

ARTICLES

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE CZECH AND POLISH BORDERLAND: EXAMPLE OF THE JESENÍK REGION

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ABSTRACT

Cross-border cooperation in the Czech and Polish borderland: example of the Jeseník region

The article would like to discuss determinants of Czech-Polish cross-border relations in Jeseník-Nysa-Prudník districts (Olomouc and Opole regions) and their possible impact on regional development. There are described specificities of these relations which still influence current level of cross border collaboration. The main aim of the article is to describe the situation on Czech-Polish border in Jeseník region after accession into Schengen area in 2007. Thanks to the specific border regime this event plays an important milestone in Czech-Polish cross-border relations. From methodological point of view were used interviews with mayors and other representatives on municipal level as well as questionnaires among local citizens to map the situation 5 years after entering into the Schengen space. We would like also to discuss broader context of cross-border relations and their dynamics to understand better current situation and possible future development.

KEY WORDS

cross-border cooperation, Czech and Polish border, Schengen space, Olomouc region, Opole region.

1.Introduction

The following article focuses on the analysis of the selected aspects of cross-border cooperation with regard to the gradual elimination of the effect of the border after 1989 and particularly with regard to the consequences of the accession of the Czech Republic and Poland to the Schengen Area at the end of 2007. The investigated region can be considered a border region whose overall development has been affected by both the type and penetrability of the border and the intensity of the cross-border relations. The issue of border and cross-border cooperation in Central Europe, namely after the political and social changes in 1990s, has become a new research specialization thanks to the interest of the professional public expressed at numerous meetings and professional events as well as by rich bibliography.

2.Research of cross-border relations and cross-border cooperation in the Czech Republic

There have been numerous professional meetings that gave rise to the establishment of workplaces focused on the subject matter from the research point of view. The most complex research of the issue of cross-border relations in the Czech and Polish and Czech and Slovak border areas took place within the border geo-grant that included the following participants: Masaryk University in Brno, University of Ostrava and Palacký University of Olomouc, the “Czech Border” Research Department of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (AS CR), even though this department focuses more on the Czech and German border.

Other Czech participating workplaces include the Institute of Geonics AS CR, the Brno branch as well as the University of Economics Prague. The Polish research institutes include the Polish Geological Institute, Silesian Institute in Opole. In Slovakia, they are the Comenius University in Bratislava or Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

As for professional events explicitly devoted to the subject matter and the territory, these are some of works that have been published like Heffner ed. (1996), Heffner, Drobek eds. (1996), *The Situation and Perspectives of Trans-border Development and Co-operation of Border-regions in Germany, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic*, House for Polish-German Co-operation, FES, Gliwice (1999), Balej, Jeřábek eds. (2002), Dubcová, Kramáreková eds. (2002), (Wahla 2005), Peková, Zapletalová eds. (2005), Korec, Ilenčík, Bartovicová eds. (2005). The bibliography could also include source works that provide information about interest border regions.

However, unlike the vast bibliography, the excerpt from these sources has many restrictions with regard to the subject matter of the Czech and Polish and Czech and Slovak border areas. For instance, the statistical data necessary for the construction of chart or map outputs have not processed at the required level of territorial details, or they are not up-to-date.

The Czech Statistical Office did not publish the basic statistical data about euroregions in the territory of the Czech borderland until 2006 (“Euroregions in the Czech Republic”). Publications issued earlier (e.g. about the Czech and Polish euroregions) are no longer relevant and cannot be used as a source. On the other hand, the “Biuletyn pogranicza polsko-czeskiego/Bulletin česko-polského pohraničí“ (Bulletin of Czech and Polish Border) that used to be published by the Czech Ministry for Regional Development and the Polish Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy is no longer available. The websites of the individual euroregions represent quite a reliable and up-to-date source of information about current projects of cross-border cooperation and allocations of financial resources within the Phare CBC and Interreg IIIA programmes.

