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.

Informational data
for non-profit organisations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping

Reporting period: 01.01.2025-31.12.2025

Budapest, 31.05.2026.

The representative of the organisation

Stamp

The published information has not been audited.

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

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

Simplified annual report balance sheet for other organisations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping

The balance sheet date: 31.12.2025.
Type of profit and loss account: Simplified annual report

Budapest, 31.05.2026.

The representative of the organisation

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

Simplified annual report balance sheet for other organisations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping
The balance sheet date: 31.12.2025.

	1000 HUF	Previous year	Previous year modification	Reference year
01.	**A. Invested assets**	**5 832**		**5 417**
02.	I. Intangible assets	0		0
03.	II. Tangible assets	5 832		5 417
04.	III. Invested financial assets	0		0
05.	**B. Current assets**	**465 281**		**463 854**
06.	I. Inventories	0		0
07.	II. Receivables	7 225		13 561
08.	III. Securities	30 306		55 001
09.	IV. Cash	427 750		395 292
10.	**C. Prepaid expenses and accrued income**	**411**		**3 351**
11.	**TOTAL ASSETS**	**471 524**		**472 622**
12.	**D. Equity**	**126 606**	**0**	**171 565**
13.	I. Start-up capital I Subscribed capital	0		0
14.	II. Capital change/Results	70 946		126 607
15.	III. Restricted reserve	0		0
16.	IV. Revaluation reserve	0		0
17.	V. Current year result from core activities (non-profit activities)	53 168	0	39 815
18.	VI. Current year result from business activities	2 492	0	5 143
19.	**E. Provisions**	**0**		**0**
20.	**F. Liabilities**	**19 364**	**0**	**23 701**
21.	I. Subordinated liabilities	0		0
22.	II. Long-term liabilities	0		0
23.	III. Short-term liabilities	19 364	0	23 701
24.	**G. Accrued liabilities**	**325 554**	**0**	**277 356**
25.	**TOTAL LIABILITIES**	**471 524**		**472 622**

The published information has not been audited.

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

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

Non-profit income statement for non-profit organisations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping

Reporting period: 01.01.2025-31.12.2025

Budapest, 31.05.2026.

The representative of the organisation

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

Non-profit income statement for non-profit organizations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping
Reporting period: 01.01.2025-31.12.2025

	1000 HUF	Previous year	Previous year modification	Reference year
A.	**Personnel Expenditures**	**187 169**	**0**	**217 953**
A.1.	**Personnel costs**	**151 846**	**0**	**179 132**
A. 1 .A.	Personnel costs: in form of commission fees	1250	0	9 970
A. 1 .B.	Personnel costs: in form of honorarium	480	0	1100
A.2.	**Other personnel expenditures**	**13 789**	**0**	**15 760**
A.3.	**Payroll taxes and social contributions**	**21 534**	**0**	**23 061**
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

Non-profit income statement for non-profit organizations maintaining double-entry bookkeeping
Reporting period: 01.01.2025-31.12.2025

	1000 HUF	Previous year	Previous year modification	Reference year
A.	**Total revenue from public benefit activities**	**299 690**	**0**	**308 619**
A.1.	**Grant received for public benefit activities**	**294 456**	**0**	**301 651**
A. 1 .A.	from the founder	0	0	0
A. 1 .B.	from the central budget	292 839	0	300 505
A.1.C.	from the local government	0	0	0
A.1.D.	other	1 617	0	1 146
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**	**1 466**	**0**	**2 875**
A.5.	**Other type of revenue**	**3 768**	**0**	**4 093**
B.	**Revenue from business activities**	**15 441**	**0**	**35 519**
C.	**Total revenue (A+B)**	**315 131**	**0**	**344 138**
D.	**Public benefit activity expenses**	**246 522**	**0**	**268 804**
D.1.	Material expenses	66 259	0	62 853
D.2.	Personnel expenses	177 998	0	196 158
D.3.	Depreciation	1 123	0	1 207
D.4.	Other expenses	288	0	2
D.5.	Expenses of financial transactions	854	0	8 584
E.	**Expenses of business acitivities**	**12 702**	**0**	**29 867**
E. 1.	Material expenses	3 414	0	6 984
E.2.	Personnel expenses	9 171	0	21 795
E.3.	Depreciation	58	0	134
E.4.	Other expenses	15	0	0
E.5.	Expenses of financial transactions	44	0	954
F.	**Total expenditure (D+E)**	**259 224**	**0**	**298 671**
G.	**Profit or loss before tax (B-E or C-F)**	**2 739**	**0**	**5 652**
H.	**Tax liability**	247	0	509
I.	**Profit/loss from business activities for the current year (G-H)**	**2 492**	**0**	**5 143**
J	**Current-year public benefit result (A-D)**	**53 168**	**0**	**39 815**

The published information has not been audited.

Tax number:	18188071-2-42
Court:	Budapest Regional Court
Registration decision number:	PK 61.285/2003/
Registration number:	01-02-10819

Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives

1067 Budapest, Teréz körút 13.

Public Benefit Annex
Year 2025

ACTIVITY REPORT
2025

A brief introduction to CESCI

The Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives (CESCI) was established in 2009 with the aim of promoting and strengthening cross-border cooperation – modelled on the French Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) - along Hungary's borders and throughout Central and South-Eastern Europe.

As a private-law public-benefit association, CESCI carries out the following activities in relation to cross-border cooperation:

- conducts research on the topic of border regions and in specific border areas;
- develops integrated territorial strategies and participates in cross-border programming;
- prepares policy background materials at EU and national level on the subject of cross-border development, and participates in related consultations and policy debates;
- supports cross-border project development;
- supports cross-border institutional development;
- supports the capacity-building of local actors through knowledge transfer.

Objectives of CESCI

CESCI's main objectives are:

- to provide professional support for cross-border cooperation along Hungary's borders and in other countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe;
- to improve the exchange of professional experience between Euroregions, EGTCs and local and regional authorities involved in cross-border cooperation;
- disseminating best practices from Western Europe;
- establishing strategic cooperation with the relevant decision-making and preparatory bodies of the Union and with Northern and Western European networks established for the same purpose;
- strengthening internal cohesion, peace and mutual rapprochement in the region by establishing partnerships between the nations of Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The public benefit objectives of CESCI pursuant to Act CLVI of 1997:

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

Our office holders in 2025:

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

The position of President of CESCI is held by Dr Zsuzsanna Fejes, Associate Professor at the National University of Public Service.

The association's vice-presidents in 2025:

- Dr Tamás Tóth, Professor, Milton Friedman University,
- Zoltán Szögi, Administrative Officer, Budapest Capital Government Office.

The members of the association's Board in 2025:

- Dr Hynek Böhm, Associate Professor at the University of Opole (Poland) and Assistant Professor at the Technical University of Liberec (Czech Republic),
- Dr Jože Gričar, Professor Emeritus of economics (University of Maribor, Slovenia),
- Ferenc Ivanics, Vice-President of the Győr-Moson-Sopron County Assembly,
- Dr Myroslava Lendel, Vice-Rector for Research and Education at Uzhhorod National University (Ukraine)
- Dr Dana-Bianca Mitrică, Head of the Institute of Human Geography and Regional Sciences at the Romanian Academy,
- István Szabó, former Vice-President of the Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Assembly.

