

Summary

The County of Vukovar-Sirmium is relatively well bounded by the spatial element of the East-Croatian plains. The geographical position of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium is largely determined by the importance of the transversal land connection between the Dinaric-Mediterranean area in the south and the Danube and Central European area to the north. It is also determined by the provision of the longitudinal relationship between Central and South Eastern Europe and the navigable waterways of the Drava, Danube and Sava. It is mostly a lowland region, the highest part is in the north where the loess plain of Vukovar extends on the western slopes of the Fruška Gora, and the lowest is in the central Spačva zone. This county has a continental climate, characteristic of Central Europe. In a climate-zone sense, the diversity of the plant world in the Vukovar-Sirmium County belongs to the Euro Siberian-North American region, with widespread oak forests. As a reflection of the climatic and geological conditions, appropriate types of soils can be found. A dominant black-coloured soil that is rich in humus (chernozemic soil) is prevalent. By virtue of their length, size and importance for the life of the population and development of the area, the Danube and Sava, the main watercourses of the area stand out in the hydrographical network of the county.

Complex historical, political, economic, social, cultural-civilization and other processes in correlation with favorable natural geographic conditions, have resulted in a specific and dynamic movement and development of the population in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. From mid-19th century until the early 1970s, this county had relatively high rates of population growth as a result of frequent and numerous immigration waves that compensated for demographic losses that resulted from increased emigration (especially during and immediately after the Great Wars). However, at the beginning of the 1970s, there was a significant slowdown, a kind of stagnation in demographic dynamics. During these years, natural change began to rapidly deteriorate and the number of immigrants began to exceed the number of migrants, and the level of demographic aging increased... This is a time when the adverse consequences of uncontrolled deagrarianisation, erratic industrialisation as well as increas-

ingly aggressive deruralisation all added up. From a demographic point of view, the breaking point was in 1990, during and after which the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, in large part due to the negative consequences of Serbia's armed aggression, was affected by depopulation processes in all the vital and structural components of movement and population development. Population decline between 1991 and 2001, the natural decline in the population, which has continued since 1999, the accelerated aging of the population, as well as more pronounced spatial population polarisation are a reflection of the past, but the important functions of future demographic, social and economic development forces in the county.

A key demographic factor of ethnic change during the 20th century was migration, especially the Hungarian exodus (after WWI) and the German population (before the end and post-war period of WWII). The displaced Croatian and non-Serbian populations as well as the Serbian refugees during the Serbian armed aggression and occupation of two thirds of settlements in the county during the 1990s needs to be added to the mentioned migratory currents. At the same time, ethno-demographic development was significantly influenced by immigration, especially the colonisation of new populations during the two agrarian reforms (after the First and Second World Wars) as well as the migration of labor in the 1950s and 1960s. However, regardless of the number, organisation, spontaneity or compulsion and ethnic complexity of migratory currents, the County of Vukovar-Sirmium gradually became "Croatised" during the last century.

Throughout history, peoples and traditions, culture and civilisation, religion and customs have met in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. The historic journey begins with traces of prehistoric religious cultures and continues with traces of ancient Roman culture and religion followed by the growth and collapse of ancient Christianity. After the great migration of peoples and the stabilisation of social and political relations, this space experienced a new revival of Catholic Christianity in the Middle Ages. However, the Ottoman conquest of these regions and migration that continued until the 20th century changed the demographic as well as religious characteristics of



this space. To date in this area, besides the predominant Roman Catholic Church and Greek ceremonies, the most common Christian churches include the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Evangelical and Reformed Church. With regard to other religious communities, the Jewish community, in particular was significant in the past while Islamic communities are considerable today. Therefore, it is also a multicultural space with a history of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

The earliest permanent settlement began in the last quarter of the sixth century BC in the space of Vukovar-Sirmium. The first agricultural settlements belonged to the Starčevo culture, which was highly agricultural. The Starčevo culture was replaced by the late Neolithic - Sopot culture in the mid 6th century BC in this region. Major changes in the area of the Vukovar-Sirmium County took place in the middle of the 4th century BC with the appearance of the Baden culture. Bearers of this culture had close links with the Indo-European movement towards the west. There was a string of settlements from Ilok to Vukovar, while the site of Vučedol was the largest. The Baden culture in this area around 3250 BC was gradually replaced by the Kostolac and then the Vučedol culture began in 3000 BC. The Vučedol culture in its late stage lost a critical mass in its home region - eastern Croatia, and so the earliest bronze period marked Vinkovačka culture that continued the tradition of Vučedol. The Vinkovačka culture that moved towards areas of northwestern Croatia, and probably further, partially depleted areas in which it began its existence. Its successor was a very attractive Vatin culture that spread from Serbia and Vojvodina, and took over older areas of the settlement. Since then until the ancient period in the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium different cultures have alternated. This articulates the stabilisation and development of the population.

