

THE EFFECT OF THE 10-YEAR EU MEMBERSHIP OF HUNGARY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN THE SUB- REGIONS OF NÓGRÁD COUNTY

Part 1: Rural Development

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Abstract

Located in the Northern Hungary Region, Nógrád County has the second smallest area and the smallest population among counties in Hungary. At the same time, Nógrád is also the most forested county in the country (nearly 40% of its cultivated areas is covered by forests), which provides excellent opportunities for active tourism and ecotourism. In addition, this county has the lowest number of towns in the country, which carries a potential primarily for rural tourism. Rural and natural tourism as well as cultural tourism, which can be built on rich treasures of cultural heritage, offer alternative employment opportunities to the population of the county, which has four sub-regions rated as disadvantaged. The study is seeking an answer to the question to what extent the *regional policy of the EU* contributed to the development of tourism in six sub-regions of the county during the 10-year EU membership of Hungary.

Keywords: Nógrád County, sub-region, EU aid, operative programmes, development of tourism

Introduction

With the second smallest area (254,548 ha) and, at the same time, the smallest population (202,427 persons) among counties in Hungary, Nógrád County (NUTS3) is located in the Northern Hungary Region (NUTS2). On the basis of its population density (79.5 persons/km²), it ranks 11th among the 19 counties of the country. The ranges of the Northern Mountains (the Mátra

Mountains to the east, the Karancs-Medves Hills to the north, the Börzsöny Mountains to the west and the Cserhát Hills in the centre) cover the vast majority of the territory of the county. In 2013, 39.28% of the cultivated area of the county was covered by forests, with which it is considered the most forested county in Hungary (Hungarian Statistical Office, 2014). These inherent conditions of the landscape offer the county the opportunity to exploit certain types of rural tourism (natural, eco-, active and hunting tourism and forest schools). The system of statistical sub-regions (LAU1) was introduced in Hungary in 1994. Pursuant to Act XXI of 1996 on Regional Development and Regional Planning (hereinafter the ‘Regional Development Act’), a sub-region comprises municipalities that are also geographically contiguous, among which there are real working, residential, transport and secondary provision (education, health care and trade), etc. relationships (Lukács Gergely S., 2008).

Small by area, the county is divided into six sub-regions named after six towns in it, which have central roles from a regional point of view (in order by area): Pásztó (55,157 ha), Balassagyarmat (53,294 ha), Salgótarján (47,461 ha), Rétság (43,503 ha), Szécsény (27,769 ha) and Bátonyterenye (27,364 ha). With 131 municipalities, the county is also the least urbanised county in the country in a certain sense, since it has the fewest towns at national level. In this ranking, it is followed by the adjacent Heves County with nine towns (Hungarian Statistical Office, 2014). According to the delimitation applied in the Hungarian SAPARD Programme, four sub-regions in the county (Pásztó, Balassagyarmat, Rétság and Szécsény) qualify as ‘rural sub-regions’, because the proportion of those living in towns with a population density higher than 120 persons/km² is below 50% in these areas (Fehér, I. and Kóródi, M., 2007). According to this methodology, the Salgótarján sub-region, which also includes the county town, and the Bátonyterenye sub-region to the south fall within the category of what is called ‘non-rural sub-regions’.

The sphere of disadvantaged sub-regions, i.e. the beneficiaries of subsidies, in Hungary is specified in Government Decree No. 311/2007 (XI.17.) currently in force. The delimitation of the beneficiary sub-regions stated in the Government Decree was based on a complex indicator formed from a group of economic, infrastructure, social, welfare and employment indicators (the arithmetic average of all complex indicators of the sub-region, i.e. a score of 2.9), the methodology of which was adopted in Resolution of Parliament No. 67/2007 (VI.28.), which has already been repealed since then. Based on this, three types of beneficiary sub-region types can be distinguished:

- ‘disadvantaged sub-regions’ (with a complex indicator less than 2.9 and an area that may not exceed 30% of the population in the region)

- ‘*most disadvantaged sub-regions*’ (with the lowest complex indicator within disadvantaged sub-regions, up to 15% of the population of the country)
- ‘*most disadvantaged sub-regions with complex programmes*’ (with the lowest complex indicator within the most disadvantaged sub-regions, up to 10% of the population of the country; these are sub-regions that are favoured in EU tenders)

On the basis of the complex indicator of the Government Decree, four sub-regions in Nógrád county, disadvantaged from a social and economic point of view, are also included in the list of disadvantaged sub-regions. While the Pásztó sub-region (score: 2.69) belongs to the disadvantaged sub-regions and the Salgótarján and Szécsény sub-regions (both scored 2.19) belong to the most disadvantaged sub-regions, the Bátonyterenye sub-region (score: 2.06) was included among the most disadvantaged sub-regions to undergo convergence with complex programmes.

