

## STATES AND COUNTRIES IN THE UNIFYING EUROPE

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### Abstract

The paper is dealing with the issue of the state borders in the unifying Europe, underlining the question of conflict borders and function of regions in the concept of the Europe of regions. On different case studies the suitability and its functionality are presented, of borders over the mainly in the framework of regions.

**Key words:** Europe, Europe of regions, state borders

## DRŽAVE IN REGIJE V ZDRUŽENI EVROPI

### Izveček

Članek obravnava vprašanja državnih meja znotraj združene Evrope in izpostavlja vprašnje konfliktnih meja ter funkcijo regij v konceptu Evropa regij. Na različnih primerih predstavlja ustreznost meja skozi čas in njihovo funkcionalnost, kar še posebej izstopa v regionalnem okviru.

**Ključne besede:** Evropa, Evropa regij, državne meje

It is not simple to talk about borders in the unifying Europe, since what this expression means does change spatially even in the European highly developed integration. The external borders of the EU are mostly based on natural dividing lines and are thus easily drawn, and, on the other hand, surround the community like defending walls, protecting its achievements that have been commonly fought by member states during the course of decades. Thus, it is predominantly its isolating effect that has been felt during the past decades; liberalization in the permeability of borders appears rather as a consequence of EU enlargement only. It is important to emphasise this phenomenon, since after the enlargement commencing in 2004 parts of the Schengen border will be transformed into internal EU borders and the external one will be simultaneously pushed towards the east, to protrude as a wall in a region where permeability has traditionally been a demand.

The internal EU borders have almost identical legal status, yet there are considerable differences in this respect. For example, one cannot compare the lines defining the legitimate spaces of Benelux states, which have been virtually totally freely permeable for almost a century, with borders stretching between Germany and Austria, Sweden and Finland, or between the founding member states of the EU. The dividing lines inside the EU are different, among a series of other factors, in their historic and international roles, physical existence, trace, durability, and thus, in their present characteristics, reflecting the complexity represented by member states. Despite this variable structure, there is one common, explicit tendency in integration: the community, Hungary now aims at becoming a member of intends to continuously degrade its internal borders, trying to give them a connective role instead of a function of isolation. Nevertheless, despite positive intentions and democratism, these joining surfaces do bear problems: it is enough to think of the dividing line in the Irish island or the British-Spanish border (Gibraltar) stretching along the southern verges of the continent. There can be a series of ethnic and religious segregations and unrest, causing tension within counties or even individual settlements, all indicating that it is not only pre-accession countries that have problems yet to solve (Guérit, F., Kamps B., Trócsányi A., 2002).

The majority of these conflicts results from the fact that the way how the borders – of either level – were drawn and thus space was divided, is not appropriate. When the regional structure that has formed more or less spontaneously during the course of socio-economic development does not coincide – or only partly coincides – with the spatial structure demanded by the interests of power, then what results is problematic, difficultly operable regions even in the most democratic scheme. In the followings the functionally built (bottom-up), organically developing spatial systems will be contrasted with the administrative-authoritative (top-down) ones serving power relations. Certainly, there is considerable overlap between the two approaches everywhere in the world, but at the same time, even with full optimism, no complete harmony is expected anywhere.

*Table 1: Two possible systems of spatial division*

Functional system	settlement	attraction zone	region	country
Administrative system	village/town	district	county	state

A functional system contains the settlement, the natural attraction zone established around it during the course of centuries, the region based on these, and the country including all. These are terms that can be objectively organized into a system, building on each other to form the whole. Its internal borders are flexible, and can be adjusted in accordance with the requirements of different era, yet, on larger time-scales they represent relative constancy. The other structural system contrasting and co-existing with the functional one is a top-down organisation that has been created administratively, also being hierarchic. Legal system, administration, power functions are all valid only within the borders of the state, therefore, to operate these functions, it is required to establish units of similar size on the various levels. The state practices its rights through counties, below which there are districts being authoritative in villages and towns. The nomenclature of the various levels as well as the division of powers among them is widely variable in Europe's different pockets, yet this system is essentially similar in all places. In the followings, we are going to outline the theoretical and pragmatic differences between these two systems, as seen in the forming European space.