Then there are works that deal with specific elements of the socioeconomic system of the Czech and Polish border area, namely the transformation of the capital space and demographic potential (Borsa 1996, Heffner 1996, 1998, Kaszluk 1996, Klosowski 1996, Prokop 1996, Vencálek 1995, 1998) and the possibilities of the development of tourism in the interest section of the Czech border area as one of the key economic stimuli of the regional development of marginal territories (Havrlant 1997, Korowicki-Kubiak 1996, Smigielska 1996, Smolová 1999, Szczyrba 2005, Wawrzyniak 1996).

As for the affiliation of authors to scientific institutes, there are namely works dealing with the territory of the Czech and Polish border area in the region of Upper Silesia, i.e. Opava and Ratiboř Region, Ostrava and Katowice Region and Těšín Region. The territory of the Glacensis Euroregion (the Klodzko Region) is almost ignored in literature. The new view of the Czech and Polish cross-border cooperation after 1989 has also appeared in a whole range of professional articles dealing with the institutionalization of the cooperation.

The articles discuss the possibilities of legislatively embedding the cooperation in the legal systems of both countries, with focus on the municipal sector (Adamčík a kol. 1995, Byrtus 1996, Dokoupil 1999, Malarski, 1996, Markowiak 1999, Mikulík a kol. 2001, Rawska, 1996) as well as in relation to the European law (Seidel 1996).

As for the previous development of the Czech and Polish cooperation, authors namely deal with the territories of euroregions and the questions of their roles

in the development of cross-border cooperation (Dokoupil 1999, Heřmanová 2005, Kadeřábková 1996, Novotná-Galuszková 2005, Patočka 1995, Pešek-Jirousková 2004, Peková 2005, Vidláková 2000, Wahla a kol. 2001, Zapletalová 2003).

The Czech and Polish relations that traditionally belong to the significant aspects of outlining the foreign policy of both countries are the subject of several professional articles that deal with the issues of the new dimension of these relations due to the democratic development in the Czech Republic and Poland after 1989 (Borák 1996, Janák 1996) and the Czech and Polish ethnic border in the region of the Těšín Silesia (Bukowska-Floreńska 1997, Siwek 1996 and 2000). In addition, there is a common thematic circle that addresses the conceptual and methodological issues of determining a border area and that creates a common scientific and research platform (Dokoupil 1998, 2000, Halás 2000, 2005, Havlíček 1999, 2003, Havrlant, M. 1996, Hurbánek 2005, Jagielski 1996, Jeřábek 2000, Jeřábek a kol. 2004, Reinhölová 1995, Stasiak 1996).

3. Borders and their role in cross-border collaboration

Many authors agree on two basic definitions of the political-geographical determination of borders: natural and artificial. Natural borders are formed by natural elements in the landscape (most often watercourses and reliefs), whereas artificial borders are formed by cultural elements (national borders), historical aspects or geometrical approach (direct connection of contractually specified points, meridians or parallels).

According to the genetic factors, there are four types of political borders (Schwind, 1972, Ante, 1981, Šindler, 1986, 1996, cited in Jeřábek a kol., 2004, p. 49):

- Subsequent: a border defined subsequently after the differentiation of neighbouring regions (e.g. Belgium/the Netherlands)
- Antecedent: a border defined prior to the differentiation of the areas (e.g. USA/Canada)
- Overlapping: political measures lead to overlaps of the original territories
- Relict: a border that no longer exists but that is still visible from prior periods (e.g. between East and West Germany)

As for penetrability, Maier (1990) defines closed, partially open and open borders. The penetrability of the border is influenced by the cultural, social and economic development of border areas (Jeřábek a kol., 2004).

In the given cases, a border region acts either as a closed, centralized system with an impenetrable border or border crossings serve as bridges (while the identity, independence and some isolation of the neighbouring regions are retained).

And lastly, open borders create a system of contact territory in the border region where a stronger integration of both communities occurs. The aforementioned aspects have to be considered if we want to better understand the particularities of border regions.

