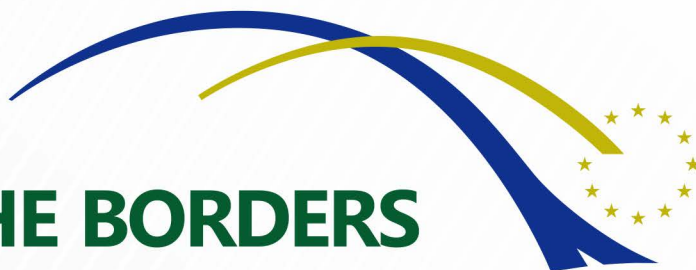


Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives
European Institute of Cross-Border Studies



CROSSING THE BORDERS

Studies on cross-border cooperation within the Danube Region

Case Study
of the Órség-Goričko cooperation

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1. Introduction

We are living in a time of co-operation and co-dependence. Thus it is worth discussing the significance of the co-operation between Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park. The Central-European small and medium-sized countries are essentially transit countries with a linking role, as well as borderline countries, thus borders have a huge impact on the majority of their area, so on Hungary and Slovenia as well (Hajdú Z. 2000, Bufon, M. 1996, 2004). Both the Slovenian and Hungarian geography emphasise that the region lies in the junction of cultural regions, macro regions and biogeographic units, and its border feature is highly important (Orožen Adamič, M. 2004, Perko, D. 2004). One pivotal statement of the Hungarian geography is that in the respect of ethnics, society, economy and traffic, borders break spatial continuity, hinder smooth relationships and flows. (Nárai–Rechnitzer 1999). Milan Bufon (2004), Slovenian geographer concludes that the Slovenian borderline regions are like a "European integration laboratory". Regarding the co-operation, at a macro regional level, it must be emphasised that in general, among the ever-narrowing border lines ranging from North - North-West to South - South-West, the borderline of the studied region represents one of the peripheral open types of the Danube River Basin.

From a historical aspect in the two decades following the demolition of the Iron Curtain, a basically landscape-based integration took place in the border region, which deserves a case study to be presented. Moreover, the developments in regional cohesion, aiming at nature and environmental protection of the National Park and the Landscape Park as outstanding actors, are in harmony with the guidelines due to the cohesion policy of the EU, which referred to the spatial perspective exceeding the administrative borders (i.e. European Spatial Development Perspective, Territorial Agenda). The significance of the co-operation lies in that it gives an example to the cohesion-based mutual co-ordination and management initiatives.

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that the success of the borderline co-operation between Órség National Park and Goričko not only has a great influence on the common future of the Slovenian-Hungarian borderline areas and population, but also on that of the whole macro-region and of the European ecological networks. Beside the mutual care for cross-border landscape, this co-operation also bears great significance. Due to the small area of the countries and the dense network of borders (many times breaking the landscape) it is hardly possible to launch large-scale programmes within one country without having cross-border impacts on the neighbouring countries (Illés I. 2002).

It is not possible to examine the development of the Danube-region areas including only the local framework (social, economic, planning etc.). The function of the borders of Central-Europe, including that of Hungary and Slovenia, is in perpetual change, as well as the border regions themselves. The dissolution of borders offers many a great opportunity, meanwhile creating new problematic areas. The need to treat these with a combined, integrated strategic

approach, enhances the territorial development role of cross-border co-operations, meaning the best practice, of Goričko and Órség.

The interoperability and openness of the common border region of Hungary and Slovenia were influenced, on one hand, by the system changes in the region and by the European integration, on the other. The enmity and distrust following World War I, were not in favour of cross-border co-operations and relationships (Tóth J. – Golobics P. 1996, Golobics P. – Tóth J. 1999, Rechnitzer J. 1999). After World War II, both countries became part of the Soviet alliance of interests, however, the Cominform¹ condemned Yugoslavia in 1948 (due to its independent geopolitical endeavours), which was an indisputable step to a break-up, and with this step the building of the Iron Curtain begun. The present Slovenian-Hungarian borderline became even more closed than in the interwar period, mainly in the first half of the socialist regime.² The Slovenian border was closed with barbed wire fences and special missile attack warning system. The Iron Curtain initially consisted of wire obstacles, mine fields, roadways and checkpoints inside the countries. The roadway followed the mine field, which was installed in the wire obstacles, that is, barbed wires braced to 150 cm tall dual-lined wood poles. From the borderline the 50-500 m wide lane was the border lane and the 15 km area was the "borderzone". In one of these only with a certain permit was it possible to reside and build. Only in harmony with the 1955 Soviet-Yugoslavian reconciliation, in 1956 mines and wire obstacles were removed. From the beginning of the 70s did the border's hermetically sealed character mitigate; this was the period of "gentle Iron Curtain", during which a low-voltage wire fence substituted the existing complex technical blockade. At the system change on 1 August 1989, this method of border control finally ceased to exist on the examined border section.

In the period of the closed, strongly restrictive Iron Curtain, the border was perceivable through its peripheral process enhancing impact. Due to this, the borderline area drifted to a peripheral situation in a social, economic and political way. The defensive political will prevented and slowed the development of border regions. It was excluded from the preferences of the national regional policy, it did not appear as beneficiary area. The lack of investments started an autocatalytic process: with the borders getting more closed the attraction zones became more truncated, the border control limited the free movement of the population and goods, thus the general development and standards of living declined. Consequently, the border region making up the geographical periphery is more and more becoming a peripheral region in the economic sense and in the sense of power. The deficiency in funds and the low purchasing power increased the isolation of the border because local actors did not have

¹ Communist Information Bureau

² On the 621 km long border section between 1920 and 1941, between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Hungary there were 26 border stations out of which only 6-7 remained until the beginning of the socialist period. Their traffic was minimal. In 1961 on the Hungarian side all in all 5350 border crossings were registered: the gap compared even to Austria was obtrusive. (Bottini, S. 2010)

resources efficient enough to cross the border. The control of the power centre hindered the autonomy of local actors, the development of sub-centres and regional centres, that is, the opportunity of cross-border co-operations.

The change in geopolitical constellation created new opportunities, and still does so for cross-border co-operation (Szűcs R. G. 2009). Nowadays there is a chance for co-operations to be developed that serve the enhancement of the cohesion overcoming the artificial disruption caused by the Iron Curtain. With the borders becoming more open the territorial capital of the borderline regions' landscape specialities may serve as a foundation, since the values of natural and built heritages rarely coincide with the political borders. The spatial-structure modifying influence of the borders' changing roles can be unequivocally recognisable in environmental protection, rural development and tourism. The obstacles before all forms of tourism (i.e. ecotourism, water tourism) have started to cease, cross-border structures are forming. In the past period certain states and their authorities and actors strived to harmonize the preservation and presentation of the aforementioned values, as well as the regional development based on this. Networks, such as NATURA 2000 areas, under cross-border and intact environmental protection, have been established and the increasing tourist traffic is one of their characteristics. The co-operations may bring together tourist destinations with the help of cross-border thematic routes and educational trails. The significance of the co-operation of the two conservation areas, among others, lies in the mutual exploitation of the region's touristic potential.

The increasing state of openness of the borders in the past two and a half decades, especially compared to the atmosphere of the Cold war after World War II, means an enormous change. After 1945, the Iron Curtain that separated the world systems, also hermetically sealed off the western borders of Hungary (Sallai J. 1996). The strong, barrier- or filter-like borders often times served as a real wall, even regarding the Eastern socialist countries, up until the system changing processes in Eastern-Central Europe. Although, certain positive tendencies have appeared since the 70s and 80s on (Sallai J. 1996, Locsmándi Sz. 2004, Fülöp M. – Vincze G. 2007, Bottini, S. 2010).

In the recent history of the borderline areas of Central Europe, beside the system changing processes, the European integration was the other major milestone. For the Central-European border regions, the Eastern expansion of the EU brought forth the so called four fundamental liberties: free flow of capital, goods, services, and labour. Due to the Eastern expansion, from 1 May 2004 on, Hungary and Slovenia are full members of the European Union. Beside the removal of customs borders, the cross-border co-operations were greatly facilitated: by having joined the Community, passports were substituted by ID cards, and after joining the Schengen area (21 December 2007) the permanent internal border control ceased on the Slovenian-Hungarian line. On the 102 km long border in 1988 only 2 border crossing points were

operational, whose number has risen to 9 by 2015 resulting that the interoperability of the Slovenian-Hungarian border has become outstanding in the region.³

Finally, in the aspect of the border studies, it is worth examining the change in the role, expansion and function of the border section, since they deeply affect the opportunities for cross-border co-operation.

Considering the spatial expansion of the border, today's tendency shows a shift of the administrative borders towards the emergence of blurred borders. Instead of sharp boundaries, temporary zones emerge (Fleischer T. 2001, Novotny G. 2007). Due to the opening up of borders - or as David Newman (2011) describes the borders' flowing character: process of opening - it is rather about that the spatial specialities of the border change and instead of a well discernible line, we can talk about a border lane, a border zone as a consequence of the blur. The need for the common operation of the borderline areas on the two or more sides of the border, replaces the necessity of the exact drawing of the border. Thus - after Tamás Hardi - frontier type is gradually replaced by the 'boundary' type border. On the basis of the nomenclature drawn up by van Houtum, the open border starts to prevail instead of the former closed one (van Houtum, H. 1998), furthermore, the 'bridge' role of the border grows, as well. This kind of change in border characteristics entails the transformation of border functions: on the basis of Guichonnet and Raffestin's border function typology (1974), the borders' significant legal, fiscal, control, military and ideological functions are much less dominating than a few years ago. In correlation with this, borders do not (only) separate, moreover, the 'linking function' starts to dominate according to Strassoldo (1989). This also means to the examined border region that borders do not primarily serve as defensive walls, but as scenes of peaceful co-operation, enhancing the borders' linking role. The barrier-, filter-like border is replaced by the open border. The borderline co-operation belongs to the 'open border' effects as an evolution of the integration process. The linking function and the openness of the borders reveal that where the given territory of the State is located currently on the way to integration (Ratti, R. 1993). Due to the change in the spatial characteristics and prevalence of the linking function of the border, it becomes a contact zone, does not remain an obstacle or buffer zone. Consequently, border regions, among others with the effective contribution of Órség and Goričko, form integrated border areas and cohesive border regions, from single-attribute they become multi-attribute border regions (co-operative in more fields (see Haggett, P. 2006). The Danube-basin and Slovenia within, along with the alienated border regions of Hungary, shift towards the Martínez-type mutually collaborating, then integrated border regions in consequence of the transformational process.

³ Regarding the density of the border crossing points, behind the Austrian ones, the Hungarian border section of the Slovenian-Hungarian border is the most interoperable.

Due to the opened borders, there is an opportunity for the formerly separated peripheral areas to join together. The opening-opened borders can exploit the territorial potential that originates from disparate characteristics (comparative advantages) of certain border regions. Thus there is an opportunity to mutually exploit the territorial capital, to link and complete the so far internal common and complementary advantages. In this aspect, the economic growth of the border regions is no longer influenced by the differences between political-institutional systems (that is, the separating component of the border definition), but the combinations of comparative advantages of neighbouring areas (Courlet, C. 1988). Henceforth, we can talk about transborder regions instead of border regions. The co-operation of the examined partners, because of these all, is of special significance concerning the Hungarian-Slovenian border region.

Before the study would go on to the development of the cross-border co-operation and the discussion of its geographical environment, it is important to clarify why the co-operation of Órség and Goričko is a best practice.

The cooperation has been selected as a best practice model mainly because of the initiatives launched in the frame of sustainable development activities that were consistent with the natural capacity of the cross-border landscape. In their cooperation, the partners have been trying to harmonize their activities in relation to a sustainable landscape management system that includes interconnecting fields of action of habitat restoration, environmental protection, production and processing of local products, ecotourism, heritage conservation and dissolution of mental borders.

2. Methodology

At the beginning of the methodology part, it is worth talking about the content and logical structure of the study. The aim of the study is to introduce the cross-border co-operation of Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park. To accomplish this, the cross-border cohesion strengthening/weakening geographical, structural, organisational advantages and processes are to be revealed, with special regard to determining why the co-operation is a best practice model. Therefore, it is also important to clarify the advantages of the region, the development activities to build on them, hampering factors, as well as further possible co-operation in the future.

This introduction is to show why the co-operation of the two nature conservation areas is significant for the given border region. The processes mostly influencing the co-operative opportunities of the border region will be elaborated on, such as the demolition of the Iron Curtain and the European integration process, which tendencies result in more open borders and bestow a special significance upon the exploitation of the mutual territorial potential of Órség and Goričko.

Primarily, this methodology part briefly introduces with which means and sources we processed the geographical and structural characteristics of the co-operation.

The second long chapter addressing the general analysis, firstly outlines the history of the cross-border co-operation and the change in perspective, which led towards the cohesion-based planning. The main periods will be separated, the significant milestones defined, by introducing them the development of the co-operation will be perceivable, the process during which the parks have become more and more leading stakeholders concerning the CBC activities in harmony with regional advantages.

After this, the presentation of the geographical environment of the co-operation comes, to see that what the geographical scope of the co-operation is, whether the completeness of the area coverage is realised, and how big border region can be organised by the co-operation.

The fourth big structural unit is for the detailed analysis, where firstly, the case study deals with the questions of structure institute and management. As it will be studied later, the rather different organisational structures are those, contrary to the geographical-regional advantages, that hinder the efforts to strengthen cohesion of cross-border co-operation. Thus, the competences of the partners, their obligatory and voluntary tasks, as well as their staff and budget etc. will be compared. Since no own work organisation was created, the individual structures of the actors, the system of workshops and meetings can be presented.

The aim of the sixth subchapter is to present the particular activities of the co-operation. To accomplish this, at first, the different well-established non-project based activities (events, etc.) will be presented, then the detailed presentation of the project comes. The study presents the

projects in groups, broken down to mutual and non-mutual, bilateral and trans-European groups. Finally, there will be a comparison, due to which we will get a picture about which sectors and thematic areas the two parks have similar interests in, and which areas represent differences. It is necessary in order to establish that in the future useful results as good practices could be achieved built on common or complementary advantages, potentials or challenges.

The eighth chapter gives a short summary of the information from the interviews using the method of SWOT analysis. It separates macro-level specialities, determined by the explicitly structural 'external' environment, relating also to the whole border region, as well as it separates the information related to the particular processes and common activities of the co-operation. The ninth subchapter is about the future plans and aims of the co-operation. Since they do not have a common plan document, a comprehensive table will be presented, which juxtaposes the two parks' own and common ideas about the co-operation, therefore, they become comparable and coordinated and allow the possibility to even designate the elements of a common strategy.

The tenth subchapter presents those unique resources originated from geographical and border regional attributes, by which the co-operation may be supported in bilateral and trans-European cross-border programmes and projects. Primarily, the chapter focuses on those mutual or complementary advantages, which can be jointly developed according to the cross-border strategic spatial perspective, and harmonised regarding the area.

Finally, there will be a synthesis as closure for the content part of the study that concludes the most important attributes and morals concerning the co-operation. The conclusion afterwards goes beyond the simple situation report and in the light of the aforementioned information, specifies useful recommendations for the actors in regional development policy.

Proceeding to the pure methodology and the utilised sources: this case study could build on the results of previously published independent or periods of studies (i.e. Hardi T. 2002)⁴, especially on the short case study „Governance of natural areas in the transnational context: Trilateral Nature Park Goričko-Raab-Órség” within the project of ESPON TANGO (Territorial Approaches for New Governance) in the framework of ESPON 2013 Programme, which dealt particularly with the question of Slovenian-Hungarian co-operations in the border region.⁵ This study thus strives to synthesize the results, as well as present the new ones.

In each and every work that touches upon border study questions, it is expedient to be aware of the frequently used and current terms at the field of border functions and border region

⁴ <http://tet.rkk.hu/index.php/TeT/article/view/863/1722>

⁵ ESPON TANGO (2013):

http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TANGO/Case_Study_12_Trilateral_Nature_Park.pdf

typology. Thus, there will be references to authors known in border studies (i.e. Ratti, R. 1993; Martínez, O. J. 1994; van Houtum, H. 1998; Haggett, P. 2006; Newman, D. 2011). Beside the studies and volumes particularly about border studies, the literature dealing with the opportunities of the two countries' cross-border co-operation and their geographical background (i.e. Hajdú Z. 2000; Bufon, M. 1996, 2004) was also included in the literature perusal methodology.

The legal rules related to two (or three, considering the Austrian party) partners, and documents of the cooperation agreements between them constitute a separate group. All these were necessary in order to see in what kind of regulatory environment the parks work, how this affects their co-operation and for the sake of integration of the border region what written frameworks (aims, institutional structures, etc.) were created.

The study examined that which sources the co-operative partners could exploit and what particular projects they could elaborate on and realise. For the sake of this, primarily the publications of actors, partners, and homepages of projects, conclusive studies about the utilization of CBC resources⁶, the related cross-border trilateral and transnational co-operation programmes and projects (i.e. TransEcoNet, Landscape in Harmony) were overviewed, including those realised in the framework of Phare the INTERREG and the European Territorial Cooperation. In connection with the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, as well as the Slovenia–Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013 the lists of approved operations have been checked thoroughly. During the analysis and presentation of the realised projects we were aware of the numerous attributes of the project, such as, leading and project partners; budget; the period and duration of the realisation; the content, thematic area, aims of the project; completed activities; results related to cohesion strengthening.

Whether the objectives of the co-operation are suitable in respect to the border region's social-economic situation, primarily the chapter about resources will reveal. For this purpose, the cohesion-based methodology worked out by the CESC was realised, above all, in this chapter. Its essence is that instead of the sector-focused, simply descriptive analysis, it is rather worth revealing the potential of mutual and complementary advantages that strengthen (or weaken) the cohesion of the border region. From the relevant literature László Gyuricza's scientific article⁷ was outstanding: „Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problémák és pontatlanságok a tájak nevezéktanában és térképi ábrázolásában” (2012).

Among the empirical research methods the interviews must be mentioned, which took place at the work organisation or the headquarters of the interviewees. In the field, not only did we talk personally, but also we did fieldwork. In one part of the border region in question,

⁶ I.e. The results of the Hungarian Phare CBC programmes 1995–2001. Source: http://www.vati.hu/files/articleUploads/5526/Phare_CBC_1995-2001_tanulmany.pdf

⁷ http://www.foldrajzitasasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlemenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

especially around Óriszentpéter and Grad a local walking, taking photos and observation of the landscape structure took place.

Before the interviews themselves were made, we found the suitable stakeholders (stakeholder analysis). Finally, personal interviews were made with three local actors - each was an hour long. By asking similar questions adapted not only to the content structure of the study, but also to the peculiarities of the organisations, we received at the same time 'soft' and 'hard' (statistical, factual) data, as well as objective and subjective information from the following interviewees:

- Dr. István Szentirmai (Órség National Park, Department of Nature Conservation, head of department)
- Stanislava Dešnik (Goričko Landscape Park, Acting Director)
- Sándor Bauer (Naturpark Térségfejlesztési Közhasznú Nonprofit Ltd., Managing director)

Via telephone we reached the Naturpark Raab in Austria, which is deemed important due to its close relation to the direct co-operation. Finally, they answered our questions in e-mail, namely Karl Kahr, who is responsible for organization and management. The interviews facilitated the answering to that whether the co-operation contributed to the intensification of cross-border relations, whether some kind of local identity emerged in the region influenced by cross-border co-operations and whether the cross-border co-operation had an impact on the development of the region. The integration of personal experience and practices regarded good into the study was a separate aspect in order for the really efficient development activities to be able to serve as an example and to build on them in the development policy of the future.

3. The development of cross-border co-operation

Henceforth, the study deals with the impacts of cross-border co-operations' framework conditions (i.e. demolition of the Iron Curtain, accession into the European Union and Schengen Area) on the actors of the co-operation and on the intensity.

In general it can be said that the effect of the demolition of the Iron Curtain and the European integration process have made cross-border co-operation easier and more direct. The newly appeared bottom-up initiatives have reinterpreted the former, almost state privilege CBC co-operations. The obstacles in the way of local initiatives continuously disappeared. For instance, years ago organizing a cross-border trip or event influencing the consciousness of belonging together in the border region was subject to authorisation (obligation to register them at least at two authorities, as well as a certain amount of money to be paid etc.). Contrary to this, in the past years it has been free to organise such events and the removal of existing obstacles unequivocally appears in the intensity of the co-operation.

Essentially, after the demolition of the Iron Curtain and the accession to the EU, the real co-operations started to take place between the protected areas. Contributing to this, both Órség National Park and Goričko are young organisations, the former was established in 2002, the latter in 2003. Before 2000, nature protection was not significant on either sides. The Hungarian side was merely a landscape protection area with one or two rangers, whereas on the Slovenian side there was no protection whatsoever. Consequently, there were neither capacity, nor resources to give room for mutual projects or activities.

The two countries show greatly similar pace approaching the EU. After the establishment of the INTERREG initiative in 1995, financial and strategic supporting means started to appear to stimulate cross-border co-operations. The cross-border co-operation between Hungary and Slovenia started prior to the accession; in relation to the pre-accession funds (Phare CBC) between 1995 and 1996 the trilateral programme between Slovenia, Hungary and Austria. Afterwards, the first bilateral co-operation operated between 2000 and 2003 in the framework of Slovenia-Hungary Phare cross-border co-operation programmes. Within this framework a large project with large significance was carried out each year, and then in 2003 a grant scheme aiming at the development of human resources was launched. The mutual interest in the co-operation manifests in nature protection (2000: Mutual national park development; 2002: waste water management in the valley of river Kerka), in economic co-operation (2001: Common Economic Area Support Plan) and in human resources development (2003: the maximization of opportunities of human resources in border line regions). So called people-to-people co-operations were outlined as further important co-operation areas, which were realised through small project funds (2000-2003), which do not exist anymore.

Therefore, already at the time of the establishment of Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Area, those thematic areas were outlined where real CBC projects with regional development influence could be developed. These sectors, in addition, mostly coincide with

the parks' own and common (which will be elaborated on later) and voluntary aims and tasks determined at State level.

Hungary and Slovenia simultaneously, due to the so called Fifth Enlargement, have become full members of the European Union together with 8 other states, thus further opportunities opened for common activities serving to consolidate the co-operation, for a harmonised regional planning, and to create the co-operation's organisational and financial background. During the truncated planning cycle between 2004 and 2006 the trilateral INTERREG IIIA Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia was available. At EU level there have been changes in perspective: with the European Territorial Cooperation becoming an independent objective of the European Cohesion Policy, there has been an unprecedented support for European transnational, interregional and cross-border co-operations. The Slovenia-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme was born as the development plan of the now complete 2007–2013 budgetary period.

This detour had to be taken in order to see that due to scarce state and local resources, with the start of the cross-border programme an opportunity opened for more significant common activities. This construed integration process has immensely stimulated the alliance of the three borderline conservation areas, namely the Slovenian Naturpark Goričko, the Hungarian Órség National Park and the Austrian NaturPark Raab. With the birth and the growth of the funds allocated to them, the co-operation in today's sense started to unfold at that very time.

The appearance of actors meant the '**zero**' step of the cross-border co-operation. The major parts of today's Órség National Park (Órség, Vendvidék, Rába Valley and the neighbourhood of Szentgyörgyvölgy) were given protection in the second half of the 1970s; the Szentgyörgyvölgy landscape protection area was appointed in 1976, the Órség landscape protection area in 1978. The Órség–Vendvidék Naturpark was established in 1998, the Kerkamente Naturpark in 1996. The Órség National Park as one of the main actors of the co-operation was born from the fusion of Szentgyörgyvölgy landscape protection area and Órség landscape protection area in 2002.

In the south the establishment of the Slovenian Naturpark Goričko was realised approximately at the same time in 2003. The area, similarly to the Hungarian and Austrian partners, was built on the diversity of the cultivated landscape, it offered valuable, but strongly fragmented natural habitats, flora and fauna, to which, as Natura 2000 area, area-based protection had to be provided according to the EU guidelines.

From the parks of Hármashatár (Tripoint), Naturpark Raab on the Austrian side has been appointed as diverse cultivated landscape. This area is bordered by the Neuhauser hills, through the Doiber- and Rába-valley until the Henndorf Mountains and it ends in Mogersdorf at the historical Schlößl Mountain. The Association for Naturpark Raab committed itself to the diversity and uniqueness of farming and the conservation of the mosaic agriculture, as well as to encourage soft tourism. The richness of nature and cultural heritage has to get closer to both the local population and guests - they described their aims.

The two most important **documents** of the history of cross-border co-operation and the way leading there are worth delineating, since they played a decisive role in the deepening of the co-operation and they indicate the historic development process of CBC relations.

As we will see later on, the idea of the border region could be grasped mostly at a threefold border region level. The parties acknowledged that the concerted management and development, in the framework of a strategic partnership, of the three sides of the border may provide suitable solution to exploit the common and complementary advantages. In the spirit of regional perspective, Dr. Wilfried Hicke Principal Adviser, Regional Deputy Registrar, and Péter Csoknyai Principal Adviser head of department put forward proposals to the trilateral protection of the area, which concerns Hungary, Slovenia and Austria, and possesses unique natural and cultural values. The idea of a cross-border nature park was expressed by Hicke and Mr. Csoknyai at the Hungarian-Austrian joint committee that had prepared the establishment of the Fertő-Hanság National Park and the Nationalpark Neusiedler See–Seewinkel as the firstly established, still unique cross-border national park in the former Iron Curtain area.

After the consultations, the document '**Agreement between Naturpark Raab, Órség National Park and Krajinski Park Goričko**' was signed by Dr. Tibor Markovics director on behalf of Órség National Park, on behalf of the Slovenian Goričko by Janko Halb, and on behalf of the Austrian Naturpark Raab Willi Thomas Deputy Director. Following this step we can talk about the Órség-Raab-Goričko Nature Park, which provides the framework conditions of a loose co-operation. The agreement, adopted in the small town of Windisch-Minihof belonging to Minihof-Liebau in Burgenland on 21 May **2006**, was based on the mutual advantage that the common border line area of Hungary and Slovenia is excessively rich in natural and cultural assets. These three parks were established in regard to the different legal rules, and they co-operate in harmony with the agreement still today.

In accordance with IUCN regulations all three parties identified the preservation and presentation of the region's natural values and cultural heritage as common interest.

The aims of the cross-border co-operation have been determined by the parties in the following (partly setting up a kind of indirect priority order):

- Joint work in order to protect natural and cultural values;
- Organization and realization of joint events;
- Design and creation of joint publications;
- Coordination of tourism activities;
- Elaboration of joint projects;
- Preparation and realization of habitat restorations;
- Operation of environmental education, forest school;
- Involvement in activities initiated by the European Green Belt.

In the agreement there was a perusal of actual activities that were realised within the framework of the co-operation. The following belong to those:

- Representation of agreed goals and government programs, regional and sub-regional level;
- The involvement of public and social organizations in the protection of natural resources, coordination of necessary information works;
- Involvement of the population in tourism development projects and in the operation;
- Mutual awareness raising, together with the population regarding social and folk traditions, traditional farming activities and the preservation of folk crafts;
- Preserving the values of vernacular architecture, finding resources and the developing of necessary support system;
- Promoting effective mutual appearances in the tenders of European Union or the individual states.

As it can be seen, the aims of the cross-border co-operation are primarily nature conservation, environmental protection and cultural heritage protection; the aims group around tourism and strive to harmonise and by surpassing this, mutually plan certain activities. The cross-border, transnational and project-level co-operations were endorsed separately, which go beyond sheer publication editing.

The **organisational base** of the co-operation was determined in the 2006 text of the agreement (for further explanation check: Chapter 5, The composition of the work organisation).

The second and so far final common document of the co-operation was signed on 25 May **2009**, almost exactly three years after the first one, in the headquarters of Órség National Park, Óriszentpéter. The **Co-operation Agreement**⁸, which was signed by Ferenc Márkus director on behalf of the Órség National Park, Janko Halb on behalf of the Krajinski Park Goričko, and Helmut Sampt Chairman of the Association of Naturpark Raab. The agreement slightly consolidated and further developed the cross-border co-operation in certain thematic and strategic target areas. In other questions, however, the previously established practice remained unchanged. The **organisational background** of the 'hármashatár' (tripoint) co-operation remained the same and no mutually sustained institute or organisation have been established, neither are there any mutual employees. All three parties confirmed that the preservation and presentation of the landscape's natural assets and cultural heritage remain their common interest. No activities have been modified that were realised in the framework of the co-operation. Although, there has been a change concerning the aims of the co-

⁸ Full description: Co-operation Agreement between Naturpark Raab, Órség National Park and Krajinski Park Goričko.

operation. The formerly determined aims of the co-operation have been extended with the following four areas (the last one was discarded in 2012):

- Joint research on fish communities of cross-border watercourses;
- Coordinated joint survey and study of otter populations;
- Elaboration and initiation of a protection programme for European roller (*Coracias garrulus*);
- Joint monitoring of effects in case of realization of an incinerator planned to be built in Szentgotthárd.

In the Hungarian and Slovenian co-operation history that is taking place in the current area of the two parks (and the Hungarian Natúrpark Ltd.), three main milestones can be highlighted. The first steps meant only a few common projects, the beginning of this period, from the appearance and completion of the Phare CBC resources, approximately lasted between **1995** and **2003**. The partnerships for the most part lacked deeper efforts to seek out partners, they were rather accidental and based on personal acquaintances.

Afterwards, a kind of institutionalised co-operation was set forth among the protected areas. By 2003 the Órség National Park and the Goričko Landscape Park had been established, then in 2006 and 2009 agreements were endorsed. Therefore, apart from the former sporadic co-operations a formal, document-supported co-operation has been established. The agreements themselves, contrary to the beginnings, no longer bear particular significance in a practical respect, still it provided a framework for subsequent co-operations. At programme and project level there are and there will be more developments that are basically bilateral, but also refer to a third party, they are imbued with border region attribute.

Simultaneously, along with the more or less official nature park co-operation, came the newer cross-border co-operation programmes; more resources, opportunities and common tenders were outlined. This period lasted between about **2007** and **2009**. The next, **third** milestone is innovative in a way that in the past few years they have been trying to further develop the co-operation that exists at the formal and mostly actual project level. The aim is to have a kind of co-thinking and co-operation between the two protected areas independently from the projects and funds. Regular meetings, common programmes (tourist programmes) have been organised as of today. This whole co-operation generates more tenders and projects.

During the completed projects there have been much communication, co-thinking has appeared. The practice in regard to the whole border region is rather that the long-term strategic and regional cohesion perspective is not dominant, which adapts to needs, but the parks that play a key role in Slovenian-Hungarian cross-border co-operations start to recognise that it is more beneficial to communicate more and realise the cohesion perspectives.

All in all, what has been established in the area, in roughly a decade since the foundation of the parks, is the practice that nature parks - including the Raab Nature Park - have tried to organise

the hármashatár (Tripoint) region themselves ("take it under their wings"). Firstly, to organise events, secondly, to develop products, thirdly, to realise the knowledge transfer. In these three major areas the parties mutually involve each other. The know-how, the project development and the participation in the realisation belong here (apart from the fact that one of the parties does not participate in a certain project).

