



**AgEcon** SEARCH  
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

*The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library*

**This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.**

**Help ensure our sustainability.**

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search  
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>  
[aesearch@umn.edu](mailto:aesearch@umn.edu)

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE KAZINCBARCIKA MICRO-REGION,  
FOCUS ON THE SOUTH GÖMÖR VILLAGES OF TRIZS, RAGÁLY AND  
ALSÓSZUHA**

**Foglalkoztatási lehetőségek a Kazincbarcikai Kistérségben –  
fókuszban a dél-gömöri falvak: Trizs, Ragály, Alsószuha**

GERENCSÉR Anett – SZÉPLAKY Eszter

---

**Abstract**

*Depopulation, aging, economic despair, are these really rural problems? Differences between various micro-regions on the path of development have become ever sharper. The disadvantages of the peripheral micro-regions are the lack of cities, poor accessibility of villages, loss of economic function of the regions and isolation caused by the closeness of the border. All these problems are present in the lives of the 'Gömör villages'. Our studies – which were made for the 'Margó' case study competition of 2013 – focus on the South Gömör villages of Alsószuha, Ragály and Trizs. The purpose of the study on villages was to explore opportunities for resolving employment difficulties, as well as revealing economic and social problems.*

*In the first part of our study, we review the population distribution, unemployment indicators of the Local Government of the Multi-purpose Micro-regional Association for Kazincbarcika and the surrounding area (henceforth: Kazincbarcika micro-region) based on figures from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, followed by a presentation of the three villages. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the local employment situation, we described the*

*results of a questionnaire survey conducted in summer of 2013 which shows the current status of the employment situation via images created by locals.*

*The study closes with the employment situation of the Kazincbarcika micro-region, as well as employment suggestions for improving its image.*

**Keywords:** employment, Kazincbarcika micro-region, 'South Gömör' villages, periphery

**Összefoglaló**

*Elnéptelenedés, elöregedés, gazdasági ellehetetlenülés. Vajon tényleg ezek a vidék problémái? Az eltérő fejlődési pályán haladó kistérségek közötti különbségek egyre markánsabbá váltak. A periférikus kistérségek hátránya a városok hiánya, a települések rossz elérhetősége, a térségek gazdasági funkcióvesztése, a határ menti elzártság. Mindezek a problémák jelen vannak a „gömöri települések” életében is. Tanulmányunk – amely a 2013-as „Margó” esettanulmányi versenyre készült – a dél-gömöri falvak: Alsószuha, Ragály és Trizs helyzetét állítja középpontba. A településeken végzett vizsgálat célja az volt, hogy a gazdasági és társadalmi problémák feltárása mellett a*

*foglalkoztatási nehézségek orvoslására megoldási lehetőségeket tárjunk fel.*

*A tanulmányunk első részében a Kazincbarcika és Vonzáskörzete Többcélú Önkormányzati Kistérségi Társulás (a továbbiakban: Kazincbarcikai kistérség) népességeloszlása, munkanélküliségi mutatóit ismertetjük a Központi Statisztikai Hivatal adatai alapján, amelyet a három falu bemutatása követ. Annak érdekében, hogy átfogóbb képet kapjunk a helyi foglalkoztatási helyzetről, ismertetjük a*

*2013 nyarán végzett kérdőíves felmérésünk eredményeit, amely a helyiek által alkotott helyzetképet szemlélteti a foglalkoztatás jelenlegi állapotáról.*

*A tanulmányt a Kazincbarcikai kistérség foglalkoztatási helyzetének, valamint arculatának javítását célzó foglalkoztatási javaslatokkal zárjuk.*

**Kulcsszavak:** foglalkoztatás, Kazincbarcikai kistérség, „dél-gömöri” falvak, periféria

## Introduction

The study is aimed at introducing the chief results of the coursework made for the ‘Margó’ case study competition of 2013 announced by the Institute of World and Regional Economics, the University of Miskolc and Foundation for Northern Hungarian Regional Studies. The object of the competition was to present a successfully operating peripheral region or village related to local employment initiatives and their effects, as well as to elaborate a suggestion system for further developing initiatives considered successful so far, and to adapt this for other areas. From the villages of South Gömör region,<sup>4</sup> Alsószuha, Ragály, and Trizs were selected, which are at the centre of the analysis. These three villages have belonged to the District Office of Putnok since 1 July 2013; furthermore, this office has carried out tasks involving labour matters since 1 September 2013. Due to the reorganisation of the public administration at the territorial level, instead of the district notary office, a common office has been operating for the villages of Ragály, Trizs, Imola, Szuhafő, Alsószuha and Zubogy since 1 January 2013.

Since the change of regime, differences between the various micro-regions on the path of development have become ever sharper. These villages are characterized by depopulation, aging and economic despair. What kind of background problems are the most severe difficulties of the regions? The disadvantages of the peripheral micro-regions are the lack of cities, poor accessibility of villages, loss of economic of function of the regions and isolation caused by the proximity of the border. These factors may result in a situation less favourable for the micro-region. All these problems are present in the lives of the three Gömör villages. These villages are trying to find a way out of the current situation. The question is what the way of progress should be. Is it localisation, efforts for self-dependence or regional development? Does the way forward manage to achieve long-term sustainable development and solve the problems of villages and their inhabitants?

In order to gain extensive knowledge – to obtain answers to the above questions – besides the review of specialized literature, we became personally acquainted with the villages of the Kazincbarcika micro-region. In order to present a comprehensive overview, we conducted interviews with the mayors of the villages examined, as well as with notaries and those local inhabitants who participate in the public works program. We got a more consistent picture of the situation of the region with random interviews in the institutions and catering units which

<sup>4</sup> Zubogy, Ragály, Trizs, Imola, Kánó, Aggtelek, Alsószuha, Szuhafő, Zádorfalva

operate in the villages. Our opinion was integrated with the situation of exploring the job centre staff of Kazincbarcika.

In the study we outline the state of the Kazincbarcika micro-region in accordance with the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. After introducing the three villages, we get an insight into the current state of employment utilizing the questionnaire method. Finally, we draw up a development proposal for the improvement of the employment situation and in order to achieve positive changes in the image of the micro-region.

### **Method of the research**

In the course of completing the study – due to the nature of the case study – we relied heavily on our primary research; however, information from secondary sources played an important role in formulating a picture of the villages' current situation.