Members of the Supervisory Board (SB) in 2025:

- Dr György Kocziszky (Chair), Professor, Budapest Metropolitan University,
- Judit Árvai-Füleki, Chief Executive Officer, EDUTUS Non-profit Public Benefit Ltd,
- Dr Attila Tilki, Member of Parliament, member of the Hungarian delegation to the Council of Europe.

Our members

In terms of the composition of the association's membership, in 2025 one private individual (Dr Myroslava Lendel) and one public-law institution (Pontibus EGTC) joined the organisation, bringing our total membership to 60 in 2025.

Services offered to our members:

- online publication of our quarterly newsletter, compiled specifically for members and containing practical information;
- supporting our members' professional development by organising study trips and providing co-funding for their travel;
- regular invitation for members to participate in all professional events;
- furthermore, in many cases we provide assistance free of charge in response to individual requests.

Highlights from the association's activities in 2025

As in previous years, in 2025 CESCI placed great emphasis on implementing its mission at a high professional standard, maintaining and developing the services provided to its members, and supporting its partner organisations.

We held our Annual General Meeting on 19 May 2025 in Budapest, with strong member participation and all resolutions adopted successfully. During the meeting, the annual reports, the public benefit report, and the 2025 work and financial plan were approved. Several officers' terms of office were extended, a new board member was elected (Professor Myroslava Lendel), and amendments were made to the Statutes of the Association and the procurement rules.

We continuously maintain and develop our range of services for our members, including local and county authorities, EGTCs, and physical persons, directly affected at a professional level. In 2025, we published our online newsletter four times, which we supplemented on several occasions throughout the year with ad hoc updates on calls for proposals and events for our members.

Unlike in previous years, CESCI did not organise a study trip for the members in 2025, instead a call for applications was announced to support members' professional travel and participation needs. The aim was, on the one hand, to ensure that our support was not limited to a narrow circle of members able to participate in a single study trip, and on the other hand, to strengthen our membership's international professional networking connections. This enabled our members to participate

- in the conference organised by DG REGIO in Gorizia on 27–28 March on the future of Interreg programmes;
- a thematic workshop on regional cooperation on 3 April 2025 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the European Danube Region Strategy (EUSDR) Presidency programme;
- the 6th GreenTech Green Energy and Sustainability Trade Fair and Conference, held at the ZalaZONE Automotive Test Track on 22–23 May 2025;
- at the EuroVelo Tourism Conference on 25 September 2025 in Balatonfüred, and
- the Active Hungary conference on 25–26 November 2025 in Siófok.

During the year, we also made the catalogue of our specialist book collection available online (https://budapest.cesci-net.eu/szakkonyveink/). The continuously expanding collectioncurrently comprises more than 500 volumes, in a wide range of languages (English, Bulgarian, Finnish, French, Croatian, Polish, Hungarian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian). The library offers insights into numerous academic fields, with a particular focus on border studies, cross-border cooperation and its frameworks, international relations and geopolitics, etc. The books can be consulted and used at the CESCI office by prior arrangement.

We have developed new websites free of charge for both our partner organisations – CESCI Balkans and CESCI Carpathia – to ensure that their activities and achievements are presented to the public in a clear and easily accessible manner, in a unified format that enhances the visibility of our network.

As CESCI considers the continuous development of staff skills to be of paramount importance, two training courses were organised during the year alongside regular English language instruction. A gender equality training session took place on 7 April 2025, and a training course on the use of artificial intelligence was held on 10–11 June 2025. The aim of the gender equality training was to establish a common framework for thinking about gender equality and to support our colleagues in reflecting more consciously on their own experiences, attitudes and the patterns that emerge in the organisation's operations. The aim of the training session entitled 'AI in CESCI's Work' was to provide a well-founded overview of the possibilities, limitations and responsible use of artificial intelligence

in the organisation's day-to-day work. The training concluded by exploring how CESCI might trial safe, practical and gradually implementable applications of AI in its own activities.

The internal cohesion of CESCI was further strengthened through team-building programmes. In September 2025, staff participated in a three-day professional study trip, organised with the active involvement of the CESCI Balkans team. The aim of the trip was to strengthen internal relations within the organisation, to foster a shared professional mindset, and to gain professional and cultural experience related to the Northern Bačka Region. Near Mórahalom, the participants gained insights into the operation of the southern border control system, after which the programme concluded with a meeting and a joint dinner. On the second day in Subotica, the deputy mayor welcomed the delegation, followed by a cultural and urbanist tour of the city, and further community and professional programmes. To conclude the programme, the participants visited Palič. Throughout the year, we organised several joint sporting events (rock climbing, squash, badminton and swimming).

The organisation is also committed to expanding the knowledge of the younger generation, so we took on interns again in 2025. Over the summer, one Hungarian and three Czech students were given internship opportunities; the latter also presented their experiences and impressions in a short video.

Our staff members in 2025 were:

- László DARÁNYI, Planning Analyst
- Kitti DUBNICZKI, Director
- Dr Katalin FEKETE, Legal Adviser
- Teodor GYELNÍK, Senior Research Fellow
- Roland HESZ, Senior Analyst
- Enikő HÜSE-NYERGES, Senior Development Expert
- Dr Melinda ISTENES-BENCZI, International Relations Officer
- Dr Norbert Jankai, Legal Adviser
- Viktória JÁNOSI, GIS expert
- Mátyás JASCHITZ, Director
- Gyula OCSKAY, Secretary General
- Lilla OCSKAY, Project Assistant
- Éva ROMÁN, Administrative Assistant
- Csaba SIKI, GIS specialist
- Monika ŠIMONOVÁ, Project Manager
- Annamária VAS, Office Manager.

CESCI supported the operation of CESCI Balkans by contracting

- Miklós KÓSZÓ as Project Manager
- Zsuzsanna SZABÓ as Project Assistant.

Border studies, academic activities

From the very beginning, our association has been actively involved in research related to border regions and strives to strengthen the academic foundation of its professional activities. In line with this, we participate in academic conferences and workshops, and we also organise such events.

Besides, we also endeavour to contribute to the international academic discourse through our own publications. We are keen to engage with the work of emerging research groups in the field of border studies, and we support the academic careers of our staff.

The Ludovika UPS - CESCI Research Group

The Research Group on Cross-Border Cooperation (HEK) was established at the Ludovika National University of Public Service (NKE) in late 2021 in collaboration with CESCI. In addition to CESCI staff, the workshop involves lecturers from the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies and the Faculty of Law Enforcement (primarily the Department of Border Control), as well as external researchers. The research workshop thus uniquely ensures that the aspects of cooperation and security, as well as theory and practice, are present in the joint work.

The research group held its annual meeting on 12 February, where attendees discussed the activity report for the previous year and the work plan for 2025. A professional meeting took place on 26 June, where the members were introduced to the framework for accessing EU funding.

The research group's events in 2025

On 20 May 2025, the Department of Border Control at the Faculty of Law Enforcement of the National University of Public Service and the Border Guard Culture Foundation organised the 3rd historical-scientific conference titled "Schengen 40-35-30 – Glimpses into the Life of Border Control Agencies", in which the research group played a key role. The event, linked to three important anniversaries of Schengen cooperation, provided an overview of the historical, policy and security contexts of the Schengen system. On behalf of the research group, János Sallai, Teodor Gyelník and Melinda Istenes-Benczi gave presentations. The conference also featured the launch of the collection of papers "Schengen 40-35-30", published by CESCI, which examines the development of Schengen cooperation through 18 studies, primarily written by researchers specialising in border policing.