Finally, it is worth presenting that in the common co-operation area of Órség National Park and the Goričko what kind of other, relevant, or already participating actors can be highlighted, and which actors the parties strived to primarily integrate.

Firstly, the **Órség Nature Park Association** has to be introduced that has been actively participating, amongst others, in the nature park initiative since the very beginning and its work organisation, the Natúrpark Térségfejlesztési Közhasznú Nonprofit Ltd., whose priority is to help the European integration of the area, and to realise the common development programmes with neighbour countries.

The Municipal Alliance of Vas County Undeveloped Areas, which included 67 municipalities, operated since 1991, following its dissolution in 1995 the Órség-Vendvidék Natúrpark⁹, as its successor, was established with the participation of regional municipalities, civil organisations, enterprises and private individuals. The park, focusing on sustainable development and supporting developments that harmonise with the ecological advantages of the region, was born in Óriszentpéter as its headquarters, uniting an overall area of 440 km², due to the initiative of 22 Órség and 6 Vendvidék municipalities. The former Órség landscape protection area, which constitutes a part of Órség National Park, takes up to 379,11 km², however, finally, 61 municipalities joined the nature park, whose overall area did not coincide with the landscape protection area. The secretarial tasks of the association have been tended to by Natúrpark Térségfejlesztési Közhasznú Társaság (Nature Park Regional Development Public Benefit Association) since 3 May 2000. Its founders beside Órség-Vendvidék Nature Park Association were Regional Development Association of the Municipalities of Órség, Municipality of Körmend City, Municipality of Szentgotthárd City, Szombathely Forestry Corp., as well as the West-Pannon Regional Development Plc. Its area of operation covers the statistical micro-regions of Körmend, Óriszentpéter, and Szentgotthárd. Practically the majority of towns in Órség and the town around Alsószölnök are active in the co-operation within the framework of Nature Park. By time the number of towns has reduced compared to the original. They do not think that the number of members should be increased, rather they see possibilities in co-operating with Zala county-based or other initiatives, which were established with a nature park philosophy in some kind of network form. The fact of a town being a Nature Park member or not, bears no real significance. They co-operate with such towns that are not members, also there are members with whom the co-operation is not particularly active.

⁹ http://w3.rkk.hu/nyuti/borderregion/sa/w2_case.pdf

There is a classic co-operation area, which Nature Park has been working on since the beginning. This is primarily targeted towards touristic co-operations. It has to be seen that the establishment and consolidation of the Órség National Park practically take numerous roles and infrastructural developments naturally to national parks (i.e. educational trails), whose elaboration and visualisation were started by the Nature Park. Thus, it is pointless for the Nature Park to deal with these, since there is a national organisation established and financed for this purpose - said the executive during the interview.

The Nature Park has started to co-operate in two directions with the Slovenian side apart from classic tourism. One is the development of local products, the other is that of human resources. Within the latter, one of its parts means the recognition of good practices and their adaptation, the other one reveals the co-operations of the labour market and the co-operation in harmony with border line economic relations. The explanation to this is that on the Hungarian side a programme has been launched, which has aimed at the establishment of labour market pacts in the micro-region. The Nature Park was the Hungarian-side co-ordinator and initiator of a similar pact. Utilising these systems of relationships, they started to deal with Slovenian partnerships, local development organizations, foundations, labour centres. They have taken a direction to figure out how they could help borderline job placement and movement of labour. In this area an expert network was established last year. In this, Hungarian and Slovenian experts take part who have made proposals as to what actual activities could be initiated. What we have to think over is that which proposals should be formed into an actual project - explained László Bauer, executive of the regional development organisation. Therefore, the development path and the milestones for the Natúrpark Nonprofit Ltd. were the following, with which they are able to appear in the network of border region partnership: 1, tourism policy 2, local product 3, human resources (for more information on the projects, see Chapter 6).

As it has been referred to, following the establishment of the Hungarian national park, the Hungarian nature park initiative gradually lost its leading role in the matters of nature conservation and environmental protection, as well as, in partly, tourism policy matters, and by now the ÓNPI (Órség National Park Directorate) has become the major Hungarian partner of the nature conservation projects. However, it is more positive that the Nature Park has got a less official, more vivid and people-oriented system of relationships with local actors. Consequently, it can provide different quality in the frame of the co-operation. The initiative of the Nature Park is bottom-up type, thus it can integrate real demands into the system. In their opinion, it cannot be expected in an official structure that the national park and Goričko should tend to the same activities as the Nature Park itself, this is why they remain important stakeholders in the border region.

On the Hungarian side there is the **Szlovén Vidék Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.** (Slovenian Region Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd.) with headquarters in Szentgotthárd, which belongs to the active partners that can be involved and do not arrive from nature conservation sector. The aim of

the company established by the Alliance of Hungarian Slovenes in December 2006 is that to contribute, in its frame of public benefit activity, to the cultural, touristic and economic development of Raba Region (in Slovenian: Slovenska krajina)¹⁰ also inhabited by Slovenian people, to support the establishment of enterprises of the Slovenian population, as well as the investments of the already operational enterprises. All this shall be achieved by seeking out Slovenian, Hungarian and EU tender resources, and by the preparation and implementation of the tenders. The main activities of the organisation that employs six colleagues involve writing tenders, a model farm, common agricultural machineries, the operation of an apple processing facility, as well as the tradition promoting, event organisation and publication editing that all serve the Slovenian ethnic culture. The Szlovén Vidék Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft. receives strong support from the Slovenian state, they develop much along the border area, which has Slovenian population.

On the Slovenian side, **regional development agencies** established by state co-ordination, play an active and decisive role in tending to regional development tasks and in generating CBC projects, furthermore they have assumed leading roles in the pooling of funds in the past few years. Without the involvement of regional development agencies, successful regional development work cannot be accomplished since the Goričko and the towns on their own do not have suitable capacities to tend to regional development tasks. Therefore, in this respect in Slovenia the situation is slightly different. There are more development agencies, which in general deal with writing of tenders and project management. Órség National Park has common projects with these organisations, however, since nature conservation is not their primary area of expertise, still they participate in the project management in the Goričko area.

The Mura Development Agency acts as the leading development institution in the Slovenian part of the border region, implementing tasks and projects for regional development. The agency's activities are directed to constant stimulation of progress and development on the regional level and fostering public-private partnerships. Being an another important platform for cooperation between actors and institutions in the NUTS3 region of Pomurje and for the whole border region, in which the Goričko Nature Park is situated, is the Mura Regional Development Agency. It has been one of the initiators of the trinational nature park in the mid-1990s. The coordination with the 27 municipalities in the region is carried out through 5 sub-regional partnerships, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, directly through annual meetings of the regional board, composed of mayors of all municipalities. Mura RDA often serves also as a lead institution in various EU projects in relation to Goričko Nature Park, having institutional capacity to carry out complex administrative tasks with this regard. One of such projects is project "Upkač", aiming at preserving the biodiversity of orchards in Goričko Nature

¹⁰ Towns of Felsőszölnök, Alsószölnök, Szakonyfalu, Orfalu, Kétvölgy, Apátistvánfalva.

Park and Órség National Park. The park authorities are partners in the project, which is led by the Mura Agency (for more, see Chapter 6).¹¹

Another development agency on the Slovene side includes the Prlekija Development Agency. The agency has already been operating for more than ten years. It was established in order to promote development of small businesses, tourism and rural areas in the region of Prlekija, a region in north-eastern Slovenia between the Drava and Mura rivers, stretching from the border with Austria to the border with Croatia in the historical region of Lower Styria, forming the Mura Statistical Region together with the traditional province of Prekmurje. The agency has realized several major development projects, with which it made a big impact in the broader Slovenian territory. Its activity covers four basic areas: the development of small businesses and tourism, rural development, environmental protection and cross-border cooperation. Current references are the most extensive in the field of promoting small business development and cross-border cooperation programs. In the present time, it has firmly consolidated international links with Austrian, Hungarian and Croatian partners and has developed into an institution that undertakes bigger and more demanding projects, particularly in the context of EU programmes.

Last but not least, municipalities can be identified as important actors. They take part in cross-border co-operations with different intensity. In general their method of participation is that the national park or a Slovenian development agency bring together partners or involve municipalities. For example, perhaps Óriszentpéter and Szalafő are the two towns where the mayors are the most active and they usually take part in different projects.

History of a tight cooperation had started even before the Pan-European Picnic, an important event that led to the fall of the Iron Curtain, was held. There was a **meeting** of mayors and local people at the tri-national border on 27th May 1989 when the previously heavily guarded border had been opened to the public.

In essence, the real co-operation between the two protected areas began after the demolition of the Iron Curtain and intensified after the EU accession with the help of growing funds allocated to INTERREG Community Initiative and later to European Territorial Cooperation objective. Another contributing factor was that both Goričko Nature Park and Órség National Park are young organizations; the former was established in 2002, while the latter was founded in 2003. Before the millennium, neither side of the border assigned an outstanding importance to the goals of nature conservation. Due to the lack of money, the cooperation started to emerge with the appearance of the two parks as important regional stakeholders. The establishment of the two parks was the **zero-step** in the history of their cooperation.

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http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Projects/AppliedResearch/TANGO/Case_Study_12_Trilateral_Nature_Park.pdf

Three major periods can be defined in their cooperation. The **first** period lasted from the appearance of Phare programmes until their run-out, approximately between 1995 and 2003. In those times, the co-operations were mainly based on activities with no territorially integrated approach, ad hoc partnerships and personal connections. The **second** period, lasted approximately between 2004 and 2009 and it is characterized by the beginning of a partly institutionalized cooperation. The previously sporadic exercise changed to a more formal one. The territoriality and strategic thinking gained bigger consideration.

The Parties recognized that a coordinated, strategic partnership in the context of management and development of the two (with Austria three) sides of the border can provide a suitable solution in the joint and complementary assets to exploit. The idea of establishing a trilateral park with the participation of Slovenia, Hungary and Austria emerged in the early 1990s at one of the workshops aimed at developing a vision for the area after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Therefore, since their foundation two important documents have been agreed to by the partners. The first Memorandum, signed on 21st May 2006, meant the formation of a trilateral nature park, and set the main goals and activities, organizational structures regarding the cooperation. The aims of the cooperation are mainly focusing on environmental protection and nature conservation, cultural heritage, tourism and people-to-people actions. The second and yet last agreement on cooperation was accepted on 25th May 2009, nearly three years later, in which four new fields of cooperation have been added to the specified goals set before.

The beginning of the **third** and last period started around 2009 and it is still ongoing. This milestone brought the idea that besides project-based co-operations, regardless of money, a common thinking and some kind of joint planning are needed between two areas. The partners have been trying to move in the direction of a long-term, demand-driven, territorially integrated and cohesion-based approach.

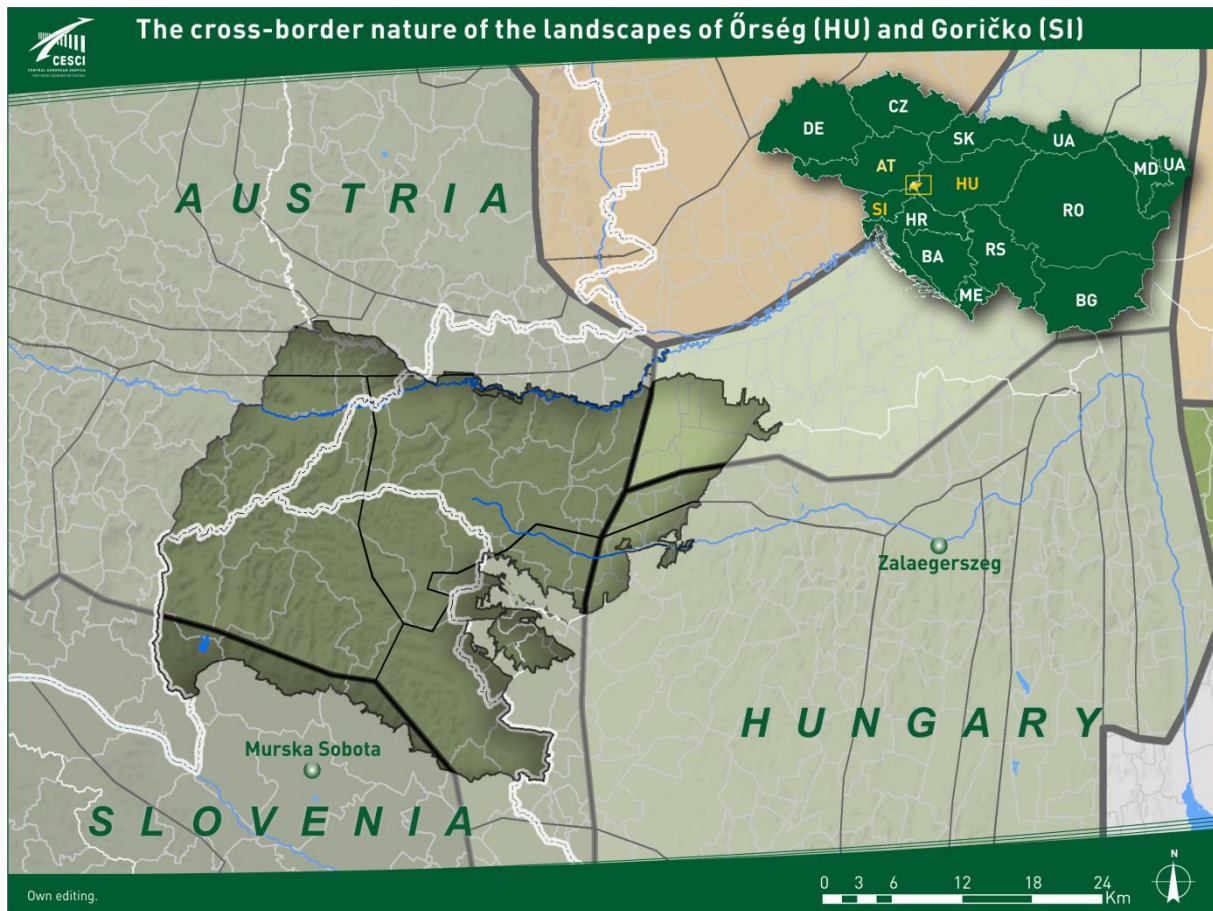
4. Presentation of the geographical environment of the co-operation

Before we proceed to the narrowly defined area of co-operations, it is worth providing a broader picture of the region, in which the regional scope¹² of the co-operation can be interpreted in order to be able to place the co-operation within a wider environment. In Hungary the co-operation area is bordered by Upper Rába Valley, Vasi-hegyhát (Mountain's back of Vas), Gőcsej and Közép-zalai-dombság (Middle Zala Hills), in Austria the extension of Upper Rába Valley and the Gleichenberg hills, in Slovenia the Slovensko gorice means the border. In the respect of landscape structure, the Hungarian-Slovenian border region belongs to the Western Transdanubia macro region, which is divided between two smaller regions, the Mura–Rába-hills and the Drava–Mura-hills. Within these, five micro-regions can be distinguished, whose borders do not coincide with the political borders, thus, we can talk about cross-border landscapes: on the northern side of the border section the administrative border intersects the low hill reliefs, on the southern side it does so with the intrinsically linked plain reliefs. Mostly¹³ on the Hungarian side, the Órség (Lower Órség), which gave its name to the national park and Hetés (Kerka region) are located, as well as on the Slovenian side Goričko hills and the lower plain area of Mura, the Ravensko can be found in close proximity of the border.¹⁴ The integral extension of the Upper Órség-Vasi-Hegyhát micro region is the Goričko. The Kerka-vidék (Hetés) and the left hand side plain of the Mura reach over to the Slovenian side, which continues in the low hills of the Slovenian Dolinsko, and to the south of that in the Ravensko.

¹² By regional scope we mean the co-operation participants' area of operation defined in the statute, furthermore, the related neighbour and intermediate area, which can be organised decisively by the two parks.

¹³ The following towns constitute the exceptions: Hodoš, Krplivnik, Domanjševci, Središče, Prosenjakovci, Pordašinci, Šikečka vas and Motvarjevci.

¹⁴ József Hajdú-Mohoros, Attila Hevesi, Zsolt Horváth: The natural landscape classification of the Carpathian-Pannon area <http://ebedszu.net/zsolt/szakdoli/tajbeosztas.html>



The biggest shaping force of the borderline region's present surface was the Mura and its tributaries, it can be divided into two major phases. Firstly, the accumulation processes were predominantly characteristic. Due to this, in the major part of the area, on the surface a scree bed can be found, which was the result of the accumulated alluvium until the Pleistocene epoch and the building work of the rivers (ancient Raba and ancient Mura). In the second half of the Pleistocene the erosion of alluvium was characteristic in consequence of tectonic movements and the spread of rivers. Alongside the ancient tectonic fault-lines the movements renewed again, which caused tremors in the area, at this time the Lenti-basin and after that the Lendvai-basin sank. This increased the relief energy of the surrounding areas, which sped up valley development and the segmentation of the area. As a result, steep, watercourse-segmented sides and sharp hillsides were created, which later supported the establishment and spread of the hillside town form.

The surface of the Hungarian-Slovenian border region is about 150-300 m high in average, it is a dying hill region whose surface is swiftly formed by erosion. Its **terrain** is tripartite in North-South direction. The Northern part of the region is the Órség, whose terrain contains flat, plateau-like hills, however, proceeding to the west, the landscape becomes more intensive, hills and stream valleys densely follow one another, a view of a hill is outlined that is strongly fragmented by erosion-derasion valleys. In the north, towards the Raba-valley is characterised

by steep breakdowns, which make the surface diverse. On this relief traditionally arable farming meadow management and grassland farming are characteristic. The region slopes down from the west to east, its average height is between 250-300 m¹⁵. The relative relief is about 15-45 m/km¹⁶. On the other side of the border in the region of Goričko, Slovenia the alluvium hills become more and more segmented and gradually get higher towards the Alps, reaching its peak near the Austrian border (Sotinski breg – 418 m)¹⁷. The Lenti-basin and the Lendva–Mura-basin constitute the lowest part of the area that have become perfect plains due to tectonic dips and subsidence of rivers. The present level differences are minimal. It is also characterised by simultaneously low relief energy (1-5 m/km²)¹⁸. The most southern part of the area is the southern part of the Kerka region and the Lendvai hill. It is also the highest part, due to the big differences in level, it is characterised by high relief energy (80-125 m/km²)¹⁹. The wet climate contributes to this, thus the surface forming here is the fastest and is also the most segmented part of the border region, so it is unsuitable for arable farming. Due to the different slope exposures, distinct farming was created, on the south-south west slopes vines took root, whereas on the northern and eastern slopes forests are situated.

In contrast with the hilly areas located east of the borderline region, there was no loess formation, and due to the wetter, cooler climate loaming took place, where later on mostly woodland soils came into existence. The spread of pottery was based on the process in Órség and Goričko. The water abundance caused by frequent precipitation is also harmful for the soils and affects the opportunities in agriculture. Since this prevents biological and chemical activities in soils, soil life is minimal. In consequence of the water abundance the soil was washed away, heat-, water balance are insufficient, the majority of soils are without structure. It poses another problem that the topsoil is shallow, poor in nutrients, its humus content is low (1,6-2%), and their pH level is acidic (4,0-5,0 pH)²⁰. The most common soil types in the area are luvisol and pseudogley brown forest soil. In smaller intact areas we can still find old soils, and

¹⁵ László Gyuricza: Opportunities in landscape utilisation alongside the Slovenian border
http://old.foldrajz.ttk.pte.hu/tgt/web_kozlemenyek/kozl2/pte_termeszetfoldrajzi_kozlemenyek2.pdf

¹⁶ László Gyuricza: Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problems and inaccuracies in the nomenclature and map imagery of the landscapes
http://www.foldrajzitorsasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlemenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.park-goricko.org/de/prvastran.asp>

¹⁸ László Gyuricza: Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problems and inaccuracies in the nomenclature and map imagery of the landscapes
http://www.foldrajzitorsasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlemenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

¹⁹ László Gyuricza: Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problems and inaccuracies in the nomenclature and map imagery of the landscapes
http://www.foldrajzitorsasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlemenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

²⁰ László Gyuricza: Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problems and inaccuracies in the nomenclature and map imagery of the landscapes
http://www.foldrajzitorsasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlemenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

along the streams alluvial soils are characteristic, in a mosaic-like pattern gravel and regosol skeletal soils were formed.

Due to the great amount of precipitation caused by the climate, **hydrographic attributes** are adverse for arable crop production and for traditional peasant farming, they provide suitable conditions for a low level self-sufficiency only. In the countryside four major rivers, Mura, Raba, Zala, Kerka and their tributaries are dominant, through which the area belongs to three drainage basins. These are the river basins of Mura-Dráva water system, Balaton and Raba. The rivers bear great importance in the uniqueness of the flora and fauna of the region since these create important habitat-oases. Apart from these, the rivers are significant for tourism: there are possibilities for boat trips, and the lower section of Kerka is available for kayak and canoe trips.

Due to the adverse precipitation conditions more, smaller still waters, moors and swamps can be found in the region, which, however, create excellent conditions to establish unique plant communities, and it can be built on in tourism as well. For instance, the sphagnum moss moorland of Szőce, which is specially protected, however, on its educational trail visitors can familiarize themselves with the ecosystem and care of the moorland of the region.

In relation to hydrography we shall speak about subsoil waters, since the high groundwater is characteristic of almost the whole region, especially of eskers and the lower areas of widening valleys. Among others the high groundwater and the watertight soil layer obstruct the infiltration of abundant precipitation into the soil, thus inland inundation is frequent (mainly in spring). The big amount of precipitation, as it has been pointed out at the soil conditions part, has got adverse effects on the crop production in the whole border region. Although, in animal husbandry previously this attribute was used to water the animals using a so called 'tóka' (small hole filled with water).

The climate of the Slovenian-Hungarian border regions is wet subalpine, which is primarily influenced by the distance from the Atlantic Ocean and the proximity of the Alps and Adriatic Sea. Consequently, the pre-alpine, Atlantic, sub-Mediterranean and continental effects apply here. It is characterised by moderate continental temperature, small amount of thermal fluctuation and abundant precipitation.

The climate of the border region is balanced, hot summers are rare (the average temperature of Órség is only 19°C²¹, and winters are not so cold either). The area is rich in precipitation (the annual precipitation is higher than 700-750 mm²²), in the northern regions higher annual precipitation can be registered, whereas moving further from the Alps it decreases towards the

²¹ László Gyuricza: Mura-vidék – Kerka-vidék – Hetés: Problems and inaccuracies in the nomenclature and map imagery of the landscapes
http://www.foldrajzirtarsasag.hu/downloads/foldrajzi_kozlomenyek_2012_136_evf_4_pp_376.pdf

²² http://www.met.hu/eghajlat/magyarorszag_eghajlata/altalanos_eghajlati_jellemzes/csapadek/

middle regions, however, in the southern parts it is higher again in consequence of the Autumn second maximum caused by a Mediterranean effect. The early summer, and summer thunderstorms often entail hailstorms. Due to the relatively cool, but wet climate relative humidity is high. In consequence of all these, precipitation conditions are slightly ideal for arable crop production.

The annual average mean temperature of the border region is around 9-10 °C²³ on the basis of the long-term average. The summer average temperature is lower, in comparison with the country, which is caused by the cloudiness derived from the high precipitation average. The annual average sunshine hours ranges between 1750 and 1850 hours/year²⁴. In spite of this, the lack of summer hot weather might be a tourist attraction.

To the **associated regional units** in Slovenian-Hungarian relations, the full area of operation of the western-Hungarian Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park in north-east Slovenia belong. The size of the area controlled by the two parties is almost identical; the former is 439,3 km², the latter is 462 km². In case we are aware of the tripoint attribute of the co-operation, the Raab Nature Park of South-eastern Austria comprises the third major associated partner of the co-operation. It is important to emphasise that the area of operation of the Nature Park Directorate²⁵, which is responsible for the legal operation of Órség National Park, extends to the whole of Vas County (3336,2 km²).

NUTS 3 (County)	LAU1 (district)	Settlement name	Area (km ²)	Legal status
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Szentgotthárd	67.73	Seat of the district
Vas	Zalaegerszeg	Zalalövő	52.64	Town
Vas	Körmend	Óriszentpéter	33.56	Town
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Felsőszölnök	23.56	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Alsószölnök	10.02	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Szakonyfalu	11.19	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Kétvölgy	6.28	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Apátistvánfalva	12.86	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Orfalu	6.94	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Magyarlak	7.62	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Csörötnek	20.53	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Vasszentmihály	6.41	Village

²³ http://www.met.hu/eghajlat/magyarorszag_eghajlata/altalanos_eghajlati_jellemzes/homerseklet/

²⁴ http://www.met.hu/eghajlat/magyarorszag_eghajlata/altalanos_eghajlati_jellemzes/sugarzas/

²⁵ Hungarian state organ responsible for the operation of the nationally significant protected area. The single directorates, beside the national park within their area of operation, tend to the nature conservation operation of all landscape protection areas. The 'Hungarian national park' and the 'national park directorate' do not mean the same area.

NUTS 3 (County)	LAU1 (district)	Settlement name	Area (km ²)	Legal status
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Rátót	7.27	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Gasztony	14.27	Village
Vas	Körmend	Csákánydoroszló	26.61	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Rábagyarmat	16.79	Village
Vas	Körmend	Halogy	7.05	Village
Vas	Körmend	Hegyhátszentmárton	12.74	Village
Vas	Körmend	Ivác	11.06	Village
Vas	Körmend	Felsőmarác	17.44	Village
Vas	Körmend	Daraboshegy	4.59	Village
Vas	Körmend	Nádasd	35.6	Village
Vas	Körmend	Szőce	18.71	Village
Vas	Körmend	Órimagyarósd	12.29	Village
Vas	Körmend	Viszák	10.13	Village
Vas	Körmend	Hegyhátszentjakab	9.47	Village
Vas	Körmend	Felsőjánosfa	3.06	Village
Vas	Zalaegerszeg	Csöde	10.61	Village
Vas	Körmend	Kisrákos	11.06	Village
Vas	Körmend	Szaknyér	2.93	Village
Vas	Körmend	Pankasz	9.27	Village
Vas	Körmend	Nagyrákos	16.11	Village
Vas	Körmend	Szatta	6.01	Village
Vas	Körmend	Ispánk	6.92	Village
Vas	Szentgotthárd	Kondorfa	21.61	Village
Vas	Körmend	Szalafő	27.37	Village
Vas	Körmend	Bajánsenye	21.85	Village
Vas	Körmend	Kerkáskápolna	9.2	Village
Vas	Körmend	Kercaszomor	12.87	Village
Vas	Körmend	Magyarszombatfa	15.94	Village
Vas	Körmend	Velemér	9.55	Village
Zala	Lenti	Szentgyörgyvölgy	29.58	Village
Zala	Lenti	Magyarföld	8.89	Village
Zala	Lenti	Felsőszenterzsébet	8.24	Village

Source: Own editing.

The Órség National Park lies in the NUT2 region called Western Transdanubia, and touches upon 44 settlement borders of four districts of two counties. The settlements are predominantly in Vas county, however, Szentgyörgyvölgy, Magyarföld and Felsőszenterzsébet (with their 46,71 km² they compose the 7,5% of the district) belong to the Lenti-district that stretches along the southern part of the national park. The major proportion of the national park belongs to the district of Körmend, while the minor proportion to the district of

Szentgotthárd; in the former district only two settlements (Nemesmedves és Rönök) are left out of the national park that covers 91,4% of the district, whereas in the latter district 57,2% of the settlement area is covered by the national park. In Zalaegerszeg district, merely the peripheries of two settlements (the plots of Zalalövő és Csöde) are under the surveillance of the national park. The Órség National Park represents only a small proportion of the area of Hungary, a bit less than half percent (0,47%). However, in case we compare this area to that of Western Transdanubia (3.92%), or rather to the NUTS3 regions comprising Vas (13.17%) or Zala (11.61%) counties, its size is not negligible.

Seat of the municipality	Settlements	Area (km ²)	Legal status
Cankova	Cankova, Domajinci, Gerlinci, Gornji Črnci, Korovci, Krašči	30.6	Village
Dobrovnik	Dobrovnik, Strehovci, Žitkovci	31.1	Village
Gornji Petrovci	Gornji Petrovci, Adrijanci, Boreča, Gornji Petrovci, Košarovci, Križevci, Kukeč, Martinje, Lucova, Neradnovci, Panovci, Peskovci, Stanjevci, Šulinci, Ženavlje	66.8	Village
Grad	Grad, Dolnji Slaveči, Kovačevci, Kruplivnik, Motovilci, Radovci, Vidonci	37.4	Village
Hodoš	Hodoš, Krplivnik	18.1	Village
Kobilje	Kobilje	19.7	Village
Kuzma	Kuzma, Dolič, Gornji Slaveči, Matjaševci, Trdkova	22.9	Village
Moravske Toplice	Moravske Toplice, Andrejci, Berkovci, Bogojina, Bukovnica, Čikečka vas, Filovci, Fokovci, Ivanjševci, Ivanovci, Kančevci, Krnci, Lončarovci, Motvarjevci, Pordašinci, Prosenjakovci, Ratkovci, Selo, Središče, Suhi Vrh, Tešanovci, Vučja Gomila	144.5	Village
Puconci	Puconci, Bodonci, Bokrači, Dolina, Dankovci, Kuštanovci, Mačkovci, Moščanci, Otovci, Pečarovci, Poznanovci, Prosečka Ves, Šalamenci, Vadarci, Vaneča	107.7	Village
Rogašovci	Rogašovci, Fikšinci, Kramarovci, Nuskova, Ocinje, Pertoča, Ropoča, Serdica, Sotina, Sveti Jurij, Večeslavci	40.1	Village
Šalovci	Šalovci, Budinci, Čepinci, Dolenci, Domanjševci, Markovci	58.2	Village

Source: Own editing.

The Goričko Landscape Park lies in the most eastern corner of the NUT2 region called Eastern Slovenia, wholly in the eastern part of the NUTS3 Mura Statistical Region, and in the northern corner of the historical Prekmurje (literally „Transmurania”), which does not constitute as an administrative-statistical region. In the north-central half of Prekmurje, the Goričko Landscape Park covers the borders or the total area of 91 settlements of 11 local governments (municipalities).²⁶ The most settlements concerned are in the area of the local governments of Gornji Petrovci, Moravske Toplice and Puconci, these localities cover 55,28% of the settlement area of the park. The Slovenian partner of the co-operation, the Goričko Landscape Park covers 2,28% of the area of the Republic of Slovenia, which means five times more share in the state area compared to the Hungarian national park. In case we compare it to the NUTS2 region Eastern Slovenia, this proportion grows to 3,78%. The weight of the Goričko is expressly great in the Mura Statistical Region, where it covers more than one-third (34,55%) of the land area, and also in the historical region of Prekmurje, where the proportion of the protected area exceeds half (50,77%) of the overall area of the region.