Initially, we used the website of the Kazincbarcika micro-region. Through the information available there, we got to know the geographic features, the main natural resources and the man-made attractions of some of the villages as well as some other problems which villages have to face. For setting up the accurate picture, the essential numerical data were collected by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office.

Although this study is heavily based on the results of our own research, we try to integrate the knowledge provided by professional literature. We highlight among the used writing Lengyel and Rechnitzer [2009] Regional economics as well as Chikán [2008] Business economics.

In order to gain comprehensive knowledge, after studying the specialized literature we gained relevant information in certain villages of the Kazincbarcika micro-region, which is comprised of Alsószuha, Dédestapolcsány, Dövény, Felsőnyárád, Izsófalva, Kazincbarcika, Kurityán, Nagybarca, Ragály, Rudabánya, Szuhafő, Trizs, Vadna and Zádorfalva.

Our primary research was built on the in-depth interview and questionnaire method. On the one hand, through the questionnaire survey we estimated the employment situation, possibilities and opinions on public work schemes operating in the micro-region and about willingness to move to other areas of the country or abroad. The survey was conducted primarily online – occasionally, we conducted personal interviews as well.

On the other hand, we were honoured to interview mayors of the three villages, as well as the notaries, and were able personally speak with the leader of Kazincbarcika Labour Centre. Through these discussions, we revealed the problems these villages have struggled with since the change of regime and also outlined development projects devised by leaders to solve them. With their help, we gained an insight into the lives of villages from the institutional side.

Concurrent with making interviews, we collected relevant knowledge from local residents as well. As a result, we got to know the specifics of public work operations in Trizs through the eyes of a local worker who participated in it. Furthermore, we had a chance to visit their product warehouse and also their processing site.

In order to obtain an accurate picture of the study area, it was essential to use qualitative information as a basis, in addition to quantitative methods. Processing all this information, we draw up our development suggestions referring to the certain villages as well as for the micro-region.

### **The Kazincbarcika micro-region**

Since 2005, the Kazincbarcika micro-region has included thirty-two villages found in the region of North Hungary, in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. The basic objective of the association is to coordinate ideas and plans of the villages which have different abilities, so

that a kind of regional symbiosis has developed among these villages [Information portal of Kazincbarcika micro-region, 2013].

Local Government of Multi-purpose Micro-regional Association for Kazincbarcika and the surrounding area are in Figure 1.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alsószuha</li> <li>2. Alsótelekes</li> <li>3. Bánhorváti</li> <li>4. Berente</li> <li>5. Dédestapolcsány</li> <li>6. Dövény</li> <li>7. Felsőkelecsény</li> <li>8. Felsőnyárád</li> <li>9. Felsőtelekes</li> <li>10. Imola</li> <li>11. Izsófalva</li> <li>12. Jákfalva</li> <li>13. Kánó</li> <li>14. Kazincbarcika</li> <li>15. Kurityán</li> <li>16. Mályinka</li> </ol> |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. Múcsony</li> <li>18. Nagybarca</li> <li>19. Ormosbánya</li> <li>20. Ragály</li> <li>21. Rudabánya</li> <li>22. Rudolftelep</li> <li>23. Sajóalgóc</li> <li>24. Sajóivánka</li> <li>25. Sajókaza</li> <li>26. Szuhafő</li> <li>27. Szuhakálló</li> <li>28. Tardona</li> <li>29. Trizs</li> <li>30. Vadna</li> <li>31. Zádorfalva</li> <li>32. Zubogy</li> </ol> |
|---|---|---|

**Figure 1. Map of the Kazincbarcika micro-region**

Source: <http://www.kazincbarcika-tarsulas.hu/> [Accessed: 16 October 2013].

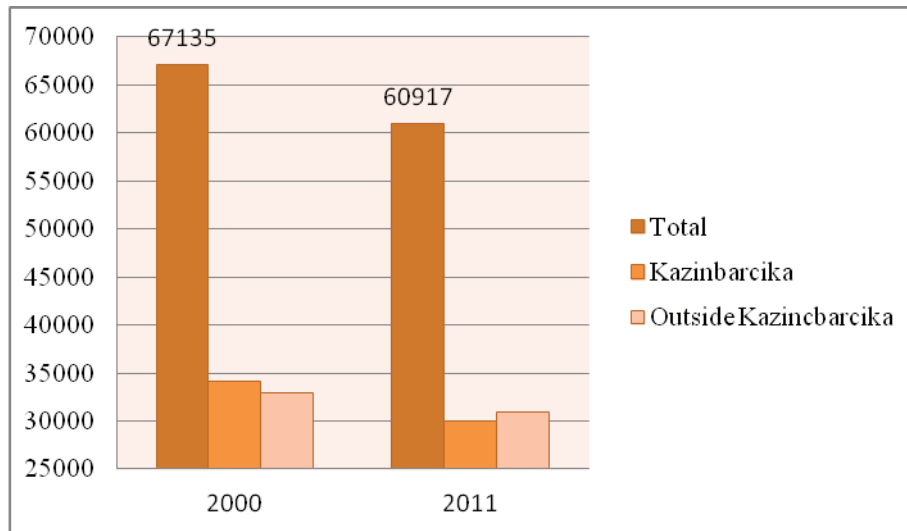
According to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, national-level trends such as population decline, aging or the unfavourable situation of the construction industry, which fewer new homes are being built, can be observed in the Kazincbarcika micro-region, too.

In the course of analysing the data, in order to observe the trends of change, we studied the latest data available in 2013, which was from 2011, as well as the data for 2000. As we processed the data of more than 30 villages, its population differed in a large way from the averaged quantity, the basis of the weighting was the population of 2011 or the proportion of the population.

### Population distribution between villages

Kazincbarcika, with a population of more than 30 000 people, stands out among the villages. More people live here than in all the other villages put together. A few other villages stand out for their relatively higher permanent populations, such as Múcsony, Rudabánya or Sajókaza, but the population of these individually does not exceed 4000. Therefore, in the analysis shown in Figure 2, we treated Kazincbarcika separately. It can be observed that while in 2000 more people lived in Kazincbarcika, this proportion had changed by 2011. The majority of the micro-region lives in smaller villages.