4. Development and particularities of the general conditions of the cross-border cooperation in the Czech and Polish border area

The frequent border changes in the 20th century also resulted in extensive changes in the border areas of Central Europe. As for the Czech and Polish border, there were not changes in the location of the borderline but there were demographic changes along most of the border after 1945 due to the migration of inhabitants. As for the effect of cross-border cooperation, a similar change can be considered to be a shift in the political border.

In spite of the fact that the border between the former socialistic Czechoslovakia and the people's republic of Poland was a border between brother nations within the so called socialistic bloc, the quality of cross-border contacts and relations was not very good. While the cross-border cooperation in Western Europe started developing as early as in 1960s and was substantially supported from the EU funds, there was a very strict border system between the former socialistic countries. The contacts of Czech citizens with the cross-border region often narrowed down to a simple exchange or purchases of shortage goods or to the use of joint marked tourist trails along the ridges of bordering mountains.

After 1989, there was a significant dynamic in the form and intensity of cooperation. Jeřábek a kol. (2004, p. 180) defines three stages. With regard to the subsequent development after 2003, we added two more significant periods to the original three stages. The period of 1989–1992 is typical for its “wild” (spontaneous) cooperation without any large coordination, namely at the communal level.

The second stage of the development of cooperation took place from 1993 to 1996 when EU entered the process as it was the cross-border regions as the drive of the cross-border cooperation. Many euroregions were established along the borders. As for the Czech and Polish border, the Nisa/Nysa/Neisse Euroregion was the most important.

At that time, euroregions along the borders of the EU member countries and post-communist countries of Central Europe were established. Germany played an important initiation role as it stood at the rise of the first stage of three euroregions that covered most of the Czech and German border (Eggenis, Labe and Nisa).

In the period of 1997–2004, the regionally-institutional cross-border cooperation coordinated by EU attained a more specific form. The Phare CBC funds were namely used since they were already also intended for cooperation between EU candidate countries. The other euroregions along the Czech and Polish border, i.e. Glacensis, Praděd, Silesia and Těšín Silesia, were established in this period. This was a very important stage of cooperation prior to the accession of both countries to EU. Many projects with a cross-border impact were implemented and the contacts between both countries intensified.

However, the intensity and quality of the contacts depends on the overall readiness, willingness and capacity for cooperation which is undoubtedly highest at the Czech and German border. The relations at the Czech and Polish border are more independent and differentiated, which is also demonstrated by the engagement of the individual parts (simply said euroregions) in the Czech and Polish border area. The period of 2004–2007 represents quite a short period of time between the accession of the countries to EU and the subsequent accession to the Schengen Area. The characteristic features of the period include gradual acceptance of the standard mechanisms of cooperation between the EU member states, including the programmes of cross-border cooperation within INTERREG.

With regard to the quite a short period and relatively limited allocation of financial resources of 2004–2006, it is a transitional (or interim) period. The last stage that started after 2007 is characteristic namely by the new programming period within EU when the EU structural funds started to contribute substantially to the implementation of a whole range of projects in the areas of technical or social infrastructure and other areas, as well as by the accession of both countries to the Schengen Area and a significant improvement of border penetrability.

5. The specifics influencing cross-border relations in investigated area

The current form and specific operation of the cross-border relations in the investigated area have been significantly affected by the following aspects of its development, which influence cross-border relations even today. We can speak about path-dependent and also past-dependent development of the region as well as about the importance of other factors.

6. Physical-geographical position of the territory and accessibility to larger inland centres

The bad accessibility of the territory from larger centres (Ostrava or Olomouc) and the natural barrier of the Hrubý Jeseník massif that has to be crossed definitely represent an obstacle to the integration of economy as well as to other socioeconomic factors. This leads to some mental isolation from the inland and creates conditions for worse socioeconomic competitiveness. On the other hand, the territory naturally falls to the north, i.e. the territory of Poland, where the Jeseník Region has always had a complementary partner in both economic and cultural areas.

Thus, it is possible to assume that the socioeconomic relations will orientate to the north in the future if the character of the border and the cross-border region naturally changes from partially open to open, which is one of the opportunities of the development of the region.