The third party that influences the bilateral co-operations is the Naturpark Raab that has the smallest area of the three nature parks. Consequently, the area of the park covers only 0,17% of Austria. Derived from the small area of Burgenland state, it includes the relatively major part (3,6%) of the province. The nature park includes all the Jennersdorf District municipalities that lie south of river Lafnitz. The total of 7 municipalities, the belonging villages and part of settlements extend to the major part of Jennersdorf District (56,1%).

The overall area of the trilateral co-operation is up to 1043,4 km², while the Hungarian-Slovenian co-operation constitutes an almost intact cross-border region of 901,3 km². As a comparison, this size exceeds the combined size (869,6 km²) of LAU1 area level Szentgotthárd- and Körmend-districts, which makes up the majority of the protected areas on the Hungarian side, and almost equals to the area of the historical Prekmurje (910 km²), which is in the Mura Statistical Region (Pomurska), and is embraced by the border and the Mura. Therefore, regarding its size, it is a cross-border co-operation sufficient enough for regional development aims.

²⁶ Compared to Hungary the Slovenian administrative system has only two levels: the national level and the level of municipalities that consists of at least 3-4 other settlements beside the seat of the municipality in general.



Its co-operation area previously has not existed in the form of an independent administrative unit. The border region settlements, including the area of today's South-Burgenland, were last united under common authority in the Kingdom of Hungary before the Treaty of Trianon, followed by WWI, which came into force on 31st July 1921. In spite of this, even during the turn of the twentieth century, the border region was not a unified, independent administrative region even under the Hungarian administration. The bigger northern part of the co-operation area belonged to Szentgotthárd-district of Vas county, while its southern part together with other areas to Lendava district.

Since the beginning of the co-operation the **area of the co-operative partners** has not changed. We should rather talk about that it has been successful over time that bigger and bigger proportion of the park areas and the actors thereof have been involved into the common CBC activities in connection with projects or other soft elements.

The Slovenian and Austrian nature park fully cover the settlements that belong to them. Contrary to this, on the Hungarian side, excluding Óriszentpéter, Szalafő and Apátistvánfalva, the inner areas do not belong to the national park, thus we can talk about a mosaic-like "hollow" spatial structure, though, it is still regarded as an intact territorial unit. In the aspect of the national park, two bigger zones are distinguished from the "base area": along the northern river bends of the Raba-valley, as well as the area of the Szentgyörgyvölgy landscape protection area

that has been integrated into the national park in the south-south-west, including those micro regions that belong to the neighbourhood of Kercaszomor and Magyarszombatfa, also to the Slovenian border and Slovenian landscape protection park. Nevertheless, we can say that in the respect of the cross-border co-operation, the compliance with the completeness of the area coverage can be regarded as accomplished, thus, beside the extent of the area, its intactness also positively influences the efficiency of the co-operation.

5. Organisational and institutional structure and operation

The differences and similarities in the organisational structure of the two (three) parties greatly influence their regulatory compliance activities, as well as their own initiatives. Further on, the study will examine that how organisational attributes facilitate or hinder the participation in the cross-border co-operation.

Moreover, it is important to state that this chapter will deal with the matters of organisational and institutional structure together with particular work organisation matters. Since we cannot talk about a common work organisation, henceforward the organisational idiosyncrasies of the parks will be compared to illustrate the differences and similarities.

The Goričko Landscape Park, which is operated from its headquarters in Grad, is given less financial resources to tend to its activities due to its scarcer duties and jurisdictions. In consequence of this, the number of its employees is much fewer than that of its Hungarian partner, only 9-10 employees.²⁷ Within the Órség National Park, with its headquarters in Óriszentpéter, the total 40 employees fill in 43 positions and 29 positions with different scope of activities, whereas in Slovenia only 8 different positions exist. The discrepancy in numbers emerges from the highly developed nature conservation ranger service of the Hungarian side, from the significant number of financial and accounting employees, as well as from the considerable weight of nature management coming from the possession of the land area.

Not only in the number of employees, but also in the number and importance of departments and sections that determine the organisational structure, there are shifts between the two sides. In Goričko there are 4 major organisational units operating, whereas under the national park that deals with Órség and its broader environment there are 9 departments apart from the Directorate. In regard to the single organisational units, on the Slovenian side there is no distinct directorate and the acting Director is Stanislava Dešnik, who alone tends to the tasks connected to the directorate. In contrast with this, on the Hungarian side a directorate of three is in operation with Mr Tibor Markovics. The Órség National Park has its own independent legal and administrative departments, nature management department and application management department. The Órség Land Management Department carries out its activities expressly in Órség.

Henceforward, we will discuss particularly which place the cross-border co-operations take in the work of the organisations, how many people, who, and which organisational units are responsible for the developments.

²⁷ Moreover, after its establishment it employed only one employee and one Acting Director managed the park.

Table 1: The organizational structure of Goričko Nature Park

Position	Name
General employment	
Acting director	Stanislava Dešnik
Nature protection councillor	Janko Halb
Nature protection councillor	Gregor Domanjko
Chief Accountant	Suzana Huber-Sobočan
Business secretary	Nataša Krpič
Group for nature protection and international projects	
Nature protection collaborator	Nataša Moršič
Nature protection supervisors, nature park ranger	
Nature protection supervisor	Kristjan Malačič
Visitor centre	
Nature Park guide leader	Marina Horvat
Nature park guide	Štefanija Fujs

Source: http://www.park-goricko.org/en/informacija.asp?id_meta_type=59&id_jezik=3&id_language=3&id_informacija=271

Table 2: The organizational structure of Órség National Park

Position	Name
Directorate	
Director	Tibor Markovics
Deputy Director, Natural Protection	Jenő Horváth
Deputy Director of Finance	Éva Pál
Legal and Administrative Department	
Secretarial assistant	Judit Varga
Legal adviser	Vilmos Paukovits
Department of Finance and Accounting	
Finance assistant	Tünde Árva
Finance assistant	Judit Holdosi
Finance assistant	Richárd Németh
Finance assistant	Tiborné Pintér
Finance assistant	Mária Véghné Töreki
Tender management department	
Head of department	Csaba Németh
Project manager	Dániel Kovács
Project manager	Miklós Bodoncz
Project manager	Szilveszter Dénes
Department of Nature Conservation	
Head of department	István Szentirmai
Zoological consultant	Ádám Faragó

Position	Name
Forestry Consultant	Márta Havas
Botanical consultant	Mátyás Szépligeti
Geographic Information System Consultant	Andrea Tárczy
Department of Nature Conservation Ranger Service	
Head of department	Tibor Tanner
Head of Natural Landscape Conservation	Mihály Máté
Head of Natural Landscape Conservation	Blanka Kóródi
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Zsófia Szekeres
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Dr. László Jandrasits
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Rita Márkus
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Ágnes Gruber
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Imre Szabó
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Krisztián Harsányi
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Mihály Tóth
Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Education	
Head of department	Albert Kevy
Ecotourism associate	Szilárd Kovács
Eco Tourism Consultant	Ágnes Nagyné Szabó
Land Management Department of Northern Vas County	
Head of Natural Landscape Conservation	Blanka Kóródi
Ecotourism associate	Boglárka Bali
Natural Area Conservation Supervisor	Krisztián Harsányi
Órség Land Management Department	
Head of department	Zoltán Kovács-Mesterházy
Head of the Manor	Gábor Szabó
Agricultural Equipment Operator	Zoltán Pivonka
Maintenance Department	
Head of department	Jenő Horváth
Janitor	Gyuláné Mihály
Janitor	Ferenc Könye
Forester	György Németh
Head of Engine Plant	László Póczak

Source: <http://www.orseginemzetipark.hu/hu/info/segitunk/elerhetosegek.html>

As it we can see it in the tables, none of the parks have employees to deal with cross-border co-operation. This cannot be done due to the size of the staff. In the Órség there is a so called Tender Management Department, whose primary tasks are project writing, project management and the implementation of developments. The department deals with national and other tenders, therefore, it takes part simultaneously in Slovenia-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme projects, international and national projects (predominantly in

sectorial operational programmes), and in projects funded from its own resources.²⁸ In the department under the Deputy Director of Finance four Hungarian persons work; one head of department (Csaba Németh), whose work is helped by three project managers (Dániel Kovács, Miklós Bodonczai and Szilveszter Dénes). The organisational unit was established four years ago that also deals with cross-border development matters. At first, the national park tried entrusting external tender writing companies. However, this system in their opinion was malfunctioning, so they chose to have this task done with their own staff.

In the case of Goričko Landscape Park, mostly the Group for nature protection and international projects deals with cross-border co-operation projects, however, there is no separate person in charge of CBC matters. When the park works on a cross-border project, it hires an employee especially for this purpose. In these cases, to ensure the presence of project administration and experts in scientific research and observation, there is a need for extra employees. Thus, those persons with fixed-term employment are in charge of tender administration. In 2014, three persons in project manager position worked at the organisation, however, after the last project had been realised they left the park. Since the tender had been realised they had to be laid off after three years. Although, the administrative works afterwards are still being carried out, thus their absence has an adverse impact on the co-operation with the Hungarian party. The accounting is taking years, consequently, those sums, which were spent a year and a half ago, still have not been transferred to the accounts of the Slovenian and Hungarian parties. Among the employees in the frame of the landscape protection park there are no cross-border residents. Nevertheless, it is favourable for the cross-border co-operation that a Slovenian lady with Hungarian nationality (Marina Horvat) works for the park.

Last but not least, the organisational resources and opportunities of the Hungarian *Natúrpark* (Nature Park) have to be presented. The Nature Park is more operative than all the other actors and regional development organisations in the region. While due to the statutory obligations from the state, the institutional form of Goričko and Órség is characterised by bigger decision constraints, the Executive of the Nature Park can make decisions more freely (apart from

²⁸ On the basis of the document '2013 Report on the activities of Órség National Park Directorate' in 2014 the following national tasks were tended to by the department:

- Continuing the forest habitat reconstruction activities
- The construction and handover of the Bird Conservation Showroom buildings.
- Furnishing and handover of Research Centre for Nature Tourism in Szőce.
- Closure of development of touristic supplies and products.
- Closure of well drilling, procurement of tools and machines related to the improvement of pasture management.
- Implementation of a cattle barn and its additional facilities.
- Realisation of organisational development

certain strategy questions). Whether the small size of the Nature Park is an advantage or drawback is a matter of perspective. In case a matter of quick reaction is needed to be executed, the Nature Park is the most operative. It is more time-consuming for bigger actors (Goričko and National Park) to reach consensus with those behind them, they are more dependent on the state-regional actors (i.e. from financial perspective as well). In case it is successful, they have a more secure background. The number of colleagues is 3, in the framework of the Natúrpark Nonprofit Kft. that functions as the work organisation of the Nature Park, out of which two participate actively in the development work that incorporates cross-border co-operation.

All in all, because of the organisation structure of Órség National Park, it can accomplish its environmental and nature conservation perspectives with more employees and diverse organisational structure, and it can build relatively broad cross-border co-operations.

Regarding cross-border co-operation, the conditions given by the disparate national regulatory environment are very decisive. The co-operational decision-making of the actors is defined by what kind of tasks, jurisdictions and fields of competence the state level assigns to the organisations.

The management of the Hungarian park with its headquarters in Óriszentpéter, is defined in the modified, consolidated version of the deed of foundation of the Órség National Park Directorate.²⁹ On the basis of the regulation given by the Minister of Rural Development, who is responsible for, among others, nature conservation and environmental protection, the public tasks of the Directorate are the nature conservation public service and the public-authority activity defined in the statute.

The opportunities of the two parks are largely determined by the size of their own assets, and how they can indirectly or directly serve regional development aims. One of the main differences between the two parks is that the Hungarian national park not only assesses, manages, presents the nature conservation areas that belong to it, but also owns ever-growing **asset management** areas. 98% of the areas in its own management - in a remarkably high degree among Hungarian national parks - are treated in the organisation's own benefit. Moreover, the national park's aims to extend its own asset management areas coincide with the Hungarian governmental endeavours. Due to the land purchases, the national park has almost doubled the size of the lands in its own possession and management in the past three years. Thus, before the land purchases, the cultivated land of 3000 hectares in Órség National Park's own management had grown to 6000 hectares. The consequence of this was that in 2012 the Hungarian government relaunched the purchase of agricultural lands under nature conservation. Minister for Agriculture Sándor Fazekas announced in January 2012 in Óriszentpéter, the headquarters of the national park, that 550 million HUF had been

²⁹ <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/kozlonyok/Kozlonyok/12/PDF/2012/36.pdf>

reallocated to accomplish the aim.³⁰ After the launch of the programme in 2012, 636 hectare land, later another 1064 hectares from 950 million HUF funds, in 2013, 456 hectares from 460 million HUF were purchased. In 2014, 480 million HUF were at hand, from which 600 hectare arable land, meadow and forest were purchased or expropriated until the end of the year.

According to the plans, the Órség National Park will be continuing the land purchases in 2015. According to the national park, in order to achieve the necessary nature protection goals as well as decrease the conflicts of interest in the protected areas (including regional development and cross-border initiative conflicts), it is still essential to increase the amount of self-owned territories. By concentrating the fragmented land area of the numerous small, frequently external actors³¹, with fewer partners and stakeholders they have to agree, and accomplish projects that incorporate lighter and bigger areas and have real regional development effects. In the region, the proportion of neglected, degrading grasslands, whose restoration probably will not be undertaken by their private owners, is significant, while in the majority of state forests industrial and profit-oriented management is going on. All these will or can be substituted by the Directorate management aiming at nature conservation. Currently the largest proportion of the areas in asset management is forest (in 2013, 1723 ha, 42.2%), smaller proportion is grass (2012 ha, 24.8%). The national park owns arable lands as well (307 ha, 7.5%).

In the majority of the purchased arable lands fodder is produced for the indigenous livestock by the national park, other parts are converted to meadows, pastures, in the forests selective-cutting forest management will be undertaken, furthermore, there will be areas for rental. These management activities all contribute to the improvement of the budgetary situation of the national park.

Regarding the management classification of the Órség National Park Directorate, it is an independently operating and self-managing budgetary organisational unit. Out of its 10 establishments a total of 7 were built in the area of the Órségi National Park or in its direct proximity.³² These seven establishments are the following:

- Keserűszer Guesthouse, Óriszentpéter
- Office building with a -record office, Óriszentpéter

³⁰ <http://vaol.hu/hirek/jelentosen-novelte-sajat-kezelesben-levo-teruletnek-nagysagat-az-orsegi-nemzeti-park-1667932>

³¹ On the basis what Tibor Markovics said, there was a purchased undivided forest, which was listed under the name of 248 owners, consequently, of course, no professional forest management could/ could have been undertaken. The purchased plots predominantly meant such areas, which were in the possession of producers' cooperatives in the socialist era, then during the privatisation era they were assigned as undivided common possession to their new owners, many of whom were not local actors and no longer lived in the Órség.

³² The inner areas of some settlements (i.e. Szőce) do not belong to the national park, however, are surrounded by protected national park areas.

- Livestock farm, Óriszentpéter
- Engine plant, warehouses, Óriszentpéter
- Órség Folk Monument Group, Szalafő
- Weather Station, Szentgotthárd–Farkasfa
- Moor exhibition site, Szőce

As Stanislava Dešnik, acting Director of Goričko Landscape Park acknowledged, the work of Órség National Park is not as hard as theirs. While the Slovenians have to prod the land owners to sustain the meadows and hay meadows, Hungarians can use authoritative tools, and on their own lands they can efficiently enforce nature and environmental protection perspectives. However, Goričko cannot use force against private owners. It is a difficult task to make less cultivated and less adaptive farmers understand the principle of sustainability and that ecological farming can serve not only nature conservation, but also economic development. In addition to this, the young do not wish to farm in a hillside landscape that has less favourable producing attributes or farm structure compared to the Mura-basin, and consequently provides lower earnings. Resulting from that, there are many abandoned, unused areas without owners, no matter how much the landscape protection park may maintain and reap them up to its limit.

All in all, while the Hungarian side has land areas with its own asset management and utilisation, as well as establishments, the Slovenian side has no own land area and only the headquarters in the Grad castle, the accommodation and visitor's centre are in their possession.

Certain national **regulatory environments** have the biggest influence on the opportunity to have cross-border co-operations. This basically determines the actors' room for manoeuvre. In the region of the Tripoint the Órség National Park has got the most extent nature conservation system, there the conservation area regulations are the most restrictive. Contrary to this, the Goričko can only provide lower level security, since it is not a national park, but a landscape park. If we take into consideration the nomenclature classification of International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN in short), the Órség National Park is classified in category II, that is, an area whose ecological unity is to be preserved for present and future generations; is to be protected against any kind of agricultural and industrial abuse; and where there is every opportunity not only for scientific, but also for educational and leisure activities. However, the Goričko is in IUCN category V and is a so called Protected Landscape/Seascape, that is, such an area whose unity is to be preserved owing to its natural or cultural values. Moreover, the Austrian Naturpark Raab does not belong to any IUCN categories at all.

On the basis of the government regulation 347/2006. (XII. 23.) about the appointments of the organs performing environmental protection, nature conservation, water authority and administrative functions, in Hungary a national park directorate takes care of the following:

- a) tends to
 - aa) tasks related to the nature conservation management of protected and specially protected natural areas, the Natura 2000 areas, as well as to areas and values in the scope of the international environmental agreement, with the exception of those tasks that must be carried out by other organs or natural persons.
 - ab) asset management tasks in respect to the treasury assets under asset management,
 - ac) preparatory tasks related to the jurisdiction of the Minister's local forest and wildlife management plans;
- b) tends to furthermore
 - ba) nature conservation research,
 - bb) creating and sustaining habitats, as well as
 - bc) restoring and rehabilitating damaged and impaired habitats
- c) it keeps records of protected natural areas and natural values on its area of operation, takes care of primary and secondary data collection necessary for keeping records with nature conservation aims, as well as it operates the area monitoring and informational system related to its function, it co-operates with other informational and monitoring systems;
- d) it contributes furthermore
 - da) to forest resource protection activities,
 - db) to the protection of natural flora and fauna (wild and fish species available for hunting, fishing, ancient domestic animal species and types and their gene pools), which are not classified as protected from the nature conservation aspect.
- e) it comments on the regional, county and micro-regional development concept and programme related to priority areas; the concept of spatial planning of priority areas and counties; the local building code and also concepts of urban planning.
- f) it co-operates with the regional offices of the National Office of Cultural Heritage regarding cultural heritage tasks related to the separately defined statute of the Office;
- g) it stays in contact with other organisations that tend to nature conservation management tasks, and natural persons;
- h) it provides help for municipalities in nature protection tasks.

The direction of the park is managed by the Goričko Landscape Park as public institute based in Grad, in compliance with the regulation about the Goričko Landscape Park. The director and the leadership of the park as public-sector employees tend to the following activities:

- prepare the directing plan of the park,
- accept the annual work plan of the park based on the management plan and take care of the implementation of the tasks defined therein,

- constantly follow closely and analyse the condition of natural values, natural variety and diversity of the landscape, as well as make reports on the condition of the park,
- take care of the implementation of protective provisions, nature protection tasks and development guidelines in harmony with the regulation,
- take care of the maintenance of the natural values, refurbishment and protection of the park,
- conclude contracts in connection with the protection of the park based on the nature conservation law,
- co-operate with the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation when drawing up the nature conservation guidelines for the park,
- coordinate and follow closely the research work concerning the park,
- contribute to international projects because of the procurement of the tools necessary for the operation of the park, furthermore, contribute to the introduction and professional research of the park, as well as tend to the implementation of the received projects,
- tend to the introduction of the park, whose aim is to raise awareness of the significance of the park for the public,
- provide access to data about the park and lead the information centre of the park,
- co-operate with the land owners in the park, professionally help them and provide them with advice,
- manage the properties in State possession in the park that are defined in the act of the establishment of the public institute,
- prepare and maintain roads, signs in the park, and the infrastructure necessary upon visiting the park and also assume a leading role in the park,
- take care of natural values or the part of the park open for visitors, in harmony with the management plan of the park,
- tend to other tasks concerning the development and protection of the park.

As it may be concluded from the tasks and jurisdictions mentioned above, the Hungarian side has more complex activities as a result of legal obligations. The Órség National Park has more and wider jurisdiction regarding the nature conservation ranger service, native Hungarian animal species, quasi competent authority-comment functions, as well as the right of ownership. All these (see appendix) from the regional and rural development perspective, provide more favourable legal background for the operation of the organisation. The theoretical and statute opportunities are there on both sides to participate in international co-operations, project developments, however, the very different legal, work organisation, asset management potentials can be based on two different organisation structures, where there is a need to either eliminate or benefit from the discrepancies in the field of mutual exploitation of the border region's territorial capital.

In connection with the legal environment and the personnel, different opportunities can be recognised: while the two parks are in charge of similar-sized areas,³³ and the challenges as well as advantages are very similar, the Órség National Park has had four times more permanent employees. Contrary to this, the Goričko annually has a budget equal to less than half³⁴ (about 46%) of the income from the central budget of the Hungarian national park. It must be added that the Hungarian park receives more funds, but also tends to more tasks, therefore in its own area the results can be more significant.

Thus, the Hungarian party has got more room for manoeuvre. A national park directorate counts as a strong organisation in Hungary with big professional cadre, more infrastructure and relatively significant budget. Due to these it can accomplish much. Moreover, the legal environment confers broad powers on the organisation. Especially the personnel of nature conservation ranger service, which operates as an authority, and the Tender management department are outstanding. Although, due to recent changes a national park is no more a nature conservation authority, but actually the park has the last word in numerous matters.³⁵

The strength of the Hungarian party lies in that it has significantly bigger capacity than the Slovenians, thus they can learn from the Hungarian practice, for example, from the activities of habitat reconstructions and farming on protected areas. In Hungary in recent years billions have been allocated to recover, treat and improve habitats. In contrast, on the Slovenian side slightly none of these exist. They neither have their own area, nor personnel to make these improvements. In this respect, Slovenians are behind Hungarians regarding cross-border cooperation opportunities. The weakness of Goričko is that it has only few legal means compared to a Hungarian national park directorate. Consequently, the Slovenian party can better achieve its goals by communicating with local actors, persuading, encouraging, building a good system of relationships, whereas Hungarians can operate with authority instruments. The communication with local actors can be learnt from the Slovenians, authority instruments and every kind of resources from the Hungarians.

Language matters have great significance in the organisational and institutional structure and operation, as well as which language(s) is/are used as working language by the actors during the communication with Slovenian, Hungarian (and Austrian) partners. Since language challenges greatly determine on what level the Slovenia-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme may be realised as a working relation. The experience shows that there are much

³³ Órség National Park: 43,927 hectares; Goričko national park: 46,200 hectares.

³⁴ Our calculations of the EUR-HUF exchange rate, were based on 310 HUF/EUR rate.

³⁵ It contributes to the necessary Impact estimation procedure in the Natura 2000 areas; to environmental impact assessment common authorisation procedure of environmental use; planning and realising state researches in nature and landscape protection, as well as to organising non-state researches; as expert - in case of seeking out the competent Inspectorate for Environmental Protection, Natural Protection and Water Management - nature conservancy authority, competent authority landscape protection procedures.

more theoretical programmes and projects, since local actors who are responsible for practical realisations do not or hardly speak foreign languages. This greatly determines the cross-border co-operation's possible project partners, contents and its whole method also in the border region of Órség National Park and Goričko. It is relatively hard to find a language that suits both sides of the border region co-operation, so none of the parties fall behind. Therefore, the desirable Slovenian-Hungarian-Austrian tripartite co-operations usually do not have the same strength.

One of the main difficulties of the meaningful co-operations are language difficulties: the tripartite border region belongs to two very different language families (Indo-European and Uralic), it is a confront zone of the Slavic Slovenian, the Finno-Ugric Hungarian and the Germanic German languages. In addition to this comes English as world language, which besides German, is the main relay language, and in the already multilingual environment, it appears as the quasi "obligatory" language when it comes to the assembly of projects. Henceforward, we will discuss it.

As it has been mentioned, we encounter dissimilar language competencies on both sides of the border. According to the experience of the Órség National Park, the Slovenian side speaks German and English sufficiently. Contrary to this, at the national park directorate there is a relatively small number of people who can speak foreign languages daily. This makes communication difficult between Goričko and the senior management, and this was noted by the Slovenian party during the interview for this study. This deficiency is frequently spoken of during personal contacts (for instance, they cannot negotiate with the director neither in English, nor in German etc.).

According to the Hungarian Nature Park's experience, Slovenians prefer German in international relations, Austrians naturally speak German and wish to do so, also Hungarians prefer German, however, primarily it is true for the Nature Park and its Hungarian partners. The Nature Park mostly makes itself understood in German with the Slovenian and Austrian parties.

Along the Slovenian-Hungarian border there are institutions that speak both Slovenian and Hungarian as well. These are typically the representatives of local minorities and their representation of interest and cultural organs. The Hungarian or Slovenian language use is generally not typical in cross-border co-operation. This roots from the small proportion of those who know both minority and majority languages, if we look at the totality of project partners and stakeholders.

Coming to the two main co-operative partners nowadays: between Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park the working language is primarily English, secondarily it is German. The German language skills of the Slovenian partner are better than that of the English, however, Hungarians speak less German, so as a compromise, English remains the solution. In the past it posed an even more serious problem to find the suitable language. Since István Szentirmai, Head of Environmental Conservation Department, has been actively participating in the

communication with the Slovenian partner, they perfectly understand each other. Besides Mr Szentirmai, Miklós Bodoncz (project manager, Tender management department) speaks excellent English, thus there are persons to communicate with. To understand each other, Marina Horvat, head and guide of the Goričko Landscape Park's Centre for Visitors, offers great help; she is from Mostje and is presently living in Murska Sobota. Horvat, member of the Slovenian Hungarian minority, interprets in many cases if the parties do not understand one another, because there is no sufficient funds for an appointed interpreter in each case. The direct and unequivocal communication is hindered when discussions have to be organised including an interpreter. If twenty people sit around a table, it takes hours to agree on project matters after having listened to the interpreter (i.e. project Academy of Crafts).

It would be most effective in the co-operation of the two parks if the projects were monolingual, since numerous problems root from the fact that everything has to be filled in Slovenian as well as in Hungarian. Immense amounts of turmoil result from 'to and fro' translations. Moreover, the parties feel that they pay enormous amount of money in vain for certain translation agencies. There were such translations made by professional translators, which had to be retranslated, since the agencies were not familiar with the terminology. In the Slovenian-Hungarian relation practically there is no appropriate professional translator. Last time in the Butterfly atlas it was eliminated in such a way that the authors wrote the texts in their mother tongue and in English, while experts translated those from English into the respective mother tongues. According to the Hungarian national park, bilingualism should not be forced in the projects.

The regulation of the cross-border co-operation programme poses many problems. Thus, it is recommended that project materials should be simply in English, such as numerous other international tenders (i.e. LIFE, etc.). To accomplish this, partners try to reach the governments of their countries so as to acquire more money to eliminate such problems as translation of materials. The governments are aware that this is a tripoint, but so far there have not been any changes in regulation neither at EU nor country level.

Features effect the cooperation	Goričko Nature Park	Órség National Park
Territory (km ²)	462	439.3
IUCN category	V (Protected Landscape)	II (National Park)
Properties	Grad Castle	own lands and animals
Budget (in EUR)	0.45 million	close to 1 million
Organizational structure	4 units	9 units
Human resources (person)	10 with 8 positions	40 with 29 positions
Mandatory tasks	monitoring, survey and study, protection, presentation and development of the natural and built environment	plus: exercises ownership rights, genetic protection of ancient breeds, responsibility for issuing of permissions for all interventions and land use changes

Source: <http://www.orseginemzetipark.hu/hu/info/segitunk/elerhetosegek.html>, http://www.park-goricko.org/en/informacija.asp?id_meta_type=59&id_jezik=3&id_language=3&id_informacija=271

To sum up, despite the undertaken ambitions the cooperation has not established any joint institution yet, therefore it cannot be discussed any further. While the cross-border nature of the landscape is a strengthening factor, the organisational structures are the ones that weaken the cohesion the most regarding any other weakening factor. Besides the lack of language skills especially on the Hungarian side, it is a problem that needs to be tackled. It is needed to emphasize that due to the fact that regulatory environments vary across borders, many differences can be found in their ability to cooperate regarding properties, budget and so on. All in all, the Hungarian Órség National Park has more roles and responsibilities, allocated funds and so on to carry out its own compulsory and optional tasks, furthermore to actively participate in even cross-border projects.

6. The components of the work organisation

Since the beginning of the cooperation, it has not established its own working organization, only the following cooperation system can be studied (Please find all the other organizational issues in the previous chapter).

Meetings, common idea workshops are inherent to CBC programmes either in one of the Nature Parks, or in the National Park. One of the most significant activities aside from the CBC projects is the mutual, regular and frequent personal communication. Different personal bi-, or trilateral (Naturpark Raab including) meetings/talks, workshops, as well as online (e-mail), and telephone consultations belong here. The latter occurs 2-5 times weekly.

Lately, the bi-, or trilateral meetings have been initiated primarily by the Goričko Landscape Park. The reason for this is that among the three nature park members the Slovenians speak high level German and English, thus they can simultaneously communicate with both Austrian and Hungarian partners. Officially, in accordance with the agreement of 2006, the organisations of the three parks meet at least twice annually. The trilateral talks or workshops (excluding the project talks) occur once or twice every month. It is best to separate workshops and talks. To several workshops and meetings, apart from the experts regarded as employees of the parks, the partners invite the concerned local mayors and, depending on the topic, on occasion some non-governmental organisation representatives, thus expanding the partnership, creating a wider stakeholder group. At these meetings due to the presence of mayors, the questions about settlement level cross-border co-operations and the exchange of experience between settlement leaders are also important. The role of the workshops lies in helping settlement decision makers to see clearly which important elements certain regional actors invest in that are also important from a cross-border perspective. At the talks it is slightly different; there the participants are executive managers, chairs, topic related actors and experts. The topic of cross-border co-operation is always on the actual agenda at the negotiations of executive managers and chairs. Working group talks are a good basis for the alignment of interests and the exchange of expert ideas. An expert meeting does not only mean a round table talk, but also the partners visit the host's best practice facilities, and they get a mutual insight into the exemplary current activities. Both Goričko Landscape Park and Órség National Park applauded those invitations where one of the parties show its accomplishments and the measures leading there, and it is possible to exchange new solution proposals and ideas. The Naturpark Raab, agreeing with the two other parties and deeming the co-operation excellent, commented positively on the trilateral meetings.

We can talk about communication if we narrow down the tripoint nature park to the bilateral Hungarian-Slovenian co-operation. According to the Órség National Park, between Órség and Goričko there are annual regular **meetings** (1-2 occasions). These are thematic meetings where from both sides' competent executives and those responsible for the given topic take part in

the discussion of certain areas of expertise. At the meetings, to the main activity of the participants' joint programmes, suggestions for new projects and their discussion and approval belong. Specifically project co-operations always start with a call for tender, to which everyone has some kind of development ideas in advance. After the call for tender, they meet, discuss and consult about occurring ideas for the sake of regionally harmonised developments.