**Figure 2. Population distribution between villages**

*Source: created by the authors on the basis of Hungarian Central Statistical Office data*

The phenomenon is explained by the fact that the urban population is more mobile, and so brings itself to moving easier than the inhabitants of small villages. This fact is reflected in the measured migration rate of 2000, in which the micro-region is characterised by 5%; in the case of Kazinbarcika, the figure is 5.5%. If we look at the data of the population according to age distribution, it can be observed that the working-age population (18-59 years) decreased more than in the rest of the villages.

### Population distribution by age

Table 1 shows the composition of the population as well as population changes projected on age. The cumulative column shows the total population change. From data, we may observe the aging of the population, that is, the increasing ratio of the elderly. The proportion of minors decreased by 5%, while the proportion of retired people increased by 3%.

**Table 1. Population distribution by age**

Population distribution by age			0-5 years	6-17 years	18-59 years	60+ years	Total population
Total	Share of an age group [%]	2000	6.1	15.9	60	18	67135
		2011	5.3	12.6	6.6	21.5	60917
	Population change in ages [%]		-20.4	-28.1	-7.7	10.6	-8.9
Kazinbarcika	Share of an age group [%]	2000	5.6	15.3	63.4	15.7	34126
		2011	5	11	62.1	21.9	30030
	Population change in ages [%]		-22.3	-36.4	-13.8	22.7	-12
Outside Kazinbarcika	Share of an age group [%]	2000	6.6	16.6	56.7	20.2	33009
		2011	5.7	14	59.1	21.1	30887
	Population change in ages [%]		-18.7	-20.1	-1.8	-1.3	-6

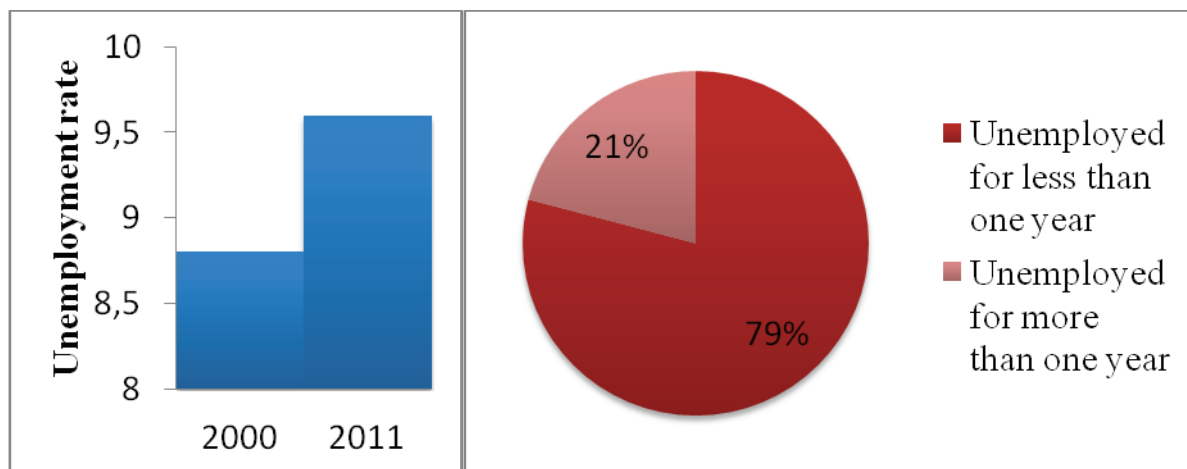
*Source: created by the authors on the basis of Hungarian Central Statistical Office data*

This proportion was even higher in Kazincbarcika. This does not seem much when comparing the ratios, but if we have a glance at the population-weighted data, in the age group under 60 a serious population decline occurs. If we study the micro-region without Kazincbarcika, we can see a better rate, but the number of new-borns and infants (aged 0-5) shows a declining tendency. As we will see later, this leads to a negative demographic indicator.

The level of migration is the major contributor to the fall in population. It accounts for two-thirds of the decline. In terms of migration, a fall can be observed, indicating fewer and fewer people migrate, but this figure can be misleading. The more mobile residents have probably already emigrated, so it can be shown that fewer people are moving away. Besides the migration, the fall in the birth rate so also contributes to further population decline. All this is well reflected in the previous figures.

### Joblessness in the Kazincbarcika micro-region

The main reason for migration can be identified as the lack of workplace. Unemployment is a major problem throughout the country; the national level is around 10%. Like the rest of the country, this micro-region has not escaped unemployment. In 2000 it was 8.8 %, reaching 9.6% in 2011. In *Figure 3* we can observe interesting data regarding unemployment. In 2011 nearly one-fifth of the unemployed had been without work for a long time, more than a year unemployment. The problems caused by unemployment are shown with concrete data in the villages.



**Figure 3. Unemployment rates**

*Source: created by the authors on the basis of Hungarian Central Statistical Office data*

### Comprehensive picture of villages

Visitors may get a highly polarized picture of the villages of North Borsod nestled in the mountains. Despite talk of recognizing their natural resources, the ability of these villages to retain their population presents a depressing picture. There are breakthroughs, however; yet these initiatives have brought about appreciable change only in Trizs.

### ***Alsószuha***

This village of approximately 500 inhabitants has a significant unemployed segment of the population. They do not have foreign capital and the number of existing businesses is low. There is no dominant city in the area. As it suffers from weak infrastructure, they do not receive investment or development that would spur economic recovery.

According to the district notary, five public work schemes were in progress in this village in 2013. 15 people took part in public agricultural work, 15 in value creation and 10 each in draining flood waters, repairing road networks and restoring agricultural roads. The mayor has been in charge of the village since 2006. He is convinced that not only must migration be cut but the village must also be made more liveable. In 2010, the village joined to the work program 'Start', which provided employment opportunities for 60 people. Obtaining additional funding resources, they plan to realise the construction of new medical offices and the construction work on the sewage system.

Referring to the exploratory discussions in the village, inhabitants deal with logging (Gömör Wood Ltd.) as well as retail and operating small businesses (e.g. construction). In this village family livestock and apiculture are also typical. Locals commute to Ózd and Kazincbarcika primarily to BorsodChem Zrt., which is present as a force driving employment in the region. Other jobs are provided by in Robert Bosch GmbH. of Miskolc and the brick factory at Serényfalva. Significant labour force flows from the micro-region to the Jabil Circuit Hungary Ltd. of Tiszaújváros.