7. Historic inertia and relations to the neighbouring parts of modern Polish Silesia

We have to emphasize that the territory was completely artificially separated from the prospering part of Silesia that became a part of Prussia (and later Germany) after the defeat of the Habsburgs in 1742. Today, this artificially determined border dividing municipalities has a significant impact. There are some extreme cases, such as the municipality of Bílá Voda, where the demarcation line ran through the local church. Since then, almost 270 years later, the territory is being “peripherilized” or “strangled” and separated from its natural hinterland in modern Poland (Ziener et al., 2012).

There are some relics that remind us of the original relations, such as the chateau in Javorník, the summer seat of the Wroclaw archbishops. However, the border was at least partially penetrable until 1945 and the cultural and language characteristics of the population were identical, which changed after 1945 due to the replacement of inhabitants on both sides of the border, which greatly disturbed significant cultural, economic and social relations and deepened the peripheral attributes of the area.

8. Socioeconomic characteristics of the population

The relations on both sides of the border had developed quite continually and naturally until the displacement of Germans after WWII. The territory had somewhat adapted to the political separation from the rest of Silesia during the two centuries but the complete replacement of inhabitants after 1945 caused a

great historical discontinuity in both countries. On the Czech side, the territory was populated only partially and the socioeconomic characteristics of the population were below average which acted (and still acts) as an inhibitor of cross-border relations. The adverse features of the population include lower education, lower business activity and high employment rate in the primary sector.

The identification of the inhabitants with the territory as one of the important positive socioeconomic characteristics of the population is established gradually in the second or third generation. Thus we can generally state that the aforementioned socioeconomic characteristics of the population after 1945 did not contribute to the renewal of the cross-border activity to the previous level. For more details about demographical and socioeconomic structure of the borderland look for example at Kladivo, Ptáček, et al. (2012).

9.Border system at the Czech and Polish borderline until accession into the Schengen Area in 2007

The border system at the Czech and Polish borderline until the accession of both countries to the Schengen Area was not very liberal. We would like to emphasize that namely the protection of the border on the Polish side was very persistent until the last minutes of the existence of the guarded border in 2007. The Czech and Polish border system had gone through several development stages since 1945 that led to gradual liberalization. Ironically, though, the protection of the Czech and Polish border was much more obstinate than that of the German and Austrian borders, namely after 1989 and after Germany and Austria joined the Schengen Area when the Czech Republic was on its outside border.

Even the existence of minor border traffic and gradual increase in the number of border crossings did not improve the situation. This namely concerned the guarding of the so called green border. Many people have their own experience with the enormous eagerness of the Polish border patrol in case of an illegal crossing. One step suited the purpose. Owners of restaurants and fast food in the border mountains, for instance Krkonoše, have similar experience. The strict border protection was often discussed in the media, especially after the accession of both countries to EU, but without any apparent success.

The Polish also often delayed the opening of new border crossings – for instance, Vidnava/Kalków or Travná/Ladek Zdrój in Jeseník Region that had to wait to be opened for passenger cars until the end of 2007. The same is also confirmed in documents prepared for the Ministry for Regional Development (Toušek a kol., 2007, p. 48): “

The Polish border is perceived as gradually opening, beginning with the former “iron curtain” through the current “hassle-free and conflict-free situation” until its potential complete disappearance. The assessment of the border system highlights some substantial improvements as against the situation before 1989 but on the other hand, there is often a disappointment from the delays in the accession to the Schengen Area and condemnations regarding the rigid controls on the Polish side that the respondents perceive as inadequate for an internal EU border (however, the experience is ambiguous).” In this regard (and ironically unlike all the other state borders), the role of the border system also was a substantial inhibitor of cross-border relations. Some of the extreme cases will be described in case studies.