Although, they "only" occasionally meet in person, talks, that can be viewed as workshops are organised even if there is no actual project in which the actors could be partners. In relation to current matters, for example, if the following month one of the parties happens to organise an event, firstly they get in contact with the cross-border partner via e-mail or phone. One of the parties indicates that some kind of programme is to be organised, while the other party strives to use its own system of relationships to deploy groups and private individuals active in that area. These kinds of communications group around typically tourism policy and event organisation topics.

Recently, the parties have tried to launch an exchange programme, which has not been successful as of yet. This means that the colleagues on one side would spend a week on the other side, during which they would be able to get familiar with the work of the neighbour colleagues.

7. Main areas of activities/profile

Given the fact that the cooperation has not got its own development agency or some kind of institutionalized working organization, most of the main fields of action concentrate on an important aspect of the border situation along the state boundary that used to be nearly hermetically closed both physically and mentally. To be explicit, the main goal is to bring people closer together. This approach, regarding social cohesion, shall not be underestimated in such border area. There was little shared knowledge about each other, subsequently, it hindered any kind of cooperation, not to mention the project level or strategically based ones, nevertheless, mental borders have still remained alive and they have been performing division among people. Since they have a great share among common activities, the study would like to point out the joint activities in the field of events first. After that the projects can be seen as good examples and other important steps in the direction of joint planning, management and implementation will be introduced. We believe that addressing the case of cross-border projects in a relatively long chapter compared to the others is necessary, because through their research, we can identify which cross-border challenges have been dealt with and what kind of projects should be implemented in the upcoming years in order to avoid overlaps and to build on already existing synergies.

Nature conservation areas on the borderline frequently harmonise their programmes, they organise mutual events. Whether the Goričko or the national park has some events (i.e. in Hungary the Pumpkin Festival, in Slovenia the autumn fair) they always invite each other, provide a booth etc.. The common activities, disregarding the actions related to the projects, can be summarized with the following programmes, events and touristic areas:

- Painting competition: involving 1-5 graders from elementary school students in the area, in which all three nature parks participate.
- Nature park quiz: contest for 3-6 graders, in all three countries with the same tasks to learn more about the border region.
- Execution of Common weeks for the students of all three countries: two days in Goričko, two days in Órség, and one day in Raab. The very first trilateral competition was tried in 2014. The youngsters explored the Goričko and the National Park while hiking and travelling in carriages. The programme was very popular with the students, they were really delighted. However, since the co-operation does not have enough funds, they are planning a one-day trip in 2015. The parties do not know how this programme will improve in the future. Contrary to this, the experience has been favourable so far. During the trip there is a chance for kids to meet on the tripoint border, where they can get in touch with three different languages and cultures.
- Nature park meeting: this can be regarded as best example. The Órség–Raab–Goričko Tripoint Nature Park meeting, which is organised on the day of European

Nature parks, offers a local product market, play centres, handcrafting, nature trails, cultural programmes and gastronomic specialities to the local population and tourists. The meeting, beside cultural programmes and fairs, includes traditional peasant olympics, where teams of the countries compete against each other in reaping, tree chopping, and in other areas. The Peasant Olympics, or competition of three countries, and the whole meeting are very popular. The residents of all three countries take part in it in relatively big number, including cross-border guests. The Olympic Games take place with 15 participants, competitors, who come from all three parks. At the end of the competition series, a common award ceremony takes place. The series is mutually organised by the three protected areas, alternating the venues among them. The first games took place in Óriszentpéter, the second one in Goričko last year, in 2015 the Austrian partner is expected to host the games.

- Reaping contest in Selo: Central-European countries, Hungarians and Slovenians as well, compete against each other in traditional manual reaping. In its organisation the Goričko partakes as well, and also the Órség National Park is invited. The national park will be represented - more will participate from its organisation. The national park has its own booth at the event. Due to the presence of the Hungarian minority also, the Hungarian language publications are readily purchased.
- The Órség Pumpkin Festival³⁶: beside the local municipalities the Órség National Park is present as organiser. Primarily the emphasis is on pumpkin contests, pumpkin food tastings and the purchase of local products. Related to this, there are programmes and events also on the Slovenian side, they expect visitors to see the pumpkin exhibition and other programmes in the settlement of Bodonci.
- They frequently organise such trips (in the frame of trekking and bicycle tourings) that touch upon both countries and in whose organisation and execution all three sides actively take part. The Bicycle marathon belongs here starting in September (bicycle tour in three countries) or the trilateral hikings in the Tripoint between Budinci and Orfalu.
- Mutual sign postings: common sign posting of the so called 3 country-bicycle route and the cross-border trekking routes.

³⁶ In 2015, Magyarszombatfa, Nagyrákos, Óriszentpéter, Szalafő settlements will provide the venues.

8. Initiatives related to the first nature park: Projects prior to the establishment of the Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park

With help of Slovenia-Hungary-Austria Phare CBC Programme, operating between 2000 and 2003, the development strategy for the border areas of the three countries was prepared in the Autumn of 1999 (TRI-D)³⁷. The strategy extended to three districts of Burgenland (Güssing, Jennersdorf and Oberwart) and Styria (Feldbach, Fürstenfeld, Radkersburg) in Austria, to the Pomurje region in Slovenia, and to three micro-regions of Vas (Körmend, Órség and Szentgotthárd) and Zala (Órség-Göcsej-Hetés, micro-regions along the Kerka and in Northern-Zala) counties. This meant that such a programme was born that particularly focused on the tripoint region, which integrated the total area of Órség and Goričko into a mutual regional strategy after the demolition of the Iron Curtain. The document that was prepared in the framework of the Regional development strategy in the border region co-operation, pointed out the aims related to the following sectors: transport, infrastructure, border crossing points; environmental and natural energy resources; economic development; tourism; agriculture; industry; human resources and cultural heritage.

The strategy expressly focused on problems that could be solved trilaterally, however, to elaborate on the projects, which could have solved those problems, there were no sufficient funds since the trilateral PHARE programme was a one-time chance only. After 2004 only the bilateral cross-border co-operation programmes continued, by now the strategy has been discarded.

Before the establishment and consolidation of the Órség National Park, the Natúrpark (Nature Park) played a leading role in elaborating on cross-border tourism projects on the Hungarian side. From these co-operations with the Slovenian party we will present one good practice. The Natúrpark Regional Nonprofit Kft. took part as project developer in the call for tender of the Hungary-Slovenia Phare CBC Small Project Fund 2001 in harmony with the Hungarian Slovenian Common Programming Document (2000-2006), developing that from its frame. In the “Tourism management of Órség-Goričko Nature Park”³⁸ project the DRUSTVO Dota was the cross-border partner organisation from Črenšovci. The total budget of the project was 52,000 EUR, the fund was 46,000 EUR allocated by the Phare.

The project wished to facilitate the more efficient management of the region's tourism with the collaboration of the actors representing the cross-border nature park's community

³⁷ http://w3.rkk.hu/nyuti/borderregion/sa/w2_case.pdf

³⁸ Source: http://www.vati.hu/files/sharedUploads/docs/szolven_magyar2.pdf (22-23.o.)

http://www.vati.hu/files/articleUploads/5526/Phare_CBC_1995-2001_tanulmany.pdf

interests. The aim of the project was to extend the touristic supplies and their appropriate presentation of today's Hungarian-Slovenian cross-border nature park (Órség–Goričko). The parties realised that the target area is a cross-border natural area, in whose development strategy, tourism meant first priority. The aim of the project was furthermore to build a cross-border co-operation network. Essentially it realised the touristic measures of the aforementioned cross-border TRI-D strategy. The common control of tourism appeared as a priority area in the area development strategy.

Among the activities, beside the creation of the co-operation's condition system, the realisation of certain model programmes was present. The sample programmes meant long-term traditional touristic events and publications, which strived to establish a common tourism image for the border region.

The ÓrségNet Hungarian-Slovenian and English language touristic database meant continuous international promotion for the region, it contained basic information and practical touristic information. The creation, maintenance and update of the touristic database with the same content were also mutual, which served as a base for the common introduction of the region. Bilingual, Hungarian and Slovenian programme guide and event calendar were released in both countries. Stage setting tools were purchased, making it possible in the co-operation region to present different cultural and touristic programmes. Three touristic events were realised attracting a great number of curious people: Szerek és Porták Fesztiválja, Naturally Órség!, Days of Bloom.

The planned result of the project was that the participating organisations would be able to develop and implement touristic programmes with the help of the project. The planned activities simultaneously aimed at the improvement of tourist information, promoting of the border region and the foundation of a higher quality, harmonised series of programmes. In conclusion, the activities aimed at the cross-border tourism management of the area.

The project also had a ground-breaking role in that the participating regional actors in the area of appearance on the internet, publication editing and event organisation, could get first-hand experience about the benefits of common appearance and programming. This was the first occasion that the Slovenian partner's tourism development activity, which had been going on for years, could intrinsically join the initiatives on the Hungarian side, and vice versa. The results could achieve a kind of multiplying effect, that is, they opened the way for newer and more cross-border relations and touristic co-operations.

8.1 Joint trans-European co-operations

Since their foundation, the National Park Órség and the Goričko Landscape Park, they have participated jointly in one project on trans-European level as Associated Institutions among 23 other institutions. The project was called 'Transnational ecological network', or 'TransEcoNet', shortly.

TransEcoNet – Landscape without borders, implemented through the Central Europe Transnational Programme 2007–2013 with the help of 2.293.617,00 € ERDF contribution out of the total budget, 2.901.082,12 €.

The project was born from the realisation that there are numerous ecologically valuable landscapes in Central Europe that do not fit administrative borders, and whose analysis, treatment and development require cross-border trans-European approach. National parks, landscape protection areas, other national protected areas and EU protected areas, which have natural values, are a really coherent and complex system. The partners wished to react to the fact that the cross-border dimension of ecological networks, which mean natural-geographical units that exist independently from borders, pose an ever-growing challenge due to the fragmentation of habitats and topographic regions caused by human activities.

The **leading partner** of the project was Technische Universität Dresden, Institute of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, Chair of Remote Sensing from Dresden, Germany. 15 **Project Partners** were the following: the German Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development from Dresden and The Saxon Regional Conservation Foundation - National Park Saxon Switzerland Information Centre from Bad Schandau, the Austrian Vienna University of Technology, Institute of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing from Vienna, University of Vienna, Department of Conservation Biology, Vegetation and Landscape Ecology from Vienna, Vienna University of Technology, Institute for History of Architecture and Art, Building Research and Preservation from Vienna and the Austrian League for Nature Conservation Burgenland, the Czech Silva Tarouca Research Institute for Landscape and Ornamental Gardening from Brno, Public Benefit Corporation Bohemian Switzerland from Krásná Lípa and University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem, Faculty of the Environment from Ústí nad Labem and the Polish Karkonosze National Park from Jelenia Góra as well.

Last but not least, one Hungarian (The University of West Hungary, Sopron) and three Slovenian partners took part in the project, Geodetic Institute of Slovenia from Ljubljana, University of Nova Gorica, Faculty of Environmental Sciences and the Regional Development Agency Mura Ltd. from Murska Sobota. The development agency, which has an important role regarding the cooperation of Órség and Goričko, collected and analysed data related to Pomurje region, especially on the Mura River. Moreover, workshops, seminars, exhibitions were implemented as well as a documentary film was produced.

The aforementioned **Associated Institutions** along with the Órség National Park and Administrative Authority of Goričko Regional Park included institutions from Slovenia (The Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts from Ljubljana, Slovenia; University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Civil and Geodetic Engineering from Ljubljana; Kozjanski Park Administration from Podsreda), Hungary (Fertő–Hanság National Park Administration from Sarród) furthermore from Czech Republic (Charles University Prague, Department of Philosophy and History of Sciences from Prague; Czech Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection from Prague; National Park Administration České Švýcarsko from Krásná Lípa; Administration of Protected Landscape Area Labské pískovce from Děčín; National Park Administration Krkonoše from Vrchlabí), Slovak Republic (Poloniny National Park Administrative Authority from Stakčín; WOLF Forest Protection Movement from Tulčík; Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development from Bratislava), Germany (National Park Administration Sächsische Schweiz from Bad Schandau; Administrative Authority of the Biosphere Reserve Oberlausitzer Heide-und Teichlandschaft, from Mücka; Saxon State Ministry of the Environment and Agriculture - Department of Nature Conservation from Dresden; Office for Regional Planning Oberes Elbtal/Osterzgebirge from Radebeul), Austria (Imagno Brandstätter Images from Vienna; National Park Administration Neusiedler See–Seewinkel from Apetlon; ECOVAST-European Council for the Village And Small Town from Vienna), Italy (Università Politecnica delle Marche-DARDUS-Facoltà di Ingegneria from Ancona) and Azerbaijan (National Aerospace Agency from Baku).

In the frames of the ecological network analysis of TransEcoNet, the territory of the Hungarian–Slovenian partners were among the four trans-boundary project regions within the six Central European countries that were in the focus. The border sections and areas of Central Europe were divided into the following four project regions: Northern Project Region, Central Project Region North, Central Project Region South and Southern Project Region, in which the territories of both Órség National Park and Goričko Nature Park were included. The TransEcoNet Southern Project Region incorporated the two protected areas furthermore a wider range of natural landscapes along the border areas of Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. Amongst others these meant the valleys of the rivers Raab, Pinka, Strem in Austria, the Mura River basin, and stretched to the south to the Kozjanski Regional Park and the river Sava in Slovenia along the border to Croatia. TransEcoNet partners from these border areas handled as the territories as one joint cross-border region, and conducted their activities in the previously defined focal areas of Southern Burgenland in Austria, Órség in Hungary, Pomurje and Kozjanski Regional Park in Slovenia. Within the Southern Project Region the partners focused on the mentioned focal areas and investigation areas that had been defined in their respective work package.

A total number of 6 work packages were set up.

TransEcoNet project **aimed** at establishing a comprehensive inventory of the aforementioned trans-European protected areas and protecting the ecological networks, including their both natural and cultural heritage. The partners of TransEcoNet were working towards the following **objectives** in general:

- To elaborate strategies and give recommendations how to develop and manage transnational ecological networks in Central Europe regarding future land use and biodiversity conservation,
- To provide these recommendations to European, national and regional planning authorities, hence fostering a sustainable development of natural landscapes,
- To raise public awareness for natural and cultural heritage of transboundary landscapes,
- To contribute to a better connectivity of European ecosystems like the Alps, the Green Belt and the Carpathians.

The project partners **elaborated**, analysed and assessed parts of the Central European ecological network regarding trans-boundary connectivity and existing gaps; land use changes since the end of the 18th century; ecological functionality of landscapes and services they provide to society and national planning tools, regulations and transnational cooperation initiatives dealing with ecological networks.

Hereinafter, the study lists and presents the major activities which took place either in the Slovenian or the Hungarian side of the protected cross-border area.

Within Work Package 3: Eco-topologies - Inventories of ecological networks

*Action 3.1 Inventory of existing networks:*³⁹ a report related to the inventory of existing networks has been elaborated that deals with the valuation of the connectedness of protected areas across national borders within the TransEcoNet project regions, the definition of core and non-core areas (areas with high respectively weak protection status) and the definition of potential ecological corridors.

Action 3.2 Biodiversity in networks: the final report of this action⁴⁰ studied and summarized the European and national legislation and policies on ecological networks, identified the target species, made an overview of trans-boundary and regional cooperation initiatives in Central Europe and sketched the future options of cross-border and regional cooperation on ecological networks.

³⁹ http://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/fakultaeten/fakultaet_forst_geo_und_hydrowissenschaften/fachrichtung_geowissenschaften/ipf/fern/transeconet/project/folder.2010-04-27.9120262544/Final%20Report_3.1.pdf

⁴⁰ http://tu-dresden.de/die_tu_dresden/fakultaeten/fakultaet_forst_geo_und_hydrowissenschaften/fachrichtung_geowissenschaften/ipf/fern/transeconet/project/folder.2010-04-27.9120262544/Final%20Report_3.2.pdf

Action 3.3 Gaps in ecological networks: the elaborated TransEcoNet gap analysis aimed at supporting a better connection between protected areas through/with the help of the identification of potential ecological corridors and the detection and prioritisation of gaps.

Within the Work package 4: History of ecological networks

Action 4.1 History of ecological networks: the general objective of the action was to visualise the history of landscapes which are part of ecological networks. In the frames of this action, a report on Historical maps of Central Europe has been conducted. In addition, the old maps were vectorised and in order to make the analyses comparable a common transnational map of land use change was initiated.

Action 4.4 Inventory of heritage: In the framework of the collection of non-cartographic documents showing landscape history, the Regional Development Agency Mura cooperated with 10 primary schools of Pomurje, near the border triangle with Austria and Hungary that was one of the focal areas of TransEcoNet. The pupils reviewed the cultural heritage of their home region in several workshops. With help of their grandparents, neighbours and friends, they collected old photos, postcards and pictures showing traditional agriculture in the area, showing the former landscape and also old tools and vehicles which were used. The pupils also interviewed elderly people about the old folk tradition and about the way of life on the Mura River some decades ago. That means tools, tales and myths were collected which relate to the cultural landscape of Pomurje.

Within the frames of Work Package 6, Identities and strategies - Raising awareness

Action 6.1 Perception of landscape change: surveys of oral history have been carried out in the border triangle. At workshops and in studies considering Órség and the Pomurje region, several issues were touched and discussed, like the former and present state of landscapes, the impacts and changes on landscape and a comparison of the situation on both side of the state border.

Action 6.2 Documentary films: Landscape, people and their common history are also documented in form of film recordings in all trans-boundary regions of TransEcoNet. Several film parts reflect certain regional landscape situations and cultural heritage. Such documentary film called Valleys of the Pinka and Raab/Órség/Goričko (AT-HU-SI) was also part of this action.

Action 6.4 Thematic publicity: A number of activities raising awareness of ecological networks are compiled in this action. People should get aware of their regional landscape and its ecological values, natural heritage and cultural identity. In spring and summer of 2011, people could visit two exhibitions on Slovenian cultural heritage implemented within TransEcoNet. The exhibition, titled as "The young days of my grandparents", was set up at three places. Two of them were in the castle of Beltinci and in the castle of Grad, the administration and information centre of Goričko Nature Park. Local schools have compiled materials regarding the cultural heritage of their home region. They investigated landscape situations, working and living

conditions of their grandparents in the early times. With the help of the activities, the children discovered the life in the early times and they became aware about contrasts the old and the new/current way of life. The Slovene project partners of TransEcoNet, the Regional Development Agency Mura, the University of Nova Gorica and the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia worked closely together with the Goričko Nature Park in order to organise these series of exhibitions.

Additionally, the first interview-workshop took place in Órszentpéter, Órség, Hungary on 22 July 2010.⁴¹ At the workshop, the majority of the respondents, many mayors from different settlements from Órség and the representatives of the Órség National Park gathered together. The study presentation was followed by a public forum where the facilitators tried to find a common solution for the problems of the landscape and people regarding Órség, together with the aforementioned participants including local inhabitants, decision makers and the representatives of the National Park. During the meeting, the following questions were being discussed:

- What kind of future do you want to for the landscape in Órség and what role could you play with your own activity in that?
- Seeing the past, do you see any possibility to harmonize the farming and the nature conservation?
- How would be possible to start/improve the communication between the stakeholders, local people in the region (forestry, regional planners, local governments, green authority, national park)?

Firstly, the participants had to answer these questions in small groups, and after the group discussion, the questions were openly discussed together. This forum, aimed at conserving the landscape, can be seen as an important step and as a Hungarian-side model towards establishing and organizing a forum/platform where all affected people and stakeholders have the possibility to participate and cooperate in long term.

To sum up, TransEcoNet, which was carried out from January 2009 until July 2012, **contributed** to the pan-European inter-linkage of valuable ecosystems and to a sustainable cross-border territorial development and it tried to reach an improved/informed public awareness of ecological networks. Therefore, it can be seen as a real good example on how the cross-border protected landscapes with rich natural and cultural heritage can be developed jointly.

⁴¹ <http://transeconet.nyme.hu/index.php?id=18776>

8.2 Green Belt Initiative

Two projects, in which the Nature Park Goričko took part as a project partner on transnational level, were all based on the European Green Belt Initiative. At the beginning of the introduction of the initiative, there is a need to discuss its importance. The idea of a European Green Belt based on the German Green Belt was articulated by the Friends of the Earth (BUND), Germany and the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) for the first time in 2002. The first scientific meeting, seen as the start of the initiative, took place in 2003. This happened in parallel with the establishment of the Hungarian Órség National Park, only few months earlier than the establishment of Goričko Nature Park in Slovenia as part of the three country nature park Goričko-Raab-Órség in the border triangle with Austria and Hungary.⁴²

Countries which have signed the Declaration of Intent in 2013 on the European Green Belt until now are: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.⁴³ Slovenia and Hungary participate in one of the four organizational regions of the Initiative together with Germany, the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Italy and Croatia.

The European Green Belt Initiative focuses on the areas that once were separated by a frontier known as the Iron Curtain. Because of the restricted access and the strong former barrier, a unique biodiversity has kept and evolved along the border zones. It is important to note that a line which performed separating functions, but after the dissolution of the former Eastern bloc and together with the European integration process can act as a unifying element of Europe's natural environment since.

By following a course of which large sections were part of the so called Iron Curtain, the border between East and West, one of the most divisive boundaries in history, the European Green Belt symbolizes the European effort for joint cross-border activities in nature conservation and sustainable development. Moreover, the initiative aims at better harmonising human activities with natural environment and at increasing opportunities for the socio-economic development of local communities. In accordance with the vision behind it, the European Green Belt offers the chance to take one of the world's leading symbol of human division and transform it into a model for future nature conservation in Europe.

Cross-border conservation projects contributed to the integration of communities across administrative state boundaries too. Besides the promotion of increased understanding between East and West, between old and new EU member states and candidate countries, the Belt also explains the need for nature conservation to the general international public.

⁴² http://www.europeangreenbelt.org/fileadmin/content/downloads/the-initiative/Fact-sheet_EGB.pdf

⁴³ http://www.europeangreenbelt.org/fileadmin/content/downloads/Declaration-signed-04-09-2013_with_Slovak_Republic.pdf

Owing to EU funding and support from the adjoining countries on the regional and national levels, the stakeholders along the Green Belt have been engaged in implementing two multinational projects. The projects' main aims are to protect the Green Belt as an ecological corridor and memorial landscape, to develop trans-boundary cooperation and to promote sustainable regional development.

The first project in which the Goričko participated was project CADSES Interreg IIIB **Protection and Valorisation of the longest Habitat System in Europe (abbreviation: GREEN BELT)**, with the duration between April 2006 and May 2008. The project partners along with Logarska dolina d.o.o., Solčava and the Nature Park Goričko were the Association for Rural Development in Thuringia, Erfurt as Lead Partner; BUND - Friends of the Earth Germany, Erfurt; Thuringian Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Environment, Erfurt; University of Applied Science Erfurt; Institute of Systems Biology and Ecology, The Czech Academy of Sciences, České Budějovice; Oziveni-Bohemian Greenways, Prague; Hnutí Duha, Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, Brno; Institute for Nature Conservation Austria in cooperation with the Austrian League for Nature Conservation, Graz; Austrian League for Nature Conservation Burgenland, Eisenstadt; Slovak Environmental Agency, Banská Bystrica; Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, Bratislava; Hungarian Cyclist Club, Budapest; Castanea - Society for Environmental Protection, Sopron; ETP Foundation – Sustainable Development Projects, Sofia.

The vision of the GREEN BELT was to facilitate the transformation of the former “death belt” into a green “life line” by focusing on the use of the natural potential of the project region to foster a sustainable economic development. GREEN BELT elaborated pilot studies in the fields of traffic, tourism, regional marketing and education. The project also aimed at improving the communication between the people once separated and at raising the awareness that nature protection can be compatible with sustainable regional development. The main **results** included:

- Contribution to a sustainable trans-national Green Belt networking for the protection and valorisation of the longest habitat system in Europe,
- Feasibility studies on the topics “Gap analysis of the Green Belt”, “Sensitive traffic development”, “Involvement of the local population into Green Belt tourism”,
- New common corporate design of the Green Belt initiative: website, printed material and mobile exhibition and leaflet "Central European Green Belt" in seven languages
- Green Belt workshops for stakeholders on the local, regional and national level
- Pilot projects: Signposting of thematic cycle trails and an adventure hiking-trail in selected areas along the Green Belt⁴⁴

⁴⁴ http://www.park-goricko.org/dokumenty/52/2/2011/greenbelt-slo2-web_722.pdf

In the followings, the study deals with the most important activities and results of the project regarding the cross-border cooperation of three borders.⁴⁵ The project activities included the 3rd Green Belt Workshop, held between 24th and 26th August 2006 in the centre of Goričko, Grad. A European Nordic Walking Path has been designated with three milestone-like information tables on the territory of Goričko (at castle Grad, municipality of Cankova and the Tripoint) that now connects the Slovenian side with Austria and reaches the Hungarian border. On 9th October, 2006, an information stone of the European Green Belt was erected, which was the first in the line of the former Iron Curtain stretched from the Barents to the Black Sea. Nature Park Goričko has become an integral part of the way to form a necklace of protected areas along the northern Slovenian border with other protected areas in Slovenia and Europe. A so called walk passport was issued in which a tourist can mark the places what were visited so far along the border. The whole project for Goričko was mostly based on the project Nordic Walking on Green Belt by the help of the Phare, Slovenia–Austria 2006. The project results included the creation of co-worker expert network, common corporate design, web page in 8 languages, a Calendar, a brochure about the Slovenian/German greenbelt and video interviews about the everyday life during the highest isolating performance of the Iron Curtain, etc.

Other activities were mostly focused on the intention on strengthening social cohesion among once hermetically separated people on different sides of borders. A video interview called “Attention! State border” was created. Village theatre plays were all based on stories about crossing the border. Public events such as walking days (e.g. trilateral hiking to the border stone, walk between Budinci, Slovenia and Orfalu, Hungary) and swimming were organized with the explicit intent to contribute to the dissolution of mental borders. From the point of view of the cooperation with the Hungarian side, the designation of a cyclist circle road between Budinci, Andovci, Čepinci and Orfalu in Hungary had great importance.

The other project dealt with the European Green Belt, it was called as **“Promoting the ecological network in the European Green Belt” (short form: GreenNet)**. It lasted from April 2011 until March 2014. The total budget of the project, implemented through the Central Europe Programme co-financed by the ERDF, was 1.953.143 EUR, out of which the ERDF contribution was 1.498.538,05 EUR.

The **partnership** was consisted of the Lead partner Association for Rural Development Thuringia and partners as follows: Nature Park Goričko, BUND-Project Office Green Belt; Friends of the Earth Germany, Austrian Institute for Nature Protection and Landscape Ecology Styria, Ametyst - Environmental Protection Association (Jihozapad, CZ), Regional Environmental Center, Country office Slovakia (REC Slovakia), C.E.T.A. - Centre for Theoretical and Applied Ecology (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, IT), University of Applied Science Erfurt (Thüringen, DE), University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences Vienna, IRUB (Wien, AT), Austrian League of Nature

⁴⁵ http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/conf/conference/110322-CNF/presentations/43_Desnik.pdf

Conservation Lower Austria (Wien, AT), Regional Management Burgenland GmbH (Burgenland, AT).

The project aimed to support and strengthen policies, strategies and approaches to safeguard the ecological network of the Green Belt. The further enhancing of nature protection in the Kučnica/Kutschenitza–Mura Rivers along the Slovenian–Austrian border, which was one of the six chosen GreenNet pilot regions, was aspired by applying local and regional tools, instruments and strategies to enhance nature protection, civil participation and public awareness. The project contributed to the development and implementation of a joint transnational strategy for management. Other main topics are political lobbying on EU- and national level as well as the scientific networking on Green Belt issues. In details:

- a common transnational methodology defined regional goals and landscape quality objectives for the pilot regions, precisely the following possible fields of action for the Kučnica/Kutschenitza–Mura pilot region:
 - Collection and evaluation of water ecosystem data for joint water management and,
 - management plan of Nature Park Goričko,
 - Collection and evaluation of spatial data for spatial plans using by communities,
 - Communication with relevant stakeholder,
 - Suggestions for water management,
 - Revitalization with purchase of habitats/biotopes,
 - Suggestions for funding extensive land use,
 - Work with media,
 - Raising awareness.
- A GIS tool has been elaborated in order to visualize and evaluate the data collected during regional surveys and inventories,
- transnational benchmarking of tools and instruments for nature conservation,
- development of tools for safeguarding ecological networks,
- transnational management and protection strategy,
- “Charta of the Green Belt”, comprising of a common transnational management strategy and GreenNet toolboxes,
- promoting the European Green Belt as World Heritage.

8.3 Mutual cross-border co-operation projects

The border region's two main actors, the Órség National Park and Goričko Landscape Park, have realised two mutual projects so far, in which both participated as project partners. The former was the Landscape in Harmony project, the latter the Upkač/Magas fák gyöngyei (English: Pearls of high trees), and both were realised within the framework of the Slovenia-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013. Henceforward, we will focus on these two projects.

The **leading partner** of the project 'Sustainable use of Natura 2000 habitats along the Slovenian-Hungarian border', shortly Landscape in Harmony project (SI-HU-1-2-012), was the Órség National Park Directorate itself. This was the first CBC project - proving the bigger project management capacity compared to that of Goričko - that was successfully implemented by the lead of the national park. Among the partners on the Hungarian side were also the Slovenian Minority Local Government of Apátistvánfalva Settlement (AÖK), on the Slovenian side the Goričko Landscape Park, Prlekija Development Agency (PRA) that deals with the majority of project management matters, as well as the Ecological Centrum SVIT (ECS).

Therefore, in the development and realisation of the project five partners took part. The Órség National Park Directorate, as the nature conservation manager of the Órség Natura 2000 area, carried out the co-ordination of the project, harmonized and continuously checked the work of the partners. Accomplishing the sustainable use of the habitats on the Órség Natura 2000 areas was its priority task. The Goričko Landscape Park was responsible for the nature conservation management of the Goričko Natura 2000 area, the Prlekija Development Agency for the improvement of the Mura Natura 2000 area. The partners wished to contribute to find a common solution for cross-border intact Natura 2000 area's nature conservation problems. The two nature conservation organisations and the PRA contributed to the project with their knowledge in ecosystems and sustainable agriculture. The main task of the ECS, as ecological product developer, was to develop and promote nature-friendly agricultural products. The AÖK contributed to the project by the nature-friendly management of valuable habitats in its area, and by mediating the interests of the Slovenian minority. During the realisation of the project, it meant an advantage that the partners had had previous cross-border co-operations, and experience in implementing similar tenders (Phare CBC, Interreg IIIA, LIFE Nature).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Source:

https://www.google.hu/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCUQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonp.nemzetipark.gov.hu%2F_user%2Fbrowser%2Ffile%2Fprojekte%2Folyamatban%2Fprojekt%25C3%25B6sszefoglal%25C3%25B3_hun.doc&ei=BXjPVID8K8GqU-mng5gE&usg=AFQjCNEp7p7bamjiBE5r4tahCx3f8Q5elg&sig2=uldZcxrPAwDQgP3YFCsYMQ&bvm=bv.85076809.d.d24

The project's implementation period was from 2009 to October 2012. The total cost of the project was 1 317 193,66 EUR; the total obtained public funds 1 251 333,93 EUR, and the first cost 65 859,73 EUR. The obtained ERDF sum was 1 109 300,99 EUR, thus the fund supported 85% of the overall cost.