The first (functional) row has evolved as a result of secular development. As peoples colonized lands and created their settlements it became necessary to ensure protection and, secure the conditions for working and living, for practising various activities in their homelands. Certainly, these activities gain shape and are concentrated in certain institutions with different attractions. This is because their existence is based on a series of geographic features and on their utilisability, on the resulting quantitative characteristics, and on the requiremental and functional composition of people living there. The settlements are organized into attraction zones of which regions are born, the definition of which is quite diverse in literature. One thing is sure, however: permanent coexistence, traditions and the common value systems all work as cohesive forces for people living there and it also seems justified that the building blocks of regions are attraction zones. Then, the country - a permanent "umbrella" of regional coexistence and joint operation - is made up of these regions, among which there are stripes of thinner organizational structure.

The other (administrative) row contains those spatial terms that are built top-down, i.e. components of a public administrative division of a state. When establishing these spatial units, the space of the country is being divided, thus the background for the creation of this structural terminology is quite different. Another substantial difference is that its elements, in contrast with the former system, have linear boundaries, i.e. there is no point in space without definitely belonging to one of the units. A village is declared as such by the authorised administrative organ or legal entity. Accordingly, while one settlement can be called a village, another may be only a populated outer area; and if another one is claimed to be even more developed – based on a system of various numerical criteria –, then it will be granted town rank. Villages are organised into districts the centre of which supplies its villages with an institutional system of certain functions, and district (administrative) boundaries are also of line character. Accordingly, every single point in space belongs to and joins one of the villages or towns. Districts and counties

have similar constellation, but these units must be considered even more carefully. From the above it appears that each term has its corresponding one in the other system, but the issue of county versus region is one that represents a subject of strong debates and confrontation of interests. Many of those who would prefer eliminating differences between the two rows of spatial terms, try to formulate regions composed of counties. However, the authors of the present paper believe that these possible units do not overlap with the true regions that carry within them real economic processes, thus it is not recommended to devote effort to thinking up such. Moreover, true regions do exist, since we have created them by our everyday space use. It is only necessary to simply explore them and build a system of self-governing onto the existing structure. This could even be carried out parallel with county-level operation, but it would be more favourable to establish it instead of the county system. However, to establish such a system faces very serious difficulties, since our county-based election system never allows a political situation in which a winning power could think of destroying a system in which it won the elections and in which its legitimacy is ensured. Maybe the four-year system prescribed today in policy is not even enough for governments to effectively work out the most ideal spatial structure. A longer cycle would possibly allow time for thinking about how to proceed and how we can establish and transform a new (geo-) political background.

Counties together make up a state, or to put it more precisely, the territory of the state is divided by administration into counties. Countries are a result of an objective developmental process, whereas states are created by principles operating the world in general, rather than being a spatial unit that forms as a result of natural socio-economic processes. State boundaries are determined and drawn by current or permanent political power relations, thus they have nothing to do with a structure formed by an already existing socio-economic arrangement (Tóth J., Golobics P., 1996).

If the consequences of those mentioned above are projected broadly onto the continent as a whole, a seemingly evident statement can be made: Europe can be divided into either countries or states, now not dealing with possible divisions on the lower hierarchy. First, however, the old continent should be defined spatially. To do only this is not simple either, since Europe's political (state-determined) and physical geographic boundaries differ greatly from each other. If state territories are considered, the EU is present in Africa (e.g. Ceuta) and also in America (e.g. French Guyana), and if Turkey should join, the integration undoubtedly will become Asian as well. The expression „Europe of the Nations” appears from time to time in materials presenting the integration process, but in these cases, irrespective of whether the countries referred to are national states or not, what is being dealt with is clearly the Europe of states. It is enough to allude to the „Belgian nation” which is a single state but its citizens are associated to several different nations, through strong linguistic, cultural and other bonds. If this way of thinking is applied and the smallest ones are also counted, there are nearly 50 states in our continent, showing marked differences in all respects: the contrast between The Vatican of 0,44 km<sup>2</sup>, and Russia extending well beyond Europe's boundaries shows this illustratively. (Table 2)