During their conquest, the Romans conquered the region of the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium. The administrative divisions of Illyricum of this region can be found in the Lower Pannonia. With the arrival of the Roman army, roads of a strategic and economic character as well as forts along the border that constituted the Danube - Danube limes were built. In addition to the border station, smaller and larger settlements located near existing roads, which were linked to local routes were built. Among them were marketplaces close to military camps, then smaller and larger rural settlements as well as rest stops for travellers and the exchange of horses. The administrative and economic centres were Vinkovci - Cibalae. This relatively densely populated area had developed trade and manufacturing of their own agricultural and craft products that was predominated by ceramics, while wood was one of the main raw materi-

als. The outbreak of barbarian tribes that were initiated by the Huns in 375 began the process of the Migration Period. From 378 until 379, Eastern and Western Goths, Huns, Gepids and Lombards appeared in this region. The arrival of the Avars along with the first Slavs marked the final blow to the entire ancient world. With the fall of Sirmium in 582, the period of antiquity ended and the Pannonia remained devastated and robbed.

The County of Vukovar-Sirmium was a component of the Vukovar County during the late Middle Ages that was first mentioned in sources in 1220. The area was relatively well settled and there are significant urban settlements (free royal towns and marketplaces) as well as numerous villages. The properties of many noble families, of which some, such as those of Ilok, were considered among the most powerful in the Hungarian-Croatian kingdom, can be found. The remains of their fortified cities are evidence of the richness of life in this area during the Middle Ages.

The Ottomans conquered the present-day area of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium from 1526 until 1537. Ottoman rule was established, consolidated and organised in the following decades. In administrative-territorial terms, this area belonged to the western part of Srijem Sandzak, in the qadi of Germans and Ilok. During the struggle for Slavonia, many material Oriental monuments of the Ottoman civilisation were destroyed and degraded between the 1687 and 1697. Even though material heritage from the Ottoman period was very poorly preserved in this area, the non-material and spiritual heritage is still resilient today, despite the subsequent cultural and language gradations.

The largest part of Sirmium was liberated from Ottoman rule in 1691. By concluding an agreement of peace in Srijemski Karlovci at the beginning of 1699, a new border between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire was drawn, which stretched throughout Sirmium. The Habsburg Empire once again went to war with the Ottoman Empire in 1737, which placed a large burden on the population who had to meet the military units' needs as military operations were conducted nearby. There was an outbreak of the plague when the war ended in Sirmium, which seriously affected the local population.

The Empress and Queen Maria Theresa established the Sirmium County in 1745, which was followed by the organisation of a Military Frontier, i.e., the separation of military from civilian areas in the present-day territory of the Vukovar-Sirmium County. From 1745, regulated by the judiciary and the administration, the Sirmium County embodied the mother country of Croatia and was placed under the administration of Croatian Parliament and Ban. This brought the disorderly state of administration in Slavonia between the Court Chamber and the military authorities to an end. The Sirmium



County functioned as autonomous aristocratic local government units that were subordinate to the ruler. A county prefect appointed by the ruler was at the head. Along with the county prefect, there was a magistrate who had executive powers while the county assembly was composed of nobility that had legislative power. Administration and the judiciary were connected in the feudal system. The county system was abolished after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in the new State union of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1922. This system was returned in the democratic and sovereign state of Croatia in 1993.

The Sava and Danube Sirmium was under military administration within the framework of the Shipping and Petrovaradin regiment in 1747. Both regiments were provided with small municipalities that they called companies. Each regiment had four infantry battalions and other units. Every adult and capable man between the ages of 16 and 60 was a conscript. He was supported by the household cooperative (*zadruga*) – the primary units of a patriarchal military-agrarian society. The main economic activity was agriculture. Land tax was the main type of tax. The great owner of the land was the ruler, and border guards were its users. They were soldiers and peasants. Crafts, trade and other activities were poorly developed. Everything was subordinated to military needs. Most residents in the Brod regiment were Catholics, while residents were predominantly Orthodox in the Petrovaradin regiment. During the revolution in 1848, the Brod and Petrovaradin Regiment found themselves between the Hungarian movement, the Serbian movement in southern Hungary and the Croatian movement.

