Tax ID: 18188071-2-42
Registering authority: Budapest Capital Regional Court
Registration number: 01/01/10819
Registration decision: PK 61.285/2003

CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES
1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Profit and loss account
for public benefit organisations keeping doubly-entry books

Reporting period: 01.01.23 – 31.12.2023

Budapest, 10.3.2024

Managing Director

CESCI
Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések
Közép-európai Segítő Szolgálata
HUN 1067 Budapest, Teréz krt. 13
adószám: 18188071-2-42
bankszámlaszám: 12010240-01374152-00100008

Stamp

The published information has not been audited

Tax ID: 18188071-2-42
Registration authority: Budapest Capital Regional Court
Registration number: 01/01/10819

CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES

1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Profit and loss account
for public benefit organisations keeping doubly-entry books

Date: 31.12.2023
Type of profit and loss account: Simplified annual report

Budapest, 10.3.2024

Managing Director

CESCI
Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések
Közép-európai Segítő Szolgálata
HUN 1067 Budapest, Teréz krt. 13.
adószám: 18188071-2-42
bankszámlaszám: 12010240-01374052-00100001

Stamp

The published information has not been audited

CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES
Tax ID: 18188071-2-42
Registration number: 01/01/10819

Profit and loss account for public benefit organisations keeping double-entry books

Date: 31.12.2023

	1 000 HUF	Previous	Previous year	Reference
01.	**A. Invested assets**	**5 301**		**4 041**
02.	I. Intangible assets	58		58
03.	II. Tangible assets	5 243		3 983
04.	III. Invested financial assets	0		0
05.	**B. Current assets**	**217 554**		**416 750**
06.	I. Inventories	0		0
07.	II. Receivables	9 721		8 083
08.	III. Securities	0		0
09.	IV. Cash	207 833		408 667
10.	**C. Prepaid expenses**	**239**		**18**
11.	**TOTAL ASSETS**	**223 094**		**420 809**
12.	**D. Owner's equity**	**62 456**	**0**	**70 946**
13.	I. Start-up capital / Subscribed capital	0		0
14.	II. Capital change/Results	45 984		62 456
15.	III. Restricted reserve	0		0
16.	IV. Revaluation reserve	0		0
17.	V. Current year result from core activities (non-profit activities)	13 812	0	7 740
18.	VI. Current year result from business activities	2 660	0	750
19.	**E. Provisions**	**0**		**0**
20.	**F. Liabilities**	**10 713**	**0**	**12 546**
21.	I. Subordinated debt	0		0
22.	II. Long-term liabilities	0		0
23.	III. Short-term liabilities	10 713	0	12 546
24.	**G. Accrued liabilities**	**149 925**	**0**	**337 317**
25.	**TOTAL LIABILITIES**	**223 094**		**420 809**

The published information has not been audited

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Registration authority: Budapest Capital Regional Court
Registration number: 01/01/10819

CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES

1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Profit and loss account for public benefit organisations keeping double-entry books

Reporting period: 01.01.23 – 31.12.2023

Budapest, 10.3.2024

Managing Director

CESCI
Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések
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CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES
Tax ID: 18188071-2-42
Registration number: 01/01/10819

Profit and loss account for public benefit organisations keeping double-entry books
Reporting period: 01.01.23 – 31.12.2023

	1 000 HUF	Previous	Previous	Reference
A.	**Personnel Expenses**	**124 177**	**0**	**154 036**
A.1.	**Salary costs**	**98 120**	**0**	**122 675**
A. 1.A.	Salary costs: in form of commission fees	1895	0	2 522
A. 1.B.	Salary costs: in form of honorarium	960	0	480
A.2.	**Other personnel expenses**	**12 096**	**0**	**14 260**
A.3.	**Payroll taxes**	**13 961**	**0**	**17 101**
B.	**Support provided by the organisation**	**0**	**0**	**0**

The published information has not been audited.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN SERVICE FOR CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES
Tax ID: 18188071-2-42
Registration number: 01/01/10819

Profit and loss account for public benefit organisations keeping double-entry books
Reporting period: 01.01.2023-31.12.2023

	1 000 HUF	Previous	Modification of	Referenc
A.	**Total revenue from public benefit activities**	**153 922**	**0**	**184 496**
A.1.	**Subsidy for public benefit purposes**	**150 300**	**0**	**180 132**
A. 1.A.	from the founder	0	0	0
A. 1.B.	from the central budget	148 626	0	173 661
A.1.C.	from the local government	0	0	0
A.1.D.	other	1 674	0	6 471
A.2.	**Grants received through tenders**	**0**	**0**	**0**
A.3.	**Revenue from public benefit activities**	**0**	**0**	**0**
A.4.	**Revenue from membership fees**	**1 666**	**0**	**1 409**
A.5.	**Other type of revenue**	**1 956**	**0**	**2 955**
B.	**Revenue from business activities**	**32 843**	**0**	**19 967**
C.	**Total revenue (A+B)**	**186 765**	**0**	**204 463**
D.	**Expenditure of public benefit activities**	**140 110**	**0**	**176 756**
D.1.	Material expenses	29 168	0	34 845
D.2.	Personnel expenses	102 334	0	138 988
D.3.	Depreciation	1 756	0	1 137
D.4.	Other expenses	5 901	0	264
D.5.	Expenses of financial transactions	951	0	1 522
E.	**Expenditures of business activities**	**29 907**	**0**	**19 140**
E. 1.	Material expenses	6 226	0	3 773
E.2.	Personnel expenses	21 843	0	15 049
E.3.	Depreciation	375	0	123
E.4.	Other expenses	1 260	0	30
E.5	Expenses of financial transactions	203	0	165
F.	**Total expenditure (D+E)**	**170 017**	**0**	**195 896**
G.	**Profit or loss before tax (B-E or C-F)**	**2 936**	**0**	**827**
H.	**Tax liability**	276	0	77
I.	**Profit or loss of the base year (G-H)**	**2 660**	**0**	**750**
J	**Public benefit result of the base year (A-D)**	**13 812**	**0**	**7 740**

The published information has not been audited.

CESCI
Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések
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bankszámlaszám: 12010240-01374052-00100001

Tax number:	18188071-2-42
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Recording order:	PK 61.285/2003/
Registration number:	01-02-0010819

Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives

1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Report and Public benefit annex
Year 2023

Short introduction of CESCI

The Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) was established in 2009 to support the spread and strengthening of cross-border cooperation along the Hungarian borders and throughout Central and South-Eastern Europe, following the example of the French Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT).

CESCI, as a private law public benefit association, carries out the following activities related to cross-border cooperation:

- conducting research on border studies and in specific border regions;
- preparing territorial integrated strategies and participating in cross-border programming;
- preparing policy background papers at EU and national levels on cross-border development and participating in consultations and policy debates;
- supporting the development of cross-border projects;
- supporting the development of institutions in the border regions;
- contributing to the improvement of local actors' capacities by transferring knowledge.

Objectives of CESCI

The main objectives of CESCI are:

- providing professional support for cross-border cooperation along the Hungarian borders and in other countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe;
- improving the exchange of expertise between Euroregions, EGTCs and local and regional authorities involved in cross-border cooperation;
- disseminating good practices from Western Europe;
- developing strategic cooperation with the relevant EU decision-preparing and decision-making institutions and with the networks of Northern and Western European institutions established for similar purposes;
- strengthening internal cohesion, peace and mutual rapprochement in the region by building partnerships between the nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The public benefit objectives of CESCI under Act CLVI of 1997:

- promoting Euro-Atlantic integration,
- activities related to national and ethnic minorities in Hungary and Hungarians beyond the borders.

Our office-holders in 2023:

Our Honorary President is Professor Szilveszter E. Vizi, former President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The CESCI is chaired by Dr Zsuzsanna Fejes, Associate Professor at the University of Public Service.

Vice-Presidents of the Association in 2023:

- Prof. Dr. Tamás Tóth, Professor, Milton Friedman University;
- Zoltán Szögi, Head of Coordination at Mathias Corvinus Collegium.

Presidency of the Association in 2023:

- Dr Hynek Böhm, Associate Professor at the University of Opole (PL) and Assistant Professor at the Technical University of Liberec (CZ);
- Dr Jože Gričar, professor emeritus of Economics, University of Maribor, Slovenia;
- Ferenc Ivanics, Vice-president of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Council (from 12 October 2023, member of the Board)
- Dr Dana-Bianca Mitrică, Head of the Institute for Human Geography and Regional Sciences of the Romanian Academy of Sciences;
- Dr János Rechnitzer, professor emeritus of the Széchenyi István University of Győr (he was a member of the Board until his death in June 2023);
- István Szabó, Vice-president of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Council.