By setting up the institution of Sub-regional Development Councils (with the main task of devising a concept and a programme for the regional development of sub-regions), the amendment of the Regional Development Act (Act LXXV of 2004) has strengthened the role of regional development and statistical sub-regions. In a number of sub-regions, the responsibilities of the body have been taken over by already operational multi-purpose sub-regional councils.

On 1 May 2004, Hungary became a member of the European Union together with nine, mostly Eastern European countries. The regional and rural policy financed from the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund of the European Union (together with national co-financing) provides a significant means for the Community convergence of regions that are socially and economically disadvantaged (such as the Northern Hungary Region). This study investigates through what EU-level regional development programmes and to what extent the tourism industry in this county, which is rich in natural and cultural values but has four sub-regions falling behind from a social and economic point of view, profited in the first 10 years of the EU membership of the country.

Research Methodology

In the period including two EU budget periods (2004–2006 and 2007–2013), the operative programmes of the National Development Plan (hereinafter the ‘NDP’) and the New Hungary Development Plan (hereinafter the ‘NHDP’) served the development of tourist attractions and services in the county to a significant extent. In the case of the various EU programmes, the aid amounts per bidder were summarised in tabular (MS

Excel) form for the county and, within that, for the sub-regions. Due to the high number and large space requirement of the tables, only the analysis of the breakdown of the data by operative programme had room in the study, but it includes the tables of the data broken down by sub-region, associated with the two national strategic plans. The aid provided in the two EU budget periods are stated in the study from two points of view: firstly, the EU aid amounts awarded on various grounds and, secondly, the number of tenders supported under the individual programmes and measures. The latter data do not change anything in the total value of the projects completed in the region, but are able to give an idea of the extent of interest through tenders and activity in the individual operative programmes.

The aid obtained through the operative programmes of NDP and NHDP can also be narrowed down, in addition to the regional level, to county and even sub-regional levels (and, within that, to municipalities and bidders) on the website of the National Development Agency.

It is also an important consideration with respect to the data on the awarded bids that in the case of the agricultural and rural development programmes (National Rural Development Plan and New Hungary Rural Development Programme), data on actual disbursements are stated in both the Annual Reports and the Internet database. By contrast, the database of the supported tenders under the operative programmes (NDP and NHDP) includes the amounts of the awarded aid, which, on the other hand, does not coincide with invoice-based actual disbursements on every occasion (e.g. if the bidder did not meet a condition of the invitation to tender or the project was implemented from less funds than the aid awarded). Although the tender data sheets of the operative programmes under the NHDP also allow the exact tracking of the project in addition to the aid amount awarded (e.g. data on contracts, project implementation and disbursements), the aid data sheets for the projects supported by the operative programmes under the NDP state only the amount awarded when the decision was made to grant an aid. If, in the case of the NHDP, the research takes disbursements as a basis (which incidentally gives a more realistic picture of the development value of the given projects), the data of the NHDP cannot be compared with the data series of the NDP later. The examination of the projects under the NHDP on the basis of disbursements is rendered more difficult by the fact that a number of projects to which aid has been awarded in previous years are still under way and, accordingly, not all invoice-based disbursements have been made yet. Disbursement data under the NHDP may become ready for analysis when the disbursement period ends definitively. Until then, it cannot be evaluated in a relevant way yet how much the disbursements made during the seven-year period contributed exactly to the development of the tourism industry, economy, etc. in a county or sub-region.

National Development Plan (2004–2006)

The National Development Plan (hereinafter the ‘NDP’), which was the first strategic reference framework of the country in the EU, supported the cause of tourism also directly primarily through two of its operative programmes.