The research group's most significant event took place between 12 and 14 May 2025 at the NKE University, in collaboration with TEIN (Transfrontier Euro-Institut Network). The central question of the international conference, titled 'What future for the concept of a borderless Europe?', which was realised with the support of the Mecenatúra programme, was how the concept referred to in the title can be reinterpreted amidst the multifaceted crises of the 21st century – particularly the changed security policy environment, the challenges of the Schengen system and the transformation of territorial cooperation. The professional programme on the first day reflected on the changing status of borders: during the morning plenary session, Christine Bradley, Section Chief at the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, Professor at the University of Victoria in Canada, analysed current issues in the European border discourse within an international context, followed by a total of 29 presentations across six parallel thematic sessions during the afternoon. The second day opened with a public lecture by Eduardo Medeiros, a professor at the University Institute of Lisbon, on the European Union's cohesion policy, followed by a PhD section comprising 10 presentations, which served to nurture talent and provide a professional platform for young researchers. Running in parallel with the PhD session was the TEIN strategic workshop, which, as a follow-up to the 2024 Eupen workshop, discussed the network's training and educational objectives

and its toolkit. The conference attracted significant international interest, with 144 participants from a total of 19 countries.

The online lecture series launched by the Cross-Border Cooperation Research Group in 2023 continued in 2025. The aim of the initiative is to provide an opportunity for the members of the group to introduce themselves and to gain mutual insight into research topics and approaches. As part of the 2025 programme, on 25 February, Dr Teodor Gyelník gave a lecture titled "The Formation of the Slovak National Narrative and its Slovak–Hungarian Dimensions", in which he analysed the historical and political contexts of Slovak national self-interpretation, as well as their impact on Hungarian–Slovak relations.

The research group in the international academic community

TEIN: the European network of institutions researching border regions

In 2025, the research group continued to play an active and visible role in the work of TEIN, of which it has been a full member since 2022. The network brings together European universities, border research institutes and professional organisations supporting cross-border cooperation, thus providing an important international framework for the development of research links, expert exchanges and joint projects. In addition to the aforementioned conference in Budapest and the training strategy workshop organised as part of it, representatives of the research group also took part in the TEIN General Assembly and Annual Conference held in Girona between 20–22 October 2025, where Zsuzsanna Fejes presented the outcomes of the Budapest conference and its academic follow-up, whilst Teodor Gyelník outlined the key lessons learnt from the BorderLabs CE project.

We also took active part in the development of a joint study by ITEM (the institute specialised in cross-border cooperation at Maastricht University) and TEIN, examining the impact of the amended Schengen Borders Code, with a case study on the Hungarian–Austrian border section. The study was subsequently presented at the conference entitled '40 Years of Schengen in the Age of Border Controls', organised by ITEM and the UM Brussels Hub in Brussels on 24 November 2025.

Networking in the Central and Eastern European region

The conference entitled "The World We Live In: Models and Perspectives of Cross-Border Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe", held on 14–15 November 2025 in Cluj-Napoca, served to strengthen professional ties in Central and Eastern Europe. At the event, organised as part of the Frontem project managed by the University of Strasbourg, Dr Melinda Istenes-Benczi gave a presentation entitled "Legal accessibility as a crisis management tool: lessons from Central Europe".

She also represented the research workshop with her presentation "The Tisza EGTC as a tool ensuring the resilience of cross-border cooperation" at the international academic conference titled "Recent Challenges and Perspectives of Slovak-Ukrainian Cross-Border Cooperation", which took place on 20–21 October 2025 in the auditorium of the Evangelical College in Prešov. The conference was organised by IPOL, the Institute of Political Science at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prešov.

The ABCD Journal

In 2025, the development of the Journal of Advanced Studies on Borders, Cooperation and Development (ABCD Journal) reached an important milestone. The research workshop had already published the journal's pilot issue in 2024, in 1,000 printed copies and online, with the aim of establishing, in the longer term, an internationally recognised open-access academic journal focusing on border studies, edited by James W. Scott. In 2025, as a continuation, the journal's first issue was published as a joint publication by CESCI, LUPS and the University of Eastern Finland. The 152-page, English-language issue presents a selection of papers from the TEIN conference held in Budapest in May 2025 and addresses issues such as border symbolism and identity, the interrelationships between the Schengen system and security, innovative legal and governance tools, and the role of education, language and citizenship in maintaining cross-border cooperation.

Academic activities outside HEK

Our association also participates in initiatives, academic conferences and workshops related to border studies outside the research group.

From 12 to 16 May 2025, the summer school entitled "B-Shapes – Border-Shaping Perceptions of European Societies", funded by the Horizon Europe programme, was held in Bolzano, Italy, at which CESCI was represented by Dr Melinda Istenes-Benczi. The programme brought together 23 participants from 17 countries and examined, within an interdisciplinary framework, how borders shape perceptions of society, culture and identity. The programme also included a study trip, during which participants learned about the functioning of the EGTC Euregio Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino, as well as the activities of civil society organisations active in migration and solidarity.

In early 2025, CESCI team members followed online the 2024/2025 "Border Realities: Beyond Nature and Culture". The public series was organised and led by Lola Aubry (UniGR-CBS, University of Luxembourg) and Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (Pacte, CNRS, Université Grenoble Alpes). Its central question was how contemporary border research can transcend the traditional separation of nature and culture, and how borders can be interpreted as natural–cultural phenomena.

In addition to our international academic presence and knowledge-sharing, in 2025 we also sought to play an active role in establishing new research collaborations. In 2025, at the invitation of our board member Hynek Böhm, CESCI joined as a partner in the preparation of the BARI Network proposal submitted in response to the Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Staff Exchanges 2025 call. The aim of the international consortium was to examine how cross-border collaborations can become more resilient in the context of the current European 'polycrisis', with particular regard to governance, legal, social and environmental challenges. The project was ultimately not awarded funding.

Our publications

Balla, J., Darányi, L., Fejes, Zs., Istenes-Benczi, M., Ocskay, Gy., Vájlok, L. (2025): Case study: The Hungarian-Austrian border area. In Mertens, P., Unfried, M., Sivonen, S. (eds.): The revised Schengen Borders Code – an ex-post evaluation in times of border controls (ITEM-TEIN joint study). ITEM Cross-

Border Impact Assessment 2025. Maastricht: Institute for Transnational and Euregional Cross-Border Cooperation and Mobility, pp. 76–107.

Brunet-Jailly, E., Ocskay, Gy., Guillermo Ramírez, M., Van der Velde, M., Shaban, T. (2025): Introduction: European Union Borders with Ukraine. Borders in Globalization Review, 6:2, pp. 20–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18357/big_r62202522426

Gyelník, T. (2025): Dossier 2: Proposal for an EU Regulation 'Facilitating cross-border solutions' – Cross-Border effects across European cross-border regions (ITEM-TEIN joint study). [Book review] ABCD Journal, 1:1, pp. 143–152.

Gyelník, T. (2025): Privatising Border Control. Law at the Limits of the Sovereign State. [Book review] ABCD Journal, 1:1, pp. 135–142.