Members of the Supervisory Board (SB) in 2023:

- Dr György Kocziszky (Chairman), Rector of the Budapest Metropolitan University, Presidential Advisor to the President of the Hungarian National Bank (elected Chairman at the inaugural meeting of the SB in August 2023; previously, the SB was chaired by Kálmán Nagy, former Vice-chairman of the Zala County Council),
- István Oláh, Chief Operating Officer of D-Tag Analytics Zrt. (resigned from the SC on 10 November 2023),
- Attila Tilki, Member of Parliament, Member of the Hungarian Delegation to the Council of Europe.

In the year 2023, we sadly lost one of our board members, Professor Dr János Rechnitzer. He was one of the best-known and most respected experts of Regional Science in Hungary, a Doctor of Geography, Professor Emeritus of the Széchenyi István University, and a teacher of generations of regionalists. During his career, he has published nearly 300 scientific articles, eight independent books and nine co-authored books. He was an active developer of Regional Science, a key actor in the Committee on Regional Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), Section IX, and a member of the MTA Assembly, representing Regional Science in numerous academic fora and committees. His death means an irreplaceable loss for our association and for the entire community of Hungarian Regional Science, both in scientific and personal sense. CESCI is keen to keep alive the spirit and professionalism of his teachings.

Member institutions of CESCI in 2023

As a result of continuous revision of membership, and, in line with the association's intention to reach out to a broader range of Hungarian local or county self-governments, professional organisations, EGTCs and individuals committed to cross-border cooperation, the number of our members has increased to almost 60. The General Assembly held in May approved the membership of the MURABA EGTC, while at the General Assembly in October a total of 15 natural persons from Hungary, Slovakia and France successfully applied for membership.

Mosaics from the life of the association

In its 2023 activities, CESCI has continued to focus on maintaining and improving the services it provides to its members. During the year, a total of four CESCI newsletters were produced, complemented by two special issues on open calls for proposals and events for our members. We also continued to update our website, improve our newsletter and actively manage our LinkedIn profile and Facebook page.

As an important event in the life of the organisation, we held our Annual General Assembly on 31 May 2023 at the Hotel Thermal Balance in Lenti, attended by a large number of members. At the Assembly, our members approved the annual reports of the association and its boards, and decisions were made on membership and office holders' matters. Subsequently, on 12 October 2023, our association held an extraordinary general assembly meeting in the online space, where further decisions were made on membership (admission of new members) and officer matters (election of a new board member).

The term of office of the members of our Supervisory Board (SB) expired in 2023. Among the former members of the SB, Attila Tilki and István Oláh were re-elected by the General Assembly, while the former chairman of the SB, Kálmán Nagy did not stand for re-election. The Board of the Association has invited Dr György Kocziszky to stand as a candidate for the vacant seat of the SB member that he gladly accepted.

Dr György Kocziszky brings to his role as Chairman of the Supervisory Board an extraordinary amount of knowledge and expertise gained as Chairman of the Rationalisation Subcommittee of the Management and Organisation Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), as Dean of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Miskolc, as a member of the Economics Committee of the Hungarian Accreditation Commission and as a Presidential Advisor of the Hungarian National Bank. His research interests include topics of relevance to CESCI such as the economics of European integration, regional economics and growth and development theory. Dr György Kocziszky also served as President of CESCI from 2009 to 2011 and is familiar with the work of our association.

During the year, we also actively supported our regional partner organisations, CESCI Carpathia and CESCI Balkans, with joint project activities. One of these projects, #ACCESS, is a strategic project aimed at improving the quality of life of people living in the Slovak-Hungarian border region by strengthening internal cohesion between the two countries, increasing mutual trust and identifying and removing legal and administrative obstacles. The project, supported by the Interreg Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Programme and implemented in partnership with CESCI Carpathia, started in May 2023 and will run until April 2029. Similarly, in partnership with CESCI Carpathia, we organised the annual conference and Cross-Border School of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) in Košice between 8-11 November.

In parallel, during 2023, we continued to strengthen and develop our organisation internally, including further upgrading our IT and GIS capacities, and expanding our staff with a legal advisor, a project manager and a project and financial assistant. Our internship programme enabled two young people to gain work experience. Throughout the year, we continued to focus on implementing operational management reforms for more efficient and sustainable functioning, strengthening the internal cohesion of the organisation and continuously improving the professional and language skills of the team.

CESCI has continued to strengthen and expand its international relations in the past year, which is essential for a deeper understanding and policy influence on cross-border cooperation. To this end, in 2023 we continued to actively participate in the work of several international organisations, such as the Regional Studies Association, the leading organisation for regional science, EUREGHA, which promotes cross-border health cooperation, and TG-WeB, which promotes territorial planning and development cooperation in the Western Balkans. We have also entered into cooperation with the German Federal Planning Centre BBSR on the topic of cross-border monitoring.

Partly to strengthen international relations and partly to promote networking of our members, we have organised a study tour for our members in 2023. During the CESCI study trip to Liberec, our members were able to learn about the characteristics and territorial cooperation experience of the Czech-German-Polish tri-border region. During the visits and presentations, the participants gained insights into the development of the Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion, including spatial development achievements and environmental risk management. During the trip, the members experienced how cross-border projects support the preservation of cultural heritage and the cohesion of local communities, as well as the role of INTERREG funds in cross-border development.

A detailed report completed with photos of the study tour is available on our website: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/report-on-cescis-study-tour-to-liberec-in-2023/

Social responsibility

Although our association is essentially a public benefit association in the areas set out in its statutes, in 2023 we also tried to fulfill our social responsibility in other areas.

One of relevant activities dates back to 2017, when CESCI organised a workshop in Homrogd, at the invitation of the Beautiful Cserehát initiative, where we worked with local stakeholders to identify the main challenges and development opportunities of the region. As a result, a Territorial Action Plan for Employment (TAPE) was formulated under the coordination of Via Carpatia EGTC. The central element of the action plan was to support the production of local products, aiming at improving the quality of human capital, increasing the market outlets for local products, developing production infrastructure and building a regional brand. As part of this TAPE, a multifunctional training and coordination centre and a marketplace were constructed in Gagyvendégi in 2019. The project was successfully completed in the summer of 2021, with infrastructure improvements and construction works completed as planned. However, due to price increases between the time the tender was written and the completion of the works, there were no funds left for landscaping around the community centre. As a result, CESCI staff travelled to the site and contributed to the completion of the project through physical work, including the gardening around the facilities accompanied with local people. A short film summarising the work was also produced.

Link to the English short film: https://youtu.be/RPT1KU1LnKY?si=drCNWm-V1kwbAjdZ

As part of our social responsibility activities, since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we have been looking for ways to help the troubled country, despite our limited resources. For example, in 2022, we provided humanitarian aid from a cancelled V4 project event in Transcarpathia, and in 2023, we

worked with our network of European partners to help provide vital equipment for hospitals in the westernmost region of Ukraine. With the help of Tisza EGTC, we have contacted the hospitals in Transcarpathia where the war has left them in greatest need of rehabilitation equipment and medical supplies for day-to-day operations. During the year, we focused on the urgent needs of the Transcarpathian Regional Clinical Centre of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery, the Uzhhorod City Hospital of Obstetrics, the Uzhhorod City Multidisciplinary Clinical Hospital and the Transcarpathian Regional Clinical Hospital. These hospitals are overwhelmed by the influx of wounded Ukrainian soldiers, despite the region's relative remoteness from the immediate military conflict zones. To address the immediate needs for medical equipment for both existing and planned medical centres, we have prepared a page detailing the list of medical equipment required at the Transcarpathian Rehabilitation Centre. The list of specific needs of the hospitals is available at the following link: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/call-for-help-ukraine/

To prepare an excavation project planned for the Uzhhorod Castle, we contacted Olga Shumovska, Director of the Tivadar Lehotzky Castle Museum in Uzhhorod, at the request of Volodymyr Chubirko, that-time President of the Transcarpathian Regional Council. On 19 April, our Secretary General discussed the possibilities of cooperation in Uzhhorod, and on 25 October, a joint excavation project was agreed with representatives of the Institute of Archaeology of Pázmány Péter Catholic University and the Department of Archaeology of the National University of Uzhhorod. So far, only one archaeological excavation has been carried out in the Uzhhorod Castle, in the area of the former castle church. The multi-year excavation project, which will start in 2024, is expected to systematically uncover the most important monumental complex in Transcarpathia and launch restoration works.