Both regiments were demobilised in 1873. Their fields merged in 1881 with the rest of Croatia and Slavonia. Revolutionary turmoil in 1848 strongly affected the entire area of the Croatian Kingdom and Slavonia that was of course reflected in Sirmium. In order to combat national and revolutionary movements, the Viennese court issued the so-called imposed constitution within the area of the Habsburg monarchy. This introduced absolutism; established centralism, and the German language was introduced in all public services, schools and other institutions. However, it was impossible to stop economic progress in the modernisation of the economy and society. With the creation of a dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867, Croatia was completely left to Hungary. Through this dualistic organisation Sirmium and Slavonia became economically dependent on Hungary, separated from Dalmatia and Istria, and directed towards the interests of Budapest. This was also a time that was permeated with positive trends of economic development that removed the remains of late feudal relations in the village. Although Sirmium changed slowly in economic terms, the process of industrialisation began in the second half of the 19th century. In accordance with economic life in Sirmium County, social life was equally developed.

During the past, numerous historical forces influenced the development of social, cultural, economic and political circumstances in the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium. In particular, these forces were manifested by the creation of the monarchist Yugoslav community at the end of World War II when, in extremely complex historical circumstances, they shaped the processes of



territorial and national integration, that is, modernisation. In the "long 19th century" and "short 20th century", processes of national integration of Sirmium Croats were mostly formed in the complex socio-historical relations that were created in the multinational communities that existed at the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the first monarchic Yugoslavia, but also during the difficult time of the Second World War, in which the Independent State of Croatia existed for a short period.

At the end of World War II, the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium along with the rest of Croatia shared fate and the circumstances of a new Yugoslav state, under the dictatorship of a communist regime. The Second World War had many casualties and brought about severe financial devastation. The Communists were able to impose their dictatorship by persecuting members of non-Communist parties, intellectuals, priests, private entrepreneurs, farmers and all those that were considered an obstacle to the new order. The Catholic Church was a special target, because it refused to submit to the communist regime and because communists saw it as the only worthy opponent after the multiparty system. With the abolition of private ownership and entrepreneurship, state economic management and self-management seriously affected economic development.

The County of Vukovar-Sirmium was seriously affected by Serbia's armed aggression at the beginning of the nineties. The objective of this rebellion created and inspired by Serbian political leadership and generously supported by the Yugoslav People's Army, was to create a new, great Serbian state on the ruins of Yugoslavia, which would, among other Croatian regions, encompass the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. The armed rebellion in the second half of 1991 escalated into an open war and aggression by Serbs and the Yugoslav People's Army against Croatia reaching a climax during the battle of Vukovar, from 25 August to 20 November 1991. This battle marked a turning point in the Croatian war for independence, because rebel Serbs and the Yugoslav People's Army had already exhausted their military and human resources. In addition, the Greater Serbia conquest and genocidal policy was revealed, which ultimately strengthened the international position of Croatia as an autonomous and independent state. Close to 5,800 inhabitants died, were killed, or died as a result of the war or disappeared in the Serb armed and Yugoslav People's Army aggression in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. Fifty three mass and several hundred individual graves have been discovered; nearly two thousand victims of Serbian aggression have been exhumed from these graves. Due to policies of ethnic cleansing in the former occupied areas of the county, more than 50,000 people, mostly Croats, were displaced. Total material war damage exceeded four billion euros. Demographic losses and material damage have deter-

mined the developmental lag in this county compared to other areas of Croatia. Thus, the removal or mitigation of the negative consequences of aggression and war, in fact, raises the key strategic and national interests of the Republic of Croatia.