A conversation with an older local resident also confirmed that job opportunities in the micro-region are limited. Many businesses went bankrupt. The mine in Feketevölgy (Felsőnyárad) which had employed about 600 people in 1998, has closed. People from 39 municipalities [Molnár és Dobos, 2003] went to work here, including from Alsószuha, too. Additionally, the sponge plant and the foam silk factory in Kurityán has also closed their doors. The number of BorsodChem Zrt. employees also has dropped significantly to about 2000 today [Gerencsér and Széplaky, 2013]. After the deterioration of the economic power sustaining the micro-region, today, thanks to the Chinese Wanhua Group, an investment of €200 million will occur in the Kazincbarcika premises of BorsodChem Zrt. Due to this fact, hundreds of jobs will be created in this disadvantaged region [OrientPress, 2013].

### ***Ragály***

In this village, with a population of 696, 84 people were registered as unemployed in 2013. The public works program is diversified in the village. 3.5 acres are being farmed under the agriculture program, in which 13 persons have taken part. The aim of the village leadership is to provide food for social care in the institutions and produce the necessary raw materials for it. The vegetables produced (e.g. cabbage) are processed in a processing room.

The remaining onions and potatoes are sold locally. From the resulting revenue, they have bought equipment for pickling.

8 people participated in value-creating public work. In this context, the internal reconstruction of the Balassa-Ragályi Baroque style castle was realized, which currently houses the Mayor's Office. In addition, the lead off inland- and rain water program employed 13 people, and 4 people have taken part in the maintenance of rural roads approaching the village. The project known as the boiler program provided 3 people job opportunities in the village. Besides, 5 local (agricultural and family-related) businesses are in operation.



The mayor of Ragály stressed that there is no drastic population decline. In 2002 the population was 712 and today it is 664.

Like Trizs, this village has joined in the revitalization of rural traditions. During the Series of Gömör-Torna Summer Festival, Ragály entered the Gömör Wedding Festival program, which was designed to achieve this goal [Ragály village, 2013].

A fine example of the regional co-operation is that Zubogy, Alsószuha and Ragály has purchased a wood chips machine under a triple application. The application was submitted to the Labour Centre of the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Government Office for the 'Bio- and renewable energy Start working sample program supporting'. This collaboration could be the first link for future cooperation.

### *Trizs*

The positive image of Trizs, such as the nicely renovated village centre, the Gömör county house, the fishing pond representing local values and the lively folk traditions attract visitors [Trizs village, 2013]. This village is a prime example of nearly full employment.

The population of Trizs is 242. Previously women accounted for 70% of the unemployed, so the local government of the village applied for a program which helped women to succeed. 2013 is the second year when the Job Start program commenced, in which 25 public workers (9 men, 15 women) took part. The themes of this program are agriculture, animal husbandry and conservation. The program, which is popular among the locals, started with 10 people.

In the village, agricultural public work is dominant. In the framework of this program, the food processing, production and sales systems are integrated. They themselves plant and hoe the 6 hectares area of the municipality by hand. In the village, herbs and forest fruits are gathered and processed – to make jam, syrup and canned fruit – and sold in different ways. Their unique products are for example violet syrup and jelly, as well as thyme syrup. (A total of 17 kinds of homemade syrup, 14 kinds of homemade jam, a variety of pickles and green beans with letcho have been made. The white poppy seed grown in this village is the treasure of Trizs. They process the collected pine buds and seeds. From the latter cooling-heating seed pillows are made, which are used in the health sector.)

One of the local employees shared the idea with us as follows: 'What the good Lord has given us is all valuable. It should not be thrown away, it should be processed. The sales take place with the permission of the notary, on Fridays. A further advantage of the village is that it has a demonstration kitchen where consumers can taste the finished products before purchasing. The leaders of the village considered the productions of local products important and based on this approach planned a local market development.'

The purpose of the village is to promote the Gömör products. They represented themselves at a number of events, for example, the Gömör Expo of Putnok, 'Színe- Java' Producer and Craft Fair of Kazincbarcika or in Farmers' Market and Craft Fair of Pácín.

In the Kazincbarcika micro-region, we can see a number of initiatives which strengthen collaboration between the locals. Within the framework of Gömör-Torna Summer Festival, the Pig-slaughtering of Gömör is held. The mayor said, 'Trizs is a beautiful village, which needs to beautify itself even more.' Here, rural tourism can be an alternative for development.

The goal is that the empty old houses should be let out as holiday houses. The Gömör county house is one of the jewels of Gömör's architectural heritage.

### **Empirical study with a questionnaire method**

In connection with this micro-region, we seek to discover which facts affect or enhance labour market chances in the micro-region. Are there any breakthroughs? What kind of opportunity did they choose? What form of assistance is available? In the course of our research, we found it important to know the situation of people living in the micro-region, their employment opportunities and opinions about their labour market chances.

The survey was conducted between 25 August and 10 October 2013. For data collection, we used a self-administrative, paper-based online questionnaire. The results may not be representative because sampling was made by different methods and does not reflect the composition of the population in the region. Besides the questionnaire, in Kazincbarcika and the villages studied we also conducted personal interviews, so 102 completed questionnaires were used in the study.

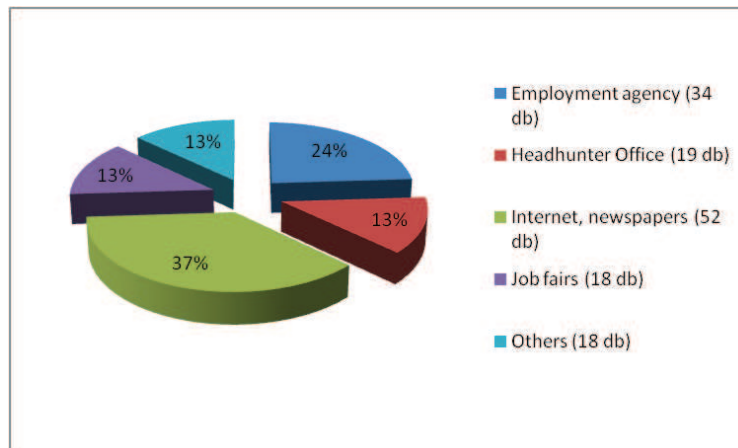
The majority of respondents, 71%, were female. In terms of age distribution, most respondents, 46%, represented the 18-30 year old age group, while only a small number belonged to the 61-70 year-old group. 64% of the survey respondents had dependent family members and in most cases they were raising two children.