Events of the Association

Date	Location	Name of the event
1 March 2023	Gagyvendégi	Field survey before landscaping
22-24 March 2023	Gagyvendégi	Gardening fieldwork
19 April 2023	Uzhhorod, Ukraine	Meeting with Volodymyr Chubirko, President of the Transcarpathian Regional Council, and Olga Shumovska, Director of the Uzhhorod Castle Museum in Uzhhorod
18 May 2023	(Online)	CESCI Carpathia Annual General Assembly
23 May 2023	Budapest	Meeting of the CESCI Supervisory Board
23 May 2023	Budapest	Participation in the Danube Data Cube Workshop
31 May 2023	Lenti	CESCI General Assembly
23 August 2023	Budapest	Inaugural meeting of the new Supervisory Board of CESCI
29-30 August 2023	Vének, Győr	CESCI team building

Date	Location	Name of the event
12-15 September 2023	Liberec, Czech Republic (Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion)	Study tour for our members
13 September 2023	Budapest	Working lunch at the Slovenian Embassy in Budapest on the occasion of the inauguration of Consul General Dubravka Šekoranja
27 September 2023	(Online)	Meeting of the CESCI Supervisory Board
4 October 2023.	Budapest	Participation in the GDi Solutions Day, a professional day on geospatial information technology
12 October 2023	(Online)	Extraordinary General Assembly and Board meeting
18-20 October 2023.	Berlin, Germany	3rd meeting of the Cross-border Monitoring Network established by the BBSR, joining the network
25 October 2023	Uzhhorod, Ukraine	Preparation of the excavation project in Uzhhorod Castle
9 November 2023	Košice, Slovakia	AEBR General Assembly

CESCI's activities in 2023

Border research, scientific activities

Our association has always been actively involved in research on cross-border issues and strives to strengthen the scientific basis of its professional activities. In this context, we are present at scientific conferences and workshops and organise such events. On the other hand, we also seek to be present in the international scientific discourse with our publications. We are also involved in the work of research groups in the field of border studies and support the scientific careers of our staff.

Scientific networking

The Research Group of Cross-border Cooperation

To provide a scientific basis for its practical professional work, CESCI has been conducting research in border studies in cooperation with the National University of Public Service (UPS) from 2022, under the leadership of our President, Dr Zsuzsanna Fejes, in the framework of a joint research group. In the year 2023, the Research Group of Cross-Border Cooperation has carried out a number of important activities linking the academic and civil spheres, combining theoretical research with practical implementation.

In 2023, we have taken important steps towards the launch of an internationally recognised journal. The Journal of Advanced Studies on Borders, Cooperation and Development (ABCD Journal), is planned to be published by UPS, CESCI and the University of Eastern Finland. We have recruited renowned international researchers and practitioners in the field to serve on our editorial board, and together with Editor-in-Chief James Wesley Scott, we have developed a concept for the journal, which will be submitted to major US publishers in 2024.

The research group has also been active in conferences and workshops. Its members have given presentations on, among others, the legal and institutional framework of cross-border cooperation, the historical sources of state borders and the social integration of diaspora communities, and more than ten publications with the affiliation of the research group were published in 2023.

In addition, the research group was involved in a Norwegian-led Horizon project ("Empowering Citizens and Communities to Prepare for and Respond to Disaster"), where the primary task of our researchers would have been to present the disaster management situation in the Hungarian-Romanian border region together with the Romanian Academy of Sciences. Although it received high scores, the proposal was not funded.

The workshop regularly reports on its activities on the website developed by CESCI: https://research.cesci-net.eu/

Support for the launch of a research institute on European territorial cooperation in Uzhhorod

On 19 April 2023, the Secretary General of our Association visited Uzhhorod, where he had a meeting with Yaroslav Lazur, Dean of the Faculty of Law of the National University of Uzhhorod, and his research fellow Yulia Fetko. The meeting was about the cooperation between the research group established by CESCI and the UPS and the research institute about to be established in Uzhhorod. The research institute, which will specialise in European territorial cooperation, was established by the University Senate on 6 May and the joint work started immediately. On the recommendation of CESCI, the Uzhhorod institute was accepted in September into the TEIN (Transfrontier Euro-Institute Network) network of universities and institutes working on cross-border issues. In the framework of the AEBR's major annual event in Košice in November, the institute was involved in the organisation of the Cross-Border School and the study tour to Uzhhorod associated with the event. The presentations of the Cross-Border School will be published by the University of Victoria, Canada, in the journal BIG Review.

International scientific projects

Borders: from Humanitarian to Military Security Database

As an external partner CESCI promoted the implementation of the project "Borders: from Humanitarian to Military Security Database", funded by the Jean Monnet sub-programme of the Erasmus+ programme, in 2023. In the framework of the project, the University of Victoria, Canada, the Centre for Regional and Border Studies at the University of Wrocław, the University of Opole and Saarland University organised an international conference in Poland from 10 to 12 September 2023, where CESCI was represented by two researchers from the UPS-CESCI Research Group of Cross-border Cooperation. The conference, entitled "Borderlands Facing a Polycrisis in the 21st Century", focused on the security perspective of the migration crisis, with a special focus on the resilience and future perspectives of cross-border relations. In their paper "W/ordering in the EU. Changes of European discourse on migration", co-authored with Gyula Ocskay, the speakers, Melinda Istenes-Benczi and Teodor Gyelník, explored the phenomenon of b/ordering-borderism, presenting their research methodology. The audience gained insight into the changes in narratives and vocabulary in the speeches of the European Commission Presidents and in the EU documents of the EU Member States between 2015 and 2022. The results were illustrated by graphs produced using Speak AI (sentiment analysis) and MAXQDA (word cloud, interactive word tree, etc.) softwares, which provided a comprehensive picture of the evolution of the European discourse on the migration crisis.

A detailed report is available on the research group's website: https://research.cesci-net.eu/en/borderlands-facing-a-polycrisis-in-the-21st-century-resilience-and-future-perspectives-of-cross-border-relations/

Borders on the move: models for the EU?

Between 2019 and 2023, CESCI also participated as an external expert in the "Borders in Motion" (Frontem) project. The project, funded by the Jean Monnet sub-programme of the Erasmus+ programme and led by the Institute of Political Science of the University of Strasbourg, aimed to compare different border management systems and changing perceptions of borders.

As part of the project, two volumes of studies were published in 2023 by the University of Strasbourg and l'Harmattan Publishing in Paris, Melinda Istenes-Benczi contributed to the final volume of studies to be published, and we also played a significant role in the compilation of the FRONTEM EU Toolkit on Models of Border Management and Perception in the EU. The document provides a detailed overview at the challenges and dynamics of the different European borders, offering in-depth insights into the Romanian-Hungarian, French-German, German-Danish, Irish-Northern-Irish and French-Belgian border relations and perceptions. The study is available at the following link: https://transfrontier.eu/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Toolkit-final.pdf

Scientific publications

Cross-Border Review 2023

2023 marks the tenth edition of the CESCI Yearbook. The book analyses the importance of cross-border cooperation, with a focus on knowledge exchange and social innovation. The authors also examine the stark choices related to the experience of democracy, governance and personal freedom, highlighting the positive social benefits of cross-border cooperation. The Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) Scientific Yearbook is edited by James W. Scott (Professor of Regional and Border Studies, University of Eastern Finland) and published online in English.

The studies from the book can be downloaded from CESCI's website: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/cross-border-review-2023/

Further publications by the CESCI team (2023)

CESCI also seeks to make its policy knowledge transfer activities more visible through scientific publications. During 2023, CESCI members have been involved in a number of such academic publications, both through their members of the Research Group of Cross-Border Cooperation and through the Western Balkan Network on Territorial Governance (with the participation of Viktória Jánosi, Olivér Kriska and Mátyás Jaschitz).

Relevant publications by members of the working group in 2023:

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Scientific events

Anniversary conference on territorial and inter-organisational cooperation

In 2023, the Institute for Territorial and Inter-organisational Cooperation of the WSB University celebrated its 5th anniversary with a conference in Brenna, Poland. CESCI was one of the partners of the event and also contributed through a keynote speaker. Gyula Ocskay, Secretary General of CESCI and Research Fellow of the UPS-CESCI Research Group of Cross-border Cooperation, gave a presentation entitled "Integration in a re-bordered world? Reflections on the development of cross-border functional areas" in which he discussed the current European polycrisis and the role that the existing cross-border functional areas can play in stimulating cross-border cooperation.

More information is available on the CESCI website: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/anniversary-conference-on-territorial-and-inter-organisational-cooperation/

Annual conference of the Regional Studies Association

The 2023 Annual Conference of the Association for Regional Studies was held in the Slovenian capital between 14-17 June 2023. During the three-day event, hundreds of participants had the opportunity to take part and exchange ideas in a total of nearly 200 panels. CESCI was represented at the event by the Secretary General, who gave a presentation on CESCI's activities and experiences in a panel on legal obstacles at the borders, chaired by Ricardo Ferreira (expert of the European Commission).

Guest lecture at the invitation of the European Centre for Minority Issues

At the invitation of the European Centre for Minority Issues, Melinda Benczi gave a presentation at a seminar on minority issues in Flensburg, Germany, on 2 March 2023. Martin Klatt, Senior Researcher at ECMI, invited our colleague to present the methodology and results of her PhD thesis at the seminar. The presentation was titled "The role of national minorities in cross-border economic development processes along the Romanian-Hungarian border" and was met with keen interest from the audience, especially regarding the novel research methodology for cross-border cooperation and the potential of the results to be fed into policy-making. The seminar stressed the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation efforts in addressing the complex problems surrounding national minorities and cross-border cooperation.