One of them was the **Agricultural and Rural Development Operative Programme** (hereinafter the ‘ARDOP’) supported from the guidance section of European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), which primarily contributed to the improvement of the standard of services of rural tourism to a major extent.

Aid amounting to 23,97 million HUF was transferred to tourism providers in the county for the establishment of rural accommodation (ARDOP 3.1) through five awarded projects (three in the Salgótarján and two in the Szécsény sub-region, with 45% of the costs being supported) during the five-year disbursement period of the NDP. Under the village development and refurbishment sub-programme (ARDOP 3.4), four villages in the county (three in the Pásztó and one in the Salgótarján sub-region, with 75% of the costs being financed) received a total development amount of 114,97 million HUF in 2005. The highest aid amount under the operative programme (121,35 million HUF) was brought to the county by the LEADER+ sub-programme (ARDOP 3.5), but it was shared among 91 awarded bidders. The funds provided under the sub-programme, which had a fairly high financing rate (85%–95%), supported the cause of rural tourism through the development of tourism facilities, services and events and marketing activities. In 2007, which is considered the peak year within the tender period with regard to the number of projects supported at the county level, the ARDOP 3.5 (LEADER+) sub-programme amounted to 100% of the number of tenders in the year. Of the 83 supported tenders, the Pásztó, Salgótarján and Bátonyterenye sub-regions had a share of 57, 19 and 7, respectively. It is another consideration that disbursements made in 2007 and 2008, the last two years of the tender period, represented a less significant amount compared to the three preceding years.

The most extensive support of tourism sector in this EU development cycle was provided by **Regional Operative Program** (hereinafter the ‘ROP’) of the 7 development-statistical regions of the country. The subprogram of this (ROP 2.1) with the highest aid value (1975 million HUF, 90-100% funding rate) financed 5 projects in order to enhance the reconstruction of roads connecting settlements thus ensuring better access to disadvantaged sub-regions in the county.

Besides infrastructural investments, the community contribution to town rehabilitation subprogram (ROP 2.2) gave the other major part of ROP subsidies (915 million HUF) concerning Nógrád county. This aid was given

in 2005 to the central city of Bátonyterenye sub-region alone for the ecology-oriented renewal of the city. As regards the subsidies of ROP concerning tourism the most directly, the “ancient Pompei” in Ipolytarnóc – which is listed among world heritage candidates – was awarded 407,9 million HUF in 2006 (98% funding, Salgótarján sub-region) in the frames of touristic attraction development subprogram (ROP 1.1). Under the title of improving touristical reception capacities, one settlement in Rétság and one in Szécsény sub-region received 157,25 million HUF (50% funding) in 2006 in order to create or expand commercial accommodation places.

By analysing the fund-raising results of sub-regions, it can be concluded that Pásztó sub-region was by far the most active in fund-raising with 64 awarded projects (all but 3 were LEADER+ sub-programmes during these five years), but it should be noted that the sub-regions of Salgótarján, Balassagyarmat, Rétság and Bátonyterenye substantially outbid this at nominal value owing to the significantly higher fund needs of ROP 2.1 and ROP 2.2 sub-programmes.

New Hungary Development Plan (2007-2013)

The New Hungary Development Plan (hereinafter the ‘NHDP’) was the first EU-related national strategic plan which completely fulfilled the whole EU budget period. The case of national tourism was especially enhanced by the Regional Operative Programs developed separately for all the 7 development-strategic region of the country. Nógrád county in the North-Hungarian region received direct aids for touristical development projects through the subprograms of the 2nd pillar (2.1.1. touristic attraction and services development, 2.2.1 commercial accomodation development, and 2.3.1 setting up and developing touristical destination management organisations) in the frames of **North Hungarian Regional Operative Program** (hereinafter the ‘NHROP’). As regards the measures of the 2nd pillar, the highest volume of subsidies (4778 million HUF) in the county was given to three so-called “priority touristic product and attraction development” projects in 2012. The greatest share of the awarded grant (2455 million HUF, 99% funding) was transferred to one of the stations of pilgrimage route (“Mária Route”) expanding even beyond the borders of the country. It is called Mátraverebély-Szentkút (sub-region of Bátonyterenye), which is also ranked as a national shrine. It was followed by the touristic attraction development (1709 million HUF, 98% funding ratio) of Hollókő-Ófalu (sub-region of Szécsény) - which is ranked among the first Hungarian world heritage sites (1987) and the eco-touristic facility development (614 million HUF, 100% funding rate) of the world’s first transnational geo-park (Novohrad-Nógrád- Geopark, sub-region of Salgótarján).