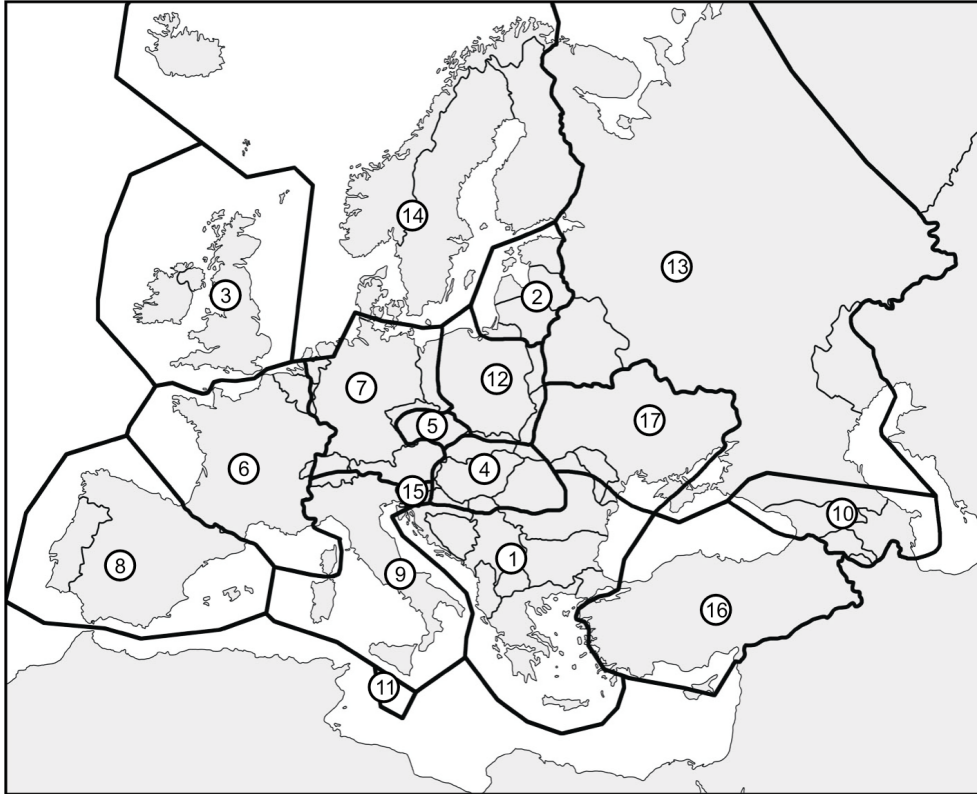
Table 2: States and countries of Europe

States of Europe	
Albania	Italy
Andorra	Latvia
Armenia	Liechtenstein
Austria	Lithuania
Azerbaijan	Luxemburg
Belgium	Macedonia
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Malta
Bulgaria	Moldova
Byelorussia	Monaco
Serbia and Montenegro	Norway
Croatia	Poland
Cyprus	Portugal
Czech Republic	Romania
Denmark	Russia
Estonia	San Marino
Finland	Slovakia
France	Slovenia
Georgia	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Great Britain	Switzerland
Greece	The Netherlands
Hungary	Turkey
Iceland	Ukraine
Ireland	Vatican
Countries of Europe	
Balkania	Caucasia
Balticum	Malta
Britain	Poland
Carpathia	Russia
Czechia/Bohemia	Scandinavia
France	Slovenia
Germany	Turkey
Iberia	Ukraine
Italy	

Having mentioned „Europe of the regions”, since the building unit of countries are the regions – that can be cut apart as well as stick unrelatedly together –, an entirely different division system appears. In this system there are only 17 countries, and the conventional spatial structure is greatly modified. As a contrast to the figure on state borders

shown above, below is a draft indicating the major spaces, demarcated only roughly. It is impossible to draw definite linear borders, since the central core areas of dense structure are separated from each other by thinly textured band-like spaces.

Figure 1: Europe of the countries (Edited by J. Tóth)



According to the map it appears that Iberia (as a country) includes the state territories of Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar and Andorra. In this interpretation France includes, in addition to the core land, parts of Belgium and Switzerland, which, as states, belong elsewhere. The country of Germany also extends beyond its state borders, to include the Netherlands, a section of Switzerland and Austria, and thus, as a country, is larger than what we know as the German state. Italy also reaches further than its state borders, taking a slice out of Switzerland which, as a state, is almost completely divided among other countries. Accordingly, Switzerland does not exist in this system either as a country or as a state. Then follow the states of Britannia and Scandinavia, but in certain parts of Russia one must draw a line resembling the state border, because of the difficulty in demarcating the Asian sections. Also, it is possible to delimit Ukraine only with quite wide, transitional

bands. It is difficult, for example, to correctly draw the borders in the Doniec-basin, a mining-industrial zone of dense spatial texture, and it also induces debates. To the south follow Caucasia and then Turkey, the latter extending also into the north-eastern districts of Cyprus. Turning back towards Europe's core areas come Balkania and Carpathia. It is intentional that the latter is not called „historic Hungary” in this context, since there have always been „joint tenants” in this geographic basin. Poland is hardly larger at all than the state under the same name, yet the border-modifying events of history have left deep marks on the spatial development of this country (Tóth J. 1999.).