Other scientific events

Date	Location	Name of the event
9 January 2023	Budapest	Inaugural academic lecture by Professor József Benedek
22 February 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
2 March 2023	Budapest	Meeting of the UPS-CESCI Research Group of Cross-Border Cooperation
2 March 2023	Flensburg, Germany	Guest lecture at the invitation of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

Date	Location	Name of the event
28 March 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
11 April 2023	(Online)	Consultation with the representatives of the National University of Uzhhorod on the establishment of a research institute of cross-border cooperation
19 April 2023	Uzhhorod, Ukraine	Meetings with Yaroslav Lazur, Dean of the National University of Uzhhorod, and Yulia Fetko, future director of the planned research institute
30 April 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
5 May 2023	(Online)	Lecture at Sara Svensson's seminar at Halmstad University
9 May 2023	(Online)	AEBR Cross-Border School - preparatory meeting
11-12 May 2023	(Online)	TG-WeB annual meeting
15 May 2023	(Online)	Consultation with the representatives of the National University of Uzhhorod on the establishment of a cross-border cooperation research institute
17 May 2023	Budapest	Strategic meeting of the National University of Public Service and the Széchenyi Programme Office on cooperation
17 May 2023	(Online)	Research Group of Cross-Border Coopearation Lecture series: lecture by Dr Zsuzsanna Fejes
17 May 2023	(Online)	BIG, presentation by Sergio Peña
31 May 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
1 June 2023	(Online)	Frontem seminar
14-17 June 2023	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Annual conference of the Regional Studies Association
21 June 2023	Budapest	Preparatory meeting of the ABCD Journal
26 June 2023	(Online)	AEBR Cross-Border School - preparatory meeting
28 June 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
3 July 2023	Budapest	Preparatory meeting of the ABCD Journal
28 August 2023	Budapest	Preparatory meeting of the ABCD Journal
6 September 2023	Frankfurt / Oder, Germany	General Assembly of the Transfrontier Euro-institute Network (TEIN)
10-13 September 2023	Wrocław - Opole, Poland	Border regions facing polycrisis in the 21st century, resilience and future perspectives of cross-border relations
20-22 September 2023	Brenna, Poland	International conference on territorial and inter-organisational cooperation
28 September 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting
3 October 2023	(Online)	AEBR Cross-Border School - preparatory meeting
8 November 2023	Kosice, Slovakia	AEBR Cross-Border School event
28 November 2023	(Online)	Jean Monnet Network (UVIC) - monthly partner meeting

Date	Location	Name of the event
30 November 2023	(Online)	Research Group of Cross-Border Coopearation Lecture series: lecture by Dr Dániel Gazsó
4 December 2023	(Online)	Research Group of Cross-Border Coopearation Lecture series: lecture by Dr János Sallai

Cross-border planning

CESCI has been carrying out extensive planning work since its creation, and has been contributing to the preparation and evaluation of EU programmes. In this respect 2023 did not mean a difference as the association had a diverse planning portfolio. We have also sought to be active in relevant European professional networks, including the AESOP thematic working group specifically focused on cross-border planning.

Evaluation of cross-border programmes 2014-2020

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as Managing Authority, we have been assigned with evaluation and implementation expert tasks for cross-border cooperation programmes with Hungarian participation since 2018. In 2023, we participated in the so-called second phase evaluation tasks of three CBC programmes with Hungarian participation, namely: the Slovakia-Hungary INTERREG V-A Cross-border Cooperation Programme, the Hungary-Serbia INTERREG IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme and the Hungary-Croatia INTERREG V-A Cross-border Cooperation Programme.

In the framework of this activity, we finalised the evaluation of the Hungarian-Serbian programme, with a strong emphasis on the analysis of effectiveness, efficiency and impact. Following positive feedback from the programme bodies, the evaluation document was adopted by the programme monitoring committee in May 2023. The evaluation of the Slovak-Hungarian programme, with a focus on the Territorial Action Plans and the evaluation of the Small Project Fund, was completed in the summer and was adopted by the Monitoring Committee in a written procedure at the end of the year. The evaluation of the Hungarian-Croatian programme was completed by the end of the year, after conducting the related primary and secondary research, and will be finalised in the first quarter of 2024, following the feedback from the programme bodies. In the case of the Hungarian-Slovak-Romanian-Ukrainian programme, the Managing Authority and the National Authorities have rescheduled the start of the evaluation work to the second quarter of 2024, taking into account the progress of the programme.

During 2023, we participated in several professional events (both in person and online) to share our evaluation experience with our European partners.

Preparation of a Hungarian-Slovenian economic and development programme

The need to develop a special transnational programme on the Slovenian-Hungarian border, to be implemented through national funding, primarily supporting national minorities living in each other's territories and their local community development, social and population retaining goals, remained on the agenda of both governments in 2023.

The technical groundwork for CESCI continued (with increasing intensity) throughout 2023 as a continuation of the work done in previous years. Unfortunately, however (mainly due to the impact of the flooding emergency on the Slovenian side in the meantime on the available budget), the

programme was not launched in 2023. Nevertheless, we were able to organise a field assessment of needs among potential applicants and to prepare a first-level proposal (in two languages) of the relevant procedures and the full programme documentation. The planning process has identified a number of decision points where bilateral agreement is needed before finalising the materials, and this work will continue in 2024. Throughout the programme development, we have provided and continue to provide ongoing technical support to our member, the MURABA EGTC.

Closing of the Revital I project

We joined the Tisza EGTC Revital I project in the last quarter of 2021, when we contributed to the preparation of a plan for the revitalisation of the collapsed Solotvyno salt mine and its area in Ukraine. At the beginning of 2023, our team finalised the territorial, social and economic situation analysis of the area, with minor amendments, and later in the year contributed to the revitalisation proposals and the project leaflet. At the final conference of the project in Berehove, Roland Hesz, CESCI's senior analyst, presented the results of the territorial analysis.

Preparation of plans at municipal level

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, we have been involved in the preparation of developments in border and cross-border cities since 2017. Following the success of previous development concepts for border towns such as Lendava, Berehove, Komárno, Satu Mare, Salonta, CESCI was invited to draft the urban development concept for Šahy. These concepts, which have been developed with the active participation of local communities, have already led to the implementation of concrete developments in several municipalities. The development concept written for Šahy follows an administrative cross-border approach, which provides a basis for future urban development projects. It is expected that the urban development concept will be finalised and presented in early 2024.

Based on our fruitful cooperation from the previous years, in 2023 our association also submitted a bid to the tender for the elaboration of urban development strategies of the city of Pápa, but our bid was not successful.

Professional events related to planning

Date	Location	Name of the event
31 January 2023	Budapest	7th Joint Monitoring Committee Meeting of the Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENI Programme (2014-2020)
27 February 2023	(Online)	How to measure cross-border cooperation in the framework of Interreg programmes? - workshop at the Institute for Transnational and Euroregional Cross-border Cooperation and Mobility, Maastricht University
21 March 2023	Šahy, Slovakia	Signing ceremony of the agreement on strategic cooperation and realisation of a design workshop

Date	Location	Name of the event
17 August 2023	Berehove, Ukraine	Final conference of the REVITAL I project
14 November 2023	Szentgotthárd	MURABA Joint Fund project development workshop
14 December 2023.	(Online)	AESOP Thematic Group (TG) meeting on Transboundary Planning and Governance

Cross-border project development

In order to ensure that scientifically sound cross-border integrated strategies are implemented, we support the preparation and development of cross-border projects, and help our partners' applications by compiling resource maps.

Preparation of tourism action plans in the Hungarian-Slovak border region

The development of a cross-border tourism action plan for the tourism development of the Gömör/Gemer region in the Via Carpatia EGTC's area, taking into account the funding opportunities of the new EU funding period, has already started in 2022 with partnership-building forums and continued in 2023 with the necessary consultations and fieldwork. Accordingly, the Via Carpatia EGTC organised a development workshop in Košice on 9 February 2023, focusing on the planning and regional integration of tourism projects. The meeting was attended by mayors of municipalities, leaders of NGOs and entrepreneurs. CESCI played a multifaceted role in the event, with interactive presentations by Director Mátyás Jaschitz and Senior Analyst Roland Hesz, who presented the current situation of active tourism, outlined the tourism situation in the Gömör/Gemer region and asked for participants' opinions and ideas on the region's tourism potential and opportunities. CESCI also prepared a template for participants to share their plans, allowing for the formulation and documentation of future joint projects. For the remainder of the project, CESCI also organised interviews with project promoters and key regional stakeholders, and continued the development of a comprehensive active tourism action plan. The Action Plan is expected to be finalised and submitted for the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme call in 2024.

