**JOINING FORCES TO BOOST THE SOUTH TRANSDANUBIAN REGION**

21 JANUARY 2022.

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The Municipality of Pécs County and the leading institutions of Baranya County will join forces to increase capital and wage incomes, improve the quality of life and reverse demographic trends in the region's municipalities and the city of Pécs through economic competitiveness. The cooperation agreement is signed by the Government Commissioner of the South Transdanubian Economic Development Zone, the Municipality of Baranya County, the Municipality of Pécs, the University of Pécs, the Universitas Quinqueecclesiensis Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Pécs-Baranya and the Baranya County Branch of the National Chamber of Agriculture of Baranya County concluded an agreement on Friday afternoon in the Senate Hall of the UP in order to jointly achieve the above objectives.

It was said at the event that the continuously worsening demographic processes of the last 30 years are a fundamental obstacle to the economic development of the South Transdanubian region. In order to increase the population retention capacity of Pécs and Baranya, and to encourage the return of emigrants, it is essential to develop the educational, health, cultural, transport, and social infrastructure in a priority and coordinated manner, and to obtain the necessary central funding. Local industry must be integrated into the technological development wave of the fourth industrial revolution. To this end, the cooperating parties must promote the development of competitive services and productive activities based on digital knowledge and new technologies in Pécs and Baranya County.

Cooperation will include the internationalization of the food economy, the marketing of tourism opportunities, digitalization, and the development and dissemination of green technologies. This requires the expansion of the university knowledge base, the training, and the employment of an increasing number of skilled workers, technologists, engineers, and researchers. They stressed the need to develop a new type of cooperation between the local economy and the university, which would allow a significant increase in added value in the economy of Baranya, contribute to a sharp rise in exports and encourage and help the county's businesses to join international value chains.

 The improvement of the transport and economic infrastructure of the region is also in the common interest of the cooperating parties and is an indispensable condition for achieving the above objectives.

The event highlighted the need to increase the region's current low attractiveness for investment. The county and municipal governments, in cooperation with the signatory partners, should create an optimal business environment for the real economy, drawing on each other's experience and the professional support of the university and chambers.