In the frames of touristic attraction and facility development of no-priority status, altogether 15 applications were awarded grants between 2008 and 2013, almost half of them (7 projects) in 2013. The highest amount of grant in nominal value (492,2 million HUF, 86% funding rate) was awarded to the 2nd phase of touristic development of ancient Pompei in Ipolytarnóc (sub-region of Salgótarján) in 2009. This project was also supported by NDP in 2006. In terms of volume, this investment was approached the most (484,55 million HUF, 84% funding rate) in 2010 by the eco-touristic investment of the forestry society of the county (Ipoly Forest Inc.) in the surroundings of Rimóc-Hollókő (sub-region of Szécsény). Besides these, two other ecotouristic development projects can be highlighted due to the total amount awarded, one of them is the Ipoly Forest Inc. again (360,7 million HUF, 85%), while the other was submitted by the recreation club of the centre of Pásztó sub-region (334 million HUF, 85%) in 2013. In the frames of this latter, an adventure and eco-touristic theme park was set up, while the former three larger eco-touristic projects included the construction of new visitor centres and educational trails and reconstruction of old ones as well as creation of new parking plots. The aim of these complex development projects was to use professional background and to introduce the flora, fauna, minerals as well as natural values of the region to families with small children, groups of school children and ecotourists. An award-winning project (396,5 million HUF, 95% funding rate) was the construction of international creative arts and crafts house in Szalmatercs (sub-region of Salgótarján) which can be an attractive destination for a special segment of cultural tourism.

Two castle hotels of the county also received aid for health tourism facility development in 2013: one of these is the Phoenix Castle Sanatorium in Csitár-Nógrádgárdony, which operated with health tourism profile before, too, and planned the expansion of health tourism offers (255 million HUF, 60% public financing). The Prónay castle in Alsópetény - positioned as honeymoon destination - opened towards a new, special niche by establishing a laser ophthalmology clinics (745,5 million HUF, 70% rate). The former investment enriched the touristic offers of Balassagyarmat, while the latter one enhanced the tourism of Rétság sub-region.

Two accommodation development projects could be realised in the county in the frames of NHROP subprogram 2.2.1 related with commercial accommodation facility development. The owner of widely known and reputed Tó Hotel in Bánk, which also one of the sites of Summer Festival of Bánk (Louis Armstrong Jazz Festival) obtained 282 million HUF (43% EU funding) for capacity expansion and development of fitness-wellness facilities in 2010. The Fort-Bau Therm Ltd. was awarded 500 million HUF grant (69% community funding) to build a 4-star wellness hotel in 2012. The

latter investment is to be implemented in the rustic surroundings of Hollókő, which is a world heritage site due to the authentic folklore architecture of the village. While the previous investment (Rétság sub-region) was closed successfully in the following year, the latter one (Szécsény sub-region) was not even started until today. According to the personal experiences of the author, the plan of establishing commercial accommodation facilities was strongly disapproved by the local pensions.

The grants aiming directly the tourism development in the county are closed by the five awarded projects amounting to a total of 225,4 million HUF (2010-2011) for the development and creation of organisations of touristic destination management (hereinafter the 'TDMO'). These were divided as follows: establishment of one local (Salgótarján county seat) and two regional (headquarters in Salgótarján and Rétság) TDMOs, touristic product development of already operating local TDMO in Salgótarján and the development of thematic route ("Palóc Route") - founded in 2005, based on ethnographic values and expanding beyond county borders - into a cluster.

The touristic potential and attraction of county settlements and, consequently, the whole county is largely affected by the overall image of city centres and the infrastructural development of villages. The measures of pillar 3 of NHROP serve the development of these areas (3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 subprograms).