Also in the second half of 2023, we were involved in the preparation of the Ister-Granum EGTC's Tourism Action Plan, where we classified the project ideas of local stakeholders and moderated the related workshop. The tasks linked to the action plan will also extend to the year 2024.

I3 project development

The EU's Funding & Tenders portal has re-launched the Interregional Innovation Investment Facility (I3) 2b call by 15 November 2023, which had received a lot of attention from applicants since its first launch. The scheme aims to promote the development and strengthening of regional innovation ecosystems and value chains in less developed regions. The CESCI team have been actively involved in the information sessions related to the call and in the preparation of a proposal, a process which will continue until the submission deadline in February 2024.

Ukrainian resource map

At the request of the Transcarpathian Regional Government, we have compiled a detailed resource map in English and Ukrainian for 21 thematic areas (from transport to health, from water management

to youth cooperation). The document provides a wide range of information on the resources available for Ukrainian entities from the EU and beyond.

Events related to project development

Date	Location	Name of the event
9 February 2023	Košice, Slovakia	Via Carpatia EGTC, tourism action plan workshop
31 March 2023	Barcs	Information Day of the Interreg VI-A Cross-border Cooperation Programme Hungary-Croatia 2021-2027
19 April 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (ReciproCITY)
29 September 2023	(Online)	Danube Regional Programme - Thematic webinar S.O. 4.2 - A better cooperation governance
10 October 2023	(Online)	Information session: How to implement projects with the following grants: Visegrad, Visegrad+ and Strategic Grants?
6 November 2023	Budapest	Consultation with the specialists of the Active and Ecotourism Development Centre on possible cross-border projects
7 November 2023	Košice, Slovakia	Consultation with the representatives of the Cardiology Centre in Košice on cross-border health cooperation
23 November 2023	(Online)	Information session on the Instrument I3 "Strand 2b - Building capacity in less developed regions" call
24 November 2023	Esztergom	Consultation on the Ister-Granum EGTC tourism action plan
6 December 2023	(Online)	Information session: the Seed Money Facility of the Danube Regional Programme
12 December 2023	(Online)	Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office: I3 Info Day - Focus on the Capacity Building Call

Cross-border institutional development

The durability of cross-border developments can be ensured if there is some kind of institutional guarantee for the sustainability of the results. Therefore, in addition to the planning and project development work, CESCI is actively involved in the development of cross-border institutional cooperation, which mainly means technical assistance provided for the establishment and operation of EGTCs.

The EGTC Programme

As always since our foundation in 2009, our professional activities in 2023 included services promoting the EGTC programme in Hungary, including regular technical consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, responding to specific requests from individual EGTCs (e.g. legal advice, thematic maps, conference participation, etc.), providing technical assistance for the organisation of the Hungarian EGTC workshops and coordinating the establishment process of new EGTCs (if necessary).

In 2023, we continued to operate and develop our EGTC-monitor, an information platform on European groupings of territorial cooperation involving Hungarian members. The platform displays all relevant information on Hungarian EGTCs, their legal and policy background - in Hungarian and English. The platform significantly increases the visibility and international embeddedness of the results of the Hungarian EGTC programme. Its content is kept up-to-date through continuous development work, and the monitor database is constantly being expanded and improved. In the course of this work, we have accumulated a wealth of data, information and knowledge on the functioning of the EGTCs. Since a significant part of the EGTCs established in the EU so far were created with Hungarian participation, we consider it useful to share this knowledge at EU level as well.

The provision of legal and professional support to the EGTCs is also a permanent task. In 2023, several Hungarian EGTCs have made requests of this nature, both large and small. Among these, our legal support activities for the Ipoly-Völgye EGTC, Ister-Granum EGTC and RDV EGTC in connection with the updating and amendment of their statutes and supervisory board rules of procedure are worth mentioning.

In one case during the year, we had to contribute to the establishment of a new EGTC: we prepared the Convention and Statutes of the planned BOTILA grouping in the Bodrogköz/Medzibodrožie area after several rounds of consultation, and we participated in face-to-face meetings at the request of the founders. The finalisation of the documents and the registration of the EGTC are expected to take place in 2024.

As in previous years, in 2023 we have produced thematic maps for several EGTCs. In some cases, we participated in technical events (conferences, project development workshops) of each EGTC, typically as speakers. Among these events, on 30 May in Lenti we organised a workshop together with the Mura Region EGTC and the Pannon EGTC under the EU initiative b-solutions, where we dealt with the legal framework for cross-border trade of local products. In addition, at the 10th anniversary conference of Via Carpatia EGTC two of our colleagues moderated technical discussions and one of our colleagues gave a presentation.

EGTC workshops

Launched by CESCI in 2012, with our active professional participation and partial financial support, two EGTC workshops were organised also in 2023 to share useful information and experiences.

The first EGTC workshop of the year took place on 29 March 2023 in Budapest, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, jointly organised by the Ministry and CESCI, during which the EGTCs' and the Ministry's teams discussed current tasks and opportunities. In his welcome speech, Péter Kiss-Parciu, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the Hungarian government's commitment to the agile EGTCs and the importance of the role of the groupings in project implementation and service delivery. Balázs Zám (National Authority for Cross-Border Programmes) gave information about the cross-border Interreg programmes and the expected calls for proposals. In the second half of the workshop, technical and financial issues were discussed, followed by an interactive discussion with representatives of the EGTCs, initiated by Kitti Dubniczki, Director of CESCI, to strengthen the networking and international visibility of the associations.

The second workshop of the year, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, took place on 7-8 December 2023 in Nógrádgárdony, Hungary, to take advantage of the opportunity to visit the newly opened Ipoly/Ipeľ bridge between Őrhalom and Vrbovka. The technical programme started with the opening speech by Balázs Loppert (desk officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade), followed by a presentation by Illés Úsz, Chief of Cabinet of the Ministry of Energy, on the future of Hungarian energy policy and the opportunities for renewable energy applications. Finally, Béla Hegyesi, National Contact Point for Interreg programmes provided information on the latest news on Interreg programmes. In the framework of the professional programme, Dr Katalin Fekete, legal advisor, and István Oláh, project manager of CESCI, presented to the participants specific European capacity building opportunities (available through innovation support). To conclude the workshop, Kitti Dubniczki, Director of CESCI, gave practical advice for the EGTCs on data management, billboard advertising and the public procurement rules relevant for the EGTCs.

Events related to institutional development

Date	Location	Name of the event
3 February 2023	Cigánd	III. Boundless in the Bodrog Basin conference
29 March 2023	Budapest	EGTC workshop
21-22 June 2023	Tiszaújváros	10th anniversary conference of the Via Carpatia EGTC
26 July 2023	Malý Horeš , Slovakia	Preparatory workshop for the setting up of an EGTC (BOTILA EGTC)
7-8 December 2023	Nógrádgárdony	EGTC workshop

Cross-border policy-making

CESCI has been committed to shaping the Hungarian and EU policies for cross-border cooperation since its establishment, in order to create a favourable development environment for local initiatives. Our activities in this field are very diverse, ranging from the local to the EU level.

The European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance

The AEBR, MOT and CESCI, as initiators of the European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance, committed to work together in a coordinated way to put cross-border cooperation back at the heart of the European project through the Strasbourg Declaration in autumn 2021. This work has continued throughout 2023. As usual, we participated in and, in some cases, co-organised and helped organise our partners' major events.

On 21 February, we participated in an online focus group workshop with MOT and AEBR on the new ESPON Thematic Action Plans.

On 17 April, the Committee of the Regions organised a joint seminar with members of the European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance, focusing on the legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border mobility and integration. On behalf of CESCI, as one of the co-organisers of the event, Secretary General Gyula Ocskay moderated one of the round table discussions, which focused on the potential benefits of the ECBM (the new EU instrument designed to the remove legal barriers) and the need for tools to facilitate cross-border cooperation.

The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) organised its annual big event in 2023 in Košice, with extensive organisational, logistical and partly financial support from CESCI and CESCI Carpathia. In the framework of the four-day event, together with our partner organisation in Košice, we supported and organised not only the AEBR Cross-Border School, the Board meeting and the General Assembly, but also a half-day seminar, a one-day conference and a study trip.

During the year, we have also been involved in the preparatory processes leading to the creation of a European Cross-Border Platform in 2024, coordinated by the Committee of the Regions, to provide more coordinated assistance to relevant professional actors in addressing the challenges faced by border communities.

Legal Accessibility

In 2023, CESCI continued to be actively involved in the EU discourse on the removal of legal barriers to cross-border cooperation, institutionalised cross-border cooperation, and on the rules and models for financing cross-border development. We were regularly present at relevant EU technical events, in most cases also as a speaker. In the first half of the year, we launched a strategic project to address legal barriers in the Hungarian-Slovak border region.