The justification of the project was that the three Natura 2000 areas, which comprise the project's target area, represent a unified natural region, their natural values essentially are identical and are in connection with each other. Due to this, the nature conservation activities in the areas of Órség, Goričko and Mura have an impact on the habitats on the other side of the border, they require a unified, cross-border management. The partners realised that the alliance of the three areas gives a greater chance to eliminate the problems.⁴⁷

It is still true that the common nature conservation challenges and harmful, in many cases hardly reversible procedures in the areas can be summarized as follows:

- The decrease of agriculture, especially the total disappearance of animal husbandry, endangers the rich natural heritage. With the decrease of pastoral farming the most valuable grassland habitats are in danger.
- The abandoned meadows are overgrown with weeds, and in long decades they were exposed to forestation, in consequence of which, the majority of the flora and fauna (for example orchids, butterfly species) have disappeared.
- The transformation of grassland into arable land.
- The disappearance of grassland habitats and along with this, the extinction of the ecosystem there, the decline of biological diversity.
- On the not abandoned, still agriculturally cultivated lands, the spurt of intensive arable land cultivation, and in respect of ecological advantages, spread of incorrect management practice.
- The included homogeneous forests and pine plantations have been significantly extended over the last 200 years, disappearance of mixed oak-beech stands, intense use of forests and clear-cutting instead of selection cutting and complex traditional use of forests (pasturing, gathering, woodcutting etc.)
- The appearance of extensive monocultures that are not characteristic of the area and go against topographic and soil characteristics, causes the pollution of potable water and deterioration in life conditions, besides the spread of agriculture inherent in chemical input and fertilization, and the disappearance of protected natural values.
- The incorrect management related to the farmers' lack of awareness

⁴⁷ Source of point ¹

- With the deterioration of the agriculture, the area has plunged into an economic crisis, unemployment has grown, standards of living has dropped and all this gradually appeared along the border.⁴⁸
- The one-dimension of the traditional mosaic-like landscape structure, the disintegration of farming forms adjusted to the landscape features, and in general the degradation of the landscape, all effect adversely the quality of life of the local population and the touristic potential.

In consequence of these, the project aims at the contribution to sustainable land use, spreading nature-friendly agricultural methods, as well as promoting the habitats and protected species of cross-border areas. Grasslands, their treatment and preservation were given particular attention. Farmers, the local population, visiting tourists and experts comprise the **target groups**.

The overall aim of the project was the preservation of the biological diversity of Natura 2000 network by developing a sustainable landscape use model based on the natural, economic and social advantages of the target area. The target system breaks down as follows:

- The assessment of the potential of the landscape utilisation that preserves biological diversity in the Natura 2000 areas of Órség, Goričko and Mura.
- Mapping out the Natura 2000 habitats, plants and diurnal butterflies of the areas,
- Assessment of economic and social relations, as well as farming and nature conservation opportunities.
- Development of new agricultural and touristic products,
- Enhancement of products' commercial viability by establishing a local trademark,
- Development of a common criteria system of nature-friendly farming, communicating it towards farmers, introduction of "green point" system,
- Preservation of biological diversity by realising sustainable land use,
- Procuring machines suitable for nature conservation management of the grasslands, and establishment of milk processing facility,
- Reconversion of arable lands to grasslands, their treatment,
- Promoting the habitats and sustainable use of Natura 2000 areas,
- Preparing tourist guide books that present the habitats, plants and diurnal butterflies of the Órség, Goričko and Mura Natura 2000 areas,
- Preparing and spreading publications and games that introduce nature-friendly farming.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ <http://landscapeinharmony.eu/hu/projekt-bemutatasa/a-projekt-hattere/#a-projekt-hattere>

⁴⁹ Source of point ¹

During the project, the natural, economic and social potentials of the three concerned Natura 2000 areas. The Natura 2000 habitat map of the border region was prepared, the vegetation mapped out (on 60 000 ha), so were the priceless diurnal butterflies of the area (on 90 000 ha), out of which a Butterfly atlas was compiled. The reason for the assessment of the diurnal butterflies was that they are apt indicators of the grassland's ecological condition. The vegetation's assessment took place with habitat-mapping, which was conducted in the whole area of Órség and Goričko. During this, the habitat types were differentiated, the occurrence of protected plants recorded, and a Geographic Information System database established.

Beside natural values, the economic and social relations were analysed, the situation, opportunities and demands of the local farmers were taken into account. Furthermore, opportunities of sustainable land use were assessed among the population. On the basis of the assessments, a sustainable landscape use model was prepared, which determined the directions of the area's development, showing guidance to local farmers and political decision makers, determining future development directions. The guidelines of the nature-friendly farming were determined, and a guide was prepared for the farmers, which were presented at forums. Besides, the opportunities for animal husbandry development were assessed, and they developed a plan to make four model farms flourish. By presenting the model farms they wished to achieve the spread of best practices and examples with the project.

Special emphasis was put on local product development and its promotion. In its framework, to encourage the production of ecological products they established a small milk processing facility (in Ratkovci), where cheese and other dairy products are produced from local milk, while cattle contribute to the sustenance of grasslands. "Green point" system (assesses the locality of the product and its effect on the environment) was introduced to evaluate farming. Furthermore, they provide the farmers who farm in a nature-friendly way with a local trademark, in order to help local products reach the market, and encourage farmers to use nature-friendly production methods.

Guidelines for nature-friendly grassland farming were developed, which were propagated on more forums. Thus, boards and posters were made, tourist guide books were printed, which served to bring natural values of the areas closer. These present the most significant habitat types, protected plant species, as well as diurnal butterfly species. In general, these were prepared in three languages in respect to the border region. With the multilingual publications they encouraged and promoted the sustainable land use and nature-friendly farming methods.⁵⁰ A nature documentary was shot covering this topic, which presents the natural values of the area, the past and present of its grassland framing, also with informational purpose. For the project a website was also created, whose main task is to propagate the

⁵⁰ Source of point ¹ + <http://landscapeinharmony.eu/hu/projekt-bemutatasa/projekttevekenysegek/#projekttevekenysegek>

informational materials, documents, which were made during the project, to the widest possible range of people. A board game was also created, which also serves to promote nature-friendly grassland farming. Its name is 'Gazdálkodj természetesen' (Economize naturally), in which you win if you economize your meadows the best possible way so the most flowers, butterflies and birds find their habitats. Apart from all these, four grass management machineries were purchased and these are used for grassland maintenance purposes. Last but not least, a cross-border educational trail was made during the project,⁵¹ therefore, interactive signposts have been placed in Kercaszomor (2 locations), Velemér, Szalafő–Felsőszér, Óriszentpéter–Keserűszer, Kondorfa, Bukovnica, Kobilje (two locations), Gibina, Selo, Gornji Petrovci and Dolenci. The educational trail presents nature-friendly grassland farming methods and draws attention to correct reaping techniques and times, as well as it introduces which protected species can be saved by keeping to these perspectives.

The biggest achievement of the project is the sustainable landscape model, which solves the preservation of biological diversity by taking economic and social opportunities into consideration, and building on the landscape advantages, it also has economy and tourism development effects. The partners hope that the future development of the area can be based on this model. Resulting from the project, new agricultural products were created and their popularity grew with producers and consumers. The agriculture's nature-friendliness slightly intensified, the communication between nature conservationists and farmers improved, and also did the conflict management between agriculture and nature conservation. The nature conservation management of grasslands of at least 200 hectares and the preservation of its diversity have been solved with the procurement of new machines. The natural values of Natura 2000 habitats have become more popular due to the publications.⁵²

It is important to note that, though, the project has been finished, the partners keep working for the preservation of the border region, which is rich in natural values, and for the facilitation of sustainable farming in harmony with nature.

Prior to the closure of Landscape in Harmony, in 2011 the realisation period of the project Magas fák gyöngyei (Pearls of high trees), or project Upkač, started (project number: SI-HU-2-2-013), which ended in 2014. As it has been referred to, the project was also realised within the Slovenia-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, with the only difference that the documentation was submitted in a later call for applications. In this project the leading partner was the Mura Development Agency, besides the DOPPS BirdLife Slovenia, Szlovén Vidék Gazdaságfejlesztési és Szolgáltató Kft. (Slovenian Countryside Economic Development and Service Ltd.) in Hungary, the Órség National Park Directorate and Goričko Landscape Park participated as project partners.

⁵¹ <http://www.patkosstudio.hu/tanosvenyek/46/harmoniaban-a-tajjal-termeszetbarat-gyapgazdalkodas>

⁵² Source of point ¹

The budget of the project turned out as follows: the obtained ERDF sum was 1 008 699,33 EUR, the overall obtained public funds were 1 186 705,12 EUR, the overall cost was 1 338 004,48 EUR; the first cost was 151 299,36 EUR.

More factors justified the project. These factors group around the preservation, potential economic utilization and making a local product of orchards' rich biocenoses (biological communities) The so called hay meadow orchards, which are rich in species and have a unique farming form, pose a challenge since the majority of orchards have been destroyed, parts of existing ones are unattended to, there are many neglected and abandoned areas. The partners strived to save their genetic values and characteristic biocenoses. The partners recognised that in consequence of the danger of the orchards' disappearance, the preservation of meadow orchards and their farming are an important nature conservation and social task. They pointed out that the preservation of hay meadow orchards should be higher priority in the Goričko and Órség National Park, since these habitats and the related farming provide the indispensable interrelated mechanism of the border region, and the subsistence of landscape and local society.

The main objective of the project is the long-term and systematised preservation and sustenance of the biological diversity of hay meadow orchards, as well as the assurance of the border area's economic and social development (exploitation of economic opportunities, reduction of emigration). The objectives of the project can be summarized as follows:

- Development of local products: the revival of traditional hay meadow together with fruit cultivation, reviving and tending to abandoned orchards, as well as helping farmers with that,
- Revitalisation of hay meadow orchards in critical condition: renewal of the area of the remaining hay meadow orchards, as well as establishing new hay meadow orchards so as to preserve the habitats on the long-run,
- Making farmers interested in the renovation, cultivation, maintenance of the abandoned orchards,
- Establishing a co-operation in the future that provides exchange of information and experience between centres with similar perspective in the border region,
- The establishment of integrated and proactive communication between those who deal with the renovation of hay meadow orchards (founding the association of borderline fruit-processors) and of cross-border partner networks,
- Establishment of a training network in the target groups of the project area (in order to gradually spread the knowledge acquired during the project, in the border areas),
- Preservation of the cultural and farming heritage of the border area with special attention to the Slovenian minority in Hungary that forms a part in the project.

The target group of the project primarily consisted of local farmers and fruit cultivation experts, since the success of these kind of projects and that of the future of hay meadow orchards

depends on the engagement of these two groups. Besides them, the target groups consisted of local residents and tourists in relation to the sales of local products from the different fruit trees.

In the frame of the project numerous **activities** were carried out, henceforward, these and the accomplished useful results will be presented in the study. Firstly, the seeking out and collection of plant and animal species in the orchards of the border region took place, from which a unified digital database was created. Apart from these, the procurement of tools (i.e. scythes, saw, ladders etc.) necessary for the maintenance of the areas took place. A machinery fleet has been established in Felsőszölnök. This meant a purchase of one tractor and several types of machineries from the project sum.

The renovation of existing orchards (i.e. in Felsőszölnök) was also part of the project, this was carried out in more orchards, mainly with the guidance of experts from Maribor. There were many old and dry branches on the previously ill-treated trees, which have been cut, and by preserving the young twigs, they have made the trees fertile again. During the project, producers received saplings and by planting them they could renew the tree population, which also helped the sustenance of hay meadow orchards.

In Felsőszölnök, in the frame of the project, the Alma-lak (Apple-house) was built on the purchased plot whose edifice primarily provides room for apple processing produced in the orchards. Thus, it was an important step in the preservation of traditional apple cultivation to hand over a new fruit juice producing small plant. It has been possible since 2014 for farmers to take their products there so fruit juice can be made to be sold later, while sustaining traditional landscape management and unique habitats. It is important to note that the range of products can be extended: not only apple, but also pear can be processed in the plant, and later on more unutilised by-products (pomace) can be used to make vinegar or pálinka. This processing procedure has been mastered by many locals so they can prepare fruit juice without external help. With these they would have liked to encourage locals so in time fewer abandoned, unattended area would be in the region and a living, attractive, well-working landscape would come into existence.

The Open Hay Orchards Network has been established, and by joining that, farmers are to present their orchards to interested guests and allow the purchase of fruits and products made from them. The orchards joining the network receive a unified signboard, and the national park directorate makes them known by giving away free common publications with maps and putting them on its website. The centre element of the network constitutes the tasting facility and the orchard, which presents the rarest local fruit types, as well as the habitats of hay orchards, all in Óriszentpéter–Keserűszer. In the house it is possible to taste local fruit products (dried fruits, juices). Besides this, in the orchards of the national park and the farmers who joined the project bird and bat holes have been placed to preserve the local unique biocenoses (plant communities).

The long-term preservation of the ancient fruit types' genetic value necessitates the storing of their samples even at the lowest security risks possible. It is guaranteed by the Csörgőalma Gyümölcsöskert (Queening Orchard), which is independent from private farms, is in stable State possession, operates in the asset management of the national park directorate, and was realised within the project. They established the appropriate infrastructure of the orchard, where there are relaxing pavilions tables, benches, information boards, bicycle racks, as well as fences and gates fitting the landscape. To cover the sustenance works of this orchard, grass managing machineries were procured.

In the centre of Goričko Landscape Park and Órség National Park one office has been established respectively, which works on the renovation and preservation of hay orchards and their habitats. During the project, it was possible to acquire professional knowledge and raise awareness in relation to hay orchards. For the sake of preserving habitats, educational encouragement of the project participants and others responsible was undertaken. They held nature days, made publications, organised events (workshops, round table talks, presentations, counselling, seminars, conferences) for the sake of suitable farming methods. It has to be particularly emphasised that in the cross-border region fruit producers and fruit processors were able to take part in workshops. Last but not least, they created thematic routes.

The result of the project was that the sustainable and systematised preservation of the habitats became possible, along with the possibility for the wider economic development of the border region with cross-border regional development perspective. In consequence of the realisation of the project, the chances of the hay orchards' survival have immensely increased, and by educating correct treatment to farmers it is possible to preserve their habitats. By promoting the products made in the orchards, farmers have better chances to sell their products.

The increase of the abandoned and later reused hay orchards' natural values was characteristic during the project, and by their correct treatment and long-term sustenance it will be successful to preserve and protect rare and priceless tree types, habitats, protected plant and animal species. Due to the successful preservation and sustenance of natural areas, economic co-operation and the exchange of experience have increased, regarding the production and sales of ecological commodities. Awareness was raised successfully in many farmers that for the sake of economic exploitation of hay orchards with long-term farming, it is expedient to establish suitable mechanisms and infrastructure, in many places this has happened. Parallel to this, the spread of hay orchards' significance took place in public, among local residents.

The project contributed to the exploitation of the development opportunities of nature-friendly farming, as well as to the added value increase in the economy. These activities, in case they constitute a long-lasting, complex, self-enhancing system, can favourably affect the population retention capacity on the long run through the preservation of landscape values, as well as the workplace and value creating effect of landscape farming, which can utilise those values in a sustainable way.

8.4 CBC projects carried out by the Goričko Nature Park

With the active partnership of the nature park, altogether five projects financed by the CBC Programme were put into action since the foundation of the organisation.

In the framework of the Slovenia–Hungary Cross-Border Operational Programme 2007–2013, apart from the already mentioned two joint projects, four projects got financed by the partnership with Goričko but without Órség National Park. These mainly focused on craft traditions and local handicraft products as well as on cultural, people-to-people kind of activities serving the strengthening of social cohesion.

In the framework of the Slovenia–Hungary Cross-Border Operational Programme 2007–2013 a total of five projects were carried out. Apart from Goričko, **partners** taking part in the project “Academy of Crafts” (abbreviated as AC), led by the Municipality of Veržej, were the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training; Hegypásztor Kör; Martineum Roman Catholic Foundation; Regional Museum of Murska Sobota; Pomelaj, the Rural Development Cooperative; Prlekija Development Agency; Directorate of the Museums in the Parish of Vas - Savaria Múzeum; Society of Folk Art in the Parish of Zala and Institution of Marianum Veržej - The DUO Centre.

The project was put into action between 15 July 2009 and 14 July 2012, the obtained ERDF fund amounted to EUR 758,362.56, the proportion of the financial contribution was 85 percent, the total public contribution was EUR 879,159.64, the total cost was EUR 892,191.25 and the first cost was EUR 13,031.6.

The fact that in the case of some trade related to craftsmanship, the number of craftsmen who could transfer their knowledge to the newer generations is trifling, was noted as the **ground** of the project. For that very reason, addressing all those target groups to whom this knowledge could be successfully transferred is important, particularly on account of knowledge and experiences going down to posterity.

The **objectives** of the project among others were to keep alive the traditional rural trades as well as to transfer the knowledge of the already forgotten ones and to elaborate new and innovative forms of training in connection with them. The main aim was to establish an interdisciplinary international centre, namely the Academy of Crafts, dealing with informational education and training on account of the new craft products and services. Hereinafter the study presents only those activities in detail which were carried out either in the Órség or Goričko part of the cooperation area or by the active participation of Goričko Nature Park.

Goričko Nature Park contributed largely to the survival of rural trades since a wide variety of craft workshops (weaving mills and potteries) were set up under its leadership. It also held potter and weaver training programmes connected to the workshops beside organising one-day workshop programmes for children on three occasions. The nature park created travelling shows presenting six trades (waver, feltmaker, spinner, thatcher, potter, blacksmith) as well as

flyers and brochures related to them. All the undertaken activities, in the framework of the Nature Park project were carried out mainly in Grad and in Prekmurje.

The aim of the Directorate of the Museums in the Parish of Vas - Savaria Múzeum in the eastern part of Órség and Zala County was the examination of craft heritage and still existing handicraft trade that can still be found.

AC projects had a significant role in the long-term preservation, revivification and development of handicraft trade and industry, thus attractiveness of the cross-border area increased and cooperation between partners working on both sides of the border, craftsmen, local communities, educational and cultural institutions as well as external experts also got stronger. Transfer of knowledge and experience on cross-border level was attained, which can support the realisation of new projects in the future. By close collaboration of partners, tourism service providers and craftsmen a unified and rich supply of tourism services based on craft features could be created on both sides of the border.

„Academy of Crafts 2” (abbreviated as AC 2) was carried out as the second part of the project with roughly the same **partners**.⁵³ The project was put into action between 15 July 2011 and 14 July 2014, the obtained ERDF fund was EUR 845,546.55, the total public contribution amounted to EUR 994,760.71, the proportion of the financial contribution was 85 percent, the total cost was EUR 1,170,306.718 and the first cost was EUR 175,546.

This project was basically initiated for the same reasons as the earlier one (AC), but was given special attention. This way the objectives were also virtually identical, with the only difference that in the second part a greater importance was attached to the disadvantaged groups, for example to people with reduced working capacity and the disabled. In the provinces there are not enough real job opportunities especially for the disabled and those with reduced working capacity. For that very reason, alternative activities like handicraft, where all of these people can work with the right attitude, are of even greater importance – as told by the partners. The results also form part of the sequel of the earlier project.

The objectives of the project included the elaboration of a programme for disadvantaged groups and children with special needs in addition to the popularisation of handicraft trade and

⁵³ The project was led by the Municipality of Veržej and the partners were the Institution of Marianum Veržej - The DUO Centre; Society of Folk Art in the Parish of Zala; Directorate of the Museums in the Parish of Vas - Savaria Múzeum; Prlekija Development Agency; Pomelaj, the Rural Development Cooperative; the Regional Museum of Murska Sobota; Goričko Nature Park Public Institute; Hegypásztor Kör and Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training.

its initiation into tourism services. Among the project activities we wish to highlight the project tasks of Goričko Nature Park⁵⁴:

- Organising a free study visit for tourist guides, service providers, travel and event organisers, this way making possible to organise excursions and holidays in Prekmurje;
- altogether 9 tourist packages were created, in one-day and longer versions, calling at craft workshops where tourists can test their manual skills;
- a detailed study was created about the craft workshops and their addresses also got collected;
- programmes connected to handicraft: pottery workshop, weaving and spinning programme for primary school children, crocheting and creative workshop programmes for children;
- 10 portable stalls got purchased on which Slovenian craftsmen can present their activities;
- promotional information points were established and the clothing design for the staff of Academy of Crafts Centres was created;
- studying old clothing and exhibiting historical baroque clothing in the castle of Grad in the framework of an international study visit with Slovene partners.

Concerning the whole of the project, regarding some of the strands on the level of the cross-border area we can speak of the further development of the earlier project. Information centres were established, education and training in connection with craft trades were assessed and enhanced, initiation of handicraft trade into tourism services got more emphasis while new active tourist packages were created for different target groups in the topics of training and research which were then carried out on a pilot basis. Furthermore, the clothing of the staff for information and the uniform design of stalls promoting handicraft were designed, international comparative studies were created about the preservation, realisation and enhancement of craft trade in the cross-border area and studies were made on the handicraft fairs organised in the cross-border region.

Apart from handicraft, cultural and social activities also played a significant role in the history of Goričko's previous partnerships.

These include "MURA-RABA TV II" (the full title of the project is "Cultural and Media cross-border co-operation of the land between Mura and Raba River II."), the first project which Goričko Nature Park was not part of. The **leading partner** of the project was HI-FI Videostudio D.O.O. from Slovenia while other project partners on the Hungarian part were Szentgotthárd Television and Cable Operator (Gotthárd TV) and Association of Slovenes in Hungary. The total

⁵⁴ http://issuu.com/marianum_verzej/docs/rokodelska_akademija_2_2014_01_maj

budget of the project was EUR 721,848.48, the ERDF fund was EUR 583,342.82, the total public contribution was EUR 102,413.22 and the first cost amounted to EUR 36,052.44.

Regarding the **objectives** of the project, the contribution to cultural exchange should be highlighted, thus Hungarian and Slovenes had the opportunity of getting to know the culture of one another better. Furthermore, increasing awareness to the culturally valuable border area (its popularization) was also among the main aims. The cultural cooperation and the exchange of content-wise rich bilingual programmes contributed to the enhancement of the attractiveness and the popularity of the border area on both sides of the border.

From the activities only those that contain usable elements for the cooperation between Órség National Park and Goričko Nature Park will be presented and underlined. “Info Points” also required substantial investments, entailing information points across Goričko and the Hungarian Rába Region providing tourists and locals with various data about the local sights while also offering internet access.

In the framework of the project, a bilingual magazine programme entitled *Mura-Rába TV* was created, being a production of TV AS but aired both on the Slovenian and Hungarian side on a weekly basis. In the meantime, Gotthárd TV also created a weekly bilingual magazine programme which was also aired on both sides of the border. Both programmes were 25 minutes long. There were other activities in the project as well (programmes in Hungarian and Slovenian presenting the life of people on both sides of the border, media camps for youngsters from Prekmurje and the Hungarian Rába Region) encouraging the enhancement of relationships and the sense of belonging concerning local residents from Prekmurje and the Hungarian Rába Region.

The project had a positive impact on the social cohesion of people living in the regions as it contributed to the recognition of the life and customs of local residents coming from those regions featured by the project as well as to the diminishing of the lack of knowledge about the people on the other side of the border. The project was of special importance mainly concerning Slovenes coming from the Rába Region that is part of Órség National Park since through the project they had the opportunity to strengthen their cultural identity in the areas next to the shared border.

Last but not least, project “Neighbour to Neighbour”, full title of which is “*Porabje and Goričko, bounded in culture*” was also carried out between 2009 and 2012 with the help of CBC SI/HU. Beside the leading partnership of Slovenska Krajina Development Agency in Hungary and apart from Goričko Nature Park, from the Slovenian side Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota and from the Hungarian side Municipality of Felsőszölnök and Alsószölnök as well as National Slovenian Self-Government took part in the development. The obtained ERDF fund amounted to EUR 910,761.06, the obtained total public contribution was EUR 1,028,106.18, the proportion of the financial contribution was 85 percent, the total cost amounted to EUR 1,209,536.682 and the first cost was EUR 181,430.5.

The main objective was the improvement of the attractiveness of the region, mainly from the point of tourism, while strong emphasis was put also on the cultural, ethnographic memories and heritages. Particular effort was made to establish richer and more valuable relationships among youngsters as well as to strengthen cultural identity.

Also within the project, the organisation of Goričko Nature Park undertook the publication of a bilingual recipe book containing the traditional dishes of the Rába Region and Goričko as well as of a guide about the cultural and ethnographic values of the border area.⁵⁵ On top of this, the following activities took place in the area of Goričko Nature Park or Órség National Park:

- 3 permanent exhibitions were elaborated: a Slovenian ethnographic collection in Felsőszölnök, an exhibition presenting the cartwright's trade and its traditions in Alsószölnök and another one presenting vernacular architecture in Filovci;
- 2 already pre-existing exhibitions were further expanded: the pottery memorial room of Kétvölgy was extended with a movie about pottery of the Rába Region, screened continuously on the scene and the content part of the exhibition entitled *"Life next to the Iron Curtain"* was translated into Slovenian;
- workshops were held mainly on the topic of handicraft (pottery) and gastronomy (pig roast), by which specific elements of the heritage of the border area can be presented and learned;
- travelling exhibitions were created from the products made at the workshops;
- with the participation of cultural groups, children and residents of the cooperation area, cultural events and film days were organised on both sides of the border by which a new tourism product was created interpreting the natural and cultural heritage of Prekmurje and the Rába Region;
- new publications, such as *"Songbook of the Rába Region"*, *"Slovene grammar"* and *"Traditional bread baking"* were issued as well as a gastronomic pocket dictionary in Slovenian;
- cultural and natural heritages of the cooperation area were archived with the means of modern technology: the ethnographic film is about handicraft while the promotional documentary video deals with the activities of the project;
- the traditional tour of Neighbour to Neighbour between Orfalu and Budinci was organised.

One of the first cross-border projects of Goričko Nature Park called *"Living with Natura 2000 in Goričko – cross-border biodiversity"* was a successful tender for the grant of the Phare programme of cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Austria 2003. The theme of the call was the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development in the cross-border area.

⁵⁵ <http://vaol.hu/cimlapon/szomszed-a-szomszedhoz-magyar-szloven-osszefogas-1446186>

The project **partners** included Lebende Erde and Vulkanland from Austria (L.E.i.V.), being the administrator of the neighbouring Natura 2000 areas in Styria. Other Slovenian partners were the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Regional Unit Maribor; Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Murska Sobora; The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia; and the Central School of Agriculture in Rakičan and Goričko Drüjštvo.

The total value of the project, carried out between September 2005 and 30 August 2006, was EUR 126,789.84 and the requested funding grant was EUR 114,110.85, 90 percent of the total budget. The project area covered the municipalities of Goričko Nature Park.

The **aims** of the project were the following:

- Integrating knowledge about the importance of nature protection management practices to preserve the habitats of rare and endangered animal and plant species;
- contributing to education and raising public awareness with the help of information activities;
- contributing to the development of the management plan for Natura 2000 territories,
- familiarizing themselves with the practice of the management area of Natura 2000 in Styria, Austria;
- putting the professional principles into practice regarding ecological restoration of important habitats;
- introducing opportunities about local handicraft products from natural sources for complementary activities of households and agricultural holdings in the protected nature area of Goričko Nature Park.

In order to achieve the objectives, the main **activities** were implemented:

- Professional development of coordination between institutions and stakeholders in the preparation of measures for the protection and development;
- elaboration of expert guidelines for mapping habitat types;
- creating a book about typical habitats, flora and fauna (Natura 2000) and the environmental measures of the Agricultural Programme as well as preparing articles for publication in local media;
- preparation of worksheets for learning groups of different ages;
- implementation of experiential learning;
- fieldwork for the students of the School of Agriculture in Rakičan;
- use and restoration of ecologically important habitats;
- implementation of a competition for the "product of nature and of nature" and sales promotion of the castle of Grad and other info-centres.

As a **result**, coordinated professional principles for a Natura 2000 management plan were set up. A booklet with the description of habitats and species was issued under the title "Nature

and Man". A collection of worksheets for environmental education helped to work with the pupils in the wild. Local products were selected on an open competition, furthermore, a wetland was restored. Besides the previously mentioned common thinking with the Austrian Nature Park, the other most important field of the cooperation for Goričko was the pilot introduction of nature science workshops for children from primary schools in the area of the nature park as well as experiential guiding for park visitors. Evaluation of the pilot implementation which was conducted on the basis of short questionnaires showed that the new approach was very well received by the pupils. Goričko Park was convinced that the offer of nature science days covering various topics and habitats as well as involving elements of nature interpretation and technical activities such as weaving and pottery, this way interpreting cultural heritage in Grad (the seat of the Nature Park) is well accepted by visitors.

8.5 CBC projects carried out by the Órség National Park

Some projects were carried out by Órség National Park being partner or beneficiary, without the participation of Goričko Nature Park. Each of the projects were different, however, they generally included activities in connection with natural environment, in the fields of nature and environmental protection, as well as cultural tourism and ecotourism (including local products).

The project Munkalehetőségek teremtése védett területeken (Creating jobs within protected areas) was the first major project, which was financed by the Hungary-Slovenia Phare BCB 2003 Programme, with the total cost of EUR 148,667. The beneficiary was the Órség National Park Directorate and the cooperative partner was Prlekija Development Agency.

Among the objectives of the project was to promote employment of long-term unemployed by programmes for education and employment within protected areas, including the National Park, Kerka Stream Nature Park, the Natura 2000 territories on both sides of the border and the Goričko Nature Park itself, which did not own the nature parkstatus at that time. Another objective was the formation and the application of qualified manpower with special knowledge to fulfil tasks regarding the natural protection of the National Park emphasizing two aspects: the nature conservation education and agri-environment.

The project was realized with almost the same content on both sides of the border. Illustrative materials were published about the natural assets of the National Park and the production methods, information boards were placed next to the nature trails and to the educational garden. Further tools for promoting education and tools ensuring technical background for theoretical training were purchased.

A 160-hour accredited conservation leader training programme was held for 30 people and a 120-hour accredited agri-environment training programme was held for 30 people; each of the trainings contained a mobility abroad. Within the framework of the trainings, it was possible to take part in 2 consultations where the participants could listen to a short summary of the

education material of the additional project, presented by Slovenian guest lecturers. After having completed the training, the participants of both groups passed a final exam. The Directorate of the National Park undertook the employment of 5 people from both of the groups for 12 months, offering them a renewal of contract in the case of mutual satisfaction.

As a result of the project, unemployment dropped by 3 persons and the number of those with special skills increased by 57. Since the training was accredited by the aspirant, they can continue working as an adult education institute. The illustrative materials purchased and prepared for the theoretical training were being used continually in the educational and tourist activity of the National Park.