The majority of respondents, 55%, were employed; however, significant differences were experienced in terms of intervals in job finding. Most of them, 37.5%, could find a job in a couple of days, but several people have pointed out that this happened 30 years ago. 27% of the employed found a job in a few months, 12% in half a year, and 14% of them in over a year.

17% of the unemployed respondents are not currently looking for work, for the following reasons: they are on maternity leave, studying or on disability pension. 10% have been trying to find a job for less than 3 months, 8% for half a year, and a further 8% for over a year. 61% of the respondents felt they had found a suitable job in accordance with their qualifications, which is 23% of men and 77% of women. Most of them showed a definite picture that they were highly educated. 29% studied in university, 20% had a college degree, and 18% completed high school.

The job search behaviour of respondents is shown in *Figure 4*. It is clear that most respondents are trying to find a job online, in newspapers or through relatives.

When the various means of seeking work, discrepancies can be seen in the rankings when these means are listed in order of effectiveness or in order of the number of people making use of them. Respondents thought the most helpful are relatives and friends when seeking work, followed by the Internet, the job centre, the executive search firm, and then job fairs.



**Figure 4. Distribution of employment agencies**

*Source: created by the authors*

Respondents who ask for help at the job centre have access to various services. The majority – 47% – were supported by this institute for job seeking, and 40% for training or retraining.

In relation to telecommuting, 37% of them would like to work abroad, 34% of them would prefer to remain within a 50 km zone, 15% only in their own place of residence, 9% more than 100 km away and 5% only within a distance of 50-100 km. A significant proportion of people who would look for a job in their own place of living are women aged 51-60. An equal proportion (42%) appears between the ages of 18-30, as well. Of those working abroad, 62.5% are female, and 37.5% male. According to their distribution, 59% of them are 18-31 years old and 19% of them are 41-50 years old, while 12.5% are between the ages of 51 and 60. 44% of those interviewed commuted between their home and place of employment daily, 17% weekly, 15% once a month and 23% not at all.

Locals generally hold a very negative view of employment opportunities in the micro-region. 96% of the interviewees are satisfied with neither local employment opportunities nor the number of employers. Most job seekers from the region find a solution for employment difficulties in public work. People who participate in public work can also be found among the responders. Most of them deal with tasks in agriculture and public area maintenance, but 74% of such persons are not satisfied with the opportunities provided by public work schemes. Many of them would like to work in a job matching their qualifications.

Overall, the respondents had a negative opinion of micro-region employment opportunities. They were not satisfied with the number of employers and job opportunities, nor with the job centre and their alternatives offered by public works. Job-seekers can find a job only after several months of unemployment. It must be taken into account that the economic situation has changed greatly compared with that of the previous few decades. Furthermore, the micro-region is characterised by large number of aging communities, as well as a great willingness of young people to migrate.

### **Joblessness in the examined villages**

The population and employment situation of the micro-region significantly determined the state of the South Gomor villages. In the following we have explored the situations of the villages examined and main problems based of the data collected by Hungarian Central

Statistical Office. The review can provide a basis for the preparation of problem- and goal trees as well as the creation of development proposals.

### ***Alsószuha***

Between 2000 and 2011 the population of Alsószuha fell from 531 to 480 according to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. This represents a 10% decrease compared to the base year of data. The reason for the change is that in the examined period, the rate of deaths and emigration exceeded the rate of births and immigration.

The data show a steady decline in population; in contrast, the number of registered job seekers are characterized growth at first, from year to year, then a reduction. Overall, however, the comparing base year data of 2000 to 2011, the number of registered job seekers had increased by 14%. The majority of them were men, with the exception of the year 2010, when the respective genders were represented with 18 each.

The number of jobseekers registered for over 180 days had peaked at 44 people. In the following 10 years their number never exceeded 30 people, but in 2011 there was a growing trend again, and the number of registered job seekers reached 37 people.

As regards their qualifications, the majority of registered jobseekers were skilled workers. They are followed by jobseekers graduating from primary and secondary schools, technical institutes and high schools. The majority of jobseekers are physical workers in Alsószuha. Their numbers alternately rose and fell during the period examined. In 2011, the number peaked at 62, representing a 9% increase compared to the data of the year 2000. Far fewer job seekers hail from among the ranks of white-collar workers than blue-collar workers, but their number change follows the same trend. Their numbers also reached the highest value in 2011. By this time 10 major white-collar job seekers were registered. In the case of entrant registered job seekers, a similar tendency was shown, consequently their number was higher, with 8 people in 2011.

According to their age composition, the majority of job seekers are between the ages of 21 and 25. In 2011, 14 people belonged to this group. They are followed by 36-40 and 51-55-year-old jobseekers. The two age groups in the examined period, both in 2011, accounted for the majority of registered jobseekers with 10 each. They are followed by 9 each in the age groups of 41-45 and the 46-50-year-olds.

### ***Ragály***

During the reporting period, the permanent population of Ragály diminished to a lesser extent than that of Alsószuha, shown above. In 2000, 720 persons lived there, but the number of people declined to 684 by 2011, a 5% decrease in the population.

Most of the jobseekers, 114 people, were registered in 2009. Overall, a 7% decrease occurred by 2011 compared to the data of 2000, when the number of registered jobseekers was 87 people and most of them were men in Ragály. The number of registered unemployed – over 180 days – decreased by 29% by 2011 compared to the registered unemployed of the base year. The highest value was recorded in 2009, when 64 people were looking for jobs in a sustained fashion.

Regarding their qualifications, most of the job seekers had primary school and vocational qualifications as well. During the examined period, their numbers differed only slightly from

each other and had a similar trend according to their changes in case of both groups. The fewest registered jobseekers were found among university, college qualification or skilled persons. In each case, a maximum of two persons were registered according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Registered jobseekers consist mainly of blue-collar workers, and in most cases, their number was more than ten times that of the registered white-collar job seekers. Evolution in the number of entrant registered jobseekers showed an upward trend with the exceptions of 2005 and 2006, then a decline can be noticed again in 2011.

In terms of age distribution, most registered job-seekers fell into the age groups of 21-25 and 41-45 during the period examined.

### ***Trizs***

Trizs is the third examined village where the permanent population changes followed a downward trend likewise former. Compared to the number of registered residents in 2000, population is decreased to 243 capita with 19% the registered capitation of 2011. In Trizs the number of deaths and emigrations is significantly higher than the rate of live births and immigrations.