Several other issues emerge if those shown on the map are further thought about. Firstly, it is desirable that the nomenclature is refined, since in many cases the names used for the country and the state coincide, which can be perceived as indelicacy by those unaware of this approach or by those belonging to states that are mutilated or disappear completely. To avoid such wounds, it seems reasonable to use names from historic past (e.g. Gallia, Germania, Polonia, Bohemia etc.), which allude to traditions, common past, language and culture rather than to states that have been created by aspirations for power in the recent past.

If the discussed map is considered as a theoretical outline, it appears that the regions are clearly differentiable in the majority of Europe's territory; regions in this sense are not cut across by country borders. However, artificially constructed borders do cross over regions, in a way that political affairs constantly present in the background have totally messed up the borders that also represent the lines of power. It is important to know that „Europe of the Regions” is composed of *ab ovo* international regions, in a geographical, state-geographical sense. Thus, if the state is considered, it is state borders that are offended by the presence of regions and countries. This confrontation practically occurred just the other way round, but because the power structure is based on spatial units delimited by state borders, it can quite as well be viewed this way. The existence of natural regional cooperation – which, in healthy conditions, is international, – can mean that cooperation having evolved on the basis of the organic economic and spatial position, and relying on the original basis, is alive. However, it also means that cooperation is influenced by governmental power and state institutions (Tóth J., Trócsányi A. Wilhelm Z., 1996).

It can only be theoretically, rather than plainly, communicated that once Europe is a community of regions, it should be transformed into Europe of the countries. It is important that these regional co-operations should be coordinated on a state level. If the state is a sovereign one *sensu strictu*, then it will not allow its interests to be curtailed, therefore, instead of true cooperation, debates will have primary importance in these regional co-operations. In a favourable situation, the state is forced – and agrees – to give up part of its sovereignty, since there is perspective for obligate advantages from regional cooperation, even if a series of inter-state agreements and compromises are necessary to be able to utilise these.

If the division of states and countries is observed, one of the most critical areas is the Balkan peninsula where an irreproducible diversity of countries exists. This figure emphasizes the crucial points of the division, and as such, has scientific significance

(Golobics P., Pap N., 1996). The demarcation of margin zones is not clear in Europe's more peaceful areas, either. It is also difficult to deal with the Czechs; every attempt aiming at Polish-Czech constructions – including the state-level Czech Republic –, rests on weak grounds. According to Gyula Prinz – whose theory of state-country dichotomy is used as the starting point of the current paper – the state of Czechoslovakia is the greatest possible absurdity of state geography. The situation is the same in the case of the Baltic states too, with some being too small to become a separate country, however, to be able to decide in this matter, one needs to dig deeper in the issue of state spatial organisation. The conditions of Slovenia are analogous, the luck of this country possibly owing to its „turntable” role. This expression, as derived from Slovenia's situation, can be more generally used in every European space the belonging of which is unclear. This bridgerole, which formerly used to be a disadvantage, is undoubtedly seen as an advantage in the European integration process, up-valuing the role of turntables. Thus, this may serve as a basis for these spaces joining together the EU.

As a conclusion, by presenting these thoughts the authors have intended to cast light on the issue of borderlines in Europe. It is necessary to be able to clearly view this recurring, complex, sometimes curious and sophisticated issue, so as to be able to consider the related facts shortly before joining the European Union. Our place of living is understood as part of a certain space (Europe), the more developed and democratically organised part which our state is going to officially become a member of in the near future. Although Hungary will not be torn away from the space represented by the Carpathian Basin, the new relations will bring conditions in which Hungary will have several types of borders: one type will be based on the natural environment, one based on historic scales, and one type (i. e. Schengen border) appearing a consequence of EU legal status. Obviously, these types do not coincide; the Schengen border will permanently serve as a divider (hopefully only for a limited period) of a country on certain sections. This situation must be managed in a way that the highest possible level of regional cooperation is ensured for ourselves and for our partners, at the same time respecting state- and the resulting EU-borders. We should cooperate and formulate our relation systems in a way that we can draw benefits both from this transitional status and, later on, from the system of a permanent, unified Europe.

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