Mechanism for the removal of cross-border legal and administrative barriers

In 2015, the Luxembourg Presidency took the initiative to set up an EU mechanism to help institutional actors and citizens in border regions remove legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border mobility. The instrument then called the European Cross-Border Convention (ECBC) and later renamed the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM), was included in the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy package, but the initiative eventually failed due to opposition from several EU Member States. The European Parliament, however, reintroduced the issue in 2023, and it will be largely discussed during the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2024.

In essence, the original proposal would have allowed the legislation of a neighbouring country to apply in a border region in exceptional cases. However, a significant number of EU member states saw the extra-territorial application of the legislation of a neighbouring country as a violation of their sovereignty and the principle of subsidiarity, and the proposal was therefore rejected. However, in order to improve the living conditions of the nearly 150 million EU citizens living in border regions, some kind of systematic and predictable solution to such situations would be necessary. It was precisely in support of the ECBM proposal that the European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance organised the aforementioned event in April, which was closely linked to the preparation and adoption of the reports on the subject in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

After the publication of the two reports, on 10 October 2023, at the invitation of the Member of the European Parliament Matjaž Nemec, our Director Kitti Dubniczki participated as a speaker at the conference "More Europe in Cross-border regions", which focused on the means to overcome the legal-administrative difficulties encountered in border regions.

On 12 December 2023, the European Commission published a proposal for a simpler, essentially voluntary solution for legal accessibility, which largely addresses the previous objections of Member States.

The debate on the new proposal has already started in the EU institutions and will enter an important phase during the Hungarian Presidency in the second half of 2024.

Participation in the b-solutions initiative

In 2023, the European project b-solutions, launched by DG REGIO and managed by AEBR, continued to address legal and administrative obstacles in border regions. Based on the request of AEBR, our association provided professional assistance in several cases to identify the legal background of the obstacles encountered and to moderate the professional discussions leading to the solution.

At the beginning of 2023, CESCI took on the role of experts for cross-border cooperation of rescue services in the Danube-Kriş-Mureş-Tisza Euroregion in the Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian tri-border area. In the framework of the project, CESCI conducted interviews, analysed the relevant legislation, studied European good practices, and organised a workshop with the authorities in Szeged on 20 March 2023. After the meeting, the CESCI team prepared a detailed analysis and made proposals to overcome the obstacles to joint action.

During the year, we also continued our work to identify legal obstacles to the cross-border retail of local products. This activity included the compilation of reports on the cross-border marketability of local products at the Hungarian-Romanian and Hungarian-Croatian borders. In the former case, the project workshop was organised in the framework of the Oradea Seminar 2023, while in the latter, a professional day was organised in Lenti on 30 May 2023 during which the participants had the opportunity to listen to theoretical and practical presentations on legal issues related to cross-border trade of local products and to visit in person some of the cross-border projects implemented in the region.

In addition, within the framework of the b-solutions project, CESCI experts assessed the legal obstacles and opportunities for the harmonisation of the rules on permits for water tourism, tour organisation and cross-border tours on the Hungarian-Slovak and Hungarian-Croatian border. Legal issues related to the protection of biodiversity in the Mura River in the Hungarian-Croatian border area and, in cooperation with Crowe, a Croatian consultancy company, the legal and administrative framework for cross-border employment were also analysed,. In addition to the analytical work, interviews were conducted and workshops were held.

In addition to these cases, our Association is also involved in the promotion of the b-solutions project. AEBR and CESCI jointly organised an information day in Budapest on 1 February 2023 to present the timely call for proposals of b-solutions to the interested public. Shortly afterwards, on 9 March 2023, at the "Without Borders - Meeting of the member municipalities and tradition groups of the Gate to Europe EGTC" organised by the Gate to Europe EGTC in Nyíradony, Melinda Istenes-Benczi, our international relations coordinator, presented the experiences of the Hungarian EGTCs' with b-solutions, encouraging the mayors present to apply for the call coordinated by AEBR in order to overcome the existing legal and administrative obstacles as soon as possible.

Our video of the briefing day can be viewed at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QucUv5z1Ohs&t=23s

#ACCESS strategic project

Promoting legal accessibility along the Slovak-Hungarian border

Along the common border between Hungary and Slovakia, integration has made tangible progress thanks to EU accession. Not only has foreign trade between the two countries increased spectacularly since 2004, reaching a record level of €17 billion in 2022, not only has the number of road border

crossings open around the clock increased (from 6 before the fall of communism to almost 40), but also cross-border commuting for labour market purposes affects the border region's population by the tens of thousands, while more than a thousand Slovak students attend Hungarian schools and nearly 20,000 Slovak citizens are already living in Hungary. Cross-border urban agglomerations similar to those in Western Europe have developed in the Bratislava and Košice areas, and shopping tourism has become part of everyday life for the inhabitants since the opening of the Schengen area in December 2007: around 75% of the turnover of Hungarian shopping centres on the border is generated by Slovak customers.

All these phenomena underline the importance of the strategic project 'Promoting legal accessibility along the Slovak-Hungarian border' (#ACCESS). The project will run from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2029, and the two implementing partners, the Budapest-based Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) and the CESCI Carpathia, based in Košice, aim to identify and remove as many legal and administrative obstacles as possible that hamper border movements and the lives of border residents.

Within the framework of the six-year project, we will systematically work with our partner in Košice to find solutions to as many of these problems as possible, thus helping to strengthen the internal cohesion of the border region, facilitating the lives of the border region's inhabitants and promoting mutual trust between the two peoples. To this end, we will invite some 12 000 border citizens to give their views on their experiences in the framework of the so-called "obstacle monitoring" and will also interview representatives of 40 institutions that have border-related responsibilities or have been involved in such developments and projects (e.g. water authorities, national parks, employment offices, etc.). Based on the information received, the second phase of the project, obstacle management, will start by analysing the relevant national and EU legislation, proposing solutions and preparing related projects, drawing on existing good practices in Western Europe.

Solutions will be identified, resulting in legislative amendments, information materials and concrete project proposals to help overcome barriers and information gaps. The #ACCESS project will also provide an opportunity to identify problems in cross-border agglomerations and to allow citizens of both countries to directly report cross-border legal and administrative obstacles that hamper their daily lives. To this end, the project will also result in the creation of an information portal with an online obstacle reporting interface and an inventory of solutions.

With CESCI Carpathia, our common goal is to further strengthen cross-border integration between the two neighbouring countries, thus promoting mutual understanding and trust building.

Follow the project news on the project website: https://hu-sk.eu or on the project Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/access.husk You can watch our project videos on the CESCI YouTube channel: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnlsr3hHCQEW9_PJbr32WwvyYfGNLHAbb&si=2um0QJwYg4CUtPpi

In 2023, we implemented several activities under our #ACCESS strategic project, launched in May. As a first step of the project, we created the project's trilingual website and Facebook page as a result of internal development work.

The opening conference of the project was hosted by CESCI Carpathia in Košice, on 14 September. The event was attended by more than 90 participants from the Slovak-Hungarian border region, including representatives of local and regional authorities, EGTCs, development agencies, universities, businesses and citizens living along the border. After the welcoming speeches, a panel discussion on the European context of the project was moderated by our legal advisor Dr Katalin Fekete, and a discussion on the practical obstacles encountered on the Slovak-Hungarian border was moderated by our Secretary General. To conclude the professional programme of the event, our Senior Development Advisor Enikő Hüse-Nyerges and CESCI Carpathia Director Rudolf Bauer gave an overview on the strategic project.

In the middle of the year, we also started to work on the identification of the obstacles through the compilation of 5 questionnaires to identify difficulties related to different border situations and cooperation. Field promotion of the questionnaires took place in autumn 2023, followed by an intensive online campaign in early 2024. Expert interviews on both sides of the border also started in autumn 2023 and will continue into 2024. In the last month of the year, we also started preparing and organising the so-called reference group meetings scheduled for early 2024.

You can follow the latest news on the project at: https://hu-sk.eu/en/news-and-events/

Support for cross-border health cooperation

Since 2016, CESCI has been actively involved in activities aimed at sharing health services across the bordere, one of the milestones of which was our membership of the EUREGHA (European Regional and Local Health Authorities) network in 2021. During 2023, we participated in several events organised by EUREGHA, typically online. We are active members of the working group on cross-border cooperation in health, which organised three meetings during the year. We also participated in the network's general assembly and in several professional events online.

Also in the framework of the network, we were invited to participate in a large-scale project applying artificial intelligence in healthcare, PICASSO (*Person-centred Integrated Care for the Silver Society)*. As part of a consortium of 45 members, our association, together with the Pontibus EGTC, the Municipality of Szob and the Szob District Family and Child Welfare Centre, would have tested the solutions to be developed in the project along the Lower-Ipoly/Ipeľ River in a cross-border manner. Unfortunately, the project was not selected.

In addition to international initiatives, we actively support Hungary's cross-border health cooperation. At the beginning of the year, we held a professional consultation with Dr Péter Takács, Secretary of State for Health, initiating the establishment of a working group on cross-border health issues. Following a positive response, in the second half of the year we worked together with representatives of the National Directorate General of Hospitals to draft and submit a proposal to the Ministry for the establishment of the working group, which was approved. The Task Force will be operational in 2024.