Gyelník, T., Istenes-Benczi, M. (2025): The Social Impacts of the Schengen Agreement in Hungary. In: Gyelník, T., Ocskay, Gy., Vájlok, L. (eds.): Schengen 40-35-30: Anniversary Collection of Essays. Budapest, Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) – Border Guard Foundation for Culture, pp. 25–46.

Gyelník, T., Ocskay, Gy., Vájlok, L. (eds.) (2025): Schengen 40-35-30: Anniversary Collection of Essays. Budapest: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) – Border Guard Foundation for Culture.

Fejes, Zs. (2025): From Barriers to Opportunities: The Road to the Adoption of the BRIDGEforEU Regulation in the EU. DETUROPE: The Central European Journal of Regional Development and Tourism, 17:3, pp. 104–129.

Fejes, Zs. (2025): What future for the concept of a Borderless Europe? International Seminar on the Perspectives of Border Policies and Territorial Cooperation in an Age of Multiple Crises. Budapest: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI). ISBN: 9786158126564

Ocskay, Gy., Vájlok, L. (2025): Foreword. In: Gyelník, T., Ocskay, Gy., Vájlok, L. (eds.): Schengen 40-35-30: Anniversary Collection of Papers. Budapest: Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) – Border Guard Foundation for Culture, pp. 5–6.

Planning-Programming-Evaluation

Evaluation of cross-border cooperation programmes

In 2025, CESCI's programme evaluation activities focused exclusively on the second-round evaluation of the 2014–2020 Hungary–Slovakia–Romania–Ukraine ENI Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (HUSKROUA), as the evaluation of the other programmes concerned had already been completed in 2024. During the evaluation work, initiated at the request of the programme authorities, CESCI examined the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the programme over its entire seven-year period. In addition to document analysis and the processing of data from the monitoring system, we also conducted document-based research, GIS-based spatial analysis, interviews and an online survey during the course of the work, thus giving programme bodies, beneficiaries and applicants the opportunity to share their experiences and comments. The evaluation was completed in July

2025, followed by a consultation process with the programme bodies in the second half of the year, which concluded in December 2025.

Preparations for cooperation programmes beyond 2027

In 2025, preparations began for the new programmes post-2027 in collaboration with the Managing Authority and the bodies responsible for the relevant programmes (the Slovakia–Hungary INTERREG Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, the Hungary–Croatia INTERREG Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Programme), which primarily involved outlining the content of the territorial analyses and conducting a preliminary assessment of the alignment of the concepts with sectoral policies. We endeavoured to participate in all international policy events and consultation fora aimed at shaping European territorial cooperation and defining its objectives. These included the meetings of the Cross-Border Cooperation Intergroup operating within the Committee of the Regions, the Interreg conference in Gorizia, the annual event of the European Cross-Border Platform, also in Gorizia, and the ArtCo conference in Budapest. Through the mobilisation of our international networks, we lobbied to keep Interreg alive and channelled our professional input into the development of the regulatory framework at every possible forum.

Supporting the implementation of the Hungarian-Slovenian economic and development programme

In 2022, the Hungarian and Slovenian Prime Ministers signed an intergovernmental agreement designed to support the economic and social development of the border region, which is inhabited by a mix of nationalities, over a five-year period. In 2025, our association provided professional advisory support to MURABA EGTC for project development work launched on the basis of the previously prepared foundational documentation,in ongoing consultation with the relevant State Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. CESCI also contributed to the technical preparation of a potential second call for proposals and the review of the regulations. On 8–9 September 2025, the Szentgotthárd/Monošter Forum—launched in 2015 by CESCI and the ambassadors of the two countries—was held, with our association once again playing a leading role in its professional and technical preparation, co-financing and on-site organisation. During the forum, alongside the projects that received funding under the programme and the programme's future, the objective of establishing a Hungarian-Slovenian cross-border regional brand and local product network also featured prominently.

Tourism Action Plans

In early 2025, we devoted significant resources to finalising the tourism action plans of five EGTCs operating along the Hungarian-Slovak border. The Monitoring Committee of the Interreg VI-A Hungary-Slovakia Programme issued a call for proposals to implement action plans supporting cross-border tourism integration, partly based on the methodology previously developed by CESCI. Our association supported the joint work of the Arrabona EGTC, the Pons-Danubii EGTC, the Via Carpatia EGTC, and the Ister-Granum and Pontibus EGTCs through project development workshops, partner consultations, statistical analyses, the preparation of diagrams, and the development of

action plan concepts. The implementation of the action plans, comprising complex project packages, began at the end of the year: under the four action plans we supported, dozens of investments are being realised in the Hungarian-Slovak border region, and work is beginning on the creation of integrated cross-border tourist destinations.

BOTILA EGTC development strategy

In the autumn of 2025, the newly established BOTILA EGTC began its strategic planning work, during which we started building the databases required for the relevant planning, analysing documents, systematically compiling relevant development concepts, and, alongside numerous consultations, we also carried out extensive fieldwork, during which our planning team visited all sites in Bodrogköz/Medzibodrožie with development potential and organised dozens of workshops with the active involvement of relevant stakeholders in the region. The defined objectives of BOTILA EGTC clearly outline the main directions of strategic planning: strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the border region; the coordinated development of infrastructure; the promotion of joint spatial planning and energy developments; the establishment of tourism destination management based on local values and appropriate in scale; and the strengthening of a shared identity and communication with the local population. The planning work is an activity extending into 2026.

Békés County active tourism project

In 2025, under the leadership of the Békés County Council, the project proposal entitled "Around the Körös in Békés" was completed, aiming at the coordinated, networked development of water-based, cycling and walking tourism, particularly in the areas of the Körös Rivers, the Élővíz Canal and the Hortobágy–Berettyó region. In developing the project, CESCI contributed primarily through geoinformatics activities, the collation of data and its organisation into a unified system, as well as the preparation of related cartographic materials.

CROSUSMOB

As a commissioned expert, CESCI had the opportunity to participate in the CROSUSMOB project, implemented under the Interreg Europe Programme. The primary aim of the project is to promote regional, cross-border, sustainable mobility, to remove existing legal, administrative and technical barriers, and to increase the attractiveness of public transport through the harmonisation of timetables, fares and infrastructure. Seven partners from six EU countries are participating in the project, including our client from Hungary, the Institute for Transport Sciences and Quality Control in Building (KTI).

CESCI, working closely with the client, has produced a study of over a hundred pages that identifies the factors influencing cross-border public transport in the border region between Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County in Hungary and Satu Mare County in Romania, as well as the associated spatial mobility and travel habits; furthermore, building on these mobility needs, it formulates policy recommendations for the development of cross-border public transport links (new bus services, rail links), particularly in light of the opening of the Schengen border and the review of Hungary's

National Transport Infrastructure Development Strategy. As part of the project's third expert meeting, held in Hungary on 5 December 2025 in Mátészalka, the Senior Analyst of CESCI, Roland Hesz presented the study's methodology, its main findings and the relevant package of policy recommendations in a lecture.

Professional networks dealing with cross-border planning

In 2025, we continued our cooperation with several professional networks dealing with cross-border planning and governance. Represented by Director Mátyás Jaschitz, we participated in three online meetings and two internal meetings of the AESOP's (Association of European Schools of Planning) thematic group on cross-border planning and governance, as well as in the professional workshop entitled "Inclusive and Cohesive Urban Development in European Cities – European Reflections and Lessons for Post-War Urban Planning".

Our director also represented our association at the annual workshop of TG-WeB, which serves as a knowledge platform for regional development in the Balkans.

