope that the county has passed the crisis of employment. The favorable changes were only temporary though, on one hand because of the changes in the unemployment supply system, on the other hand because the first wave of the laying offs ended in the steel industry. The process in the county is opposite to the tendencies of the country as unemployment rate was becoming lower everywhere in the country, but not here, where the rate exceeded 21% in February 2001, and the number of the registered unemployed was at about 60.000.

The seriousness of the situation is shown by the fact that while in 1997 Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County had the highest unemployment rates, we reached and left them in 1998. [6]

There are opposite trends in the county today, as there are economic developments and crisis at the same time. The number of workplaces increased in Miskolc and Ózd, but they decreased in Kazincbarcika, Putnok and Edelény where mines were closed. The Northern, agricultural regions of the county are still in the worse situation. [7]

The stock of the unemployed got worse in comparison with the last years. The rate of women, elderly people and less educated workers increased. The changes show that the opportunities for younger and better qualified employees got better. Their outflow from the stock of unemployed increases while the less searched groups stay in durable unemployment. The seriousness of these problems are shown well by the following data. There were 202.000 registered unemployed in the country in February, 2001, 15% of that in B-A-Z County. The number of durable unemployed, who can not work for more than a year is 105.000, and 20% of them live in B-A-Z County. [5]

In the regions of the county the employment situation is different. As I have already mentioned, in the North-Eastern part of the county the situation has become more unfavorable, while in the region of Miskolc and Ózd it got better. The differences between the regions have grown.

The most typical characteristic of the county is the lack of workplace-supply. The monthly average supply of 7–9.000 workplace is much lower than the number of the unemployed (50.000). It is unfavorable that while the number of the supplied workplaces grow, the ones not supplied decrease. Next to the global disequilibria the structure of demand and supply differ.

As the law on employment was changed, the number of people getting supplies increased (52%) and the number of those who get aid decreased to 21%. The seriousness of the situation is shown by the fact that 27% of the unemployed get no money, and then we have not mentioned the thousands who are passive unemployed.

### 3. 2. THE PILLARS OF TREATING UNEMPLOYMENT IN BORSOD

In the middle run the strategic objectives of Hungarian employment policy in harmony with EU standards are the following:

- The broadening of employment, securing the opportunities for full employment on the long run,
- Turning back the tendencies of inactivity,
- Changing the type of unemployment, from durable to shorter run, from mass to economic, from structural to frictional,
- Encouraging increasing the adaptability of workers and the competitiveness of firms,
- Increasing equality in the labor market.

The national action plan for employment in the year 2000 was created using the EU's employment policy directives. [9] The law on employment and the usage of the Labor Market Fund were altered. On basis of the experiences of the member states of the EU the change from the passive to the active means of employment policy is of great importance to increase employability, adaptability, and to realize the equality of chances. The financial sources given to the county, used for the active steps, coming from the central frame of Employment Funds were doubled from 1999 to 2000. It can hardly be understood that about 20 million Ft of this source has not been used, knowing the very bad situation of the county. This shows that adaptability is still a great problem in the region, and the technique of knowledge-transfer has to be developed in the county.

#### *The fields of using the supplies from the central frame of the Employment Fund*

- Trainings in connection with the mine closing in B-A-Z County (pillar I.)
- Training and employing experts on regional management (pillar I.)
- Taking over the interests of restart credits (pillar II.)
- Public utility works at the floods (pillar II.)
- Taking over the casual work costs (pillar III.)
- Encouraging employment of about 50 years old unemployed with a degree (Pillar IV.)

The actually used 72 million Ft helped to make better the employment chances of 563 people, efficiency can not be measured as no monitoring was made. It can be registered though that more than 10 million Ft at the floods and more than 7 million at the supply encouraging the employment of the about 50 years old unemployed were not used up in the year 2000.

The County's decentralized frame of the Employment Fund was 3,7 milliard Ft in 2000, and about 88 million Ft of those were not used up. The next table shows the given supports from the decentralized frame.