In addition to the above, we participated as a speaker at the mid-term conference of the CrossCoop project supporting the development of Hungarian-Slovak cross-border health cooperation, and (as mentioned above) helped to develop cooperation between Hungarian, Romanian and Serbian ambulance services in the tri-border region in the framework of the b-solutions initiative.

Our policy contribution to the Danube Strategy

The Department for Water Diplomacy and Strategy of the Danube Region of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade coordinates the professional diplomacy tasks related to the Danube Basin. CESCI (as a promoter of cross-border regional cooperation) has been involved in the work related to the Danube Strategy from the very beginning, mainly within Priority Area 10 (cross-border capacity building and cooperation) and as a member of the national interministerial working group coordinated by the Ministry.

In 2023, we continued to actively provide professional support to present the Hungarian position in the processes related to priority area 10 of the Danube Strategy. We are regular participants of the PA10 Danube Local Actors Platform, which is primarily aimed at strengthening civil society and territorial relations of the Strategy. These events include the EU Strategy for the Danube Region - National Hearing on 22 March 2023 and the 13th meeting of the Danube Local Actors Platform 2023 on 28 March 2023.

For the integration of the Central European region - application for the call of the Central Europe Programme

Taking part in a 9-member consortium led by the Saxony Provincial Government, we applied for the Central Europe Transnational Programme under the fourth priority axis of Better Cooperation Governance. Through the *Living Border Regions – Central Europe*, partners cooperating along the Italian-Slovenian, Austrian-German-Czech, Hungarian-Slovak, Czech-Polish-German and German-Polish borders will implement PILOT activities in the fields of integrated cross-border planning, participatory governance and the removal of legal barriers, based on a common methodology. Thanks to the lessons learnt from the PILOT, a guide and a knowledge-sharing platform for the whole Central European region will be developed and a charter to support cross-border internal integration of the region will be signed. Our association will be responsible for the professional coordination and the communication of the project, which will run from 2024 to 2026. CESCI will also be responsible for the development and maintenance of the knowledge-sharing platform.

Participation in domestic policy-making

In 2023, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, we have made a conscious effort to mainstream the aspects of border regions in domestic territorial policy.

The Ministry has delegated our Director Mátyás Jaschitz to the Monitoring Committee of the National Operational Programme for Territorial Development, where we continuously comment on the developments of the Operational Programme, trying to reflect the policy interests of the border

regions. We have also been an active participant in the policy debate on the planned economic development zones, coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development, and we have been involved in the consultation process on the renewal of the Schengen Regulation.

Events related to policy-making

As in previous years, CESCI participated in a number of policy events and webinars in 2023, and contributed to shaping a number of key policy processes. As in every year, in 2023 we participated in the most exciting activities of the European Week of Regions and Cities (EURegionsWeek), this time mainly online.

Date	Location	Name of the event
18-19 January 2023	Brussels, Belgium	Vibrant Cross-Border Labour Markets - Commission conference
1 February 2023	Budapest	b-solutions information day
14 February 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA Digital Health Working Group meeting
15 February 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA Cross-border Health Cooperation Working Group meeting
15 February 2023	Budapest	Consultation with Dr Péter Takács, State Secretary for Health
20 February 2023	Balassagyarmat	"Slovak-Hungarian cross-border cooperation project in the health sector between the hospitals of Balassagyarmat and Nagykürtös" (CrossCoop) - mid-term conference
21 February 2023	(Online)	Focus group workshop on the new thematic action plans of the ESPON programme (with MOT and AEBR)
9 March 2023	Nyíradony	Without Borders - Meeting of the member municipalities and tradition groups of the Gate to Europe EGTC
13 March 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (PICASSO)
14 March 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (PICASSO)
20 March 2023	Szeged	b-solutions workshop at the DKMT Euroregion on Hungarian-Romanian-Serbian ambulance cooperation
22 March 2023	Budapest	EU Strategy for the Danube Region - National Consultation
23 March 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (PICASSO)
28 March 2023	Košice , Slovakia	#ACCESS: Project Preparatory Workshop with CESCI Carpathia
28 March 2023	Vienna, Austria	Danube Local Actors Platform - 13th meeting
30 March 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (CENTRAL ISO1)
3 April 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (CENTRAL ISO1)
5 April 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (PICASSO)
12 April 2023	Budapest	Interministerial meeting on the ECBM Regulation at the Prime Minister's Office

Date	Location	Name of the event
17 April 2023	Brussels, Belgium	Committee of the Regions conference "Life in border regions - Tackling challenges"
25 April 2023	Budapest	Meeting of State Secretaries at the Ministry of Regional Development on the Border Town development programme
26 April 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA Digital Health Working Group meeting
10 May 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (CENTRAL ISO1)
10 May 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA Cross-border Health Cooperation Working Group on Health meeting
15 May 2023	(Online)	Project development meeting (CENTRAL ISO1)
24 May 2023	(Online)	TOP Monitoring Committee meeting
30 May 2023	Lenti	b-solutions workshop on cross-border marketing of local products
12 June 2023	Budapest	#ACCESS: Launching meeting with the Joint Secretariat
13 June 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA General Assembly
29 June 2023.	Neszmély / Radvaň nad Dunajom	Handover ceremony of the Neszmély-Radvaň nad Dunajom cross-border ferry
28 July 2023	Ipolydamásd / Chľaba	The inauguration ceremony of the Ipolydamásd-Chľaba cross-border bridge
10 August 2023	(Online)	#ACCESS: Partner meeting
6 September 2023	(Online)	#ACCESS: Partners meeting
14 September 2023	Košice, Slovakia	#ACCESS: Kick-off conference
27 September 2023	(Online)	#ACCESS: Partners meeting
4 October 2023	Budapest	Consultation with the representatives of the National Directorate General of Hospitals on the cross-border health working group
9-12 October 2023	(Online)	European Week of Regions and Cities
10 October 2023	Brussels, Belgium	Conference "More Europe in Cross-border regions"
11 October 2023	Budapest	TOP Monitoring Committee: technical workshop
11 October 2023	Tótszerdahely	b-solutions workshop: water tourism training and active tourism services in the Hungarian-Croatian border region
19 October 2023	Budapest	Involvement in the organisation of the 10th Baltic-Adriatic Forum in Budapest, a Polish initiative
8 November 2023	(Online)	TOP Monitoring Committee meeting
8 November 2023	Budapest	Participation at the workshop 'Planning functional urban areas in Hungary, with an outlook on European developments based on ESPON research'
9 November 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA Digital Health Working Group meeting

Date	Location	Name of the event
17 November 2023	The Hague, Netherlands	Annual Conference of ITEM (Institute for Transnational and Euregional Cross-border Cooperation and Mobility, Maastricht University)
20 November 2023	(Online)	EUREGHA autumn meeting

Cross-border knowledge sharing

In order to help local actors be more successful in shaping cross-border cooperation, we carry out a wide range of information and knowledge-sharing activities, in which we also try to learn as much as possible.

Participation in the capacity building of experts in cross-border development

The activity includes our professional support for the scholarship programme of the István Pálfi Regional Development Foundation - with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade - in the framework of which we gave professional presentations at relevant events. On 8 June 2023, the István Pálfi Regional Development Foundation organised the Pálfi Scholarship beneficiaries' meeting attended by two of our colleagues.

Oradea Process

The Association of French-Hungarian Initiatives (INFH), the Oradea Metropolitan Area and CESCI launched a series of annual events in 2012 with the aim of developing cooperation between Hungarian and Romanian institutions, municipalities and people. The focus of the 2023 conference was on local products and sustainable territorial food systems, with a special emphasis on the cross-border context. The event was opened by Stefan Josan, representative of the French Embassy in Romania, highlighting the importance of learning French good practices. Dr Sorin Borza, Vice-Rector of the co-organising University of Oradea and Antonia Nica, Deputy Mayor of Oradea, highlighted in their welcome speeches the community-building value of local products and the importance of unhindered marketing in the region.

During the conference, José Osete, IFECO Director, told the story of the Oradea Process initiative and its results, followed by Mariane Bloudeau, AEBR Project Manager, who presented the b-solutions initiative, which aims to overcome obstacles to cross-border cooperation. During the seminar, Louison Lançon, President of the French Let's Food Association and Katalin Kujáni, President of the Kislépték Association, also gave presentations, showing successful examples and challenges in the field of cross-border economic relations. Sorin Pogana, Managing Director of the Romanian company Fresco Verde and Sophie Lewandowski, an expert from the Meurthe-Moselle departmental council, presented projects that emphasised the promotion of local producers and the importance of cross-border trademark schemes. The final presentations of the seminar focused on the opportunities and obstacles for the cross-border marketing of local products, presented by Apor Kovács and Gyula Ocskay.