Institutional Development

Our association's main mission is to support the establishment and consolidation of cross-border relations in the Central European region. To this end, we facilitate networking and the creation and strengthening of institutional cooperation.

Professional support for the establishment of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs)

In 2025, we provided legal and professional advice for the establishment of three new EGTCs.

In connection with the establishment of the Bodrog - Tisza - Latorca (BOTILA) EGTC, CESCI coordinated the entire legal process (preparation of the agreement and statutes, consultation with the Slovak authorities, official approval and registration).

As part of the #ACCESS project, we provided ongoing legal and technical support to the founding organisations (Fiľakovo, Salgótarján, Bükki National Park Directorate) to facilitate the establishment of the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark. CESCI drafted the statutes and agreement of the Neograd Geopark EGTC, liaised with the Slovak authorities regarding any outstanding issues, and coordinated the approval process.

Our association assisted in the establishment of the planned Hungarian-Romanian Decapolis EGTC, based in Gyula, by reviewing the statutes and agreement, preparing an analysis of operating costs, and coordinating translation and consultation tasks with the approving authorities.

During the year, the process of establishing the Euro-Contrôle Route EGTC, set up with the participation of the national transport inspectorates of seven countries, was successfully completed from an administrative perspective. The establishment process lasting over a period of 10 years, represented the greatest institutional development challenge to date for CESCI.

Professional support for the operation of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation

We carried out our comprehensive assistance for EGTCs with Hungarian membership in close cooperation with the relevant department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and we continued to coordinate the necessary activities through regular joint consultations in 2025.

Providing legal and professional advice on EGTCs has been one of our core tasks for many years. In 2025, our legal staff again received a number of legal queries and requests of varying scope, which in several cases required in-depth research. At the request of the relevant department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and to facilitate compliance with legislation, we drew up a self-assessment checklist and distributed it to associations with Hungarian participation.

As in previous years, in 2025 we also provided support to several EGTCs (Arrabona, BTC, BOTILA, Ipoly Valley, Ister-Granum, Mura Region, MURABA, Pons Danubii, Pontibus, Tisza, Via Carpatia), providing various forms of professional assistance not eligible in other sources, creating thematic maps and offering expert advice on project development. We shared our translation capacity and interpreting tools with the EGTCs upon their request. On several occasions, we participated as speakers at the professional events of individual EGTCs. We edited the publication marking the 10th anniversary of the Tisza EGTC and also produced the English version. The Secretary-General also gave a speech at the EGTC's anniversary celebration. We organised a professional study trip to the Danube Bend and the Ister-Granum EGTC region for the Arrabona EGTC.

Through active professional coordination, our participation and support in terms of content, we contributed to the successful implementation of the EGTC workshops, which help with capacity building and the exchange of experiences among associations with Hungarian participation.

The first EGTC workshop of the year took place on 9 April 2025 in Budapest, focusing on strengthening access to direct EU funding (including LIFE, URBACT, EUI, Erasmus+, CERV, Digital Europe) and coordinating development plans for the EGTCs. Mónika Simon, CESCI's project manager, provided an overview of the Interreg calls for proposals relevant to EGTCs that are still expected during the current programming period. Mátyás Jaschitz, Director of CESCI, led a discussion on the EGTCs' development plans and grant application strategies as part of a moderated workshop session. In relation to the operational block, Kitti Dubniczki, Director of CESCI, presented the main elements of the self-assessment guide supporting the proper functioning of EGTCs.

The second workshop took place on 29 September 2025, also in Budapest, and, as a meeting between Iberian and Hungarian EGTCs, it also facilitatedinternational networking. At the workshop, five Iberian and six Hungarian EGTCs presented their activity portfolios in detail.

The third EGTC workshop of the year took place on 4–5 November 2025 in Villánykövesd, hosted by the Pannon EGTC. The workshop's professional focus addressed both strategic issues (with particular regard to the lessons learned from third-country membership and related initiatives) and operational cooperation. On behalf of CESCI, Kitti Dubniczki and Mátyás Jaschitz, directors of CESCI, facilitated a joint review during a moderated discussion of the scope for action available to EGTCs in development areas where national authorities have primary jurisdiction, and how these experiences can be turned into advantages for project development and partnership building.

Support for the governance of the Bratislava cross-border metropolitan area

As part of the Resilient Borders programme, Bratislava City Council and Győr-Moson-Sopron County Council have successfully applied for funding with a project aimed at establishing a tripartite governance framework for the metropolitan area. The idea for the application came from the #ACCESS project: it was during a workshop in Rajka that the need arose to critically examine the working community currently being established in the Slovak-Austrian context, and to involve the Hungarian partner in the former Slovak-Austrian BAUM (Bratislava Umland Management) cooperation.

CESCI provided comprehensive professional support for the project by compiling the implementation work plan and background materials, organising and documenting the five professional workshops, and drawing up an action plan summarising the potential sectors and institutional solutions for Slovak-Austrian-Hungarian cooperation. The project, the results of which were presented on 26 September in Győr, enables the Hungarian county council (for the time being as an observer, but with the hope of full membership in the future) to participate in the work of the steering committee of the working community.

Enhancing flood and drought resilience along the Drava River

Also within the framework of the Resilient Borders programme managed by the AEBR and MOT, the Pannon EGTC received funding to prepare the Drava River Basin Water Management Action Plan, a task for which the association also commissioned CESCI. As part of the project, we took part in a total of six technical workshops, conducted interviews with Hungarian and Croatian water management experts, and summarised the results in an action plan.

The draft is intended to facilitate the further development of existing cross-border water governance frameworks in order to effectively manage emergencies arising from climate change. The proposed actions will strengthen the cooperation between the Hungarian and Croatian water management and disaster management authorities. The project concluded on 22 September as part of a climate adaptation conference.

Dissemination activities related to institutional development

Since its foundation, our association has provided a continuous information service on the activities of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), with the EGTC Monitor – an information platform developed and operated by CESCI – playing a central role. The platform provides access to all key information regarding Hungarian EGTCs and the legal and policy framework governing their operation, in both Hungarian and English. We are able to keep the platform's content up to date through continuous development work, and we are constantly expanding and improving the monitor database. Over the course of the year, we kept the interactive map illustrating Hungarian EGTCs up to date, and published more than 79 news items on the activities of EGTCs.

Building on the findings of the monitor, we provided database-building support to the relevant department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to facilitate the easier and more systematic collection and organisation of information relating to the EGTCs.

Policy-making

Participation in EU-level professional discourse

In 2025, CESCI continued to play an active role in the EU discourse on the removal of cross-border legal barriers, institutionalised cross-border cooperation, and the rules and models for financing cross-border development. We regularly attended relevant EU professional events, in most cases as speakers. Furthermore, we regarded the achievement of these objectives as a priority in the implementation of our international projects.

We prepared expert comments on draft legislation, policy documents and new instruments. EU-level networking and support for the EGTC policy play a key role in our activities. We paid particular attention to influencing the policy discourse on the future of Interreg. We supported the work of the Border Focal Points network.