The projects *Ecoremediation* and *Órállók útja (The Path of Watchmen)* were organised within the frameworks of Interreg IIIA Community Initiative Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006, both of them realized with the leading partnership of Órség National Park's Directorate. In the project *Ecoremediation*, sustainable water management, the total cost of which was HUF 69,832,000, the project partners were the West-Transdanubian Environmental and Water Authority and Municipality of Kercaszomor from Hungary and the Prlekija Development Agency from Slovenia.

The project was initiated due to the fact that even though Kerka Stream was a highly biodiverse habitat in the past the regulation of the stream had negative effects on the ecosystem of the whole valley. In this way, the aim was to restore its previous condition. Within the framework of the project the rehabilitation of a 4 km cross-border part of Kerka Stream's basin was realized. A nature trail, information booklets and a film was prepared related to the project.

The project *Órállók útja (The Path of Watchmen)*, properly known as *Órállók útja creation of common touristic area*, was also realized with the leading partnership of Órség National Park, from January 2006 until the end of August 2007. The project partners from Hungary were decisively from Órség (the Municipality of Óriszentpéter, the Municipality of Szalafő, the Municipality of Kercaszomor, the Óri Foundation, the Directorate of Vas County Museums) and the Municipality of Hodoš, the Municipality of Šalovci and the Municipality of Moravske Toplice belonged to the partners from Slovenia. The rounded sum of aid was HUF 52 Million.

The vision of the project was to create an integrated Slovenian-Hungarian tourism demonstration area, called *Órállók útja (The path of watchmen)*. The specific aims of the project are summarized as follows:

- to present/demonstrate the natural, ethnographic and architectural assets, as well as traditional housekeeping/farming and popular crafts in an experiential and sustainable way, based on a variety of experiences, organised in a touristic package,
- to create advanced information databases and networks in the partner institutes active in the integration of development and the maintenance of development,

- to create a common marketing and promotion strategy/practice in favour of competitiveness, greater awareness on the market, more effective sales and sustainability,
- to preserve and develop minority identity and integration.

In the case of the national park, the following investments were completed:

- the creation of covered bike stands and outdoor resting places,
- the reconstruction of the barn, which was transformed into a craft workshop, including Folk Art Workshop, purchasing a potter's wheel and an electric muffle kiln,
- the creation of four new nature trails and road signs (1. The history and the monuments of Szomoróc, 2. The wildlife along Szala Stream between Óriszentpéter and Szalafő, 3. Attractions of Felsőszér in Szalafő, 4. Nature trail "Körtike" from Csörgő-szer to Pityerszer,
- the acquisition of a horse wagon and horse harness,
- logo and design, web development, bilingual publications, as well as planning Study tour and conference.

Óriszentpéter renovated the old brick-burner, Szalafő reconstructed the community centre and created an exhibition unit, Kercaszomor reconstructed a harrow house and a tourist lodge, while the Directorate of Vas County Museums reconstructed a barn in Pityeszer.

On the Slovenian side the youth hostel of Hodoš was built, bicycles were purchased, a bike stand and a resting place were created.

The investment enriched the region's tourism potential by elements which give the possibility to find out more details about the similarities and differences of cross-border cultures. As a result of the project each of the touristic attractions could be better connected, creating a cross-border ecotourism and cultural tourism itinerary.

Órség National Park cooperated not only with Slovenia, but with Austrian partners as well. Within the framework of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Austria-Hungary 2007-2013, the project *"Developing and establishing a network of nature and national parks in Burgenland and West-Hungary"* (PaNaNet) was realized. The scope territories of the project were 4 national parks (Fertő tó-Seewinkel National Park, Fertő-Hanság, Órség and Balaton Uplands National Parks in Hungary), the 6 nature parks of Burgenland (Neusiedlersee-Leithagebirge, Rosalia-Kogelberg, Landseer Berge, Geschriebenstein, Weinidylle and Raab) and 4 nature parks of Western Hungary (Sopron, Írottkő, Órség, Kerka).

The partners were the following: Regionalmanagement Burgenland GmbH, as leading partner, as well as Órség National Park Directorate, Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate, Balaton Uplands National Park, furthermore Nationalpark Neusiedler See–Seewinkel from Austria. The

total cost of the project, which was realized between April 2008 and December 2013, was EUR 1,949,936, the obtained ERDF fund was EUR 1,551,322.

The project was **justified** by the creation of several natural reserves along the Austrian-Hungarian border, on the implementation area of the project. However, coordination and communication between these territories was insufficient, therefore a project was needed to change this situation and harmonise the work and tourism management of the territories in different countries. A series of actions was needed, which tries to connect natural reserves, to stimulate the further development of nature tourism offer of regions and helps cooperation in marketing and public-relation work and utilize synergies.

Therefore the project reacted to these deficiencies and to the lack of cooperation in its target system. The **overall objective** of the project was to increase the acceptance among the population of the protected areas' functions, values related to economy and quality of life. The so-called Pannonian nature reserves were positioned as typical offer by means of the durable connection of the territories.

The aim of PaNaNet was to promote the cooperation of national parks and nature parks on both sides of the border, creating touristic offer and products in common. Network features were reinforced by joint events, trainings, workshops dealing with the main topic of joint tourism development and the training/further training of nature tour guides. Hereinafter the study presents development activities, which can be translated into the cooperation between Órség and Goričko or at least can be taken into account as future joint activities.

In the areas of touristic offer harmonization and product development, coordination meetings were organised, with the participation of representatives of national parks and nature parks. The PaNaNet International National Park and Nature Park Conference was organised in 2012, entitled *"Ecotourism and natural heritage: regional products – good examples, best practices and mistakes to avoid"*.

Participants agreed that regional and local products are part of our natural heritage, strengthening the identity of a particular area and contributing to the sustainable development of a particular region. Two presenters from Órség also featured on the event. The conference was a great possibility for knowledge transfer and sharing experience about local products, partners could get information about each others' aspirations, best practices and some of the local products, like the pumpkin seed oil of Órség, were promoted as well.

To ensure a uniform presentation of landscape and cultural history, a common PaNaNet-level map was created. Linguistic difficulties caused some problem in the Austian-Hungarian border area, thus so-called terminological crash courses were held to make participants acquire basic terms to help smooth cooperation. An important result was that within the framework of PaNaNet project tourist offer packages, guided tours were created.

Most of the tours concern Órség and Raab Nature Park, next to the Slovenian border. The programme package *“Cultural Landscapes and Flavors in the Hungarian-Austrian Border Area”*, which presents local projects, the package *“Three Countries – One Aim”* concerning Slovenia, based on bike tourism, and the package *“West-Pannon water experience”*, which organizes water tourism are the backers of the attractions of Órség and South Burgenland.

It is worth mentioning the *“PaNaTour”* experience tour. A bike tour was organized concerning the protected areas of the Hungarian-Austrian border area, which gave the possibility to meet the unique supply of ecotourism. The staff of these areas helped in the presentation of flora and fauna, as well as different habitats. Beside the project partners, decision makers, journalists, NGOs and locals could take part in the tour, promoting consultation and creating a common *“Pannonian Touristic Brand”*. Common tour guide trainings are also transferrable elements.

The benefits of the vision of partnership and project for Órség were better information transfer, and the possibility to draw the attention of tourists together to the natural values of the cross-border area, improving the competitiveness of the project area in the ecotourism market.

Table 3: List of the granted projects by Őrség National Park, Goričko Nature Park, and Natúrpark Regional Development Ltd.

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
Joint projects							
Landscape in Harmony	Sustainable use of Natura 2000 habitats along the Slovenian–Hungarian border	VP	Őrség National Park Directorate	1,109,301	1,251,333.9	Nature protection purposes, sustainable use of habitats.	3.81%
		PP2	Goričko Nature Park Public Institute				
		PP3	Prlekija Development Agency				
		PP4	Municipality of Števanovci				
		PP5	Ecological Centre Svit Pomurje Gornja Bistrica				
UPKAČ	Magas fák gyöngyei	VP	Mura Regional Development Agency	1,008,699.3	1,186,705.1	Long-term preservation of the cultivated landscape as well as of rare and endangered plant and animal species of orchards. Establishment of a training network, conservation of the nature heritage, revitalisation of orchards.	3.61%
		PP	Goričko Nature Park				
		PP	DOPPS – Birdlife Slovenia				
		PP	Slovenska Krajina Development Agency				
		PP	Őrség National Park Directorate				

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
Project of Őrség National Park							
PaNaNet	Nature reserves network of Burgenland and Western Transdanubia	VP	Regional Management Burgenland	1,551,322	1,949,936	To raise awareness to the value of the protected areas concerning economy and quality of life and to achieve broad acceptance among the population in connection with it.	1.93%
		PP	Őrség National Park Directorate				
		PP	Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate				
		PP	Balaton Uplands National Park Directorate				
		PP	Nationalpark Neusiedler See–Seewinkel				
Projects of Natúrpark Regional Development Ltd.							
LAMAPROM	Labour market development in the Slovenian–Hungarian border region	VP	Zala County Foundation for Enterprise Promotion	420,245.31	494,406.27	To bring forth the integration of disadvantaged groups of employees into the labour market, to intensify the activity of employers, to interactively introduce the body knowledge related to employment by modern tools of info-communication.	1.51%
		PP	Zala County Regional Development Agency Non-profit LLC.				
		PP	Mura Regional Development Agency				
		PP	Natúrpark Regional Development Non-profit Ltd.				
		PP	Regional Labour Fund of Pomurje				

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
BIO EXPERIENCE	Encouraging sustainable countryside development with a new tourist offer of integral product "Bio experience"	VP	Sinergija Development Agency	983,469.57	1,157,023	To strengthen local products and farmers and link them to local tourism.	3.52%
		PP	Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota				
		PP	Ecological Centre Svit Pomurje Gornja Bistrica				
		PP	CELODIN Zala Foundation				
ŐRRAGO	Competence Network in the region of the trilateral nature park Őrség-Raab-Goričko in order to develop it into a model region	VP	Natúrpark Regional Development Non-profit Ltd.	1,813,863	2,133,863	To develop the tri-national nature reserve into a cross-border model region concerning ecotourism, regional products and cultural resources.	2.12%
		PP	Verein zur Förderung des Naturpark Raab				
		PP	Csörötnék Municipality				
		PP	Magyarszombatfa Municipality				
		PP	Magyarlak Municipality				

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
Projects of Goričko Nature Park							
Neighbour to Neighbour	Porabje and Goričko, bounded in culture	VP	Slovenska Krajina Development Agency	910,671.06	1,028,106.2	To strengthen the culture and lingual identity of people living in the border area as well as to increase the attractiveness of the region.	3.13%
		PP2	Centre for Health and Development Murska Sobota				
		PP3	Municipality of Felsőszölnök				
		PP4	Municipality of Alsószölnök				
		PP5	National Slovenian Self-Government				
		PP6	Goričko Nature Park Public Institute				
AC	Academy of Crafts	VP	Municipality of Veržej	758,362.56	879,159.64	Preservation of traditional rural trades.	2.68%
		PP2	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training				
		PP3	Hegypásztor Kör				
		PP4	Goričko Nature Park Public Institute				
		PP5	Martineum Roman Catholic Foundation				
		PP6	Regional Museum of Murska Sobota				
		PP7	Pomelaj, the Rural Development Cooperative				
		PP8	Prlekija Development Agency				

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
		PP9	Directorate of the Museums in the Parish of Vas - Savaria Múzeum				
		PP10	Society of Folk Art in the Parish of Zala				
		PP11	Institution of Marianum Veržej - The DUO Centre				
MURA RABA TV II.	Cultural and Media cross-border co-operation of the land between Mura and Raba River II.	VP	HI-FI Videostudio D.O.O.	583,342.82	686,285.69	To strengthen cultural awareness, to develop informational society and network.	2.09%
		PP	Szentgotthárd Television and Cable Operator				
		PP	Goričko Nature Park Public Institute				
		PP	Association of Slovenes in Hungary				
AC 2	Academy of Crafts 2	VP	Municipality of Veržej	845,546.55	994,760.71	Preservation of traditional rural trades.	3.03%
		PP	Institution of Marianum Veržej - The DUO Centre				
		PP	Society of folk art in the Parish of Zala				
		PP	Directorate of the Museums in the Parish of Vas - Savaria Múzeum				
		PP	Prlekija Development Agency				
		PP	Pomelaj, the Rural Development Cooperative				

Short title	Title of the project	Partners	Name of the recipient	ERDF fund (EUR)	Public fund obtained (EUR)	Objective of the development	Proportion of the obtained public fund (in % of the given CBC programme)
		PP	Regional Museum of Murska Sobota				
		PP	Goričko Nature Park Public Institute				
		PP	Hegypásztor Kör				
		PP	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training				

Sources: [http://www.si-](http://www.si-hu.eu/images/uploads/A_M%C3%81SODIK_P%C3%81LY%C3%81ZATI_FELH%C3%8DV%C3%81S_KERET%C3%89BEN_AL%C3%81%C3%8DRT_T%C3%81MOGAT%C3%81SI_SZERZ%C5%90D%C3%89SSEL_RENDELKEZ%C5%90_PROJEKTEK_LIST%C3%81JA.pdf)

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To summarize, it can be said that Órség National Park and Goričko Nature Park play an increasingly important role in the development of border areas. However it is worth concerning Natúrpark Nonprofit Kft., which played a leading role in touristic projects on the Hungarian side of the border earlier, but is currently concentrating mainly on local products and on the development of human resources.

In the planning cycle between 2007 and 2013, considerably more projects were realized than other developments financed by Phare and Interreg III Funds. One of the transnational projects⁵⁶ and two of CBC programmes were common already, and one of the projects was guided by the National Park itself.

In the tri-border area Slovenian and Hungarian projects became more important, while the Austrian partner is becoming less relevant as for the increasingly close project cooperation. The only project which was realized with the participation of Naturpark Raab was the ÖRRAGO. The partner of the project was Natúrpark Nonprofit Kft., not the national park or the nature park. Based on the fact that within the framework of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Hungary, five projects were realised, while within the framework of Cross-border Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Austria none of the projects were realized, we can say that the commitment of the Slovenian partner is obvious. In addition, the Hungarian partner took part in the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Austria-Hungary only by means of the PaNaNet. Goričko Nature Park was more closely involved in Trans-European Networks outside the tri-border area. Regarding this area, it is possible to emphasize two projects of the Slovenian Nature Park within the framework of European Green Belt Initiative.

According to the topic divided into different branches originating from their functions and competencies, the partners developed projects all of which were based on the natural environment of the border area and were strictly interconnected with each other. These branches were the following: habitat protection, sustainable landscape management, local product development, craft industry traditions and built environment or intangible cultural heritage or ecotourism. The main difference between the project contents of the two protagonists was that the Hungarian partner concentrated rather on landscape management and on the improvement of the ecological coherence, while the Slovenian partner had separate projects about craft industry traditions and Slovenian minority culture. Taking into consideration the activity of the Hungarian Natúrpark Nonprofit Kft., it is possible to say that the Hungarian partner was predominant regarding the touristic and economic developmental goals activities.

⁵⁶ They took part in TransEcoNet in the framework of Central Europe Programme as Associated Institutions.

The projects described above are winning projects of the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Hungary 2007-2013 (abbreviation: SIHU), which can well predict the budget-planning period 2014-2020 and the future cooperation between Goričko and Órség.

Regarding the budget of all SIHU CBC projects, out of 43 projects with signed grant contract, the public financing of 6⁵⁷ projects exceeded the framework of the smaller joint project (*Magas fák gyöngyei*, en. “*Pearls of High Trees*”) and the public financing of 5 projects exceeded the framework of the bigger joint project (*Landscape in Harmony*), while the financing of 3 projects slightly exceed *Magas fák gyöngyei*. Considering the developments in connection with environmental protection and tourism, the fourth most awarded project was *Landscape in Harmony*, and the fifth most awarded was *Magas fák gyöngyei*, while focusing only on the own topics of the projects (nature and environmental protection), they reached the second and third place ranked by value. The role of the two parks is relevant in cross border cooperation on the border areas of Slovenia and Hungary, since the projects aiming nature and environmental protection and ecotourism carried out by them tied more than half (51.46%) of the total public financing.

The project *Landscape in Harmony* got 3.81% of the total public financing of SIHU, while project “*Magas fák gyöngyei*”/Upkač got 3.61%. *Landscape in Harmony* and Upkač altogether cost EUR 2,438,039.05, which is 7.43% of SIHU. The players’ role can be regarded important also if we add the projects, which were realized by Goričko alone⁵⁸ and which got 3,588,312.22 EUR public financing; this way, the two players of SIHU got 6,026,351.27 EUR, which is 18.35% of the total public financing of SIHU. The two organisations have an even more significant role in nature and environmental protection: their two joint projects got 27.42% of all public financing set apart for this purpose, through tenders.

The assets and the strategic support system of cross-border area (the priority of the branches mentioned) both helped the two parks to become protagonists of the development of the border region. As stakeholders, they try to take part in the initiatives regarding habitat protection and economic development based on sustainability and ecology as leading or project partners and naturally, organise spatial development.

⁵⁷ 3PARK (renewal of living environment, revitalization of castle parks) 5.56% of public financing of all winning projects; REŠUJMO SKUPAJ (mutual assistance in case of accidents or disasters) 4.98%; VIA SAVARIA (preservation of culture and religious traditions, development of religious tourism, involve small settlements in tourism) 4.46%; New road at Rédics (Hungary)-Göntérháza (Genterovci, Slovenia) border 3.88%; Pannon Pleasure (creating a cross-border biking tourism destination) 3.82%; BIOFUTURE (strengthening and supporting sustainable and effective energy use) 3.67%.

⁵⁸ Neighbour to Neighbour; AC; AC 2; MURA RABA TV II.

9. Management, budget (revenues/expenditures)

Since the cooperation does not have an independent management structure, it neither has an individual budget. In other words, there is no common organisational system: there are three basically different structures, each of them with different functions, competences and finance and funding opportunities. Financial background, the lack of funds is the main obstacle of cross-border cooperation.

However, this does not mean that the lack of funding would make it impossible for border actors to take action. The lack of large, jointly managed financial funds or sources can be regarded as a rationalization of private and public funds, as factor, which shows into the direction of spending funds in a logical and effective way. Thereby the parties almost only realized developments requiring own contributions, which answered challenges or utilized existing endowments.

The greatest challenge for the **future** is the creation of real cross-border projects, despite the limited financial framework of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Hungary.

Despite the lack of own budget, the three main actors of the region have control over a relatively large amount of funding. Two of the actors, Goričko Nature Park and Órség National Park get a high amount of public finance – they can count on varying amounts of revenue sources in each year from the state.

Concerning the financial manoeuvre of **Órség National Park** we have to emphasize that the annual budget of the directorate is about HUF 300 Million. Development activities are financed by 10-30% of the budget, including cooperations with the Slovenian (and Austrian) partners. The amount invested for CBC is varying from year to year. The turnover is depending on the stage and the cost of the stage of the given project. In some years, serious investments are realized, in which cases several millions of HUF are invested in CBC projects (e.g. *“Landscape in Harmony”* project).

The financial possibilities of the participation of the National Park in cross-border cooperations depend on the revenue from the National Park’s activity and on the level of state support. Within the own revenues, the most significant sources are tourism (tourist guide and accomodation services) and agriculture (area-based agricultural subsidies, sale of animals and other products). These sources help the National Park to survive, and provide the opportunity of non-operational expenditures. However only a small part of it can be spent on developments.

Since their own revenues are not enough to be spent on regional development, the role of CBC-sources is of utmost importance regarding developments. Developments can be realized only from Hungarian and CBC-sources. Considering the cooperation between Órség National Park

and Goričko Nature Park, common problems can be solved using EU funds. EU funds provide favourable conditions to create joint projects concerning nature conservation or tourism with the Slovenian colleagues and partners. State aid is minimal in a sense that the amount ensured by the state is hardly enough to cover wages and a part of the operating costs. The common development with the Slovenian partner is practically financed by the EU funds.

The smaller the mandatory private financial participation for the National Park is, the more favourable the tender is. Cross-border programmes are preferred by the national park, since mandatory private financial participation is relatively low. Furthermore, according to the current constructions, the mandatory private financial participation of the national parks' directorates is fully ensured by the central budget. The greatest advantage of bilateral developments for the Hungarian party is that projects don't cost the National Park anything. The financial engineering instrument is the following: 10% is financed by the government and 5% should be financed by the National Park. However, the Park gets the remaining 5% from the state.

In the Slovenian side, Goričko, the situation is less favourable. Similarly to the Hungarian side of the border, the main source of income is tourism, including the entrance fee to the castle, the sale of local products and accommodation service. However, projects have to be cofinanced from these own resources. Thus, Goričko has no "gratis" projects and it can take part in cross border cooperation projects financing 5% of the expenses from their own resources.

Since developments need to be financed from their own resources, they can only take part in a limited number of projects within a year or within an EU budget cycle, and the contents of their activities are limited as well. It is not possible for the nature park to take part in really big projects, since it cannot perform a 5% own contribution. The annual budget of Goričko Nature Park is EUR 450,000, which mainly covers the operating costs (paying salaries, heating, electricity). Similarly to the national park, developments can be realized in varying degrees: in 2014 the organisation only had EUR 5,000 for this purpose. Usually 18-20% of the annual budget, thus EUR 80-90,000 is being allocated for CBC purposes.

Among the three partners in question, the **Nature Park** (the Natúrpark Regional Development Non-profit Ltd. from the Hungarian side) is the weakest regarding resources and financial opportunities. This is based on the fact that the Nature Park has always been a local initiative. On the other two sides, including the Austrian part, nature parks are supported by provincial and State resources. On the Hungarian side of the border, Órség National Park, contrary to its name, is functioning almost like a nature park considering financing. In the case of the Nature Park, budgetary implications of CBC programmes were especially high, about 50% - infrastructural developments not included in the budget (eg. the ground floor of the work organization's centre in Alsószölnök was built from the budget of the Austrian-Hungarian CBC

programme). The high rate highlights that cooperation in cross-border programmes have an important role in the Nature Park's life.

All this is due to the fact that until very recently the activity of the Natúrpark Ltd. was generating tendering ideas, creation and realization of concrete tenders. One of the three main activities of the organisation includes participation in cross border cooperation programmes. The other two main activities include participation in rural development programmes (developing local products) and recently taking part in TÁMOP (Social Renewal Operational Programme) tenders. The value of cross border developments is about HUF 40 Million annually.

10. SWOT analysis (cooperation-based, not territorial-based)

10.1 External conditions of the cooperation: reinterpretation of the role of borders, cooperation frameworks, general impacts of the European Territorial Cooperation

STRENGTHS

- There is an increasing supply of resources for cross-border cooperation.
- Demolition of the Iron Curtain had ended, therefore barrier functions of borders had diminished.
- The economic barrier function of the border is minimal: the “cooperation” works very well concerning economic considerations as everyone knows where to go in order to access a given product or service.
- Even more stakeholders are included on the Hungarian side, such consortiums in which leading partners collect more of the small actors are organised and as a result, cross-border programmes are advantageous to even more people.
- The Slovenian side concentrates more on carrying out their projects with a more stable group of actors, like it is already in the case of Goričko.
- The presence of non-state bottom-up organisations (for example Natúrpark Regional Development Ltd.) brings a different quality to the system of the cooperation.

WEAKNESSES

- High expectations in connection with CBC sometimes caused disappointment, for which more actors desisted from further cooperation.
- Impacts of the mental detachment caused by the almost hermetic isolation from each other for decades can be observed today as well. Changing the mind of people takes more time than the completion of an infrastructure or a project would. Physical barriers had disappeared but some kind of a mental border (the “cultural iron curtain”) is still very much present.
- In previous cross-border programmes there were the so-called Small Project Funds that had disappeared in the last period which is much to be regretted. With its help, relatively small actors could access resources with ease without joining complex consortium systems. Apart from the concrete aim of implementation the role of the Funds was to establish and strengthen partnerships which were important in the foundation of cross-border cooperation.
- The typical kind of cooperation in the area is still the ad hoc, project-related one.

- It is a drawback that although there is a loose cooperation between the partners, they have practically no impact on each other. They have no means to “extort” timely and accurate performance as well as the invested money from each other.
- Regulation of the cross-border cooperation programme causes lots of problems, mainly due to the compulsory use of Slovene, Hungarian and English.
- The Slovenian managing authority and intermediate body manages issues much less strictly as it is in the case of Hungary. Therefore, concerning payments, delays of months or even one year can occur. At one time when a Slovenian partner had got the managing role in a project, it raised great difficulties for the Hungarian national park to be devoid of their 60 Million HUF for one year which they paid into the project alone.
- Previous tri-national cross-border programmes ceased to exist. In such a border area like the Slovenian–Hungarian–Austrian it bring about numerous anomalies and difficulties (for example, they cannot have a partner from a third country, consequence of which on the Slovenian side of the Austrian–Hungarian cycle path signs can only be in German and Hungarian because it is not allowed to spend money on Slovenian translation). Presently, the issue of projects involving a tri-border area is complicated due to bureaucracy.
- Impecuniosity of stakeholders from the border area and SIHUCBC being straitened is a general problem while it is especially the Slovenian side whose budget is limited. During calls only one or two joint proposals can be carried out.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The establishment of the Common Market, the Schengen Area and the European integration can contribute to the simplification of cooperation (elimination of restrictions concerning border crossing, lessening of activities subject to license, unification of EU standards, etc.)
- Further appreciation of the once, at the time of the Iron Curtain disadvantageous border location that nevertheless gained in value, by exploitation of the potentials of advantages coming from its peripheral quality (e.g. unspoilt nature and preserved traditions) through for example ecotourism.
- In consequence of the international legislative approximation, numerous cooperations can become simpler (for example the trade of local products).
- Concerning national and EU policy makers, it can be achieved that similarly to several international programmes (for example LIFE), the use of English language should be enough.
- Appreciation of the tri-border situation and further exploitation of synergies.

THREATS

- While after the fall of the Iron Curtain Slovenian–Hungarian cross-border cooperation were characterised by massively increasing willingness, cooperation intensity may relapse into a lower level by the remission of the initial enthusiasm.
- National and EU-level development policy may change, consequently topic fields important to the two parks may fall out of their priority listing and the parks would not be considered as supported types of areas anymore.
- Disappearance of soft elements (e.g. meetings, trainings, marketing elements) while they still play a significant role in networking as the establishment and maintenance of new partnerships can be realised mainly within these frameworks.

10.2 Internal characteristics of the cooperation and the cooperating partners: concrete activities and results, characteristics in connection with the joint projects

STRENGTHS

- Experience of cooperation regarding previous years is overall positive and partners consider activities successful.
- Partners already know each other well and they know what to expect from one another. Mutual trust had developed and the practice of cooperation became established.
- Partners mutually realised that jointly, by coordinating their activities they can be successful because of their capacities and challenges are similar to each other.
- The trilateral natural park was created, laying down the formal framework of the cooperation (organisational framework, objectives, activities, etc.)
- A system of formal and informal meetings and workshops was created in the framework of which the concerned majors, NGOs and experts coordinate their activities.
- Partners have been working on growing number of fields, including project development and management, event organization and knowledge transfer at the same time, in order to strengthen territorial, economic and social cohesion on both trans-European and bilateral level.
- Activities serving the creation of the sustainable landscape management model of the border area were carried out on both sides of the border. Projects were typically accied out by adjusting to the landscape features. In view of these, CBC projects *Landscape in Harmony* and *Upkač* can be considered as good models.
- Significant success was achieved jointly especially regarding the preservation of grasslands and orchards, the protection of protected and endangered animal species and the production of local products. Cross-border development can be viewed as a

mixture of nature conservation and protection of cultural heritage on which a system consisting of local products and events that are often closely related to them, playing an important role in dissolving mental borders, can be built.

- Establishment of knowledge and the connecting database, exchange of know-how and the realisation of knowledge transfer. In recent times efforts were made to focus specifically on the organisation of joint study visits in order to get to know the solutions of one another regarding different problems. It was acknowledged that there are such sectors and special fields in which one partner can transfer experience and knowledge to the neighbour organisation and this mutual learning process in fact starts to be typical nowadays. The work that has already started in the area is very important because it allows all parties to experience, through study visits and workshops, in what fields their partner can serve as an example for best practices.
- Partners try to cooperate in organising cross-border events by providing participants and facilities as well as attending events of each other with a stall.
- The strength of the Slovenian side is that regarding communication with local communities as well as different PR exercises, they are more advanced than the Hungarian partner in respect for their multilingual portals and the fact that they have a lot more activities intended especially for local people. Apart from these they often concentrate on cooperating especially with the local people.
- The strength of the Hungarian partner is nature conservation as they have got significantly larger capacities and more facilities for restoring and managing habitats than Slovenes do.

WEAKNESSES

- The fact that despite cooperation arrangements and several joint activities an own strategic document has still not been elaborated is adverse from the point of the future.
- There is no common institutional system and working group though partners had already planned its establishment.
- Although there is a unified cross-border landscape, due to the national regulatory environment, the capacity of actors to actively participate in cross-border cooperation is rather different (Slovenes have a narrower scope of tasks and authority, scarcer resource and staff, etc.)
- Concerning local organic products there are significant differences between the two sides of the border. Despite the process of liberalisation in recent years (guest tables, chance for local markets to participate) the regulation on the Hungarian side is more unfavourable. Processing and marketing of local products (as a farmer or as a caterer) as well as management is incomparably easier in Slovenia. Local products produced along the border cannot be delivered to the Hungarian producer market and sold there.

The opposite is also true, that is, cross-border market of local products is hindered by the fact that there are hardly any products that could be exported due to the quantity being too small.

- Considerable organizing and dissemination of knowledge is needed in order to allow border residents to cross the border for an event. The Pumpkin Festival can be considered as the one and only exception since compared to any other events, for local actors it still does not come naturally to include sites that are only a few kilometres from each other, in their mental maps. Cultural programmes and festivals are still not popular enough for locals. In order to make local communities comfortable with the thought of crossing the border and consequently make them think about moving in the border area as crossing over to the neighbouring town within their country while also considering the facilities for crossing borders, substantial progress is needed.
- Órség National Park is not part of the European Green Belt Initiative yet.
- One of the major difficulties of genuine cooperation is the lack of language skills, especially on the Hungarian side, where language competences are rather weak. Translation is costly, can cause misinterpretation and slows down the process of cooperation.
- The mentality, work ethic and speed of work of Hungarians and Slovenes are quite different which manifests most clearly in connection with deadlines. Slovenes work really precise and correct, on the other hand they are slow, disinclined to hurry and to work overtime. They do their duty thoroughly and in a leisurely way taking no account of deadlines. On the Hungarian side people work more like in Balkan style, that is, unlike Slovenes they do not stick to constraints (working hours, etc.), nevertheless, they do the given task by the deadline at all costs, sometimes unfortunately at the expense of quality.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Drive forward the direction of cohesion-based territoriality integrated planning irrespectively from projects and funds continues.
- There will be more opportunity for cooperation mainly in issues concerning sustainable farming and nature conservation.
- The sustainable landscape management model can be exemplary for other similarly valuable natural areas.
- Best practices on one side of the border can be adopted in the future as well.
- One of the main priorities of future cooperation will be about the networking of actors producing, developing and selling local products.
- Due to joint publications and the sign system supporting multilingualism an increasing number of people will cross the state border and visit the border area on the other side.