In the frames of NHROP, the project item of the second most significant amount – which directly concerns the tourism sector – are the social and function expansion city rehabilitation programs. The development of five sub-region centre has been done or being done with the help of 8 awarded projects (4052 million HUF, 55-100% EU funding) between 2008 and 2013, e.g. 2nd phase of rehabilitating the historical city centre of Szécsény (780,66 million HUF), function expanding rehabilitation of Salgótarján city centre (1211 million HUF), 1st phase of function expanding rehabilitation of Balassagyarmat (782,7 million HUF), city centre development in Bátonyterenye (299,7 million HUF), function expanding settlement rehabilitation in Rétság city centre (277,8 million HUF) or rehabilitation of Steelworks-Downtown of Salgótarján for social purposes (399 million HUF). The main targets set for the new investments are as follows: developing city centres which are more liveable, released from the harmful impacts of road traffic, expanding green surfaces, park construction, building cultural or recreation centres with regional scope, new parking places which enable the visitors with cars to use the facilities in the city centre, or reconstruction of historical monuments in order to increase touristic attraction.

The subprogram 3.1.2/B of NHROP enables the reconstruction and rebuilding of major inner sections of roads in all the city centres of the sub-regions - except for Rétság - in an amount of 384 million HUF altogether (90% funding). The reconstruction of these road sections - besides increasing the safety of traffic - substantially contribute to the improvement of life quality of local residents. Moreover, by attracting new investments and thus creating new workplaces, it can also enhance the population retaining force of the region. Reconstruction of sidewalks in connection with road construction, enabling accessible transport, ensuring the rainwater drainage were also part of these development projects.

There were a lot more small-scale projects (52 pcs) serving village investments (subprogram 3.1.3) have been carried out or are going on or are being prepared in more than 50 villages in order to ensure the improvement of life quality of inhabitants. Compared to city rehabilitation projects, these smaller development programs (total value is 3555 million HUF, mostly 90% funding rate) aimed the reconstruction of inner roads, sidewalks, rainwater drainage systems, bus stops, bus bays, traffic safety developments or modernization and disabled access of public institutions (cultural or community houses, municipalities). The absolute winners of this subprogram are 10 settlements of sub-region Salgótarján with 1747 million HUF, followed by 13 villages of sub-region Balassagyarmat with 537,7 million HUF and 9 villages of sub-region Rétság with 481,47 million HUF.

While the previously discussed projects targeting town rehabilitation and settlement development directly determine the image and appeal of touristic destinations, the improvement of road network - which is an element of basic infrastructure of tourism according to the references (Michalkó G. 2012) serves more indirectly the development of tourism in the country.

During the seven-year cycle of NHDPM (New Hungary Development Plan), more than half of the 59780 million HUF aid supporting the tourism of the county (35363 million HUF, 100% community funding) was given to eight projects (NHROP subprogram 5.1.1) which aimed to improve road accessibility. The village of Bánk had the greatest share from the grant (20360 million HUF community funding) with two awarded projects. The realization of these two investments enhanced better access to sub-regions of Rétság and Balassagyarmat by reconstructing almost 20 km of three sections of road. The other awarded road reconstruction projects contributed substantially to improving the accessibility of sub-regions Szécsény, Pásztó and Salgótarján. Road renovations - besides changing or strengthening the road surface - also include the reconstruction of bus stops, bus bays in the path of the roads concerned, as well as reinforcing bridges.

The subprograms 5.1.3 of NHROP supported the construction of bike path running North-South direction in downtown of Salgótarján county seat. The works went on in two phases, in about 6 km length (altogether 300,5 million HUF, 90% and 95% funding rate). Due to the project, the residents of the southern part of the city can safely access to the major facilities of city centre (public institutions, railway station, bus station) as well as commuters can easily reach the Industrial Park in the outskirts of the city. The bike path investment also ensures sports facilities for residents and tourists visiting the city.

Three county-level investments (100% funding rate) won in the frames of **Transport Development Operative Program (TDOP)** can result the improvement of regional transportation both in terms of quality and safety. One of the projects aim to make four lanes in some sections of the main road no. 21 (3629 million HUF), while another one serves the construction of an intermodal community traffic centre in the area of Salgótarján (95 million HUF).