The European Cross-Border Platform (ECBP)

The meeting of the Iberian EGTCs, held in Vigo on 3–4 June 2025, focused on strengthening the EGTCs' advocacy at EU level, the future of cohesion policy, and new tools for addressing cross-border legal and administrative barriers. Gyula Ocskay, Secretary-General of our association, took part in the event as a guest speaker. One of the key outcomes of the forum, organised by Galician and northern Portuguese organisers, was the adoption of a joint declaration calling for more autonomous representation of EGTCs at European level, the strengthening of information exchange, the expansion of project development capacities, and the establishment of coordination mechanisms linked to the BRIDGEforEU Regulation.

The declaration served as a catalyst during the organisation of the European Cross-Border Platform (ECBP) annual event. Established by the European Committee of the Regions, the ECBP is intended to succeed the EGTC Platform and serve as a forum for the exchange of professional experience and the representation of the interests of organisations involved in cross-border cooperation. CESCI participates in its work as a member of the steering committee, alongside MOT and AEBR. The 2025 event took place in Gorizia on 13–14 November, coordinated by Pavel Branda, Chair of the ECBP steering committee. The panel discussions on the first day addressed the future of European cross-border cooperation, the Resilient Borders programme managed by the AEBR and the MOT, and the European Union's enlargement towards the Balkans. The second day focused on the added value of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation as a governance tool. In the first panel, representatives of successful EGTCs presented good examples of the application of this institutional solution. The roundtable discussion in the second panel helped to take stock of the benefits of EGTCs. At the same time, the speakers also drew attention to a number of shortcomings, partly building on the experiences of the Vigo workshop. Among these, the platform took up one issue – the proposal made by Xavier Connill, director of the Cerdanya Hospital EGTC, regarding the special EU status of cross-border workers – and undertook to set up a working group to develop the initiative.

Mandates from the European Commission

A sign of CESCI's international recognition is that in 2025, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy entrusted our association with two professional tasks.

Organising a professional roundtable at the ABS conference in Seattle

From 2 to 5 April 2025, Seattle hosted the annual conference of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS), the central theme of which was the reinterpretation of cross-border governance. CESCI also contributed to the organisation of the event by organising the roundtable entitled "Models of Cross-Border Governance", which took place on 3 April. The discussion was chaired by Ricardo Ferreira, Border Focal Point Coordinator at the European Commission's DG REGIO, and participants included renowned North American and European researchers such as Laurie Trautman, Francisco Lara-Valencia, James Gerber and Christophe Sohn. The panel's technical framework was provided by a background paper prepared in collaboration between the European Commission and CESCI, which reviewed European tools and institutional models for cross-border governance, with a particular focus on Interreg programmes, EGTCs, the b-solutions initiative, the BRIDGEforEU Regulation, and new opportunities for addressing legal and administrative barriers. In addition to drafting the background document, our association invited and coordinated the work of the panel participants, and organised the travel arrangements for the Commission official.

Development of the visual identity elements of the BRIDGEforEU Regulation

In 2025, a significant step forward was taken in EU legislation addressing cross-border legal and administrative barriers: thanks to the coordination efforts of the Hungarian EU Presidency, the BRIDGEforEU Regulation on the Border Regions' Instrument for Development and Growth, was adopted. The aim of the regulation is to provide a stable institutional and procedural framework for identifying and addressing legal barriers hindering the development of border regions, with the help of cross-border coordination points (CBCPs) to be established voluntarily by Member States.

On behalf of the European Commission, our team developed the visual content to help promote the new instrument across the EU: infographics, presentation materials and other illustrative tools.

Participation in the debate on the future of Interreg

The future of the Interreg programmes became decidedly uncertain at the end of the previous programming cycle. Therefore, our association, together with its international partners, made significant efforts to contribute to shaping the policy environment. We promoted the policy document developed within the framework of TEIN by the end of 2024 ("The costs of non-Interreg") at relevant events and also shared it with representatives of the relevant Hungarian authorities.

The European Commission held a wrap-up event for the consultation process on the future of Interreg on 27–28 March. During the consultation, more than 15,000 people completed the questionnaire, including CESCI. At the event, in addition to presenting the results, the speakers also discussed the expected new rules for Interreg programmes, highlighting the aspects of performance evaluation and flexibility.

The third Art of Cooperation conference was held in Budapest on 2–3 December 2025, organised by the Széchenyi Programme Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The central theme of the event, which brought together more than 150 participants, including representatives of the national authorities of 15 Member States and 18 Interreg programmes, was the future of Interreg programmes beyond 2027. The technical programme examined regulatory changes related to the forthcoming multiannual financial framework, the expected impacts of the performance-based approach, and the relationship between the Interreg and BRIDGEforEU regulations. On behalf of CESCI, Secretary-General Gyula Ocskay took part in a workshop discussion on the removal of cross-border legal and administrative barriers, where he shared the experiences of the #ACCESS project with the participants.

Participation in the ESPON programme

The CROSSGOV project

A milestone in CESCI's history was its successful and fruitful participation in the CROSSGOV project in 2025, which was the first ESPON project in which CESCI played a role as a member of the professional consortium. Implemented between July 2024 and January 2026 with a total budget of €725,130, the project examined the governance mechanisms of cross-border functional urban areas, with the aim of developing a new analytical approach, a database, an atlas and policy recommendations. CESCI was also involved in the collection of indicators, and we coordinated the case study work package. As part of this, in addition to writing the case study focusing on the Komárom-Komárno cross-border twincity area, we carried out the mapping of the selected indicators in its entirety, produced a total of 57 maps, and coordinated the work on further 9 case studies.

Participation in the ESPON programme's professional events

In 2025, CESCI played an active role in several ESPON-related professional forums and projects, thereby strengthening the organisation's integration into European spatial research and policy-making. An important milestone in this regard was the two-day seminar entitled 'Exaptive Resilience in Border Regions', held in Gdańsk on 25–26 June 2025, which was organised jointly by ESPON EGTC and the Polish EU Presidency. CESCI was represented at the event by Directors Kitti Dubniczki and Mátyás Jaschitz. The professional programme focused on how border regions can manage the challenges arising from the geopolitical, socio-economic and climate crises by repurposing their existing resources, competencies and previous investments.

The workshop discussion held in Budapest on 7 October 2025, entitled 'Challenges in public service organisation in external and internal peripheral regions – ESPON results from a Hungarian perspective', also served to embed the ESPON findings within the domestic professional context. The event was linked to the ESPON DESIRE research project commissioned by the 2024 Hungarian EU Presidency, and examined how public services can be ensured in underdeveloped regions and those with specific needs. On behalf of CESCI, Director, Mátyás Jaschitz gave a presentation on the characteristics of cross-border functional urban areas, drawing on the ESPON CROSSGOV case studies, whilst Secretary-General, Gyula Ocskay outlined the challenges of organising public services in border regions based on the experiences of the #ACCESS project.

At the seminar entitled 'Making Space for the Renewable Energy Transition, held in Aalborg on 19–20 November 2025, the organisation was represented by Director, Mátyás Jaschitz and Senior Analyst, Roland Hesz. In line with the priorities of the Danish Presidency, the seminar explored the territorial aspects of the renewable energy transition, with particular regard to how the energy transition can be reconciled with land-use, social and planning considerations. On the second day of the programme, Mátyás Jaschitz also took part as a speaker in the parallel session entitled 'Across Borders: New Evidence for Territorial Cooperation', where he outlined experiences related to the CROSSGOV project, highlighting the role of CESCI.

