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COMPLEMENTARY COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

Abstract: The focus of this paper is the Balkan Region as initiator and driver of positive and productive cooperation. The proposal put forward here is a thought-through, developed and implementable strategy.¹ It can be adapted modularly to other regions according to interest and need.

It would be useful if the Balkan countries were to introduce a degree of voluntary interaction between their strategies approaches towards national competitiveness. It would allow them a more adequate response to the ongoing (at the time of first publication) worldwide economic crises. Simultaneously it would strengthen their position in the move towards EU Membership.

Such a move calls for regional determination, courage and willingness to cooperate. It also necessitates the riddance of the shadows of the past. It would be much more than just tolerance and (co)existence in the same geographic region and is not to be confused with a return to a pre-1991 situation.

Such novel approaches necessitate forward-looking thinking and readiness to introduce innovative measures. Unfortunately, forward-looking thinking is willingly or unwillingly often beyond the immediate personal self-interest of political leaders and their professional time horizon. In turn, national Governments and Government officials are habitually too cautious, stiff and tradition-bound to introduce innovative measures, in particular if the public could perceive these as risky.

The direct offspring of this causality is that related EU initiatives are useful but insufficient. This is particularly true in regard to the Balkan Region and the related current and expected initiatives.

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** The paper is given in terms of PowerPoint presentation.

¹ The concept formulated here was inspired by:

i) intensive exchange of ideas with Ulric Fayl v. Hentaller, Director, The Global Round Table;

ii) The main event of the „2009 Global Round Table”, 26-27 November 2009, Budapest;

iii) The international conference „Role of National Science Academies in the 21st Century”, 11 October 2008, Podgorica, Montenegro.

Therefore, administrative and geographic regions² within individual Balkan countries must become more active and vigilant. They must identify their own endogenous richness and uniqueness that could offer competitive advantages beyond their region, most importantly beyond own national border. These could include e. g. high-quality food, health-tourism, etc.

Subsequently and in order to fully utilise the innovation potential of the Balkan Region, interaction between relevant regions at cross-national-border level should be encouraged. It would strengthen these macro-regions' complementary competitive advantage as well as innovation potential. Interaction within macro-regions should address potentially relevant issues of common interest identified regionally, even sub-regionally.³ It would help mobilise and combine dispersed efforts, and realise synergies of expertise and resources that might otherwise be overlooked, underused or even not be achieved.

The main recommendation of this paper is that in the Balkan Region stakeholders, including political leaders and business, must pay more attention to potentially complementary competitive advantages. To this end, a non-political, un-bureaucratic and streamlined advisory body should be established to help identify complementary competitive advantages in the Balkan Region, called:

The Competitive Advantages Forum, CAF.

Full and active involvement of the business sector, civil society and their bottom-up networks, national- and regional planning councils as well as National Science Academies will be indispensable for this initiative to succeed.

In the entire process, every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary interference by any bureaucratic structure or civil society actor from outside the Balkan Region.

The following constructive recommendation⁴ is to the highest degree relevant for the Balkan Region context:

Think Locally – Act Globally.

The Balkan should and can do it on its own.

² Balkan Region: the Balkan countries; region: an administrative division within a country.

³ According to Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Communities: „Find the common interest and then see that a common problem required a common solution”.

⁴ „Time is Up, Universal Declaration”, issued at the international conference „Role of National Science Academies in the 21 st Century”, 11 October 2008, Podgorica, Montenegro.



Facts and The Consequence

12 – 13 November 2010, Podgorica



- ✚ *The crisis has reinforced national governance aiming at strengthening the competitiveness of the domestic economy.*

And,

- ✚ *Innovation processes take radically different forms in different sectors and in different regional contexts.*

Therefore,

- ✚ *Only a complete change of strategy – where the focus moves toward the regions, countries and social groups most exposed to globalisation and aiming at a higher degree of equity – can contribute to forming a sustainable Europe.*



What Role for Balkan ?

12 – 13 November 2010, Podgorica



1) The Question: “Leader” or “Follower” ?

If LEADER:

- 2) Precondition 1: riddance of the shadows of the past, political determination, willingness to cooperate, national- and regional cohesive strength.

But not to be confused with a return to a pre-1991 situation.

Furthermore:

- 3) Precondition 2: Intellectually viable vision and an implementable prospect.



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Balkan Quo Vadis ?

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- ❖ *Balkan needs **OWN** development strategy.*
- ❖ *It **MUST** be anchored in geopolitical realities, use in full intellectual resources, pay attention to coming generations.*



- ❖ *Balkan would be considerably **reinforced**, politically more **appealing**, become more **attractive** for investors.*



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Advice

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- ❖ *Develop Balkan – based on a unique **OWN** vision within the EU – not "follower" only.*
- ❖ *Provide highest-level political support for "**Balkan cooperation**" and ensure long-term viability and survivability.*
- ❖ *Agree on a direct interacting mechanism between uniquely Balkan- and EU initiatives, and **NOT** via third parties.*






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Plan of Action

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-  **Competitive advantage:** for each region, identify own endogenous richness and uniqueness that could offer competitive advantages beyond region / country.
-  **Complementary competitive advantage:** promote interaction between relevant regions at cross-national-border level, and take "Lead" in historically strong Balkan area(s), e.g. quality food,
-  **The Competitive Advantages Forum, CAF.**







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Indispensible Actors

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Full and active involvement of:


-  **the business sector,**
-  **civil society and their bottom-up networks,**
-  **national- and regional planning councils,**
as well as
-  **National Science Academies,**
will be **necessary** in order to succeed.



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Overall Guiding Principle


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Think Locally

Act Globally


*Universal Declaration
Podgorica, 11 October 2008*



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Balkan Quo Vadis !

12 – 13 November 2010, Podgorica



The Balkan

Should and Can

Do it on its Own.