Although data referring to population changes shows a negative picture the same cannot be said of the labour data of the examined period. Compared to 2000, the number of registered job-seekers had dropped 35%, the majority of them are women, by 2011. The number of unemployed registered for over 180 days decreased by 67% over 11 years.

Regarding their qualifications, the distributions of jobseekers showed a similar picture to that of the previously shown two villages. Eight elementary school and vocational school graduates comprised the majority of registered jobseekers. Most of them were blue-collar workers. In Trizs we also observed that the rate of white-collar registered jobseekers is a fraction of the blue-collar ones.

In terms of age distribution between each age group there are not significant differences in the number of job seekers. The highest values are to be found in 36-40 and 41-45 age groups in the examined period.

Overall, all three townships have similar problems arising from the situation of population and labour situations.

The most serious questions are population decline, a high rate of low-skilled and physical-employed job seekers and the outstanding number of registered job seekers aged 21-25 years and 40-50. A remedy is imperative because the increased difficulties may further exacerbate the situation of these villages and may result in an aging, impoverished society.

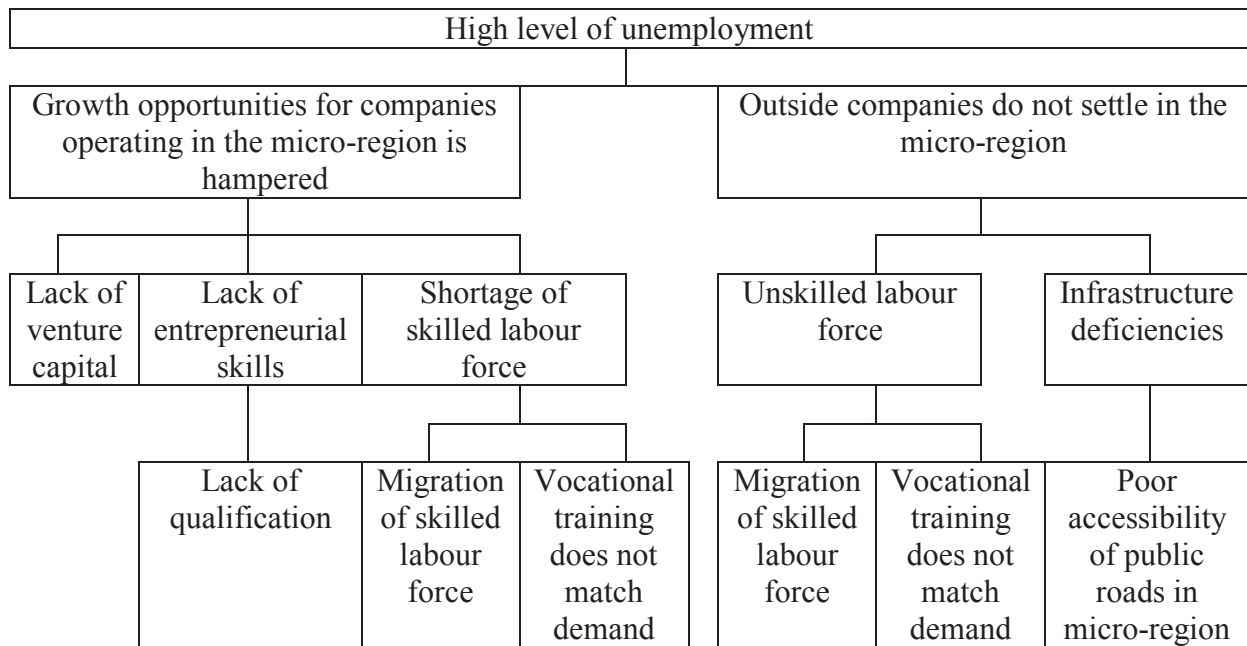
### **Objective summary of the problems and their solutions of South Gomor villages**

The two main instruments of strategic planning, the problem tree and goal tree, are the best ways to concisely illustrate the main difficulties of townships and objectives intended for their solution. Consequently, we grouped the problems of the three villages which related to the employment situation, then outlined the resulting problem tree shown in *Figure 5*.

We thought that the high level of joblessness was caused by two factors: the lack of outside companies settling locally and the difficulties of the companies already running of exploiting opportunities for growth. These problems were engendered by several factors, such as lack



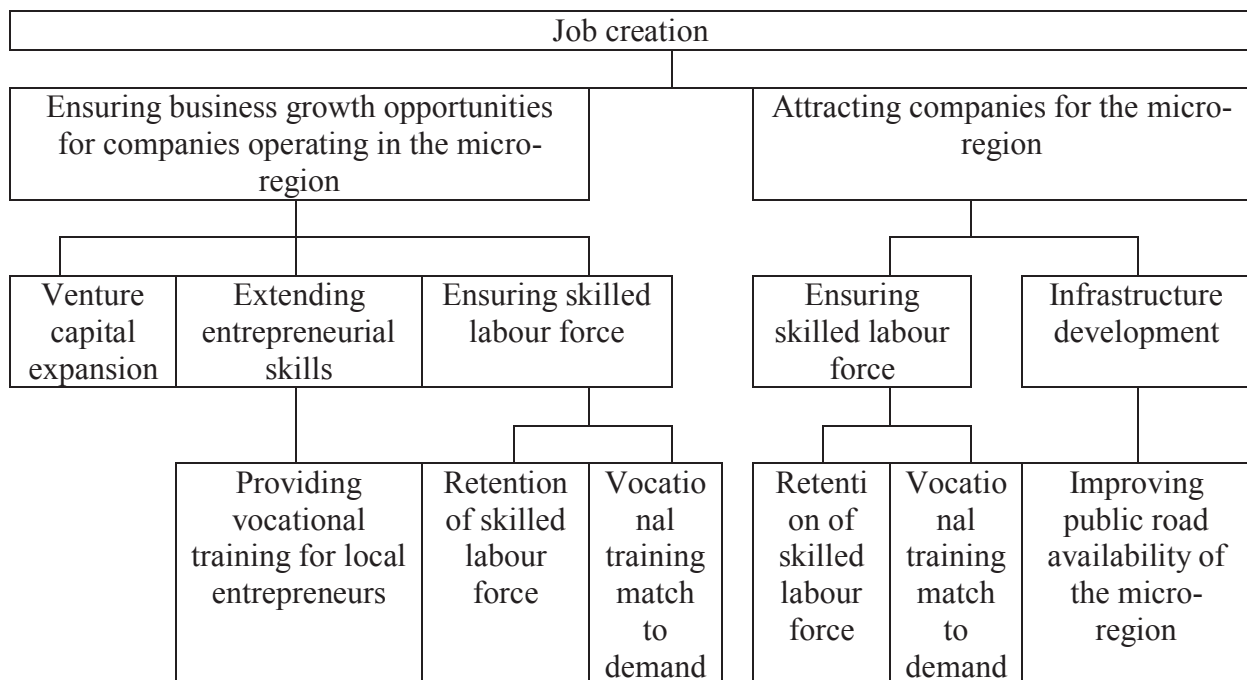
skilled labour and capital and entrepreneurial skills as well as the poor accessibility of the micro-region.