10.Mental or psychological inertia

This phenomenon can also be described as “a border in the people’s heads” that has its social and psychological construction and is not a particularity for the Jeseník Region or the Czech and Polish border. It is given by the gradual convergence of the mental maps on both sides of the border when the border itself might play a smaller role in the future. The programmes for cross-border cooperation co-financed by EU as well as initiatives of other organizations may play a significant role here as well as other aspects, such as getting to know each other, cultural exchanges, teaching Czech or Polish at schools on the other side of the border. Unfortunately, the Jeseník Region (or the entire section of the Czech and Polish border) is seriously lagging behind in comparison with the Czech and German border where such projects started shortly after 1989.

11.The case study: cross-border relations and cooperation in the Jeseník, Nysa and Prudnik districts (praděd/pradziad euroregion) after the accession to the schengen area in eyes of municipalities and local people

In our research we focused on different stages of cross-border collaboration in the last twenty years with a special focus on the period after accession of both countries into the Schengen space at the end of 2007. We did not focus on a comprehensive evaluation of all the aspects of the latest development in the Czech and Polish border area in the focus area. On the other hand, it is a first probe, evaluation of the expectations and reality that the people on both sides of the border experienced in relation to the accession to the Schengen Area.

The study is based on several types of surveys – monitoring the situation in the border area, particularly at the border crossings as well as along the green border; structured interviews with the mayors or representatives of the local

governments in selected municipalities; a questionnaire survey on the opinions of the inhabitants on both sides of the border.

The surveys took place in May 2012 and thus reflect the situation after a year and half since the Schengen Area accession. As for the anticipated effects of the accession, work hypotheses were established and reflected in the structure of the interviews and questionnaires. Generally, we expected a gradual tendency in the strengthening of the cross-border relations. We did not expect any leaps in the development and thus we determined time milestones in the cross-border cooperation as relative points that affected the acceleration or slowdown of the process of convergence between the two border areas.

Furthermore, we presumed divergence in the ongoing processes according to the localization and size of the individual municipalities. The situation would be different directly on the border, in more inland municipalities, in municipalities that had a border crossing and in those that never had one etc. The municipalities were selected on the basis of the aforementioned aspects. We anticipated a more positive approach and a higher level of knowledge and readiness for cooperation on the Polish side based on the prior experience and surveys (e.g. Toušek a kol. 2007).

12.Changes in the Opinions of Mayors of Selected Municipalities in the Czech and Polish Border Area on the Cross-border Cooperation after the Accession to the Schengen Area

We interviewed six mayors with regard to the perception of the changes “after Schengen” (three mayors on each side of the border) in the form of a structured interview and the questions were aimed at the following problematic areas:

- Expectations and reality after Schengen
- Significance of Schengen in comparison with other milestones for the cross-border cooperation in the post-November history (1989, 2004, establishment of the micro-region)
- Changes in the behaviour of the inhabitants and entrepreneurs (transport, purchases, cultural exchange and other)
- Vision of the development for the next 10 to 15 years
- Influence of the European money on the cooperation and border penetration

The interviews were carried out in the following municipalities: Bílá Voda, Černá Voda and Mikulovice on the Czech side and Głucholazy, Łądek Zdrój and Prudnik in Poland.

If we focus on the common expectations that the mayors agreed upon, few negative expectations were anticipated in total (as against the situation in the

Austrian and German (Bavarian) border area), except for the negative perception of the expected increase in traffic. They expected the creation of new jobs and development of entrepreneurial activities, easier movement of people and goods over the border. They namely anticipated a promising development of tourism.

The mayors evaluated the reality after a few years of the operation of the Schengen Area positively and they namely emphasized the following facts:

- Greater use of the potential for entrepreneurial activities on the Polish side
- Increase in traffic, namely TIR at Mikulovice-Gluchořazy, easier connection to Eastern Bohemia and Prague through Kladsko rather than via the Hrubý Jeseník Mountains
- General intensification of contacts among people
- Facilitation of cooperation in critical situations (emergency services, fire brigade...)
- Improvement in technical infrastructure (new roads, sewerage system...)