Online map of Schengen cross-border regions

The Schengen Borders Code was amended in 2024. Under the provisions of the new Code, each Member State within the zone was required to designate, within six months, those cross-border regions in which, in the event of a border closure, special arrangements would be made for the movement of workers deemed essential. Using the regional list compiled by the end of 2024, and in cooperation with the AEBR and MOT, we have produced an online map covering the entire Schengen area. As we identified numerous gaps in the list whilst creating the map, we contacted DG HOME, who forwarded the list of gaps to the Member States. We are continuously updating the map database based on the feedback received.

Data management and data-driven governance

As a continuation of our work in recent years, we continued to place particular emphasis on tasks related to data management and data-driven governance in 2025. One important international framework for this activity was the Cross-Border Monitoring Network, whose annual meeting took place in a hybrid format in Brussels on 30–31 January 2025. CESCI was represented online by Director, Mátyás Jaschitz and Senior GIS Expert, Viktória Jánosi. The technical programme covered developments relating to the ACROSS portal, which provides a comprehensive overview of cross-border initiatives, cross-border data platforms, as well as data harmonisation and visualisation.

As part of our network activities, in 2025 we also actively participated in the technical processes of the 'Study on Cross-Border Data Collection' project, commissioned by DG REGIO and supported by Eurostat. CESCI was officially represented by Director, Mátyás Jaschitz on the project's advisory board, which aims to improve the collection and interpretation of cross-border commuting data at EU level, whilst CESCI contributed its own cross-border experience and professional insights to the methodological recommendations being developed. We took part in the first online workshop on 18 March 2025, as well as in the online advisory board meetings held on 25 March and 23 June.

From 2025, we also joined the work of Eurostat's Cross-border cities and FUAs working group, where, alongside issues relating to the delineation of functional urban areas, particular emphasis was placed on the methodology for collecting commuting data and learning about international best practices. Viktória Jánosi represents our association within the network.

The workshop entitled "Measuring cross-border flows within the European Union", organised by the European Union's Joint Research Centre (JRC), took place on 15–16 May 2025 in Ispra, Italy, where CESCI was represented by Viktória Jánosi, a senior GIS expert, who gave a presentation on data sources and challenges relating to cross-border flows in Central Europe.

The annual conference of the European Forum on Geography and Statistics (EFGS) was held in Oslo from 23 to 25 September 2025. CESCI was represented there by GIS experts, Viktória Jánosi and Csaba Siki, who gave a presentation entitled 'The critical role of data in cross-border cooperation'.

On 27–28 November 2025 in Brussels, at a meeting organised by the JRC for cross-border regional observatories, Viktória Jánosi also presented CESCI's ideas on the management and long-term sustainability of cross-border monitoring, with particular regard to interoperability, data exchange and the practical conditions for visualisation.

In addition to external professional links, we also focused on strengthening our internal data capabilities: we purchased data from the statistical offices of Hungary and certain neighbouring countries, which enabled us to build detailed databases that substantially support the soundness and quality of our professional analyses. In parallel with this, our GIS experts regularly took part in free online training courses provided by Esri, one of the world's leading suppliers of geographic information system software, through which they continuously expanded their knowledge of software use and familiarised themselves with the latest developments, including online mapping and visualisation solutions. We also maintained our professional expertise by attending the GDi Solutions Day conference in Budapest on 1 October 2025, where Csaba Siki was able to learn first-hand about the latest technological innovations related to the Esri ecosystem.

Cross-border healthcare cooperation

Cross-border healthcare cooperation has become a key focus for CESCI in recent years. We continued to play an active role in the work of the EUREGHA network, which supports initiatives in this field, in 2025 as well. Dr Katalin Fekete, legal advisor, represented our association at the network's annual general meeting held in Cardiff and at the three-day professional programme of the 'Regional Health Cooperation Week'. Dr Melinda Istenes-Benczi, international coordinator, attended the EUREGHA annual conference in Brussels on 2 December. We are also active members of the network's working groups on cross-border health cooperation and health data management: we took part in three online meetings of each working group, put forward professional initiatives, and contributed to shaping the content of the network's policy statements.

On 5 February 2025 in Oradea, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health (DG SANTÉ), in cooperation with the Romanian and Hungarian national contact points, organised a workshop in Oradea to promote the EU directive regulating patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, at which CESCI was represented by Gyula Ocskay as a speaker.

CESCI's role in shaping cross-border cooperation in Central Europe

The BorderLabs CE transnational project

The BorderLabs CE project is being implemented under the Interreg Central Europe transnational programme, and its aim is to reduce the separating effects of Central European borders by testing best practices and solutions that support this. Within the consortium led by the Saxon State Government, our association performs professional coordination and communication tasks.

As part of our professional tasks, we conducted a questionnaire-based survey among key stakeholders in the Central European region regarding their expectations concerning integration.We carried out a mid-term evaluation of the five pilot projectsand we prepared the technical aspects of, and coordinated with the lead partner, the thematic workshops in Dresden, Gorizia and Wrocław. These workshops explored the project's three main themes -cross-border planning, cross-border participatory governance, and addressing legal barriers- with the involvement of external experts.

As part of our communication work, we edited the project newsletters, provided content for the Facebook and LinkedIn pages, and also contributed to the preparation of materials for the partner presentation on the Futurium platform. In addition, we provided professional supervision for the production of the project's animations and videos: we revised the scripts and narrations, and coordinated the visual concept and cutaway shots. In 2025, a total of 6 longer, 15 shorter video films and 3 animated films were produced about the project and the individual pilots.

Our policy contribution to the Danube Strategy

CESCI (as a supporter of cross-border regional cooperation) has been involved in professional activities related to the Danube Strategy from the outset, primarily within Priority Area 10 (PA10), as well as on an ad hoc basis as an invited participant in the national inter-ministerial working group coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We completed the questionnaire relating to the development of D-LAP, which is coordinated by PA10 and aims to strengthen cooperation among civil society organisations.

Among the events in 2025, the EUSDR Annual Forum, which took place from 3 to 5 November, stands out, where we represented CESCI in Sarajevo. In early October, we took part in the event entitled 'The Future of the Business Sector in the Danube Region'.

Promoting cross-border cooperation in Ukraine

In 2025, CESCI participated as a partner in the project "Cross-border cooperation in Ukraine and the V4: In the search for examples of best practice", initiated by our board member, Professor Myroslava Lendel (Uzhhorod National University), and implemented with the support of the International Visegrad Fund. The aim of the project was to identify and systematise institutional models and everyday cooperation practices in the V4 countries and Ukraine that could be utilised in Ukraine's preparations for European integration.

In February, an expert workshop was held to clarify the methodological framework and research priorities; in the spring, a questionnaire survey was conducted on the cross-border cooperation experiences of the V4 countries and Ukraine, followed by the third expert seminar held in Uzhhorod on 19–20 June, at which CESCI was represented by Gyula Ocskay and Dr Melinda Istenes-Benczi. The project was implemented with the active professional support of our team and will continue into 2026.

CESCI's policy activities along the Hungarian borders

#ACCESS

With the support of the Hungarian-Slovak Interreg programme, CESCI Budapest and CESCI Carpathia jointly began implementing a strategic project in 2023, under which we will systematically collect legal barriers hindering cross-border integration and mobility until 2029, and make proposals to eliminate them.