The **Environment and Energy Operative Program** (hereinafter the 'EEOP') of NHDP enhances the investments aiming the environmentally friendly and sustainable development of tourism. During the seven-year cycle of NHDP, following the 52 awarded projects of small-scale settlement development (NHROP 3.1.3), the second highest tendering activity (17 awarded projects) was seen in the area of "Habitat protection and restoration" as well as the "Conservation of living and non-living natural values" (EEOP 3.1.2, 3.2.0, 7.3.1.1 and 7.3.1.2). The awarded projects which received altogether 2021 million HUF grant (85-100% funding rate) were submitted mostly by national park directorates (Bükk and Duna-Ipoly National Parks), and forestry corporations (Ipoly Forest and Eger Forest Ltd.) The investment programs support the rehabilitation of meadows, pastures, grassland, lakes in terms of nature protection, construction of amphibian passages and rehabilitation of abandoned mines (creating geological exhibition sites). The main objective of these measures is to protect, restore and preserve the habitat of flora and fauna in the protected and Natura 2000 areas. The main target group of these EEOP measures is the visitors travelling with eco-touristic motivations.

The EEOP subprogram 3.3.0 supported the expansion and infrastructural development of forest schools in order to enhance environmental education in Salgótarján and Somoskőújfalu (4 awarded projects in Salgótarján sub-region). The total grant was 213,5 million HUF (90 and 100% funding rate). Out of these, the Forest School in Kotyasz, at the foot of Salgó castle deals specifically with camping mentally handicapped, visually or hearing-impaired children.

In the frames of EEOP 4.1.0 and 4.2.0 subprograms, tourism companies could also implement renewable energetic investments providing thermal and/or electric energy. At county level, 3 hotels submitted altogether 7 awarded project proposals (three were submitted by the above mentioned Tó Hotel) for reconstruction works based on renewable energy sources in an amount of 108,8 million HUF (50% funding rate).

The Palóc Museum of Balassagyarmat obtained 34 million HUF aid (96% and 100%) through 2 awarded projects in the frames of **Social Renewal Operative Program** (SROP) for performing extracurricular recreation activities with children (e.g. ethnographic and homeland study camps, unconventional literature and history classes, folklore arts and crafts classes). These optional recreational activities help to train cultural tourists of the next generation.

Finally, due to the subprogram (2.1.1) of **Economic Development Operative Program** (EDOP), private entrepreneurs from Balassagyarmat and Salgótarján – one from each city - were awarded altogether 8,35 million HUF (45% funding rate) to establish and reconstruct catering units.

Summary

During the project period of NDP (Table 1 and 2) the tourism of sub-regions in Nógrád county was supported by EU and national funds amounting to 3715 million HUF through 109 awarded projects. Regarding nominal value, the top three were the Salgótarján (1296 million HUF), Bátonyterenye (925,6 million HUF) and the Balassagyarmat sub-regions (750 million HUF). Reviewing the distribution per year, it can be concluded that 2005 was the absolute peak year with its share of 2663 million HUF, while two lowest amounts (84,4 and 12,3 million HUF) in this framework were transferred in the last two years (2007, 2008). It should be underlined that year 2004 is considered “incomplete” year in terms of fund-raising since Hungary accessed to the EU on May 1, 2004.

Table 1 Touristical type of aids (million HUF) by National Development Plan (NDP) in sub-regions of Nógrád county

Sub-region	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Rétság	0	444,4	92,07	0	7665,3	544,12
Pásztó	0	68,67	13,5	38,77	1608,8	122,55
Balassagyarmat	355,2	394,9	0	0	0	750,1
Salgótarján	0	830,42	430,15	35,23	0,529	1296,3
Bátonyterenye	0	915,17	0	10,44	0	925,6
Szécsény	0	9,5	65,2	0	2484	77,13
Total micror.	355,2	2663	600,9	84,44	12,3	3715,8

Source: own work on the basis of palyazat.gov.hu

Table 2 Number of projects (pcs) funded by NDP in sub-regions of Nógrád county

Sub-region	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Rétság	0	1	1	0	1	3
Pásztó	0	3	1	57	3	64
Balassagyarmat	1	1	0	0	0	2
Salgótarján	0	5	3	19	1	28
Báttonyterenye	0	1	0	7	0	8
Szécsény	0	2	1	0	1	4
Total micror.	1	13	6	83	6	109