Another question for the mayors was to compare the significance of the accession of both countries in the Schengen Area against other important milestones after the post-1989 significant changes. As the indicative comparison implies, the accession to the Schengen Area is for the mayors except for one more important than the accession to EU. According to the interpretation of the mayor of Bílá Voda, the year 2007 was without exaggeration as important as the fall of the Iron Curtain. It is obvious that this event could only compare to the fall of socialism in 1989 for most mayors.

After 2007, the economic and also the cultural and social relations continued to strengthen. The elimination of the impenetrability of the border did not only result in the increase in traffic, but it also improved other aspects of the cross-border relations. Joint projects were created or planned, namely in the field of tourism.

As for the economic area, this potential has not been utilized yet, which is due to the similar structural characteristics of the border regions (quite high unemployment rate, insignificant differences in wages, low entrepreneurial activity etc). Tourism and attractiveness of the mountainous regions of Jeseníky and Rychlebské hory represent a decisive future potential of the cross-border relations for the Polish.

All mayors agree that the “start of the cooperation” would be much slower without the European money and that many projects would not be implemented at all, not only in the area of technical infrastructure. The circle of areas for getting to know one another and for cooperation is also expanding thanks to that.

The prospects of the development of the mutual relations and the connection of the cross-border region are quite indefinite. However, everyone, the Czechs and the Poles, agree that the cooperation will continue deepening in the future, namely in the area of economy.

The Czech mayors expect gradual loosening of the relations with the inland (namely the economic ones) and tightening of the relations with Poland. Today, such cooperation works very well namely in critical situations such as natural disasters, medical care and so on.

13.Perception of the Development of Cross-border Cooperation in Selected Municipalities in the Czech and Polish Border Area

The perception of the issue of cross-border relations and attitudes of the inhabitants to those relations was the subject of the questionnaire survey that was carried out among the citizens of the border municipalities in the Jeseník Region in May 2012. The survey concerned a sample of 415 respondents, out of which 239 were from Poland, in particular 111 from Głuchołazy and 128 from Prudnik, and 176 were from the Czech Republic, in particular from Jeseník, Mikulovice and Zlaté Hory. The age and educational structure corresponded with the average for both countries and thus the results of the questionnaire survey may be considered to be relatively objective.

The socioeconomic situation and connection of the inhabitants to the territory is indicated by their migration potential. Thus, one of the first questions aimed at their thoughts about moving away from the region. There was a very close correlation to the age and education of the inhabitants. In particular, young people at the age of up to 30 and people with elementary education and also people with university education on the Czech side considered moving away. Mass media are the most frequently used way to learn about events in the other country – television, press and radio. The significance of the Internet is increasing. As for the frequency of contacts between the Czechs and the Poles, we can say that it is relatively balanced. 50 to 60% of all meetings are stated in the category *almost every day* or several times per month.

The fact that the Czech and Polish relations are good is also confirmed by the opinions of majority of the Czechs and the Poles who consider them quite good and very good. The share of mostly positive categories is greater for the Poles – more than 80% of the respondents. As for the Czechs, the number in these categories is more than 60% of the respondents. The fact that the Czech and Polish relations are good is also confirmed by the opinions of majority of the Czechs and the Poles who consider them quite good and very good.

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How often do you meet Czechs (Poles)?

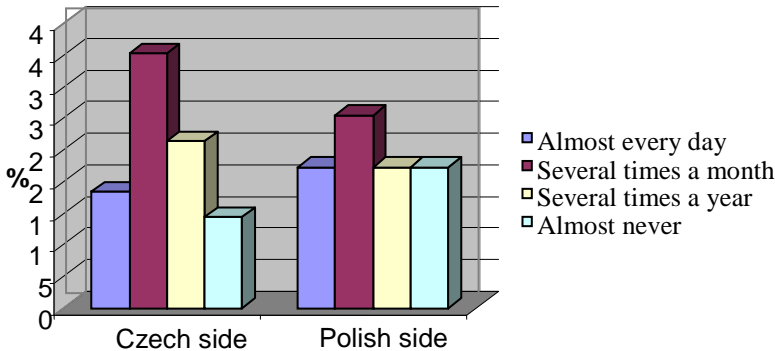


Figure 1.
Source: own research

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How do you evaluate the current Czech and Polish relations?