**Figure 5. Problem tree of the examined villages**

*Source: created by the authors*

To remedy of the difficulties described above it is necessary to overcome the remaining obstacles. This objective was shown in the *Figure 6*. The main task is to provide the right environment for the successful operation of businesses. This requires that the employee of the micro-region should acquire those skills or qualifications that meet the needs of employers.



**Figure 6. Goal tree of the examined villages**

*Source: created by the authors*

Another key objective is to prevent the migration of skilled labour. It is important that various training courses be provided not only for employees, but for the employers, as well. The key of success of the companies operating in the micro-region is that the entrepreneurs continually broaden their knowledge according to the needs of market. Improving the accessibility of the micro-region is necessary for several reasons. On the one hand it is a determining factor for the successful operation of local businesses on the other it ensures the trouble-free transportation of workers.

We believe that the solving the problems summarized above would contribute to the economic strength of the micro-region, the increase of the standard of living of the population and the improvement of their living conditions as well as preventing these villages from aging and depopulating.

### **Initiatives**

We can see a number of initiatives in the micro-region that might foster the economic development of the region. Building on these, we will outline innovative ideas which may result in the growth of employment.

### **Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme**

Within this programme, development of job-creating projects in Kazincbarcika and the surrounding area will be realised with Swiss support of 4 873 000 CHF. In the micro-region, a kind of Business Service and Incubation Centre will be created which will support the launch of new services and start-ups [NFÜ, 2013].

In the micro-region can already be found the INNOPARK– on the border of Felsönyárad, between Kurityán – which is a kind of thematic, technological park that goes beyond the traditional industrial park [Innopark, 2013]. The economic potential has been strengthened with this re-launching of industrial activity, which leads to the improvement of employment.

### **Gömör Environmental Landscape Development Association**

The purposes of the existing initiatives are, among others, the protection of environmental and natural resources, practical implementation of the ethos of sustainable, the development of ecological culture and a global approach to education. Due to the economic and intellectual backwardness of the South-Gömör region, the Association offers professional and social support.

Regarding the future, one relevant goal is to increase the income-generating capacity of local people's traditional knowledge, based on market opportunities. Also to be welcomed are a kind of workshop which supports the increase in the production of local products, the creation of a local market, boosting fruit production, and the launch of the "Gömöri Tájgazda" ("Owners of the Land") community initiative, which establishes agricultural and rural development organizations in the micro-region [Gömör Environmental Landscape Development Association, 2013].

## **Cross-border relations**

European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) helps for the implementation of cross-border transnational and interregional cooperation. As of August 2007, in Hungary can be created a kind of non-profit group designed to ensure the success of cooperation between the governments of two or more Member States and/or their local and regional actors [Cross-border cooperation programme of Hungary and Slovakia, 2013].

The Sajó-Rima Euroregion Cross-Border Cooperation was established on July 7 2000, of which the Kazincbarcikai micro-region is also a member. Its activities cover the Sajó and the Rima River region of 336 townships, which incorporate into the Slovak and Hungarian villages, too. The Sajó-Rima Euroregion forms an integrated structure of social, economic and environmental features. The aim is to achieve sustainable development. In the long-term, efficient results will be reached in the preparation work of the European integration process and participation [European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, 2013].

All of these successes are rooted in the fact that there are people alive whose memories hold past habits and family traditions, the reviving of which will lead to joint work and the revitalizing of value-creating activities (e.g. basketry, preservation the avifauna of eco-grassland avifauna, making bird feeders, collection meadow honey), that is, job creation.

## **Gömör-Torna Summer**

Gömör-Torna Summer is a program series spanning the border, taking place in more than 20 municipalities. The festival is organised in the name of cultural borderlessness, so it places great emphasis on the presentation of local management, architecture and gastronomical values as well as reviving a variety of crafts. The Gömör-Torna Summer takes place from June to October in twenty-six townships [Gömör-Torna Summer, 2013].

## **Development proposal of Alsószuha**

During fieldwork in Alsószuha we found that within locals are reviving orchard care and the collection of fruit for brandy making. As a result, the distillery of Zádorfalva runs continuously as an enterprise. The harvest, drying and cleaning walnuts are also characteristic autumn activities of family businesses. Among the disadvantaged, mushroom picking and drying have become a primary activity. This latter initiative should be expanded, as the rich flora of the surrounding oak forests provide an opportunity for job creation, as do the typical rosehips and blackthorn.

Another way of development lies in the local architectural heritage, the old Gömör mansions, and the water resources in the area. In the studies of Szlabóczky [2008], we found references stating that the Faculty of Mining at the University of Miskolc had performed a water mining study in the region. In the proposals of the study, the geothermal wells in the area were suitable for further drilling. For the lack of money, the natural water industry stagnated in the area. In the long term of village life the possibilities of potential local thermal water should be exploited. We believe that the efficient use of current tender possibilities should revive these initiatives.

## **Development proposals of Trizs and Ragály**

We saw the development of the two villages studied, Ragály and Trizs, in the continuation of the existing initiatives that are favourable for the region. During our fieldwork, spontaneous discussions confirmed the opinion of the leadership according to which the disposition of population towards migration has decreased. One reason could be the employment program, which lead in a positive direction. From the aspects of economic strengthening it is important that successful initiatives go beyond their current limits and develop into activities ready to face the competition.

