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Projects of Slovakian-Hungarian
Neighborhood Program from the point-of-view
of sustainability

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I. Introduction – aims and methods

The aim of my study is to present cross-border regions and the operation of the cross-border development programs. In the first part of my study, I will review the cross-border regions and the development programs of these regions, including Interreg I-II-III and European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). In the second part, we will see the ETC's program period 2007-2013. This presentation covers mainly the Slovakian-Hungarian ETC-program. In the main part I will focus on two implemented projects of the Slovakian-Hungarian ETC program (HUSK CBC).

With my research I want to analyze the „afterlife” of the EU-supported projects, I will introduce some good and bad examples in connection with the sustainability of the projects. EU-supported projects regularly have to be operated for 5 years after the implementation. With the projects I have chosen I would like to highlight, how supported organizations can cope with this quite long period of operation when the financial support run out and the supported organization has to finance the sustainability of development from its own resources.

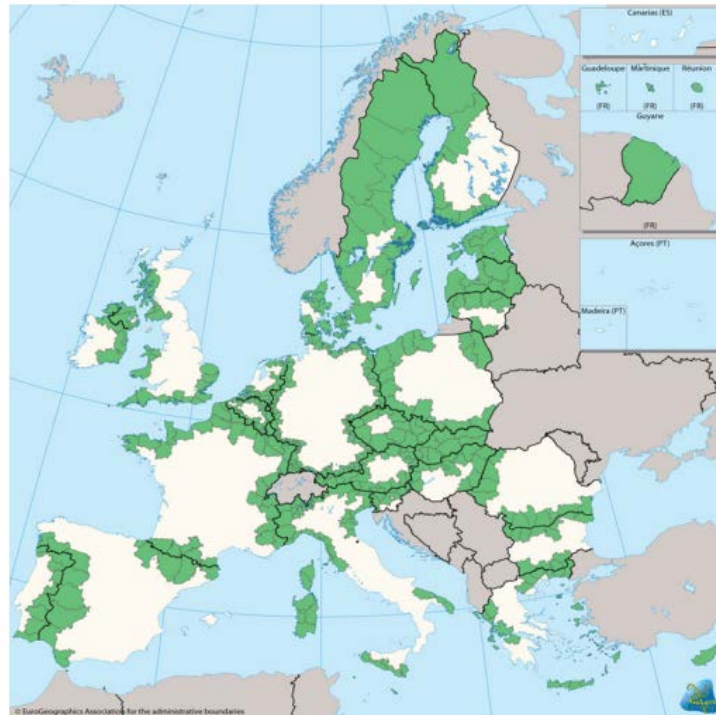
In my research I studied the EU-supported cross-border (CBC) programs. I learned the history and development of CBC-programs, focused on the Central-European characteristics. In my empirical research I have chosen some ETC (European Territorial Cooperation)-financed projects whose implementation finished in 2008 or 2009. With desk and field research I examined the chosen projects' characteristics from the point-of-view of sustainability. In my paper I will introduce some successful projects and several difficulties that influenced the further operation of the projects into a wrong way. I would like to find some answers how projects should be implemented and what kind of organizations should be financed so that EU-supported grants can contribute to the socio-economic development more efficiently in the Central European Countries (especially in Slovakia and Hungary).

II. Cross-border regions and regional development in the EU

In the European Union there is a large number of cross-border regions. Some of them are often referred to as 'Euroregions' although this is an imprecise concept that is used for a

number of different arrangements. European cross-border regions are most commonly constituted through co-operation between border municipalities, districts or regions.

II.1. Cross-border regions



1. Cross-border regions in EU

source: <http://ec.europa.eu>

II.2. Specific problems of these regions

During the integration central-peripheral relationship intensified. This causes economic, infrastructural and social problems and is leading to differences in development.

The regions of East-Central European countries were closed for decades in the socialist period and blocked the flow of the resources. The development and financing of these territories were insufficient because the borderlands were puffer zones between countries why governments allocated few financial resources for their development. In addition, quite often the region's center (city) and its gravity zone were divided by a state border.

On EU level NUTS 3 regions are eligible for ETC support. According to EU terminology the whole territory of Slovakia is eligible for these fundings, in Hungary 14 of 19 counties can get ETC-sources.

II.3. development programs of the cross-border regions (Interreg I-II-III., ETC)

The INTERREG cooperation programme is one of the four European Union Community Initiatives. The European Commission recommends INTERREG initiatives to Member States – as opposed to regional and other structural programmes – as cooperation areas fundamentally aimed to stimulate development and cohesion across the entire EU territory.

The first INTERREG Community Initiative was launched in 1990, 1994-1999 followed by INTERREG II and 2000-2006, then INTERREG III with three main strands: cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Projects from that closed at the end of 2008. Interreg IV is currently in operation, covering 2007–2013.