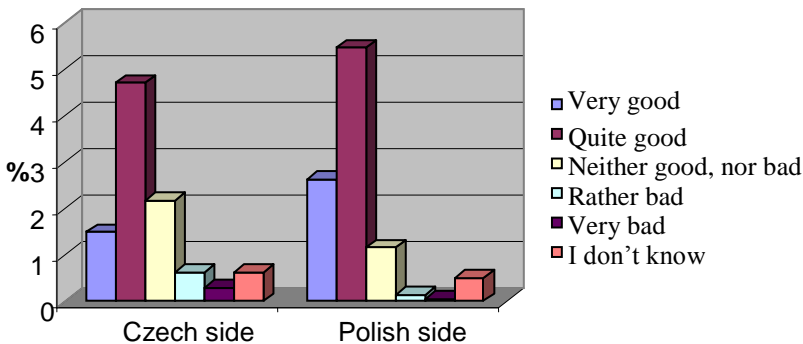


Figure 2.
Source: own research

There are quite significant differences in the reasons for travelling to Poland, or to the Czech Republic. As for the Czechs, the reasons namely include shopping, leisure activities are less important (namely in recreation), whereas the results are opposite on the Polish side. There are almost no relations based on studies or work.

Which of the following reasons for travelling to Poland (CR) is the most important for you?

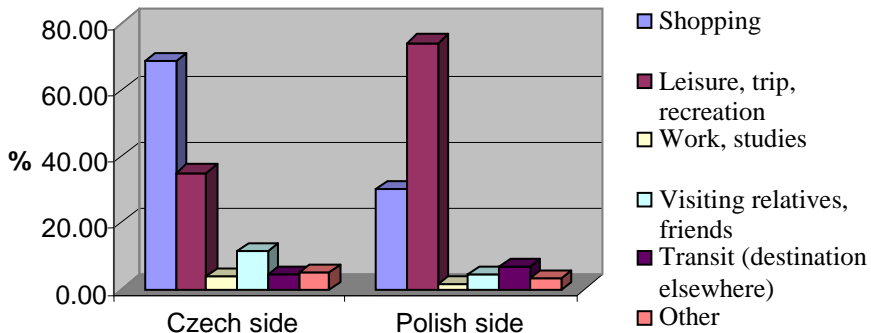
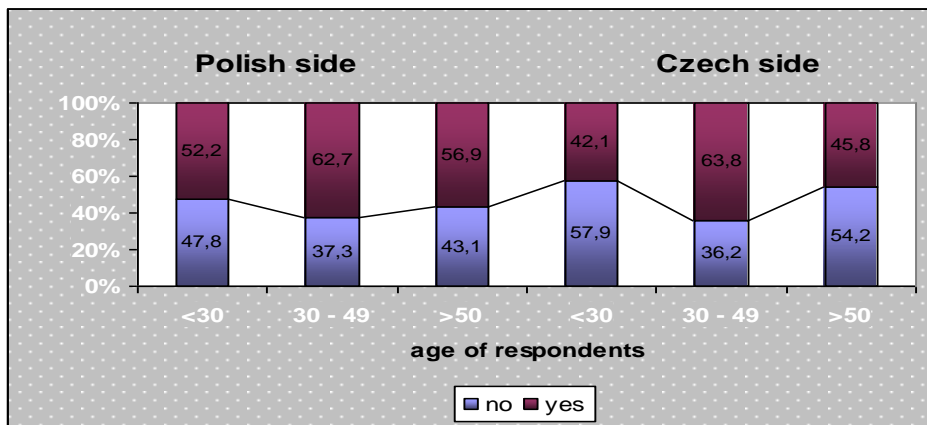
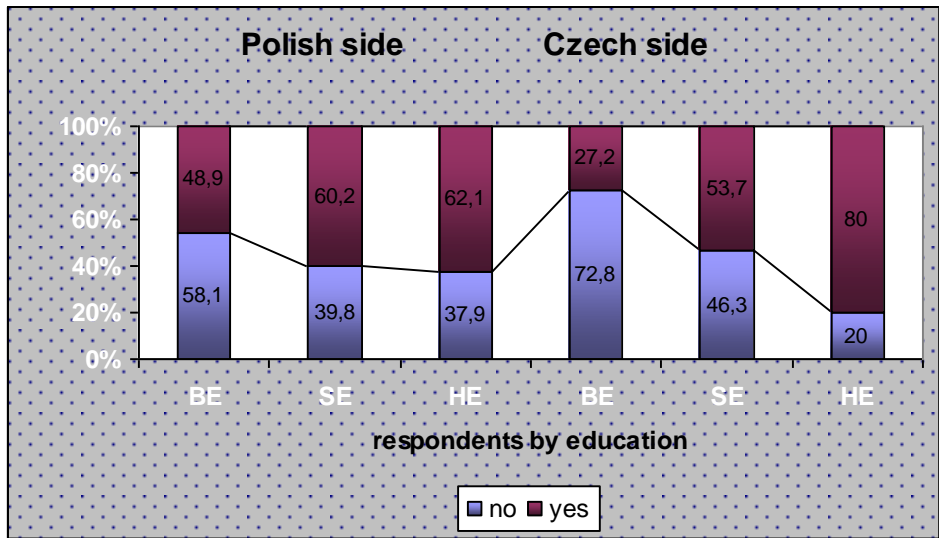