Ragály is primarily seeking to implement self-sufficient economic activity. To achieve their goals, it is necessary that agricultural products should be manufactured as extensively as possible. We consider it important that the dwellers of Ragály join in regional trade, thereby creating the profit necessary for future development.

To foster competitiveness, a widespread distribution of Trizs's final product is needed, which can at first be provided by online commerce. With the help of e-commerce, the women of Trizs are able to send their products long distances inexpensively. However, there are several conditions that must be met for successful implementation. First of all, it is important to develop an appropriate management plan in the near future. We faced the problem that supply only satisfies demands under tight constraints. This is due to the short duration of the production activities that are carried out in the village, partly owing to which they have not been able to accumulate large amounts of inventory, a lack contributed to by the fact that they sell the majority of their products in festivals and the Friday market day. An informative website should be created where the customer can get information about the family of products, prices, and the composition of certain products.

## **Consequences**

In the course of our research, it was stated that behind the successful employment program two determinative factors exist in the case of South Gömör villages. One relevant factor is the decisive role of village leaders. Successful management determines the attractiveness of a settlement. The future is shaped by a guiding force of management or leadership – be it the mayor or business leader – owing to his (decision making) abilities, proactive behaviour, values and personal commitment. It is important to have a leader who can be the initiator for the reform of rural life and value creation.

Another factor of success resides in locals' positive attitude. These people, in spite of difficulties, persevere beside the place where they live and seek to create value through their work.

## **Summary**

A positive image and good reputation of the area are vital among the factors of regional competitiveness. In the villages examined in our study, however, all this is missing. Small villages struggle with the problem of aging and depopulation. Skilled young people migrate from villages, and this process must be changed. A breakout possibility can be provided by agricultural and rural economic development, which can be achieved by strengthening the local economy and community.

Opinions are divergent about the micro-regions. Statistics illustrate diversity, which is also demonstrated in interviews. We conducted spontaneous interviews with residents during which we asked their opinion of the local employment situation. From among their replies, we selected representative answers that illustrate the three major strains of thinking to be found in the interviews:

‘My work is my life. I like it a lot. I do it with heart and soul, I support it all.’ (public employee of Trizs, female, 52)

‘Young chemists have a chance to find a job, but nobody else.’ (chemical engineer of Kazincbarcika, male, 32)

‘The situation is hopeless, no job opportunities, everybody goes to the Arboretum.’<sup>5</sup> (retiree of Kazincbarcika, male, 65)

These statements well demonstrate the tripartite division found in the opinion of the inhabitants. One group was pleased because they have work, the second is happy because of a successful career choice, while the third one summarizes the hopelessness and the lack of breakout possibilities. Opinions expressing locals’ experiences should be taken into consideration by the village leaders who determine the direction of development.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank university professor Erzsébet Lucia Nováky and associate professor Balázs Forman for their professional guidance and valuable criticism, as well as the leaders and notaries of the above mentioned villages for their proposals and knowledge.

### **References**

- CHIKÁN, A. (eds). (2008). *Vállalatgazdaságtan. [Business Economics]*. Budapest: Aula Kiadó Kft.
- LENGYEL I., RECHNITZER J. (eds). (2009). *Regionális gazdaságtan. [Regional Economics.]* Budapest-Pécs: Dialóg Campus.
- MOLNÁR, J. - DOBOS, E. (2003). *A putnoki, a fekete völgyi, és az edelényi szénbányászat társadalmi és természetföldrajzi vizsgálata. [Social and physical geographical analysis of Edelény coal mining, Putnok and the Black Valley.]* Available from: < [http://www.uni-miskolc.hu/~ecomojud/publika/zilahbanya03\\_mj.pdf](http://www.uni-miskolc.hu/~ecomojud/publika/zilahbanya03_mj.pdf)>. [Accessed: 2013.10.12. ].
- GERENCSÉR, A. - SZÉPLAKY, E. (2013). Interview with an inhabitant of Alsószuha. 2013.09.02. Alsószuha.
- SZLABÓCZKY, P. - DEÁK, J. (2008). *Emlékképek, emléklapok a Miskolci mélyfúró vállalat és utódszervezeteinek vízbányászati tevékenységéből 1950 -1993. [After-image, memories from the water mining activities of Miskolc deep water drilling company and its successor organizations in 1950 -1993.]* Available from: < [http://www.olajmuzeum.hu/uploads/File/szlaboczky\\_pal\\_-\\_dr.\\_deak\\_janos.pdf](http://www.olajmuzeum.hu/uploads/File/szlaboczky_pal_-_dr._deak_janos.pdf)>. [Accessed: 2013.10.24].

---

<sup>5</sup> Urban management of Arboretum



## Further references

- Information portal of Kazincbarcika micro-region* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.kazincbarcika-tarsulas.hu/>>. [Accessed 19 October 2013].
- European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://egtc.kormany.hu/>>. [Accessed 24 October 2013].
- Gömör Environmental Landscape Development Association* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://gomorikte.hu/>>. [Accessed 12 October 2013].
- Gömör-Torna Summer* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://gomortornainyar.btge.hu/>>. [Accessed 12 October 2013].
- Innopark* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://innopark.net/magyar/a-projektrol>>. [Accessed 5 October 2013].
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.ksh.hu/>>. [Accessed 19 October 2013].
- OrientPress* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.orientpress.hu/107939>>. [Accessed 16 October 2013].
- Ragály village* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.ragaly.hu/>>. [Accessed 24 October 2013].
- Swiss Contribution* [online]. (2013). Available from: <[www.nfu.hu/svajci\\_hozzajarulas](http://www.nfu.hu/svajci_hozzajarulas)>. [Accessed 23 October 2013].
- Trizs village* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.terport.hu/>>. [Accessed 24 October 2013].
- Cross-border cooperation programme of Hungary and Slovakia* [online]. (2013). Available from: <<http://www.husk-cbc.eu/>>. [Accessed 23 October 2013].

## Authors:

**GERENCSÉR, Anett**, master of Regional and Environmental Economic Studies;  
[netti.gerencser@gmail.com](mailto:netti.gerencser@gmail.com)

**SZÉPLAKY, ESZTER**, master of Regional and Environmental Economic Studies;  
[eszter.szeplaky@gmail.com](mailto:eszter.szeplaky@gmail.com)

Corvinus University of Budapest, Faculty of Business Administration, Department of  
Environmental Economics and Technology,  
8. Fővám tér, 1093 Budapest, Hungary