An exceptionally favorable geographic position in terms of important European communications along with natural resources have contributed to the development of a number of villages consistently throughout Prehistory, Antiquity and the Middle Ages until the present-day. Many stationary and movable archaeological finds that have been discovered in settlements and cemeteries bear witness to the rich cultural heritage that has accumulated over 8,000 years. More than 500 recorded archaeological sites make this region the richest cultural European space. In addition to the archaeological sites and more valuable museum collections or church inventory (so-called "movable monuments"), the settlement and historical architecture ("immovable monuments") make up most of the monuments. Due to extremely dense topography, items of cultural heritage are not evenly distributed in all villages in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. Historic urban places (Vukovar, Vinkovci, and Ilok) are, of course, the richest monuments. Out of 688 registered items of heritage as many as 177 (26%) can be found in the town of Vukovar!

Given that conservation services have been carrying out assessments on monuments for several years in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, due to war destruction and degradation, a revaluation and the new categorisation of items of cultural heritage was recently conducted. Distinguished are the most valuable examples of architecture for each historical style period, and for each village, which is presented in this monograph in summary form. This is a selection of relevant monuments in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium that are included in the Registry of Cultural Heritage of national importance.

The visual arts of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium are an important part of the cultural and historical art map from northern Croatia. By virtue of its heterogeneity and chronological range, it is included in almost all phases of art from the Middle Ages until today. Slavonian and Croatian art would be far more complex and more complete if these regions were not the scene of turbulent historical events throughout the centuries. Although each location on the map of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium boasts some monuments - churches, buildings, public monuments - the largest concentration of surviving art works are in some of the leading centres of the county: Ilok, Šarengrad, Vukovar, Vinkovci and Županja and greatest treasures of their museums and Franciscan Monasteries of Croatian provinces St. Cyril and Method.



Traditional material culture is one of the many expressions of cultural heritage in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. Ethnographic and traditional culture of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, includes inherited values of the Slavonian and Srijem village that have changed throughout history. Traditional, material culture in different forms evolved at different paces, quality and experienced its heyday from the 18th century until mid 20th century. It is believed that this specific culture did not cease to exist with the formation of new social relations, modernisation and globalisation trends, but continues its existence. It is amended and transmitted by those interested in its value. The development of trade and commerce that brought inhabitants of villages and towns, craftspeople and traders, soldiers and peasants, local populations and immigrants, members of different nations and religions together, created not only visible material heritage but rich social relations between all of them. The performance of daily tasks from farming, pig farming, fruit growing and winegrowing as well as weaving to creative decoration of fabric or other functional items of use in traditional life, makes this material culture valuable and recognisable.

The traditional life and culture of the most Eastern part of Croatia is very significant, varied and rich in all its forms. According to cultural manifestations, the County of Vukovar-Sirmium is a Pannonian and lowland cul-

tural zone with narrow specific areas: Ilok region and the Vukovar-Sirmium Šokci region, Vinkovci Slavonian, and Sirmium Šokci region and Županja Posavina with the particularities of Cvelferija and specificities of the rest of Šokadija. Historically Ilok, Vukovar and a part of the Vinkovci area were part of the Paorija - Banska that is, civil Croatia and the rest of Vinkovci and Županja areas were within the Military Frontier or Military Border, and are thus conditioned by the specific characteristics and differences in traditional expressions. The County of Vukovar-Sirmium is abundant with beauty and the richness of different manifestations of traditional life and culture. The area has not been sufficiently researched and reported, not only in regard to the bearers of traditional culture, the native – Šokci and Sirmiums, but also for all other Croats and other ethnic communities who have historically inhabited this area and left their mark. The Vukovar-Ilok region as well as a large part of other rural areas of the county was completely occupied during the Homeland War from the end of 1991 until 1997/1998. Many returnees have increasingly begun to restore and nurture traditional culture and life in all its forms upon return to their rebuilt places. Various changes brought about by modernisation are unavoidable. At the same time, today's older, but many younger fans of traditional culture relentlessly research and search for their past, but are also involved in cultural tourism on the basis on their heritage.



Peasant Unity (*Seljačka sloga*), the cultural, educational and teaching organisation of the Croatian Peasant Party, started to intensively encourage the cultivation of traditional cultural heritage in Croatian towns in the 1920s. Branches of Peasant Unity (*Seljačka sloga*) primarily gathered young people together, but also middle aged women and men, stressing the importance and value of their autochthonous song, dance, music and social everyday life that was presented through plays as well as the value and beauty of the traditional costumes of their area. Over time, only a certain number of branches continued to operate continuously for decades and extend their cultural heritage. Others were completely shut down, or after several decades some reopened. By the end of 2008, through the Cultural and Artistic Associations in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, 72 folk groups were registered in the county, from different villages and county towns. The beauty and interesting aspects of Slavonian-Sirmium folk life and customs of the past revitalises and interpolates in contemporary life and local Cultural and Artistic Associations transfer to the stage and show a number of events that nurture traditional heritage.