Figure 3.
Source: own research

The contacts with the other side of the border depend on the awareness of the inhabitants of cross-border cooperation projects. In this case, education plays an important role, namely on the Czech side. Generally, the awareness on the Polish side is greater than on the Czech side. The awareness of affiliation to the Praděd Euroregion also depends and positively correlates with education. The awareness is greater on the Polish side.



Source: own research



Source: own research

Figure 4: I know that I live in a euroregion (by age, by education)

The significance of the accession to the Schengen Area is confirmed by the fact that almost a half of the respondents on each side of the border think that the accession was an important impulse for the development of the cross-border cooperation in spite of the short period of time since the event. The significance of the accession to the Schengen Area is more than triple according to the respondents on the Czech side and more than double on the Polish side than the significance of the accession to EU.

14. Conclusion

The contribution aimed at outlining the determinants of the cross-border relations in the Jeseník Region and their potential impact on its regional development. The work describes the physical-geographical, socioeconomic and historic particularities of the cross-border relations in the Jeseník Region that still nowadays affect their intensity, quality and institutional provision. Thanks to the specific system along the entire Polish border (not only the Czech and Polish part), there was a limited penetrability of the border until the accession to the Schengen Area, namely for municipalities without fully operated border crossings.

The main objective of the contribution was to map the most important changes that occurred after the accession of both countries to the Schengen Area and the expectations of the mayors (interview) and inhabitants (questionnaire survey) and the following reality.

It was confirmed that the accession to the Schengen Area was a significant catalyst for the cross-border cooperation and that the relations to the Czech inland in the selected municipalities started to weaken quite shortly after the accession. We can expect further linking of the border areas in the future. As for the economic cooperation, the role of small business on the Polish side that made the best use of the fully open border and namely tourism (complementarity of factors in tourism) was confirmed.

It is not necessary to mention the great significance of the European money for the development of cooperation, without which many projects would not be implemented. As for the opinions of the inhabitants on both sides of the border, it was confirmed that the Poles know more about the Czech side, that they have a more positive approach to cooperation and that they made a better use of the potential for cooperation, not only thanks to the tourism and greater attractiveness of the Jeseník Region for Polish tourist. Can we thus consider the accession to the Schengen Area as an opportunity and an important development impulse? Can this fact contribute to the transformation of the border and peripheral region into a well-functioning cross-border unit that will pick up the threads of its rich history and the current potential on both sides of the border?

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