The second round of reference group meetings targeting border city regions concluded in 2025, resulting in new collaborations and pilot projects in areas including cross-border healthcare, biological waste management, transport and cross-border territorial governance. A report summarising the work of the reference groups has been completed, and through the Help Desk service we continued to provide expert support on newly reported issues, such as the labour market, heritage protection, the digitisation of archival materials, and the availability of the Hungarian online educational KRÉTA platform in Slovakia. In addition, the project partners expanded the database of barriers and solutions with 41 new case studies of good practice.

We have also succeeded in promoting the removal of barriers in several areas. In the field of emergency healthcare cooperation, expert consultations organised by the partners have helped the Hungarian and Slovak sides to prepare the text of a bilateral agreement, which is expected to be adopted in 2026. In the field of patient care, we developed project proposals to assist with the testing of patient pathways for two hospital partnerships. Progress has been made in preparing for the establishment of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation aimed at facilitating the joint management of the Novohrad-Nógrád Geopark, in exploring the regulatory environment for the cross-border sale of local products, in harmonising the training requirements for water tour guides, and compiling archaeological and heritage protection regulations. In the field of environmental protection, the partners have addressed the management of invasive species and the possibilities for regulatory harmonisation.

We report regularly on the results at the meetings of the programme's monitoring committee.

B-Solutions analyses

The s-Solutions initiative was launched in 2019 by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) with the support of the European Commission. Thanks to this support, stakeholders in border regions can, with the involvement of AEBR experts, identify legal barriers and propose solutions to remove them. Thanks to the AEBR's accreditation system, our association's legal experts have analysed more than a dozen of such barriers and solutions in recent years. We also worked on several cases in 2025.

In 2025, as part of the b-solutions project linked to the Mura Region EGTC, CESCI's task was to examine the legal framework for the installation and operation of planned hydro turbines on the Mura River. As part of this, we reviewed the Hungarian and Croatian regulatory environments, contacted the relevant authorities and industry stakeholders, and held consultations on the Hungarian licensing and nature conservation requirements. During the course of the work, it became clear that the most important outstanding issue was the legal classification of the water turbine under Hungarian law and the clarification of the associated licensing procedure; therefore, we refined the

technical scope of the project accordingly and worked out the procedural path on the Hungarian side in detail.

At the request of Pannon EGTC, we also worked on two topics within the framework of b-solutions. In the project aimed at helping local producers access the market, CESCI carried out an analysis of the Hungarian regulatory environment: we reviewed the licensing, taxation and food safety requirements relating to cross-border sales, and contributed to the preparation of practical recommendations aimed at simplifying market participation for small-scale producers in the Hungarian-Slovenian border region. In parallel, we also prepared a technical review of the new b-solutions case concerning Hungarian-Croatian energy communities, the aim of which is to identify the legal and administrative barriers to cross-border community energy solutions.

With regard to the Banat–Triplex Confinium EGTC, in 2025 CESCI supported the technical preparation and launch of a pilot project aimed at addressing the obstacles to Serbian local authorities' participation in the EGTC. By organising the event in Subotica, we contributed to enabling Hungarian and Serbian local authorities, institutions and professional stakeholders to jointly analyse the current legal constraints and to begin drafting background materials and coordination proposals that could lay the foundations for the full institutional participation of Serbian stakeholders in European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation. We are implementing the project in cooperation with CESCI Balkans.

Participation in the training of experts in cross-border development

In 2025, the study trip to Brussels for Pálfi scholarship holders was organised by CESCI, with the support of Edutus University and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. As part of the programme, which took place from 24 to 27 June 2025, the scholarship winners visited the European Parliament and the Museum of European History, and met with representatives of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), as well as experts from the Permanent Representation of Hungary and the Committee of the Regions.

At the closing event of the Pálfi Scholarship on 30 June, Gyula Ocskay, Secretary-General of CESCI, gave a presentation.

Basic data required for defining the public benefit status

1) Contribution to meeting the common needs of society and the individual

Based on the data relating to the target group in the public benefit annex for 2025, the organisation's services are accessible to persons other than the organisation's board members, employees and volunteers.

2) Availability of sufficient resources for the previous two completed financial years (2024, 2025)

Of the alternative conditions, the following have been met:

- average annual revenue exceeds HUF 1 million (actually in 2024–2025: HUF 329,635,000 thousands)
- the combined taxable profit for the two years (profit for the current year) is not negative: HUF 100,618,000
- personnel-related expenditures (costs) – excluding remuneration of senior executives – amount to one-quarter of total expenditures (72.62% in 2024–2025)

3) Demonstration of adequate social support in relation to the previous two completed financial years

Of the alternative conditions, the following has been met:

b) costs and expenditures incurred in the pursuit of public benefit activities amount to half of total expenditure on average over the two years. (actually 92.37% in 2024–2025)

Statement of benefits provided for specific purposes

Benefits provided to senior officers

In 2025, the association provided a benefit of HUF 600,000 to Dr Zsuzsanna Fejes, the chairperson, in the form of a chairperson's honorarium.

Statement of assets used for public benefit activities

Value of equity: HUF 171,565,000 **Purpose of use: public benefit activities**

Indicators of resource availability and social support

Resource availability indicators	Compliance	Value
Ectv.32.par.(4) a) (B1+B2)/2>1,000,000 HUF	Yes	329,635,000 HUF
Ectv. 32(4)(b) K1+K2 ≥ 0	Yes	100,618,000 HUF
Ectv. 32(4)(c) (I1+I2-A1-A2)/(H1+H2) ≥ 0.25	Yes	0.7262

Social provision indicators	Compliance	Value
Section 32(5)(a) of the Act (C1+C2)/(G1+G2) ≥ 0.02	No	0.00
Section 32(5)(b) of the Act (J1+J2)/(H1+H2) ≥ 0.5	Yes	0.9237
Ectv. 32(5)(c) (L1+L2)/2 ≥ 10 persons	No	0 persons

Basic data required for the determination of public benefit status

Category	Previous year	Current year
B. Total annual revenue	HUF 315,131 thousand	HUF 344,138 thousand
D. Public service revenue	HUF 299,690 thousand	HUF 308,619 thousand
E. Normative funding	HUF 0 thousand	HUF 0 thousand
F. EU Structural Funds / Cohesion Fund support	HUF 0 thousand	HUF 0 thousand
G. Adjusted turnover	HUF 0 thousand	HUF 0 thousand
H. Total expenditures	HUF 259,224 thousand	HUF 298,671 thousand
I. Personnel-related expenses	HUF 187,169 thousand	HUF 217,953 thousand
J. Public benefit activity expenditures	HUF 246,522 thousand	HUF 268,804 thousand
K. Profit after tax	—	—

L. Number of persons performing voluntary activities in the public interest contributing to the organisation's work (in accordance with Act LXXXVIII of 2005 on Public Benefit Voluntary activities) (persons)

0 persons 0 persons

Personnel-related expenditures

	1,000 HUF	Previous year	Adjustment to previous year	Current year
A.	**Personnel-related expenditures**	**187,169**	**0**	**217,953**
A.1.	**Wage costs**	**151,846**	**0**	**179,132**
A. 1 .A.	of wage costs: commission fees	1,250	0	9,970
A. 1 .B.	of wage costs: honoraria	480	0	1,100
A.2.	**Other personnel-related payments**	**13,789**	**0**	**15,760**
A.3.	**Social security contributions**	**21,534**	**0**	**23,061**
B.	**Benefits provided by the organisation**	**0**	**0**	**0**