

Budapest as well as the internal trade and capital exports each received a subchapter. The final part deals with tourism in Hungary.

It is a great asset of the atlas that the maps and figures clearly orientate the reader to discover the regional patterns and differences within Hungary. Unfortunately, the dark colours of symbols block the reading of some maps, while in some other cases the colours are too much reduced. Although the use of geographical names is not always consistent, the maps always help identify the objects or places mentioned in the explanations. The graphs and tables of international indicators help the interested to place the economy of Hungary first of all in a European dimension. Most of the data are surprisingly fresh – due to the computers that can wait until the last days to process the latest data either in table or map form and to the scientists who interpreted the data and the trends.

A book like this is surely an important source of information for geographers and other earth scientists. Although writing this volume did not need direct international cooperation, the publication will surely generate an echo outside Hungary. I wish that *Hungary in Maps* become a popular publication with the international readers: this book may also serve as a nice and useful gift for visitors including not only the professionals of the scientific community, but also businessmen, politicians or the sophisticated readers. It also satisfies the interest of those readers who wish to learn about the land and inhabitants of the Hungarian state and want to have a reliable guide to the modern image of the country in a European context and on a global scale. The price of this professional guide is most advantageous!

This atlas makes Hungary even more attractive to visit.

GÁBOR GERCSÁK

**OECD Environmental Performance Reviews Hungary.** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, 2008, 226 p.

The review of public policies and country performance is a core function of the OECD, whose aim is to help member countries improve their individual and collective performances in environmental management and sustainable development. OECD also reviews environmental performance of key non-Member countries. To date, OECD has completed reviews of Chile, China and of the Russian Federation.

The Environmental Performance Review of Hungary, published in 2008 in English, French and Hungarian examines Hungary's progress since the previous OECD Environmental Performance Review in 2000, and the extent to which the country had met its domestic objectives and international commitments. The OECD report also reviews Hungary's progress in the context of the OECD Environmental Strategy for the First Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Some 46 recommendations were made that should contribute to further environmental progress in Hungary. It addresses the combined efforts of government and civil society (including industry, labour, households and environmental NGOs).

The first environmental review of Hungary assessed the progress made between 1990 and 2000, a period marked by Hungary's accession to the OECD (in 1996). It was very timely to release the second report, covering the period since 2000, after accession of Hungary to the EU and after more than 10 years of co-operation with OECD. Since 2000,

Hungary has experienced a high rate of economic growth – averaging 4% annually – as well as significant structural change and integration in the European and global economy. Imports and exports of goods now represent 78% of GDP. Fiscal consolidation and economic convergence with the rest of the OECD are high on the agenda.

Since 2000, Hungary has made significant environmental progress in several fields. Hungary has not only transposed the EU environmental legislation, but it has also improved its environmental policy planning and its law enforcement activities; progressing towards the Polluter-Pays and User-Pays Principles, with increasing use of economic instruments. Hungary's pollution abatement and control expenditure has reached 1.6% of GDP. Hungary has considerably reduced air pollutants emissions and improved air quality. For instance, sulphur oxides and carbon dioxide emissions have been further decoupled from economic growth. Sulphur oxides emissions per unit of GDP in Hungary now stand below the OECD average, but are still above the Europe OECD average. Nature protection has benefited from government action with the creation of the Natura 2000 network. Nature and biodiversity are key assets for Hungary's tourism sector and they provide important ecological services such as flood protection. The report stresses that environmental democracy has progressed in Hungary with improved environmental information, environmental education, and environmental awareness. An innovative ombudsman's position has been established in 2008, to protect the rights of future generations. This can be seen as a model for other countries.

In the energy sector, energy pricing has become "greener", with regulated tariffs to consumers reflecting the cost of supply. For instance, in 2006 the gas subsidy was abolished and replaced by a direct income support scheme for poorer households. This makes sense from the economic, energy and environmental points of view. Hungary has developed a proactive stance in international environmental co-operation. It chairs the International Network of Basin Organisations and plays an important role in river basin and flood management, with 52% of its territory flood-prone. Following the Baia Mare accident in Romania, which contaminated the Tisza and Danube Rivers in 2000 with toxic mining waste, Hungary played a pivotal role by ensuring public safety and communications in affected towns downstream; but also by leading the negotiations of the Protocol on Civil Liability under Europe's Water and Industrial Accident Convention. Hungary launched in Budapest a sequence of international conferences on the environment-health interface.

These are all important achievements, but there are number of areas for further progress. Hungary still needs to address a number of environmental challenges, while pursuing sustainable development and balancing economic, environmental and social concerns. Meeting these challenges is achievable and affordable and should bring significant economic and social benefits.

Hungary faces a multiple challenge in water management; not only to satisfy the very demanding EU Water Framework Directive, but also to improve flood management, strengthen waste water treatment infrastructure and upgrade drinking water quality. A number of health-related indicators are not favourable. Drinking water is still often contaminated by ammonium, arsenic (of geological origin), nitrates, fluoride and boron. This is despite costly programmes to open new drinking water sources, extend public water supply and improve purification technology which have only reached 10% of the target population under the Drinking Water Quality Improvement Programme. Improving air and drinking water quality should bring well-being to the population, as well as economic benefits such as reduced health expenditure and improved labour productivity.

Hungary's energy and transport policies need to better integrate environmental concerns, for example by better addressing demand management. The country must fur-

ther improve efficiency in energy and materials use. In doing so, it could capture multiple benefits, such as reducing dependency on imported energy, cutting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, reducing air pollution and related health costs and being prepared to respond to more stringent greenhouse gas emission reduction goals by 2020. Hungary should identify a set of priority measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and implement fully its National Climate Change Strategy. It also needs to adopt and implement its National Biodiversity Strategy and to strengthen the financial and human resources for nature protection. The OECD report also recommends establishing institutional arrangements to review the environmental effects of fiscal instruments, identify environmentally harmful subsidies and improve the use of economic instruments such as taxes, charges and emission trading schemes.

ISTVÁN POMÁZI