More information about the event: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/helyi-termekek-fenntarthato-es-rugalmas-teruleti-elelmiszer-rendszerek-hataron-atnyulo-egyuttmukodes/#av-tab-section-1-4-link

The "Art of Cooperation" conference

The Széchenyi Programme Office held its conference "The Art of Cooperation - Conference and New Platform in Central and Eastern Europe" on 17 and 18 October 2023 in Budapest. The aim of the event was to increase the visibility of the Interreg CBC, IPA, NEXT and transnational programmes in Eastern and Central Europe and to promote cross-border cooperation. Representing CESCI, the Secretary General Gyula Ocskay moderated a panel on integrated territorial instruments, where representatives of different programmes shared their experience on the development and implementation of the instruments. In addition, Gyula Ocskay and Rudolf Bauer, Director of CESCI Carpathia, presented the #ACCESS project, which is about identifying and solving legal obstacles to Slovak-Hungarian cross-border cooperation.

Ukraine's cross-border integration with the EU

Our association and its international partners (CESCI Carpathia, WSB University from Poland, the Technical University of Liberec in the Czech Republic, the University of Prešov, Slovakia and the National University of Uzhhorod from Ukraine) implemented the project "Ukraine's cross-border EU integration through the V4" with the support of the International Visegrad Fund, in the framework of which two side events were organised in connection with the AEBR 2023 Annual Meeting in Košice, 8-11 November 2023. The event also aimed to give impetus to the Košice Platform initiative, launched in 2019 to support the integration process of the Eastern Partnership countries.

On the first day of the programme organised by our association (10 November), an international conference was held in Košice, on the topic of Ukraine's EU integration and the V4's experience in cross-border cooperation. Participants were welcomed via a video message by Olivér Várhelyi, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, and in person by Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of AEBR, Petr Mareš, Director of the International Visegrad Fund and Károly Pataky, Vice-President of the co-organising Regional Municipality of Košice. With our conference, we wanted to contribute to knowledge sharing and to initiate a lasting partnership that will facilitate the transfer of experience during Ukraine's EU integration process. Nearly 100 participants of the AEBR's annual event, who came from all over the EU, from Spain to Finland, from Ireland to Romania, were able to learn about Ukraine's progress in the integration process through presentations by Ukrainian policy-makers and experts. Policy-makers, researchers and practitioners from the V4 countries shared their experience of EU integration with the audience. Local and regional actors from the four countries and Ukraine also discussed the role of cross-border cooperation in the EU integration process: its para-diplomatic, resource-generating, confidence-building and regional development aspects.

On the second day (11 November), we organised a study tour for the participants to Uzhhorod, to the Transcarpathian Regional Council, to get first-hand information on the situation in Ukraine, the results of the administrative reform and the activities of the different regional organisations in the field of developing relations with the V4 countries.

More details about the event: https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/en/eu-integration-of-ukraine-across-borders-international-conference-in-kosice-with-the-support-of-the-international-visegrad-fund/

Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate series

Throughout the year, we have closely been following the Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate online event series organised by the European Commission. Our colleagues were involved in all five meetings held during the year, actively following the European debate on the daily life of citizens living in border regions, the cross-border labour market, cross-border legal obstacles and the involvement of SMEs. Director Kitti Dubniczki participated as a speaker in the session addressing the Cohesion Policy beyond 2027.

Events related to knowledge sharing

Date	Location	Name of the event
10 March 2023	(Online)	Consultation with partners in Košice on the AEBR annual event
22 March 2023	Esztergom	Presentation at the Conference on Cooperation between Border Regions
29 April 2023	Esztergom	Final event of the Heritage Territorial Action Plan of the Ister-Granum EGTC
3 May 2023	Siófok	Presentation at the anniversary conference on Transport Development in Hungary
25 May 2023	Oradea, Romania	Oradea Seminary
1 June 2023	(Online)	Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate #11: How can we improve the daily lives of cross-border citizens?
8 June 2023	Budapest	Meeting of the Pálfi Fellows
27 June 2023	Komárno, Slovakia	Final conference of the Regional Action Plan for Employment and related projects "Food Industry"
13 July 2023	(Online)	Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate #12: 'How to further strengthen cross-border labour market integration?'
7 September 2023	Vác	Presentation on the Hungarian-Slovak cross-border programme
21 September 2023	(Online)	Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate #13: How could a new European legal instrument tackle cross-border obstacles?
22-24 September 2023	Namur, Belgium	Panel moderation at the seminar on Europe's past, present and future: the experience of crossing borders
17-18 October 2023	Budapest	Panel moderation and presentation at the 'Art of cooperation' conference organised by the SZPI
9 November 2023	(Online)	Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate #14: Border regions in post-2027 cohesion policy (presentation)
10 November 2023	Košice, Slovakia	Conference on Ukraine's cross-border integration with the EU, supported by the International Visegrad Fund

Date	Location	Name of the event
11 November 2023	Uzhhorod, Ukraine	Study tour and partner seminar
5 December 2023	(Online)	Beyond Borders - Breakfast Debate #15: "Navigating the EU Single Market - How to help SMEs across borders?"

The CESCI team in 2023

László Darányi, planner-analyst

Kitti Dubniczki, director

Dr Katalin Fekete, legal adviser

Teodor Gyelník, senior research fellow

Roland Hesz, chief analyst

Enikő Hüse-Nyerges, senior development expert

Melinda Istenes-Benczi, international relations coordinator

Dr Norbert Jankai, legal adviser

Viktória Jánosi, GIS expert

Mátyás Jaschitz, director

Viktória Matejka, project and financial assistant

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István Oláh, project manager

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CESCI

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Basic data needed for defining a public utility status

1) Contribution to fulfilling common social and individual needs

According to the data of the Public Utility Annex of the year 2023 related to target groups, the association's services are equally available to persons other than the association's board members, employees or volunteers.

2) Proper resources at disposal in respect of the former two closed business years (2022, 2023)

The following alternative conditions apply:

- the annual average budget surpasses HUF 1 million (de facto in 2022-2023: 195,614K HUF)
- overall taxed outcome of the two years (baseline year) is not negative: 24,962K HUF)
- personal charges (expenses), without taking into consideration officials' allowances, are at least a quarter of all charges (expenses) (de facto in 2022-2023: 76.03%)

3) Account of appropriate social support after the two previously closed business years

The following condition applies:

- all expenses related to public utility activities make up at least half of all expenses on a two-year average (de facto in 2022-2023: 86.59%)

Account of allocations by objectives

Allocation to senior officers

In 2023, the association provided an allocation of 480,000 HUF for Dr. Zsuzsanna Fejes, as a presidential honorarium.

Account of assets used for public benefit activities

Value of equity	70,946K HUF
Aim of utilisation	public benefit activities

Resource supply and social support indicators

Resource supply indicators	Fulfilment of indicator	Value
Ectv.32.par.(4) a) (B1+B2)/2>1.000.000 Ft	Yes	195,614K HUF
Ectv.32.par.(4) b) K1+K2>=0	Yes	24,962K HUF
Ectv.32.par.(4) c) (I1+I2-A1-A2)/(H1+H2)>=0,25	Yes	0.7603

Resource supply indicators	Fulfilment of indicator	Value
Ectv.32.par.(5) a) (C1+C2)/(G1+G2)>=0,02	No	0,00
Ectv.32.par.(5) b) (J1+J2)/(H1+H2)>=0,5	Yes	0.8659
Ectv.32.par.(5) c) (L1+L2)/2>=10 ps.	No	0 ps.

Basic data needed for defining a public benefit status

	Previous year	Base year
B. Total annual income:	186,765K HUF	204,463K HUF
D. Public benefit income:	153,922K HUF	184,496K HUF
E. Normative grant:	0K HUF	0K HUF
F. Support from EU structural funds, and from Cohesion Fund	0K HUF	0K HUF
G. Adjusted turnover	0K HUF	0K HUF
H. Total expenditure	170,017K HUF	195,896K HUF
I. Personal charges	124,177K HUF	154,036 K HUF
J. Public benefit expenditures	140,110K HUF	176,756K HUF
K. Profit/Loss after taxation	16,472K HUF	8,490 K HUF

L. Number of volunteers assisting the association's operation (in accordance with regulation LXXXVIII/2005 on public utility volunteer activity) (persons): 1 person

Personal expenditures

	1000 HUF	Previous year	Amendment of previous year	Base year
A.	**Personal expenditures**	**124,177**	**0**	**154,036**
124 177	**Wage charges**	**98,120**	**0**	**122,675**
98 120	out of it: commissions	1,895	0	2,522
1 895	out of it: honorarium	960	0	480
960	**Other personal charges**	**12,096**	**0**	**14,260**
12 096	**Wage contributions**	**13,961**	**0**	**17,101**
13 961	**Allocations by the association**	**0**	**0**	**0**

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