Table 1.  
The assets financed from the Employment Funds

	The rate of usage within the Fund (%)	Number of people involved	
		(Number)	(%)
1. Training	25,52	9 153	22,36
2. Traditional public utility works	28,39	14 734	36,04
3. Supply on the wages of durable unemployed	14,74	6 018	14,72
4. Supply on starters	10,41	3 296	8,06
5. Investments saving workplaces	3,51	127	0,31
6. Public utility employment for environmental protection	2,25	786	1,92
7. Public utility employment at the Industrial park of Ózd	1,84	704	1,72
8. Financing of programs	4,22	1 042	2,55
9. Other issues	4,63	3 971	9,03
Altogether	100,00	40 882	100,00

Source: Lórántné Orosz Edit (2001) i.m. [10] 1. supplement

The most important supplies among the “other objectives” are: territorial mobility (1 850 persons), the overtake of contributions on employment (1 286 persons), the encouragement of becoming an entrepreneur (489 persons), the temporary self-employment of durable unemployed (221 persons) and the employment benefits of the starters (112 persons),

The 3.929 milliard Ft used for decentralized supplies helped 40.882 persons, so the supply is almost one million Ft per person. The costs of the assets are different. The most expensive is the creation of new workplaces, where the supply was 1.100.000 Ft per person, the cheapest was the supply for territorial mobility.

It is illuminating to see which were the fields where the sources were not used up:

- The supplies on intensive search for work,
- Durable self-employment of unemployed,
- Supplies for territorial mobility.

Adaptability seems to be low in these territories, and the involved ones do not know how to the supplies. The 18 million Ft left unused from the source for encouraging territorial mobility is very big, regarding how needed it would have been, looking at the fact that thousand of starters go to work to Budapest and Trans-Danubia from Borsod. The second biggest source left is the supply for encouraging unemployed to become self-employed with 15 million Ft, the third is the wage supplies for disabled and durable unemployed with 8 million Ft. Researches should be made to examine the efficiency of the usage of these sources, and this could answer the question which factors hinder knowledge transfer.

### 3. 3. THE LABOR MARKET PROGRAMS LAUNCHED IN BORSOD-ABAUJ-ZEMPLEN COUNTY

The European Union tries to fulfill its employment policy objectives through the assets of the European Social Fund. The countries waiting to access can use these sources only after accession. Hungary has already started preparations for using these sources, to able to use up the supply frameworks we will have. At application we have to consider the principles of concentration, programming, paternity, and additionality accepted by the EU. [1]

The law on encouragement of employment and unemployed supplies says that the Labor Market Fund can secure the financial sources for programs that aim the realization of employment objectives, influentation of labor market processes, and employment of those who are in an unfavorable situation.

The main characteristic of labor market programs is complexity. The objective is to bring back the unemployed to the labor markets. The programs use the assets of service based on the individual characteristics of the unemployed. They are able to concentrate sources in order to integrate unemployed in the labor market. The Labor Center of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County started its fist program in 1999, in the framework of the Regional Employment Pact “Complex public utility works”. Its objective was to make the labor market chances of the involved ones (mostly durable unemployed) better through using different methods and services of employment policy and coordinating the efforts of the involved ones.

*Table 2.*  
*The programs financed from the Employment Funds in 2000.*

	The usage of the Fund Ft	Number of people involved
1. Complex public utility and reintegration program	149.351	768
2. Program for social treatment	9.608	60
3. Program encouraging the employment of persons in unfavorable situations	4.768	25
4. Program encouraging the employment of durable unemployed, disabled and starters	2.475	189
Altogether	166.202	1042

Source: Lórántné Orosz Edit (2001) i.m. [10] 1. supplement

The program cost 87 million Ft in 1999, the number of the involved ones was 513, 122 of them managed to get employed, and 22 others without supplies. The rate of finding a new job was 30% instead of the 20% expected. On basis of the favorable experiences the program was launched in 2000 as well, with 3 new programs. The most important data of these programs is included in the following table.