- Increased participation in European Green Belt, launching of developments serving the strengthening of the cohesion by linking European ecological networks and improving the knowledge of residents about each other.
- People living on the two sides of the border can mutually gain experiences about each other and get to know one another, consequently they will be comfortable with crossing the border from which the development of a joint regional identity and the dismantling of mental borders can be expected.
- With the help of Órség National Park and Natúrpark Ltd. the Hungarian side can catch up quickly concerning local products and the already issued content will receive more effective support.
- The Slovenian State launched programmes for Slovenian minorities (for example apple juice processing facility, promotion of cattle farming, etc.) by means of which cross-border projects reaching the level of local people can be elaborated in the border area.
- Successful establishment of complete bilingualism.
- Successful elaboration of institutionalised and well-functioning cooperation on tri-border level. A tri-national cooperation would be especially effective from the perspective of regional development concerning the exploitation of territorial capital.

THREATS

- The circle of partnership cannot expand further and parks cease to be initiator stakeholders in the development of the border region. Concerning the coordinated development of the regions of the two parks, widespread partnership cannot be established and all of the cooperation will consider Órség National Park and Goričko Nature Park as their natural partners by what the circle of partners will focus only on them.
- Mandatory and voluntary activities of parks cannot be carried out from the direction of the state.
- Due to the scarcity of CBC resources, only a few of those joint projects that may have significant effect concerning regional development can be submitted by partners, while funding dries up.
- Multilingualism will do not receive adequate attention, consequence of which language skills will not improve further, making communication between the two partners more difficult.
- Without thinking of the level of tri-national cooperation, original objectives cannot be realised and partners cannot exploit the territorial capital at disposal.

11. Future plans and goals of the cooperation

Regarding future plans and goals of the cooperation, two types of future initiatives can be identified: plans that mainly focus on the territory of the given partner only, and ideas that aim to develop the cross-border region jointly. Since the cooperation has not elaborated any kind of development plan, the study can present only the following single table about the development ideas.

Type of goals	Potential fields of cooperation	Órség National Park	Goričko Nature Park
The partners' own goals (both in their territories and in relation to the trilateral cooperation)	Organizational development	Establishment of parking places and a visitor centre at the Pityerszer Ethnographic Monument; enlargement of the ranger network	Goričko would like to remain the number one initiator regarding the trinational park
	Nature conservation and environmental protection	Major habitat restoration plans especially in forests and along the Raba river	Nature conservation; management of Natura 2000 territories; protection of species; water management
	Land use management, local products	Development of the agricultural sector is always actual because of the expanding livestock, newly built barns and currently bought pastures (investment in required infrastructure and equipment)	Promotion of eco-friendly agriculture among local farmers
	Ecotourism	Development of water tourism and cycling	Sustainable tourism and recreation
Joint development ideas	Knowledge transfer	Both partners have attempted to start an exchange programme which has not been successful yet. It would give an opportunity to the parties to spend a week on the other side of the border in order to be familiar with the work of the neighbour colleagues	

Type of goals	Potential fields of cooperation	Órség National Park	Goričko Nature Park
	Project level	Continuation of Landscape in Harmony and Upkač/Magas fák gyöngyei (see in Chapter 6). Besides habitat protection, both would concentrate on the production and processing, marketing and consulting of local products, furthermore on nature-friendly farming. The main objective is to embrace the local economy. The main difference between the two aforementioned projects would be that the project called Upkač would focus on orchards, while the Landscape in Harmony would deal with the sustainable farming of meadows.	
	Joint organizational background	Keeping the current level of cooperation that has been reached and deepening it if it is possible	Establishment of the previously planned trinational nature park with its office situated at the seat of Goričko Landscape Park with Slovene, Hungarian and Austrian colleagues

Source: self-edited, made from the information extracted from the interview

It should be emphasized that due to the very limited budget allocated to the Slovenia–Hungary CBC Programme, there is no much financial background for many big projects. Other developments which have been considered priorities absorb a significant amount of resources. If a few big infrastructures were built, such as new border crossings, then nearly half of the total budget of the SIHU would be spent. Thus, partners try to be realistic and pragmatic by limiting their own goals to few areas of the cooperation. They have decided jointly and in harmony to focus the limited capacities in order to build on the results of two former projects implemented together in the frames of the SIHU 2007–2013 (see Chapter 6), namely on Landscape in Harmony and Upkač. Instead of implementing new projects, partners are interested in taking advantage of the synergies created during the aforementioned CBC projects, so they would like to submit the application with almost the same project partners for the second, upgraded versions of the given projects. To sum up, there will be a slight shift towards sustainable agriculture and local products while nature protection goals will remain one of the major goals as well.

Furthermore, the need for a more formalized and trilateral cooperation (with the Austrian nature park) platform has also been expressed, especially regarding the Slovene partner. It has been underlined that a joint cross-border management plan and a joint office (working organization) of the parks, which could integrate nature and landscape protection goals with sustainable development of the region and the well-being of local communities, would be crucial.

12. Unique, regional or own resources the cooperation can be based on

In this chapter the study reveals what kind of unique regional or own resources are available in the area of cooperation. Mainly those common or complementary factors will be presented, which can strengthen the cohesion of border areas and which can provide a basis for a territorially integrated strategy.

Within a macro-regional framework, border areas can be found in the belt of the former **Iron Curtain** from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean. As it has already been mentioned in the introduction, the rigid separating role of the border was valid not only between Austria and the socialist countries, but also between the former separate passenger Yugoslavia and Hungary, part of the Eastern bloc led by the Soviet Union (USSR).

On account of the restricted access and strong former barrier, which are the characteristic features of borders, a unique biodiversity has kept and evolved along the border zones. It is important to note that a historical dividing line can act as a unifying element of Europe's natural environment since the dissolution of former Eastern bloc. What is more, the European integration process can substantially boost the unifying elements in Central Europe. There is a potential in connecting to the 'green belt' that can offer unspoiled nature with some interesting former defensive structures and keep the oral history of the formerly divided Europe. Joint European cross-border efforts in nature conservation and in the integration of once segregated communities can be launched.

The European tourism policy puts key emphasis on bicycle tourism, playing an important role in linking tourist attractions. These routes highly contribute to the preference of environmental friendly modes of transport, putting ecotourism at the forefront. In Europe, several routes of the **EuroVelo** network significantly contribute to increasing cohesion within the Danube River Basin. EuroVelo 13 is named as Iron Curtain Trail. This is the longest designated bicycle route of Europe, following the trace of the Iron Curtain that divided the continent for almost 50 years. Nevertheless, now it serves as a means to connect the attractions of the Eastern and Western member states. The route reuniting Europe has been selected as a model project by the European Parliament in 2005.

The section of the Iron Curtain Trail on the Hungarian and Slovenian border is located almost entirely on the Slovenian side of the border. It crosses the border close to the Hungarian village of Kétvölgy, and then the route sticks closely to the national border making its way through a quiet countryside dotted with small settlements such as Domanjševci, Prosenjakovci, Motvarjavci and Kobilje. The route links the natural attractions of Goričko and Órség with the Southern Slovenian–Hungarian border section that is more about viticulture, spa and cultural tourism considering the city of Lendava or the thermal bath of Lenti. Besides bicycle tourism,

there is a chance for the two sides to jointly integrate to the European **Nordic walking** routes since some parts of Goričko have been reached.

It can be said that the Slovenian-Hungarian border has a more or less untouched and diverse landscape. While in the Middle Ages the hilly terrain along the borders promoted settlement focused on defence purposes, this formerly favourable condition became a barrier of socio-economic development from the 19th century, therefore modern manufacturing industry or cities could not develop.

One of the belts of the former Iron Curtain was not developed for military or defence reasons, thereby population density remained low. In addition, mainly on the Hungarian side, border areas and small settlements were non-preferred areas for State urban development and industrial policy, while the Slovenian side remained a smallholding system, which kept the mosaic structure of the landscape. However, the peripheral location resulting isolation is particularly favourable from the point of view of nature conservation and the conservation of folk-peasant culture. In this manner, unique habitat-islands, types of farming, architectural and intangible cultural heritage were conserved, which can serve as basis for cooperation and harmonized development of the region.

The **climate** of Slovenian-Hungarian cross-border areas is wet subalpine, which is caused by the distance from the Atlantic Ocean and the closeness to the Adriatic Sea and the Alps. Therefore, pre-Alpine, Atlantic, sub-Mediterranean and continental climate are predominant. The climate of border areas is balanced, hot summers are rare and winters are not too cold. Average temperatures in summer are higher than the national average temperature, because of the high average precipitation and frequent cloudiness. The lack of heat in the summer is a factor attracting tourists. The richness in animal and plant species of border regions is mainly due to its unique climate. Most of these species cannot be found in the surrounding areas, or they are relicts or endemic species.

The two areas, Goričko and Órség, are home to 32 **threatened plant and animal species** protected by the Habitats Directive and 23 species protected by the Bird Directive on more than 90.000 ha of protected area. The protected species form a huge variety of flora and fauna, including butterflies (scarce large blue), amphibians (yellow-bellied toad, Italian crested newt) and birds (red-backed shrike, European honey buzzard, etc.)

There are **2 identical habitat types** on both sides. One of them is the lowland hay meadow (*Alopecurus pratensis* or meadow foxtail, *Sanguisorba officinalis* or great burnet). This type of meadow is rich in flowers and it is fresh green in the spring. Precious species of the hayfields of Vendvidék ("Slovene Raba Region") and the neighbouring Goričko are the usually brightly colored vermilion waxcaps (*hygrocybe miniata*) and vaxy caps (*hygrophorus*), which stem from the Alpine region.

The local type of farming, regular mowing and haying helped the establishment of these fungal species, typical of snowy meadows of mountain areas. In the case of both Órség and Goričko the most endangered habitats are dry meadows, since if they are unkempt, they become feral because of the lack of mowing. On dry meadows some protected flora species can be found which are threatened if the meadows are uncared-for.⁵⁹ The other important habitat type is the alluvial forest with *Alnus glutinosa* or common alder and *Fraxinus excelsior* or European ash (with *Alno Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*). The woodlands are especially rich in wild games and in mushrooms on both sides of the border.

Hydrographic characteristics are similar. Due to the unfavourable precipitation patterns, there are more small **moors**, wetlands and **swamps** in the region, which provide very good conditions for unique plant communities (phytocoenosis). The most serious threat to wetlands and transition mires is dehydration. Most of the plant species in these territories are rare and protected species, since they need special circumstances to survive.

These are for example some sphagnum species, the globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*), the lemon lily (*Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus*), the siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*) or the daffodil (*Narcissus angustifolius*). The most part of transition mires, which can be found in wet valley floors, synclines without outflow and gives place to relic species (species from the end of the Ice Age), safeguards its characteristic wildlife for more than twenty thousand years. The presentations of unique attractions hold considerable touristic potential. An example of this is the specially protected transition mire of Szóce, which is crossed by a nature trail introducing the mire's special wildlife.

Artificial, barrier **lakes** are typical of the area for a long time. They have a great role from the point of view of tourism and recreation; they are perfect for fishing, having a picnic, cycling or bathing in the summer. These lakes are for example Lake Vadása near Hegyhátszentjakab and Lake Hársas near Szentgotthárd in the Órség, or more lakes on the territory of Goričko (e.g. Ledavsko jezero, Bukovniško jezero). Most of these lakes serve the recreation of the inhabitants in the afternoons/evenings and at the weekends, and the demands of tourists seeking natural experiences at the same time.

Among others, high water table and aquifers prevent high precipitation from infiltrating into the ground, that is why drainage water often accumulates in small basins. To exploit these hydrographic, soil and topographical conditions, artificial stagnant waters, called "tóka" were usually applied, which created a specific landscape management and ecological unity. Most of these can be found in the Órség, which partially goes beyond the border, and they adapted to

⁵⁹ In order to tackle this problem, regional actors already tried to familiarise farmers with the methodology of environmentally friendly grassland management within the framework of some projects, since regular mowing in good time may resolve the problem.

natural basins and drainage areas. "Tóka" is a deep hole used for water collection, a small lake, a puddle, or a pool. Small stagnant waters were used for watering domestic animals, watering garden plants, doing the laundry and bathing. After a while several types of amphibians established in these water collection holes, among others different types of protected salamander species.

Watercourses, which determine the topography of border areas to a large extent, have an important role in the specificity of the species of flora and fauna, since they give place to habitat-oases. Different sections of Rába, Mura and Kerka River might be important cross-border touristic routes for water tourism – it is possible to go on boat, kayak and canoe trips.

It is important to mention that Hungarian-Slovenian borderlands are rich in **thermal waters**, in the Upper Pannonian sand layers it is possible to find thermal waters at a temperature of 57-70°C. This can be a basis for either energy production or agriculture based on renewable resources. The level of geothermal energy also favours bath tourism and health tourism in the region (e.g. Lenti, Szentgotthárd, Moravske Toplice).

As it was already mentioned, large natural areas represent significant ecotourism-potential. The objective of the continuously developing ecotourism of the region is to form a sustainable, "gentle" tourism in accordance with the natural environment by diversifying local economies, granting livelihoods to local farmers and keeping the landscape intact for local population. In the regions of Órség and Goričko, these objectives were realized mainly by rural tourism – there are single-family houses and smaller boarding houses in place of large, high-end hotels. This situation forms a basis for many small enterprises, especially on the Hungarian side.

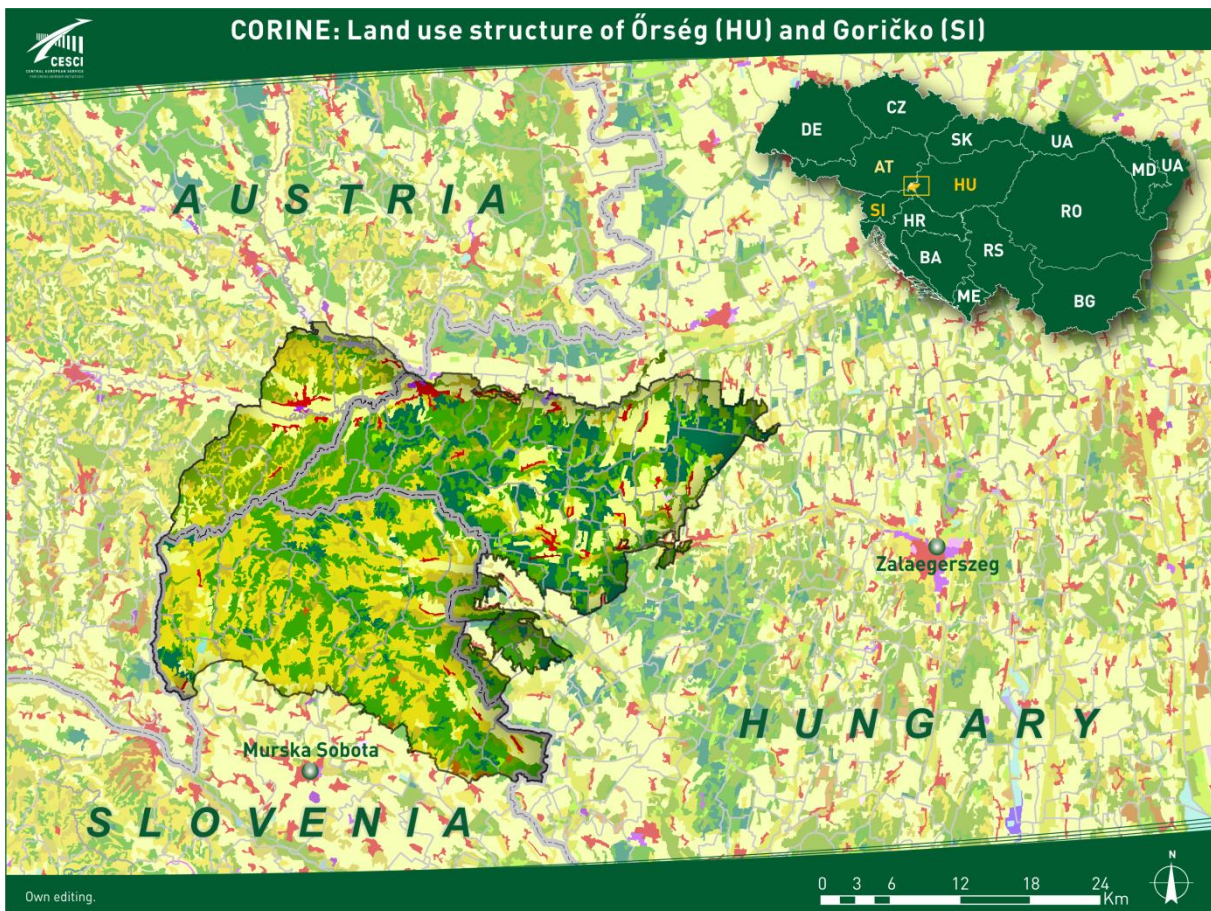
Cycling tourism and walking tourism are supported by walking trails and bike trails, nature trails, demonstration and resting places. Both in the areas of Órség and Goričko, there are one-day excursions, nature tourism, which let the visitors to be acquainted with the flora and fauna of the region (e.g. observation of moths, excursions in flowering seasons). In addition, cycling tours are also frequently organised in the territory. Tours (walking and cycling tours as well), which involve both countries are frequently organised – both countries take part in the organisation and management of these tours (for the items see first part of Chapter 1).

Both sides of the border are rich in natural assets and this characteristic renders the landscape attractive together with the cultural and architectural monuments. The facilities of ecotourism, rural tourism, gastro-tourism and cultural tourism linked with each other make the length of stays longer and render the expenditures of guests higher. On the whole, there is a great potential of enhancing cohesion in locating similar attractions on the same route and compiling joint programme packages; creating a cross-border recreation-tourism region.

It is important to emphasize that, however natural environment has diverse landscape features this characteristic alone is not attractive enough from the regional and European point of view. Really significant resources are, as it was already mentioned, the conservation of natural assets,

which is strongly linked with linguistic-cultural and gastronomic potential, including local products.

One of these resources is traditional small peasant farming. Local people formed the landscape by their small parcel **farming**, in harmony with the nature, conserving and maintaining its diversity. Mosaiced landscape management adapted to the conditions left behind a varied landscape, rich flora and fauna, a living and functioning region with similar farming practices on both sides of the border.



Until the 19th century, landscape management was determined by topography: agricultural production was a typical farming practice on the hilltops, whereas on the hillsides and in soggy valleys, it was mostly meadow and forest management. Even today, his specific spatial fragmentation can be observed in the case of individual micro landscapes; it is possible to “read” the cultural landscape.

Nowadays arable crop production, which requires large areas, is rarer causing increasing forest cover. Most of the forest cover in Hungary can be found on these areas, except the higher regions middle-mountain areas. Forests had raditionally more functions: besides logging, litter collection, mast-feeding, collection of herbs, fruits and mushrooms were done in the forests.

Forest management had an important role in this region. Selective management created multiaged and mixed forests, a part of these can be found even today.

The specific element of the originally mosaiced, small parcelled landscape structure is the so-called hay-field orchard, which once could be found on nearly all farms of the border areas. On steeper slopes, extensive hay-field orchards could be found, which grow/grew traditional types of fruits, like “búzérő” plum, “zabérő” pear, “scone” apple, or “pumpkin” apple (special local types of fruits), which can be utilized as dried fruits, jams, or pálinka (strong spirit).

Orchards of local people in the Órség were planted of ancient fruit trees centuries ago. The trees were planted far apart from each other and grassland under the trees was maintained by mowing. In the orchards, hundreds of fruit varieties were available which were different in their time of ripening, size, colour, durability and fields of use. Trees were not sprayed, in spite of this they lived for a long time; they grew high and grew sound and bounteous fruit. Trees and the lawn under the trees gave place to a special biocoenosis, the members of which were cavity-nesting birds, bats, diurnal butterflies and orchids. Fruit varieties in these orchards are unique, they are the living carriers of biological and genetical diversity of plants grown in the territory – and because of all this they are part of the cultural heritage of the territory and they are the basis of local agro-economy (including rural and gastro-tourism) and ecotourism at the same time.

Besides natural assets, the region has an outstanding built, ethnographic and cultural-historical heritage. A unique, so-called “szeres” **settlement structure** was formed, which is a transition between group settlement and scattered settlement. The former guardians or watchmen built their homes called “szerek” on hilltops and loggings. These are actually types of settlement made up of a few houses, some additional farm buildings and gardens. The most famous Hungarian “szeres” villages are Ispánk, Szalafő, Nagyrákos and Óriszentpéter, which is the center of Órség National Park, but the characteristics of “szeres” settlements can also be found on the border of Goričko Nature Park, at settlements on the territory of Órség region and at some of the settlements near southern Burgenland. Settlements of Vendvidék (Slovene Raba Region) and (Hungarian) Raba Region have similar characteristics to Órség’s settlements, however, scattered settlement structures are more widespread. Scattered settlement structure is determining on the other side of the border, in the territory of Goričko as well.

The heritage of the built environment includes specific peasant and farmhouses that reflect the traditional building materials, such as wood, clay, and straw. Several houses have straw thatched roof. The most famous collection of buildings that represents the traditional house type and the so-called “szeres” settlement is the Pityerszer ethnographic monument (skanzen) in Szalafő. The Slovenian side also boasts with these kind of buildings, e.g. Croatian’s estate (Hrvatova domačija) in Rogašovci, while some other houses are thatched with reed in both countries.

In addition, it is important to mention the monuments of folk wooden architecture and monuments of church architecture made of stone. The former group consists of the so-called “skirted” belfries (Pankasz, Kercaszomor, Magyarszombatfa–Gödörháza, Nemesnép) and wooden belfries (e.g. Selo, Slovenia). The latter group consists of the fortress churches, which also had a defensive function in the Middle Ages. These churches are built in Romanesque and Gothic style on Árpád Age foundations (Velemér, Óriszentpéter, Hegyhátszentjakab, Szőce).

Similar important religious monuments can be found on the Slovenian side, including the Ducal Rotunda of Saint Nicholas and the Virgin Mary, a Romanesque building from the early 13th century in Selo, and the Roman Catholic Church dedicated to Saint Martin with Romanesque portal dating to the 13th century, in Domanjševci. Furthermore, the castle of Grad, the biggest castle in Slovenia housing the park administration as well as the accommodation and the museum, this way being a prominently important asset for the Slovenian side.

Border areas have a wide range of **local products**. The different organic, handmade and bioproducts can retain the population of rural areas through the development of local economy (creating new jobs, increasing added value). Production, processing and sale of products on one hand promote the creation of sustainable landscape management, the rise of ecotourism and help to reach environmental protection management objectives. On the other hand local products help the reinforcement of identity and region branding, based on handicraft, which brings together traditional crafts.

Name of the producer/ service provider	Product/Service	Seat of activity
Jožica Celec	gingerbread figures	Prosenjakovci
7Zita, Terezija and Ernest Toplak	clay figures, clay hearts	Dobrovnik
Drago Škodnik	thatched roofs, bird feeders, nesting boxes	Rogašovci
Bojnec	potteries and pottery museums	Bogojina
Herman Rajsar	painted eggs	Grad
Gabrijela Flisar	crochet products	Cankova
Bernardka Merklin	painted eggs	Grad
Elizabeta Urisk	painted eggs	Dobrovnik
Jožef Zelko	pottery products	Mačkovci
Geza Kisilak	hand-made shoes	Rogašovci
Jožef és Damijan Rogan	thatched roofs	Kuzma
Daniela Topolovec	folkweave products	Hodoš
Franc Franko	wrought iron products	Puconci
Maja Rauch	textile toys	Prosenjakovci
Elizabeta Cipot	corn husk products	Odranci
Anton Žokš	wooden souvenirs, candles	Maribor

Name of the producer/ service provider	Product/Service	Seat of activity
Franc and Darja Zelko	pottery products	Mačkovci
Kmečka sirarna Gorički raj	cheeses	Prosenjakovci
Lovro Vehovar in Mirjam Celec	production of medicinal herbs	Kuzma
Ema Grah	traditional bread-baking	Grad
Štefan Gjergjek	fruit and vegetable production	Grad

Source: http://www.park-goricko.org/de/informacije_seznam.asp?id_jezik=1&id_tip1=8&id_tip2=2&id_tip3=0

As it was already mentioned above, the cultivation of hay-field **orchards** linked with environmentally friendly grassland management is of great importance on the Hungarian-Slovenian border. In order to preserve grasslands, various instruments to cultivate grasslands in an appropriate way stimulate farmers. Most common types of grown fruits are apple and grapes. It must be highlighted that processing of **pumpkin seeds** is highly significant on both sides of the border, since many farmers produce pumpkin seed oil⁶⁰, which is also sold to tourists.

Salads with home-made pumpkin seed oil dressing are typical for north-eastern Slovenia.

High-quality jams and syrups are produced from the different types of fruits and grapes, for example the jam made of “kormin” grapes or the different spicy apple jams.

According to tradition, almost every farmer has a small vineyard where he produces "his own" wine on the Slovenian side.

From other fruits grown in the region, excellent spirits drinks are produced. Pálinka made of “kormin” grapes is popular in the region, however, a complementary characteristic of the Slovenian side is oenology, therefore wine tourism has an important role there. In many villages, farmers produce honey that they sell to tourists and local people in special flavours (e.g. lavender honey).

All in all, the border region is rich in traditional foodstuffs and regional dishes such as dödölle, pumpkin and poppy-seed strudel, and fried saffron milk cap from the Hungarian side, while some dishes are enjoyed on both sides, for example gibanica layer cake or goulash. Some commonly used ingredients in regional cuisine are not widespread in the whole territory of the countries, for example poppy seed and red paprika in Slovenia or pumpkin oil and apple in Hungary.

Quality schemes defined by EU legislation enable the protection of agricultural products and foodstuffs in EU markets. According to Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment of Slovenia,

⁶⁰ Many times referred to as „the gold of Órség”

there are a few that have been designated and protected among the Slovenian Protected Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs.⁶¹ Štajerska-Prekmurje pumpkin seed oil (Štajersko-prekmursko bučno olje) has *Protected Geographical Indication*. Farmers from Štajerska and Prekmurje regions have been producing oilseed pumpkins and processing their seeds into oil since the 18th century. They produce them according to a traditional procedure of pressing roasted pumpkin seeds using heat. Prekmurje layer cake (prekmurska gibanica)⁶² and Prekmurje ham (Prekmurska šunka)⁶³, a smoked and dried meat product, produced from fresh hind legs of pigs are among those products that have gained the *Traditional Speciality Guaranteed* scheme. Higher quality scheme covers the farming of chickens for meat production of the Home-bred Goričko Chicken trademark. Home-bred Goričko Chickens have to be originated from Goričko Nature Park, and hatched, fed and slaughtered in the territory of Slovenia. They are fed on compound of high quality only. Poultry houses are smaller with fewer animals thus creating better conditions for rearing and animal welfare.

On the Hungarian side, pálinka, a traditional fruit brandy, protected as a geographical indication of the European Union, has a growing importance. Only fruit spirits mashed, distilled, matured and bottled in Hungary can be named as “pálinka”.

Pálinka distillation has respect again in Hungary. As a sign of development of fruit and pálinka culture, producers and processors of more and more settlements are involved in the production of high-quality pálinka. This unique, complementary characteristic of Hungary is reinforced by the fact that the geographical indication “pálinka” can be used in Hungary based on the Regulation (EC) No. 110/2008 of the European Parliament and the Council, and therefore from the label “pálinka” no other European farmers can have direct or indirect trading profit.

The pear pálinka of Göcsej (göcseji körtepálinka), produced on the Easternmost geographical and historical micro-region of Órség National Park is one of the eight pálinkas that has received the label “product with protected designation of origin”.

Local people put a great emphasis on **livestock breeding** as well, which is why indigenous breeds still exist, mainly on the Hungarian side. The grasslands owned by Órség National Park Directorate are utilized by the Directorate’s own livestock, grazing and preparing hay for the animals. The Directorate keeps Hungarian Fleckvieh Cattle, Grey Cattle and

⁶¹

http://www.mkgp.gov.si/fileadmin/mkgp.gov.si/pageuploads/publikacije/Zasciteni_proizvodi_SLO_ANG/Zasciteni_brosura_ANG_SPLET.pdf

⁶² The base of the dish is shortcrust pastry topped with four different layers of fillings (poppy seeds, curd cheese, ground walnuts and grated apples), separated by a layer of filo pastry.

⁶³ The uniqueness of this ham is in the drying and the long maturing process under the specific regional climate conditions.

Muraközi/Medimurje horse (the only stud of this kind in Hungary) with the aim of gene preservation and land conservation, while Hungarian Cigája (Tsigai) Sheeps and donkeys are kept for demonstrational purposes.

Not only products of plant origin, but also **products of animal origin are processed** in the region. In more settlements, different cheese types (mainly goat cheese and cow's cheese) are produced. To render cheeses more specific, producers usually add spices to them. Pig slaughterings are frequent in the area, during which sausages and black pudding are prepared to be offered raw or roasted at various festivals.

Besides products of agricultural origin and food, a great emphasis is placed on **handmade products**. Pottery, which has rich traditions, stands out from other folk crafts. Pottery is based on the important local raw material source: clay. Thus, clay soil is not only the reason for unfavourable arable farming, but also for the remarkable rate of meadows, pastures and forests on both sides of the border and the reason for pottery. Rural crafts and other traditional activities are parts of natural and cultural heritage of the region and enrich rural touristic offer.

It is true that pottery has a crucial role in border areas (it is possible to find pottery houses, exhibitions and master craftsmen in more settlements), however, wickerwork/basketry, woodcarving, gingerbread baking and candle making also have rich traditions in the region of Órség and Goričko. Furthermore, thatch builders still exist, who continue the traditional roofing method, which today is unfortunately only a way of preserving heritage. A characteristic of folk crafts is that professional knowledge and practical skills are passed on from generation to generation and these are connected to modern forms and demands. Besides the aforementioned crafts, other handicraft branches are present in the region, which should be incorporated in tourism and in the preservation of traditions.