A large number of writers by birth, origin, education, life or work related to this county and a larger number of literary works created over the last three centuries confirm the richness and beauty of Croatian literary heritage in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. Without prominent individuals we can not talk about the cultural identity of a region because identity implies the way in which a particular community is represented to others. Distinguished individuals are representatives of local identity as well as holders of homeland citizenship that their achievements promote. A popular identity book of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium would not be complete without the writer nor could its cultural identity be verified since the written word represents their home as a space open to the wider national community and the common good, as an integral part of the Croatian and European cultural circles that influence positive perceptions of Slavonia and Sirmium. Their contribution to cultural identity and the common good is evidence of the reciprocity and contact of the Croatian region and the permeation of the entire Croatian culture with Europe.

The Theatrical Chronicle of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium has been in print since the beginning of the 19th century. Its stages of development are related to cultural events in Slavonia (Požega, Slavonski Brod, Osijek, and Virovitica), but also to the Croatian theatre as a whole.

The first primary schools in the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium were developed in the first half of the 18th century and were organised and maintained by monks. The political division of Croatia into the Military Frontier and Banska Croatia did not create signifi-

cant differences in the school system. Military Frontier school legislation was created faster and provided greater financial security to teachers than in Banska Croatia. As a result of the School Law from 1888 the Croatian school system became unique. After 1945, significant reform of primary education came about with the introduction of schools that last for eight years. In the second half of the 19th and especially in the 20th century, different types of secondary schools were established to meet the needs of the economy and to strengthen civil society: apprentice, civil, economic and forestry, music, trade, a variety of vocational schools and others. After 1945, school legislation allowed the increase in the number and types of secondary schools and most high schools lasted for four years. The reform of secondary schools in the seventies disrupted the traditional school structure in its organisation of large-school centres that temporarily halted the momentum of secondary education. After the establishment of the democratic Croatian state in 1990, secondary school education was once again organised according to the traditional criteria for this level of education.

Libraries and reading rooms in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, as elsewhere, meet the cultural, educational, informational and recreational needs of its users and allow each resident to exercise their rights to knowledge, personal and democratic development. If we trace the cultural heritage, museums are unavoidable as they are the curators of tangible and intangible heritage of the space in between the rivers Danube, Sava and Bosut. They belong to the general, local museums that present cultural heritage to the public as well as invest in the organisational, professional and other efforts to please and satisfy their visitors. By enhancing their activities and increasing their collections, museums have become indispensable institutions of cultural activities in the exhibitional, museological and scientific sense, which is well illustrated in numerous permanent and temporary exhibitions as well as other various events. Cultural and scientific institutions in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium have received recognition in their work by participating expertly and actively in the profiling of its space as an important cultural and scientific factor in the Republic of Croatia. This is evident in their concern for tangible and intangible heritage, preservation and lending of books and non-book materials, studying and research of the heritage and current topics in different areas, by producing them to the public's many activities and events, which complement the offer in an otherwise rich and diverse cultural heritage of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium.

People have used simple treatments since earliest times. Some of these practices have been retained to this day. Although deaths from infectious diseases were high, especially among children, the first trained doctors came to the County of Vukovar-Sirmium in the 18th cen-



tury. They were foreigners, military doctors of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. They not only treated soldiers but civilians as well. In addition to treatment they were also involved in controlling the conditions of life. Due to the important geo-strategic position, close to the border and frequent military actions, the hospitals in Vinkovci and Vukovar could not be established before the 19th century. Since that time, the medical profession has continually developed. During the 1960s and 1970s, modern hospitals were built in Vinkovci and Vukovar. During the Serbian aggression on Croatia in 1991, the hospital in Vukovar took care of approximately 4,000 wounded persons in almost impossible conditions. The hospital in Vinkovci operated during the war, although it was badly damaged and took care of about 2,300 wounded persons. Today, about 400 physicians and 50 dentists work in the county; this is inadequate considering the growing needs.