In 2000 the most important program was the Complex public utility and reintegration program. 89,9% of the

sources was used for this program, and 73,7% of the involved ones. The success of this program can be accounted for the 1999 program. [12]

These programs are in harmony with the ones mentioned in the European Employment Strategy, as it says that problems of the unemployed can only be treated efficiently with complex programs using different methods and services, concentrating the sources. At the same time we need more knowledge transfer to be able to meet the requirements of European Employment Strategy.

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**Die Rolle der Europäischen Beschäftigungsstrategie im  
Kenntnisstransfer  
auf dem Beispiel von der Komitat Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén  
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*Im ersten Teil der Studie werde ich mit der gemeinsamkeitliche Errungenschaften der Beschäftigung der Europäische Union beschäftigen, in der zweiten Teil suche ich die Antwort auf die Frage, wie der im EU zusammengehäufte Kenntnisse und Erfahrungen in der Lösung den Problemen der beschäftigungskrise von Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén Komitat helfen können.*

*Im Prozess des Anschlusses von Ungarn zu der Europäische Union wird die Übernahme der im EU aufgehäufte Wissenschaften, die "gemeinsamkeitliche Errungenschaften" notwendig. Solche gemeinsamkeitliche Errungenschaft ist die Europäische Beschäftigungsstrategie für die ungarische Beschäftigungspolitik, die sich auf die gemeinsame, abgestimmte Beeinflussung den Wirtschaft- und Beschäftigungsprozessen gründet. Die beschäftigungspolitische Richtungslinien, die die Grundlagen der Koordination sind, haben schon erschienen in die Zielsetzungen und Instrumente der ungarische Beschäftigungspolitik.*

*Strukturelle Störungen und Beschäftigungskrise kennzeichnen die Lage der Wirtschaft in der Komitat Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén seit eines Jahrzehntes. Für die Behandlung dieses Problems sichert die Arbeitsmarktgrund zentrale und dezentralisierte Kontingente durch seine Beschäftigungsgundteil. Ich erforschte die Anwendung der Finanzierungsinstrumente. Ich habe festgestellt, das die Kenntnisstransfer noch auf die Entwicklung wartet und die Vorbereitung auf dem Empfang der Sozialgrund der EU soll fortgeführt weden.*

**AZ EURÓPAI FOGLALKOZTATÁSI STRATÉGIA  
SZEREPE A TUDÁSTRANSZFERBEN BORSOD-ABAÚJ-  
ZEMPLEN MEGYE PÉLDÁJÁN**

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*A tanulmány első részében az Európai Unió foglalkoztatást érintő közösségi vívmányaiival foglalkozom, második részében arra keresem a választ, hogy az EU-ban felhalmozott tudást és tapasztalatot mennyiben sikerült alkalmazni a legkritikusabb foglalkoztatási válsághelyzetű Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén megye problémáinak megoldására.*

*Magyarország Európai Unióhoz való csatlakozásának folyamatában szükségessé válik az EU-ban felhalmozódott tudásállománynak, a „Közösségi vívmányok-”nak az átvétele. Ilyen vívmánynak tekinthető az Európai Foglalkoztatási Stratégia a magyar foglalkoztatáspolitikára, amely a gazdasági és foglalkoztatási folyamatok közös, összehangolt befolyásolására épül. A koordináció alapját képező foglalkoztatáspolitikai irányvonalak megjelentek a magyar foglalkoztatáspolitikai célkitűzéseiben és eszköztárban is.*

*B-A-Z megye gazdaságának helyzetét több mint egy évtizede a strukturális zavarok és a foglalkoztatási válsághelyzet jellemzik. Kezelésére a Munkaerőpiaci Alap a foglalkoztatási alaprészen keresztül központi és decentralizált keretet biztosít. Vizsgáltam a finanszírozási eszközök felhasználását. Megállapítottam, hogy a tudástransfer fejlesztésre vár és folytatni kell a felkészülést az EU Szociális Alapjának fogadására.*