Name of the producer/service provider	Product/Service	Seat of activity
Attila Albert Jr.	pottery products	Magyarszombatfa
Zsuzsanna Erzsébet Balla	spruce syrup, dandelion syrup	Kondorfa
János Balogh	traditionally manufactured 100% pumpkin seed oil	Szalafő
Pál Bartha	Kormin grape pálinka	Szalafő
János Cseke Jr.	pottery products	Magyarszombatfa
Ferencz Porta	rural accommodation	Szalafő
István Gerencsér	Kormin grape jam	Óriszentpéter
Kétvölgyi Inn	rural accommodation	Kétvölgy
Erika Kovács	pottery products	Felsőjánosfa
Viktória Kovács-Mesterházy	spicy and vanilla-cardamom apple jam	Órimagyarósd
Köcöle Ltd.	Dödölle from the Órség	Órimagyarósd

Name of the producer/service provider	Product/Service	Seat of activity
Mariann Tóth	goat cheese with pumpkin seed	Szentgotthárd-Farkasfa
Ferenc Vörös	pottery products	Magyarszombatfa
Gábor Vörös	pottery products	Magyarszombatfa
Tibor Zaicz	spicy goat cheese, spicy cow cheese	Szalafő
Gyula Zsohár	pottery products	Óriszentpéter

Source: <http://nemzetiparkitermek.hu/mainpage.html>

On the Hungarian side of the Órség in 2012-13 it was possible for local producers and accommodation providers to apply for the usage of the “National Park Product” trade mark, which promoted ecotourism. At first, only potters could apply for this title, but in 2013 other local producers and accommodation providers could apply as well. However, last year this possibility was not available any more and there were no similar cases on the other side of the border. The objective was to help local products and services to reach the market and to stimulate farming compatible in harmony with the nature, production of traditional products and tourism services.⁶⁴

In the case of most products, handicraftsman can be found on both the Hungarian and Slovenian side. One of the exceptions is for example egg decorating, which is a separate craft only in the territory of Goričko, or it is particularly important only in this region. Another craft, which has different characteristics on the different sides of the border is pottery – on the Hungarian side it is much more common, and there is a higher number of potters. On the whole, in Slovenia there are less crafts - however, especially on the territory of Goričko and in its wider environment along River Mura, living handicrafts which had already disappeared in the other parts of Slovenia might be discovered. Craft traditions still have masters who can share their knowledge and experiences and render small-scale craft industry an alternative source of income.

Last but not least, it is important to mention the factors and resources influencing the **social cohesion** of borderlands. Viewing borderlands in a broader sense, not only the attractive natural environment with great potentials should be mentioned, but the “**border situation**” as well, which is a historic heritage that has been typical for centuries. In addition, if Austria is included, a further curiosity is the tri-border situation, which is the meeting point of three different cultures. When Hungarian people arrived in the Pannonian/Carpathian Basin in the 9th-10th century, they created their border surveillance system in the region of Órség. Órség

⁶⁴ <http://onp.nemzetipark.gov.hu/orsegi-nemzeti-parki-termek>

itself was named after the watchmen who were settled on the western border to watch the borderline from the hills – in return they gained different privileges. The current territory of Órség and Goričko became a borderland during the Ottoman rule in Hungary as well. Between 1600 and 1690, following the siege of the castle of Nagykanizsa by the Ottoman Turks, the southern, southeastern part of the border region became occupied territory (Vilayet of Nagykanizsa).

Battles fought against the Ottomans are part of the past. The most famous of these is the Battle of Saint Gotthard in 1664. Excluding a short intermezzo during World War II, the state borders have been dividing Órség and Goričko since the end of World War I. The fall of the Iron Curtain now helps to connect people and helps them to mentally process the times of severe separation. However, the guard towers and military objects of the previous regime and their system of division can be reintegrated in society and economy in the form of tourism and people-to-people actions.

From the point of view of religions, most of the villages in the Órség (except Vendvidék/Slovene Raba Region where the majority of the inhabitants is Catholic) are Calvinists, from the beginning of the Reformation to date, so it is like an island regarding religion, separated from the surrounding areas. The importance of Protestant Churches has even further increased by the fact that beside the Slovenian Catholic majority, the biggest Evangelic communities live in Prekmurje, in Slovenia. Cohesion is created not only by Calvinists and Evangelics, but by Catholics as well: the majority of Goričko, Vendvidék/Slovene Raba Region and Raba/Rába Valley is for a large part Catholic.

Part of the curiosities of the border region are local dialects, which cross the border. The uniqueness of Prekmurje Slovene⁶⁵, a supra-dialectal regional variety of Slovene, should be highlighted. This region was constantly under Hungarian influence since the 11th century and it was therefore different from other Slovenian regions in many respects. Although there were attempts already in 1848 to link Prekmurje people with other Slovenian compatriots in the west, but they continued to live a remote life in relation to other parts of present-day Slovenia. Thus, together with Resian, **Prekmurje Slovene** is the only Slovene dialect with a literary standard that has a different historical development from the rest of Slovene ethnic territory. Standard Prekmurje Slovene was not written with the Bohorič alphabet used by Slovenes in Inner Austria, but with a Hungarian-based orthography. Prekmurje Slovene, especially its more traditional version spoken by Slovenes living in Hungary, is not readily understood by speakers from central and western Slovenia. That is why some linguists have even argued that Prekmurje Slovene is a distinct (regional) language, while it is one of the few Slovene dialects in Slovenia that is still spoken by all strata of the local population.

⁶⁵ The dialect is also known as Pannonian Slovene, East Slovene, or Wendish.

National **minorities**, which are indigenous on both sides of the border, have an important role in social cohesion. The vast majority of Slovenians forms a small linguistic island at the settlements of the historic Vendvidék/Slovene Raba Region – the name of which refers to the Slovenian origins – as the continuation of Slovenian ethnical space. The six-neighbouring/adjacent settlements bordering Szentgotthárd from the south (Felsőszölnök, Alsószölnök, Szakonyfalu, Apátisvánfalva, Kétvölgy, Orfalu) gives place to major Slovenian communities, which have the opportunity to choose bilingual kindergartens and schools (Felsőszölnök, Apátisvánfalva). In Szentgotthárd, it is possible to learn Slovenian language in secondary school as well. The biggest Slovene majority village is Alsószölnök, situated near the tri-border area, however, proportionally many Slovenes live in Szentgotthárd as well, in the cultural centre of Hungarian Slovenes. The Hungarian Slovene minority can be informed about the news of Prekmurje and Slovenia via its official press. After the Hungarian change of regime, a continuous bilateral communication was formed between the Hungarian linguistic island and the home country.

The majority of Hungarians of Prekmurje live in the southern part of the Slovenian-Hungarian border area (Dolinsko region) and their centre is Lendava. However, representatives of the minority live north of this region as well. In some of the villages on the Slovenian side of the Órség (e.g. Hodoš, Krplivnik), which is a basically Hungarian ethnographic landscape, Hungarian minority accounts for a significant proportion in spite of the diminution and assimilation.

The relationship of Hungarian and Slovenian minorities is characterized by reciprocity. The Slovenian government provides native Hungarian national minority with extensive minority rights: in the villages where the proportion of Hungarian minority is high, the official language is Hungarian beside Slovenian. Hungarians in Slovenia enjoy bilingualism, and similarly to Hungary, teaching of minority languages is guaranteed at the level of elementary and secondary schools. A part of Slovenian speaking people in Prekmurje acquire Hungarian language as an optional subject.

After decades of isolation, with the collapse of the Iron Curtain, minorities can renew their relationships with compatriotes from their home country. Having their own values, they can be active participants in dissolving mental borders and developing cultural economy including cultural tourism. Now the joint, cross-border organisation of public education and cultural activities can promote the preservation of their identity.

Ethnic disagreements do not endanger the success of cooperation. On the contrary, the ethnic diversity can be source of cooperation and integration. The development of interethnic relations greatly influences the cooperative atmosphere, development prospects and the cohesion of the entire region in an indirect way. Intercultural dialogue and „people-to-people projects” aiming get to know each other should be promoted in this region as well. Furthermore, multilingual information injunction should be widely disseminated on both sides

of the border. As a result of having lived together for a long time, people came to know each others' cultures and in part each others' languages as well. Some of the locals understand both Hungarian and Slovenian languages – these bilingual groups, which usually have dual identity at the same time, can act as catalyst and bridge in the further reinforcement of social cohesion.

Various events promote the sense of belonging together in the border region, and at the same time enrich tourism services. Along the Hungarian-Slovenian border it is possible to find appropriate programmes throughout the whole year for all ages, which are usually organised in connection with natural values and local products, stimulating relations between locals from the two sides of the border, presentation of cultural heritage and selling products of local farmers and craftsmen. Programmes are connected to fairs, where home-made foodstuffs (e.g. jams, honeys, syrups) or handmade products (e.g. pottery products, wicker baskets, homespun/folkweaves) can be presented.

The greatest festival of the Órség is the event called "Hétrétország" (A land of seven meadows), which is organised in Óriszentpéter and the surrounding settlements every year in August. The event, which lasts for 10-12 days, is organized by the "Órségi TeleHáz" (Órség TeleHouse). The various programmes for all ages involve concerts, theatrical performances, folk music and stargazing. In addition, locals await guests in their opened farms.

Órség Pumpkin Festival, which is one of the most visited events among the neighbouring Slovenians, has cross-border relevance. Similar to this event, is the International Pottery Meeting, which is fully about hand-made pottery products. The objective of Órség Fair and the Fair at the Valley Bridge (Völgyhíd)/Völgyhíd Fair is the presentation and sale of local products.

The largest programmes on the Slovenian side are connected to Grad in Goričko, Grad Castle, such as various fairs organised in the Castle itself. Events on European Heritage Day are similarly connected to the Castle, during which it is open to all participants free of charge. This year, the International Traditional Easter Egg Exhibition is going to be organized for the 18th time in Dobrovnik.

In addition, around Easter-time even more programmes in connection with the celebrations are awaiting tourists, which allow talented local Easter egg decorators to present their works of art. The objective of most of the programmes organized in the territory of Goričko is to increase the opportunities of local farmers and producers and to provide them with better economic opportunities. This is why most of the events here are also connected to fairs of local products. Nature reserves along the border often harmonise their programmes and organise joint events, such as the Órség – Raab – Goričko Trilateral Nature Park meeting within the framework of the European Day of Nature Parks, where the usual programmes are awaiting the guests (market of local products, playhouses, handicrafts, hiking, cultural programmes, culinary offerings, "three countries olympic competitions"). Events, which last several days aimed at

larger and wider audience and related to several settlements are usually organized on the Hungarian side.

To sum up, it can be said that the most apparent strengthening factor regarding the cohesion of the border areas is the cross-border nature of the landscape since the state borders are not aligned to landscape borders. There are three micro-regions that overlap the state borders, while the whole area is part of one single big landscape unit. From the point of view of natural environment, the landscape boasts with high biodiversity that has been preserved for centuries. There are same habitat types, species with high conservation value (e.g. relict and endemic species). Taking into account the trans-European level, the region is part of a bigger ecological network called the European Green Belt to which the cooperation can actively connect. Owing to the unspoiled nature, the area is suitable for ecotourism and other activities such as recreation for locals that are consistent with the landscape.

The human elements of the landscape are also similar on both sides of the border which makes them also an important strengthening factor regarding cohesion. The land use has been adapted to the natural features of the landscape, such as terrain or soil. Because of the similarities in landscape management, the local products are also similar. The local products serve as basis for rural development in the form of joint production, processing and their distribution, especially which can only be found mainly in this cross-border region.

The region has always been some kind of a border area; this historical fact also unites the areas on both sides. The border region is also a trilateral one; it is a meeting point of three distinct cultures, for which reason there are some ethnic, linguistic, religious and gastronomical features that both (or all if Austria is included) sides share.

All things considered, the whole area can be viewed as a unified territorial unit and managed jointly as a functional, integrated cross-border region and it has the potential of sustainable development based on the capacity of the cross-border landscape.

13. Synthesis, Summary

In line with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the European integration process, the roles and effects of borders have been changing, thus new forms of cross-border cooperations have emerged in the Danube River Basin, including the one with the participation of Órség and Goričko.

First of all, it needs to be clarified that despite a CBC project, aimed at creating a joint institutional structure and working organization, there is no institution responsible for coordinating cross-border developments. Other major factors that hinder their cooperation are definitely the different nature protection regimes, the lack of language skills and the limited amount of budget and funds.

In contradistinction to the geographical aspects that represent the most important strengthening factor regarding cohesion, the structural characteristics of the cooperation are among the biggest hindering factors. The regulatory environment varies across borders weakening the parks' abilities to cooperate efficiently. There are significant differences regarding roles and responsibilities, budget, human resources and so on. The Hungarian side is a more powerful, authority-like organization having more mandatory and optional tasks, allocated funds, etc. Consequently, it is the Órség National Park which can carry out more activities, and can be even the leader of cross-border projects.

In essence, the real cooperation between the two protected areas began after the demolition of the Iron Curtain and intensified after the EU accession with the help of growing funds allocated to the INTERREG Community Initiative and later to the European Territorial Cooperation objective.

Three major periods of their cooperation have been defined. The **first** one lasted from the emergence of Phare programmes until their run-out, approximately between 1995 and 2003. During this period cooperation were mainly without a comprehensive, territorially integrated approach, based on a permanent platform instead of sporadic connections.

The **second** period between 2004 and 2009 brought a partly institutionalized and a more formal cooperation. The territoriality and strategic thinking gained bigger consideration. There was a shift towards a coordinated, strategic partnership. Two important documents, which set the main goals, activities and organizational system, were agreed by the partners: the first, on the formation of a trilateral nature park, was signed in 2006, and the latter in 2009.

The **third** period started around 2009 and it still has not ended. This period brought the idea that regardless money, besides project-based cooperation a common strategic thinking and a joint planning is needed between two protected areas. Regular meetings, joint programmes have become frequent and common.

Despite the ambition set in the Memorandum of 2006 for a joint trilateral park authority the cooperation is not operating like one park entity but rather like three separate ones, each following its own national policy system and governance structure. Due to the lack of a shared or joint working organization, it was possible to present the system of formal and informal meetings or workshops only.

In accordance with the Memorandum signed in 2006 a **joint working group** was set up. This organizational structure has been left fundamentally unchanged ever since. The meetings are held in a rotational system, each year on one of the other parks' territory. The members delegated by the three parks officially meet at least twice a year, the trilateral meetings or workshops are held 1 or 2 times a month. It is worth differentiating between workshops and discussions/meetings – considering **workshops**, besides the employees of parks, partners invite the mayors concerned and, depending on the topic, some representatives of NGOs too in order to enlarge the partnership by integrating a wider range of stakeholders. Due to the presence of mayors, these kinds of events focus more on the potentials of CBC cooperation. The **meetings** are somewhat different. Participants are always the executives, managers, directors and experts on the given topics. The meeting of the leaders forms a good basis for reconciliation and exchange of thoughts. It is not about cross-border project cooperation only but more practical cooperation. Partners examine the results and activities representing best practices so they gain insight into good model activities performed by the host partner.

Focusing only on bilateral cooperation between Órség and Goričko, meetings take place between the two parks 1 or 2 times a year. These meetings are thematic, where people responsible for the given topic get together from both sides. The main activities include the suggestion, discussion and acceptance of joint programmes and new projects in order to coordinate their development ideas.

Taking into consideration the **geographical aspects** of the cooperation, it should be underlined that the most important geographical feature of the border region is that it is a nearly completely homogeneous area since state borders are not aligned to the landscape borders. The whole area is part of the same macro-regional landscape. However, there are three micro-regions that overlap the administrative state boundaries. The cross-border nature of landscapes means that there are only slight differences between them regarding terrain, climate and so on. Even the land use adapted to the capacity of the natural environment shows many similarities on both sides of the border. From historical point of view, the hilly region turned into an unfavourable area for deploying modern industry and making a living for large urban centres around the 19th century. Due to the restricted access and the strong former barrier characteristics of borders during the Cold War, a unique biodiversity has been kept and evolved along the zone of the Iron Curtain. Owing to travel and construction restrictions, the mosaic natural landscape has been mostly preserved. In addition, settlement and industry policy of the states also helped preserving the pristine nature by excluding border areas from

beneficiary territories. Major urban centres and industrial activities have never affected the landscape in an irreversible way. All in all, it is due to historical reasons together with geographical features that the most important feature of the cross-border region along with its homogeneity is its unspoiled natural environment, characterised by high diversity with many indigenous and relict species and same habitat types in both countries.

The extensive semi-natural areas represent significant potential for **ecotourism**, nature, bicycle, water and rural tourism. The constantly growing importance of ecotourism is consistent with the natural capacity of the landscape, and the sustainable green tourism supports the diversification of local economy while preserving the unspoilt character of the natural environment for the inhabitants.

The peripheral location, which caused isolation, helped to preserve a **rich landscape** that incorporates unique forms of farming, handicraft, folk architecture and intangible heritage, on which cross-border cooperation and development can be built in order to strengthen cohesion. So, the most important geographical features of the cooperation are strongly connected to the natural environment, such as land use (including the unique settlement pattern), language and culture, gastronomy and/or local products.

These features give the opportunity to see the whole area as a homogeneous unit; consequently, there are significant potentials in managing and developing the cross-border territory jointly. It is also important to emphasize that the area has always been some kind of a border area, so the border effect has had a huge effect on the territory. On trans-European level the area is situated along the valuable ecological networks situated in the border zone of the former Iron Curtain, the European Green Belt. It is also important to note that for the proximity of Austria, the area is also a trilateral border and contact zone of three different cultures.

The importance of the cooperation mainly comes from the fact that a region/area with unfavourable character can be changed. The periphery, alienated border areas with closed, barrier-like borders can be turned into cooperative ones, into an integrated cross-border network which supports open borders.

Cooperation has been selected as the best practice model mainly due to the initiatives launched in the topic of sustainable development based on the joint characteristics and assets of the cross-border landscape. Joint projects related to this kind of development were among the most successful and important ones concerning budget as well as the results.

The sustainable landscape management model would be exemplary for other similarly valuable cross-border natural areas from the point of developments especially in ecological farming and ecotourism. Partners have achieved outstanding results in projects based on the natural

environment of the cross-border region and they strongly interconnected the areas with each other, namely in the following fields:

- nature conservation and environmental protection,
- land use and farming,
- handicraft,
- local products and trademarks,
- built environment and intangible cultural heritage,
- ecotourism.

Good practices include promotion of multilingualism in a trilateral border zone where three completely different cultures coexist beside each other. The outcome of these activities are: protected semi-natural areas, habitat restoration, preservation of high biodiversity, and ecotourism, harmonised with the landscape potentials. Moreover, employment is also stimulated through the promotion of local economy and its output. Besides the activities resulted in physically open borders, their active contribution to the dissolution of mental borders has been crucial as well. Given the fact that the cooperation has not got its own development agency or some kind of institutionalized working organization, most of the main fields of action concentrate on the most important aspect of the border situation along the state boundary that used to be nearly hermetically closed both physically and mentally: bringing people closer together. This approach regarding social cohesion shall not be underestimated in such border area.

From the point of planning, partners have been trying to move in the direction of a long-term, strategic and cohesion-based approach, and to coordinate their work in the field of project development and project management, event organization and knowledge transfer too. Partners have been striving to learn from each other, from those who have more knowledge, better experience or more tools regarding the analysis, elaboration, implementation or monitoring of a specific area, e.g. habitat protection or local products. Furthermore, study tours and workshops have been organized. Partners have become regional stakeholders by putting this approach and the aforementioned best practice model into practice in order to strengthen the cohesion of the cross-border area.

14. Conclusion

In this chapter, the objective of the research is to present policy recommendations, which can be a practical synthesis to the previous chapters and might be used by stakeholders and policymakers. Recommendations based on the assets of border areas, the experiences of joint projects and activities realized so far, and best practices, formulate a short, conceptualised possible set of interventions.

On **organisational level**, the undertaken institutionalization of cooperation should be continued, in order to render coordination more effective and programme implementation more successful. Although workshops and meetings were created which can be regarded as good practices, establishing a common office, work organization or a fixed platform system related to thematic areas could be progressive. If applicable, a cross-border network of rapporteurs (employees, who are responsible for the implementation of joint activities) may be sufficient as a first step.

Concerning financing, the further optimisation of the use of resources is recommended. This objective could be served well by a development concept or strategy, which could identify the main priority areas and specific measures in connection with them. Another reason for the validation of the principle of concentration is the general resource scarcity, including the financial framework of organisations, especially the Slovenian partner and the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Hungary. A good solution can be the further development of completed projects based on their results and synergies. In connection with the allocation of resources, the majority of own contributions and amount of subsidy should be assigned to sustainable landscape management, which is the best practice model.

Regarding the achieved results, financial possibilities and plans of partners in the planning cycle that started in 2014, the support of production, processing, sale and popularization of local products may represent a large proportion in the case of the financial allocation of developments. The development of local products contributes to the preservation of sustainable agriculture, which is adapted to the local landscape and to the survival of farming types, as well as local products which are a part of the cultural heritage, thus helping the support of rural farming. All this can give a certain legitimacy to partners, strengthening their role in the development of Slovenian-Hungarian border areas.

It seems appropriate to enlarge the **scope of partnerships** to a certain degree and to strengthen the already existing ones. Due to Slovenia's limited capacities when it comes to the fulfilling of project management tasks concerning cross-border initiatives, certain Slovenian development agencies might be playing a considerate role even in the future.

Especially if the parties do not wish to or cannot create a common organisational unit responsible for cross-border affairs. This is also the reason why it would be recommended to

integrate new partners, because the main goals and competences of parks are focused on nature conservation and can thus (from regional perspective) primarily “only” apply considerate spacial organisation force in these sectors.

During all other projects, mostly the ones treating subjects such as economic development and cultural projects, they have to cooperate with many private enterprises, public institutions, NGOs and municipalities if they want to reach a complex, territorially integrated effect that truly crosses borders. They could initiate joint multilateral partnership agreements or long-term contracts to ensure the cross-border territorial development of the Órség and Goričko landscapes with most coverage and integrating most sectors.

Moreover, we must not forget about the trilateral naturpark cooperation treaty in collaboration with the Austrian Raab Naturpark. Cooperational projects like this in the **tri-border** area are very rare, which is why the Hungarian and Slovenian parks could reach significant results even at European level. If the border area could join into the **European Green Belt** even more successfully – which is of transeuropean significance -, it would also bring upon the broadening of the geographical scope, which would thereby set a good example in the reintegration of the once isolated post-Iron Curtain regions and their population, as well as the dismantling of physical and mental boundaries.

The mutually correlated cultural heritage and social connectivity activities that strengthen nature conservation approaches, local product development, tourism-related investments and social cohesion can only be accomplished effectively by crossing borders. For this, demand-oriented, long-term territorial planning is needed, based on a mutually developed **draft package** that is at least at a conceptual level. With regard to future plans, it is unfavourable that despite the cooperation agreements, all various common projects and other activities, no integrated strategy plan has been accepted yet. It could thus be up to the future to create, apart from documents outlining not so much the proqrammes, as more just the frames of the cooperation that helps to create the basics, a cross-border territorial strategy as well.

Because of the drafting and effectualisaton of the future territorial development plan, but also because of the environmental and economic sustainability of future cooperations, it is important to stress again the fact that the border area’s fate is strongly dependent on its common **landscape** resources. Creating sustainable, cross-border landscape management is fundamental for any other intervention.

The landscape characteristics of the Órség- Goričko demand common thinking and cooperation across borders. The fact that they do not recognise borders is one common feature of the landscape’s environmental processes and their territorial spreading. Therefore, in the cooperation’s future strategy, the common cases of nature and environmental protection as well as landscape management will feature as separate items.

Sustainable landscape management based on local resources means potential development through local products for the agriculture, tourism, social space building and the creation of an attractive living environment, through which it supports job creation and economic diversification intentions that determine to a large extent the overall legitimacy of the cooperation.

Thus, the mostly unspoilt, semi-natural countryside with high levels of biodiversity can serve goals other than environmental protection. The common feature of the remaining and restorable habitats is that by presenting them, local economy can be diversified, environmentally conscious thinking can be spread and an attractive rural living environment based on cultural-landscape values can be formed.

The landscape simultaneously offers space for the various functions of natural habitat protection, socio-cultural heritage and landscape management as well as tourism and housing. The coordination of the physical presence of all functions can assist the more sustainable and effective use of natural resources in the area. The most important task with interventions related to landscape management is to explore the landscape values and potential of the area and composing a strategy based on the above, respecting it to the core and putting sustainability in focus. The strategy must serve the preservation – or in this case, restoration - of landscape resources and the coordination of other development concepts based on them.

In the border area, it is definitely worth paying special attention to landscape structure and management. The construction of reasonable spatial order adhering to the values and capacities of the landscape, as well as to social needs cannot be effectuated by settlement or even country, separated from one another, in isolation. It is inevitable that this area, dealt up by administrative borders but held together by landscape, be managed by unified ideas in the future as well.

The integral management of environmental questions raised in the area would be done by a so called **environmental management centre**, which is partly a common institution, but more likely brought to life within the framework of Órség National Park. Among the centre's main tasks, many development and coordination tasks would feature which has proven to be good practice and is connected to the sustainable management of the landscape crossing the border. The centre would have access to all the necessary professional work organisations and equipment. The main tasks of the environmental management centre could be the following (note: the works displayed are not in priority order, they are more of a summary of soft suggestions and are to be treated as a certain useful actionplan):

Nature conservation- and environmental protection-focused developments: creation of sustainable landscape management

- measuring and monitoring of landscape resources and valuable ecological networks of the region, in particular regarding the potential of sustainable landscape management

that preserves biodiversity (e.g. registration of protected species, maintenance of GIS database),

- exploration and inclusion of actors concerned by landscape management, measuring their needs and their economic potentials (e.g. collection of profitable agricultural products in the region, measuring land and water management prospects)
- establishment of the region's landscape management strategy and coordination of the implementation of the strategy,
- Active participation (generating project ideas, developing and carrying out projects) in cross-border projects,
- dissemination of green thinking, carrying out actions which raise awareness and promote social cohesion among the local population (e.g. further development of already existing, in several cases joint programmes, such as Nature Park Meeting, Nature Park Quiz, painting competition, common cross-border tours etc., furthermore organization of school activities, board games which educate to nature-friendly farming, professional conferences, Peasant Olympics and other competitions etc.),
- Organising and conducting awareness-raising campaigns aimed at local farmers:
 - Development of common criteria of nature-friendly agriculture and their communication towards farmers, introduction of the "green point" system (which evaluates the localness of a product and the impact of its production on the environment)
 - Putting together farmer training programmes in collaboration with the training institutions
 - Conducting module-based courses (e.g. applying common agricultural policy system tender options; rural, country and gastro tourism; special and curiosity products; applying renewable energy; sharing best practices related to local products and knowledge on regulation background),
 - Establishing the directives of eco friendly agriculture and preparing a guide for farmers
 - Developing model farms and presenting them as best practices
 - Organising study trips and farmer's forums
- Enforcing directives concerning effective resource use during the realisation of cooperation development plans
- Coordination and promotion of environmental initiatives (e.g. elimination of illegal waste, joint actions against adventitious species)
- Synchronising the work of nature conservational security services.

Developments concerning product development: creating cross-border ecological product clusters by overall management of production, processing, sales and promotions

- Promoting production and consumption of local products (with brochures and events)
- Compilation of the inventory of biological, ecological, handmade and other traditional products, defining the range of products that can be manufactured sustainably,
- Developing an identity manual and a local trademark,
- Knowledge transfer and management (spreading techniques that are both of a traditional, intangible cultural heritage nature and also new, innovative techniques)
- Supporting the infrastructural background of nature friendly, ecological farming (e.g. by acquisition of common machinery able to treat grasslands and hayfield-orchards)
- Developing the sales system of products (e.g. e-sales network, initiating local manufacturer's/farmers' markets, stimulating participation in visitors centres, installing shelves of local goods, coordinating canteens' raw material purchases,
- Common, synchronised event organisation (e.g. gastronomic festivals), as well as participation: organising markets with handicraft and biological products, multi-location tasting tours and product introductions, common stalls with local products, installing counters
- Interactive demonstration of rural, farming lifestyle and traditional crafts, as well as native animal breeds,
- Shaping personal producer-customer relationships: interactive workshops and site visits (e.g. apple juice making, pálinka distillation, gibanica baking, pottery), launching of manufacturing and consumer blogs, organising home delivery services,
- Developing local processing (e.g. pumpkin seed press, small apple juice making facility, dairy processing plant).

Developments focused on tourism: developing the region's eco-tourism by joint management and development of destinations as well as linking them to one another.

- Foundation of TDM organisations by the unification of already existing offices and visitor centres,
- Establishing touristic cadastres and integrated tourism information platforms and database with online access in both languages,
- Integration of significant service providers, compiling and offering programme packages,
- Common participation at tourism fairs and the major events, busy hubs and tourist attractions of the region,
- Introducing cross-border nature park as a "new" cross-border destination to the market (organising study tours, forming a common stand, publishing brochures, putting up a marketing campaign in both countries),
- Creating a common image,

- Establishing, introducing a common Tri-Border Nature Park pass,
- Developing a common, bilingual tourism portal with unified content, (which does not only aim at information exchange, but also makes offers and reservations possible),
- Developing a tourism information system optimised for smartphones,
- Publishing tourism-related leaflets (thematic and regional leaflets in multiple languages),
- Establishing new, unified information points within the region (supported by brochures and maps),
- Effectuation of the border region's complex eco-tourism development:
 - Selecting itineraries (thematic itineraries, nature trails, hiking trails) and establishing the necessary rest areas, observation stations, multilingual marker systems,
 - Construction of ecotourism visitors centres, eco-houses,
 - Creation of background infrastructure for environmental education (e.g. establishing forest schools) and setting up ecotourism training facilities,
 - Development of exhibition locations (developing locations which present a wildlife rich in endemic and relict species, manufacturing of traditional local products and nature-friendly land use)
 - Creation of services linked to ecotourism (e.g. bicycle rentals, boat harbors, camping areas)
 - Creation of a bicycle tourism infrastructural network, establishing a bicycle road system covering the whole border area with the related services;
 - Developing an equine tourism infrastructure network;
 - Organising cross-border excursions to familiarise people with natural and cultural values, as well as for the sake of social cohesion.

One of the primary tasks of the environmental management centre would thus be to set up the region's landscape management strategy and coordinate its implementation. Its primary aim is to explore the area's existing landscape assets and potentials and then organise the interactions of people and their environment accordingly. In this strategy, the land use structure ensuring the border area's livelihood and focusing on the increasing and safekeeping of land potential, should be established by human-scale solutions. The strategy should not only consider the already existing qualities, but should also establish spatial order between concepts of development.

This is also why we recommended the partnership system's development in the above.

All in all it can be said that agriculture's rentability and the priority of ecotourism development are unthinkable without coordinated land use built on the principles of sustainability, and even the quality of life of the people living in the border area is highly influenced by how far we are

able to establish an attractive, competitive environment. Intervention can result in a mosaic landscape structure in which territories with outstanding nature and environmental protection functions are not permanently fragmented and are connected by eco-corridors. Effectuating harmonic land use that fits natural conditions and which equally meets the requirements of locals and tourists, of farmers and holiday goers is advised. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that within the complete cooperation mechanism, it is recommended to continue with the exemplary cooperation in exchanging best practices, as well as turning complementarities (in the field of resources, experiences, results, etc.) arising in various different thematic areas to the benefit of the mutual learning process.

Last but not least we need to highlight the social cohesion activities of both associations so far. It is advised to continue along the line of the steps taken in order to loosen the divisive nature of borders in people's minds. Spreading programmes and attractions from across the borders of neighbouring countries, more frequent meetings of young generations, as well as further support of multilingualism can be especially important measures in the process of mutual familiarisation of cross-border areas that are often still presented as "terrae incognitae". This may lead to establishment of a mutual regional identity, which cannot be built but on a shared living area (*l'espace vécu*, Thirdspace).

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