The first beginnings of organised veterinary care began with the establishment of the Slavonian Military Border, when military doctors in addition to caring for people became responsible for the health of livestock. In 1888, Croatian Parliament passed the "Law on the regulation of veterinary medicine in the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia" that regulated the overall organisation of veterinary services which was of historic significance for Croatian veterinary medicine. The existence and operation of the Veterinary Institute in Vinkovci is of spe-

cial significance for veterinary services and veterinary medicine.

Civic associations, societies or clubs are a part of the European tradition. They were established to fulfil the needs of quality leisure time or the desire for companionship for a common purpose or benefit. For the first time in Croatia, the Imperial patent on societies in 1852 made it possible to legally organise an association whereby their status was regulated towards the State. Archives on the work of civic associations in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium have been poorly preserved so we only know about many associations from the extant rules, invitations, posters, dance rosters, etc. The largest number of civic associations was set up in urban areas while reading rooms, singing or music groups were usually established in the villages. The establishment of Peasant Unity (Seljačka sloga), which was active between the world wars, gave a powerful cultural impetus in villages and branches existed in all Croatian settlements of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. From 1945 until 1990, there were relatively few organisations as there was no interest in their establishment because of the repressive regime. There was a sudden increase in the establishment of associations after the establishment of the Croatian Democratic government in 1990 as well as a renewal of associations that were banned during Communism. This shows that there was always an interest for this aspect of



leisure among people, but for which existed, above all, political conditions.

The idea of creating a sports association, which would provide its members with the possibility of practicing different disciplines of sport, was very difficult and demanding. This is because in the beginnings very few associations had the means to do this with the exception of the Croatian Falcon (Hrvatski sokol). To succeed, thousands and thousands of young people devoted all their energy and attention to various sports and sporting events over a long period. A large number of people monitored their work and gave them moral support and financial assistance. The struggle in noble competition, the pursuit of victory and pride, discipline, dedication and a sense of community are some of the virtues that constitute our sport, giving it an ethical value.

As a complement to all the analysed aspects and features of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, this monograph presents a short overview of the present-day County of Vukovar-Sirmium as well as possibilities for the future based on the perspectives of county citizens. The mentioned review was based on a representative sample of the population in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. The survey was conducted by the Pilar Institute in July and August 2009. The inhabitants of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium assessed development until now and their satisfaction with various development issues in the locality where they live, but also by evaluating the main development problems that this county faces. In search of foundations for future development, it was necessary to examine to what extent the local population, in general, has confidence in institutional actors who should, more or less be the bearers of development and responsible for generally improving the quality of life in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. Apart from trust in social institutions for understanding the situation in a given area, especially a space that survived the extreme suffering of war and conflict, it is important to know about intergroup trust. In this context, we examined the different levels

of social identity among the population in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. This began with attachment to place through to sense of belonging in hometown, region, state or nation and Europe. In relation to the future of the County of Vukovar-Sirmium, the expectations of the local population, or how locals see the perspective of the place in which they live were analysed.

The latter is elaborated in more detail in the discussion about the potential for development as well as the social and economic assumptions of development in the County of Vukovar-Sirmium from a sociological standpoint. Discussion about development opportunities were put into a realistic social and economic framework and in the process of "production" a strategy of economic development is possible. The results of such discussions will be used by key actors of local development in other (especially Slavonian) contexts.

The County of Vukovar-Sirmium is faced with the huge challenge of Euro-Atlantic integration in the second decade of the 21st century. For **peripheral counties** in Croatia, this means not only the implementation of comprehensive social and economic reforms, but also in foreign policy terms, **bilateralism** and **regionalism** within the programme of EU regional cooperation. In conditions that accompany the implementation of regional cooperation policy in Croatia, the County of Vukovar-Sirmium is able to cooperate with countries in its close geographical proximity and according to joint socio-economic interests. The progressive strengthening of ties with the European Union in conjunction with regional cooperation that is one of the criteria for assessing Croatian membership has differentiated and determined a special status for the County of Vukovar-Sirmium. The County of Vukovar-Sirmium through different levels of involvement in inter-regional trade can provide socio-economic development incentive as regional multipliers of specialisation, division of labour and cooperation. By building a coherent system and a regional economic base of cross border cooperation, the County of Vukovar-Sirmium creates conditions for the qualitative upgrading of regional policy.

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