The European Union establishes an indicative financial allocation and defines the general objectives and priorities of the initiatives, on the basis of which EU Member States - in which eligible cross-border and macro-areas have been recognised (with the support of the concerned neighbouring non-EU countries) - submit joint detailed proposals to the European Commission (Community Initiative Programmes, CIP). Joint Managing Authorities designated by the Member States are responsible for the regular implementation of the programmes and attaining objectives.

Interreg is designed to stimulate cooperation between member states of the European Union on different levels. One of its main targets is to diminish the influence of national borders in favor of equal economic, social and cultural development of the whole territory of the European Union.

The Interreg initiative is designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion throughout the European Union, by fostering the balanced development of the continent through cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Special emphasis has been placed on integrating remote regions with those that share external borders with the candidate countries.

European Territorial Cooperation is based on the former INTERREG Community Initiative out of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Main objective is advancement of regional co-operation within the European Union.

III.ETC (European Territorial Cooperation) programmes in the 2007-2013 budget period

The European Territorial Co-operation objective is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and supports cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation programmes. The budget of €8.7 billion for this objective accounts for 2.5% of the total 2007-13 allocation for cohesion policy, including the allocation for Member States to participate in EU external border co-operation programmes supported by other instruments. For European Territorial Co-operation the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation is applicable, in particular chapter 3.

New features:

- Objective in its own right (before Community Initiative Programme) –now it is more visible
- Improved legal basis: specific provisions for cooperation
- Clear focus set on the objectives of Lisbon and Göteborg
- 75% EU-co-financing for all regions, in some cases up to 85% (before EU-co-financing of 50%)
- Lead Partner Principle

III.1. Main data (budgeting)

The European Territorial Co-operation as one of the objectives of regional policy enhances the cross-border cooperation. The objective continues the funding of the former community initiatives (INTERREG), and the ERDF finances it.(www.euvonal.hu)

Ratio of EU support:

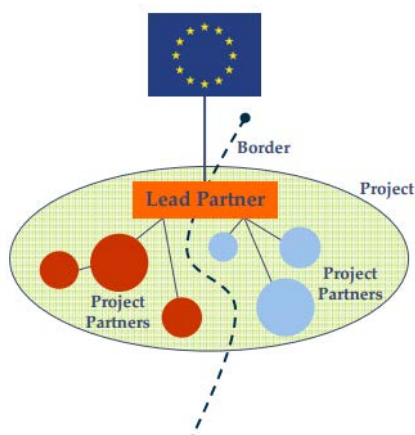
To the objective is available 7,8 billion euro (on EU level) and it is 2,52 % of the full EU budget.

The proportion of funds per priorities are the followings: (www.interreg.hu)

- Cross-border cooperation programmes: 73.86%
- Trans-national cooperation programmes: 20.95%
- Interregional cooperation: 5.19%

III.2. Program management

Lead Partner Principle – Common project administration:



2. Cross-border project's structure

- Common project development
- Common project implementation
- Common project human resources
- Common project financing

source: www.kfv.at

IV. The Slovakian-Hungarian ETC-program

The overall strategic goal of the Programme is to increase the level of economic and social integration in the Hungarian-Slovak border area by strengthening economic competitiveness, increasing social and cultural coherence among people and communities, improving accessibility and communication as well as protecting natural assets.

source:
ec.europa.eu

3. Hungarian-Slovak cross-border regions

The Hungarian regions:

- Győr-Moson-Sopron
- Komárom-Esztergom
- Pest
- Nógrád
- Heves
- Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén

- Budapest

The Slovak regions:

- Bratislavský kraj
- Trnavský kraj
- Nitriansky kraj
- Banskobystrický kraj



- Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg
- Košický kraj

Expected impacts of the investments are:

- improved cross-border connections;
- enhanced joint management of public services and resources;
- more business start-ups and tourism products; and
- local communities more motivated to engage in cross-border cooperation to improve
- the region's attractiveness. (<http://ec.europa.eu>)

V. Project sustainability from the point-of-view of success

In this part I would like to introduce one successful and one not-so-successful project from the point-of-view of sustainability.

The target region of these projects formed by the Lower Csallóköz (Slovakia), the Mosoni plain, Hanság and Szigetköz (Hungary) has excellent potentials in the field of cultural tourism. These are geographically neighbouring regions with common historical and cultural traditions, similar economic features, which all promote the transformation of these territories into popular tourist destinations.

V.1. THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE PROJECT- Exploitation of cultural and historical traditions of the border regions in the field of tourism

The project is the product of a common initiative and cooperation between the Municipality of Zemné (Szímő) in Slovakia, the Municipality of Mosonszolnok in Hungary, the MBK Pannonhalma Abbey and the Municipality of Győr county town. Its target territories are formed by the most important locations of Jedlik's life and by the partner regions, which represent a geographically unified territory in the Slovak- Hungarian border region.