Source: own work on the basis of palyazat.gov.hu

During the seven-year term of NHDP (Table 3 and 4), the tourism of Nógrád county was enriched by 59781 million HUF EU and national development grants through 142 supported investment projects. It was 16 times higher than the amount of similar project funds obtained in the previous – not complete – national EU budget period. The major part of this (28906 million HUF) was awarded to the applicants in 2012, the greatest share (20360 million HUF) was given to the Hungarian Roads Management Nonprofit Company. It submitted two projects to improve the roads accessibility (NHROP 5.1.1). Following this, the highest amounts (10816 and 9453 million HUF) were given to the applicants in the area of the county at the beginning of the budget period, in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, the highest amount of grant was given also to an investment project which aimed the improvement of road accessibility (10667 million HUF), while in 2009, the project for extending three sections of main road no. 21 into four lanes (Transport Development Operative Program 3.4.1 subprogram) received the highest grant (3629 million HUF). It is interesting to note that the lowest tendering activity of the cycle – with seven awarded projects - could be observed in 2008, which was the peak year regarding the amount of project funding. As regards the tourism development grants in the cycle, the Rétság sub-region is placed first (22616 million HUF), the second one is Szécsény (16025 million HUF), and well behind them on the third place there is Salgótarján sub-region (7808 million HUF). Reviewing the number of projects supported, the order is different: Salgótarján has 41 projects, Balassagyarmat has 28 and Rétság has 24 projects. By analyzing the grants per operative programs, it can be concluded that the highest amounts of funds were provided by NHROP to the tourism of the county. Within this, the subprogram for the improvement of public road access is in the first place (35363 million HUF), while - differently from the NDP - the awarded tenderers of town reliability subprogram are only in the third place (4052 million HUF), because the second place is occupied by three prioritised touristic product and attraction development with 4778 million HUF grant.

Nice results (3082 million HUF) were reached by the subprogram of touristic attraction and services development, which appealed the third most tenderers with 15 projects.

Table 3 Payments by New Hungary Development Plan (million HUF) in sub-regions of Nógrád county

Sub-region	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Rétság	57,73	104,16	438,1	31,55	20954,4	1031,1	22617
Pásztó	4,04	4247,3	112,83	1036,2	274,12	1037,9	6712,4
Balassagyarmat	24,1	335,24	716,5	829,9	646,75	857,13	3409,6
Salgótarján	16,11	2487,14	1745,7	376,13	2198	985,76	7808,9
Bátonyterenye	0	193,35	0	299,7	2564,5	149,74	3207,3
Szécsény	10,71	2086,35	587,54	0	2268,6	368,8	16025,7
Total micror.	10,81	9453,6	3600,6	2573,4	28906,5	4430,4	59780,9

Source: own work on the basis of palyazat.gov.hu

Table 4 Number of project proposals (pcs) supported by the NHDP in sub-regions of Nógrád county

Sub-regions	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Rétság	1	4	5	3	8	3	24
Pásztó	1	5	4	3	3	4	20
Balassagyarmat	1	8	8	2	5	4	28
Salgótarján	2	9	12	5	9	4	41
Bátonyterenye	0	4	0	1	3	1	9
Szécsény	2	8	4	0	4	2	20
Total micror.	7	38	33	14	32	18	142

Source: own work on the basis of palyazat.gov.hu

The tourism of Nógrád County received 63496,7 million HUF regional development subsidies through a total number of 251 payments between 2004-2013 (Table 5). The highest amount of subsidies (23161,12 million HUF) in the frames of programs of NDP and NHDP was provided for the sub-region of Rétság. The second and third in rank –total similarly to the results of NHDP– are the sub-regions of Szécsény (16102,83 million HUF) and Salgótarján (9105,2 million HUF). The latter two are ‘*most disadvantaged sub-regions*’ from a social and economic point of view.

Table 5 Regional development payments and number of projects total (funded by NDP and NHDP) in sub-regions of Nógrád county (2004-2013)

Sub-regions	Payments (million HUF)	Number of projects (pcs)
Rétság	23161,12	27
Pásztó	6834,95	84
Balassagyarmat	4159,7	30
Salgótarján	9105,2	69
Bátonyterenye	4132,9	17

Szécsény	16102,83	24
Total micror.	63496,7	251

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