The aim of the project is to utilise the cultural and historical heritage in the development of the tourist destinations of the border regions, the support of new products in tourism and the presentation of the Ányos Jedlik heritage in the aspect of cultural tourism.

One of the results of the project was a publication. This contains the results of a survey on touristic offers in the target region.

In the scope of the project the Jedlik House in Zemne (Szímő) in Slovakia is reconstructed, where a permanent Jedlik exhibition and a tourist information office was opened for the visitors. In Hungary the Jedlik Memorial Room in the Győr Czuczor Gergely Benedictine

Grammar School was modernized and in Mosonszolnok a tourist information office started its work. The marketing activities were supported by a unified image, printed publications and social events. The most important tools of the established “package“ are the webpage and the publication, which can be reached at www.jedlik.com. The presentation of the results of the project and its long-term sustainability will be ensured by the established TIO offices, their task being the provision of continual communication with the subjects of the tourist industry, the organisation and coordination of the marketing activities. (www.jedlik.com)

Marketing tools and activities:

- On the trails of Jedlik on both sides of the river Danube, tourist brochure in 60 pages
- Jedlik.com information website
- Leaflets published about the Jedlik Memorial Room in Czuczor Grammar School
- Tourist Information Office in Mosonszolnok

TIO's main activities, services:

- Introduction of Ányos Jedlik's heritage, advertising the places linked to the life and work of the scientist
 - Popularisation of the cultural and historical treasures of the Mosoni-Plain, the Szigetköz (Hungary) and the Lower-Csallóköz (Žitný ostrov - Slovakia)
 - Maintaining contacts with tourist and other information offices and subjects of the tour industry
 - Providing information through personal enquiries via the contacts of the office
 - Distribution of tourist publications
 - Assistance in finding accommodation
- Ányos Jedlik House in Zemne, the library of village, a memorial room, a big room for conferences and events and a Tourist Information Office are located here

From the aspect of sustainability we can say that in the establishments built and reconstructed during the programme, the library operates and the the memorial rooms can be visited at the end of the project. The TIOs await the tourists and the employees can help them, should they have any questions.

V.2. Marketing tools created for advertising and proposing spa tourism in the Lower Csallóköz and the Hanság

The lead partner Municipality of Kapuvár and Municipality of Nagymegyer (Veľký Meder) as the cross-border partnership are starting to develop the project activities for the preparation

stage of the project, in close cooperation. After the two partners signed the cooperation agreement, they organized several meetings both in Hungary and Slovakia. The opportunity to both parties is given to present their facility developed for promotional and marketing purposes.

The overall aim of the project:

- to strengthen the principle of peaceful coexistence at both sides of the border by developing nature and historical tourism
- to increase cooperation and interactions between border regions
- to increase competitiveness in tourism
- to develop economic and human relations and to develop identity in the local residents
- to offer spa tourism as an independent and complementary product and to increase the marketability of tourism in the region to form a chain of high-quality service and to build it into the elements of complex supply in the region. (termalregio.eu)

Project activities include:

- organization of two workshops in both regions
- a thermal tourism landscape-conference in both regions
- editing a bilingual website
- participation in two tourism trade fairs in each country
- production and distribution of a promotional dvd and a bilingual publication
- broadcasting the promotional dvd on a popular TV channel in both countries

These activities have been accomplished and are available now but the cooperation is missing between the two villages. The marketing tools help the operation of the individual spas but after the program period these do not promote the common work.

The Hungarian participant is the Kapuvár Flora Thermal, on its website does not appear in any way the Slovakian Thermal Corvinus. In addition, neither in English nor in Slovak can one read the website's material so potential foreign tourists cannot get information about the spa. Although the project's website provides some information on each village and their thermal bath, but it is not directly available from the thermal baths' own webpages.

During the programme period a closer relationship was generated between the two regions, however, it seems to have been broken after the project completion.

VI. Conclusions

Projects can be considered successful if they are sustainable in long-term too. Implementing of this sustainability has some important conditions. The most important things are as follows:

- during the preparation and planning of the project candidates have to perform a situation and goal analysis, a target group analysis, and a SWOT analysis, to define the project indicators and to make the project timing
- financial support is maintained after the programming period
- the project management continues its work and ensures the aftercare
- after the achievement of the project objectives, candidates work together and look for further opportunities
- they organise common programs and these are promoted continuously
- in case of tourism projects, adequate and appropriate usage of marketing tools is essential, because this way more visitors can be attracted

The cross-border projects protect the increase of the integration in the European Union, this is mainly important for the peripheral areas because it can help support the development of these regions.

Therefore the EU try to spend more money on regional policy in the future too that the existing regional differences can continue to decrease.

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