
capCROSSplan/CAPACITIES FOR CROSS BORDER PLANNING

D.T1.2.1 Concept of the stakeholder groups

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Content

1. Cross-border section	4
1.1. Summary of the transnational part	4
1.2. Introduction in general	5
1.3. Stakeholder involvement in general	9
1.4. About the general concept	10
1.5. Basic content of each deployment desk (stakeholder meeting)	15
1.6. Relevant capCROSSplan stakeholders in summary	16
2. Regional section: Pomurje region – Slovenia	17
2.1. Executive summary	17
2.2. Introduction	17
2.2.1. Main challenges	19
2.2.2. Development policy environment	19
2.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation	20
2.3. Overview of stakeholders	20
2.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process	29
2.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement	29
3. Regional section: Podravska region – Slovenia	31
3.1. Executive summary	31
3.2. Introduction	32
3.2.1. Development policy environment	37
3.2.2. Main fields of past and current cross-border cooperation	37
3.3. Overview of stakeholders	43
3.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation and involvement	53
3.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement	56
4. Regional section: Zala county – Hungary	58
4.1. Executive summary	58
4.2. Introduction	58
4.2.1. Main challenges	60
4.2.2. Development policy environment	61
4.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation	63
4.3. Overview of stakeholders	66

4.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process	73
4.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement.....	74
5. Regional section: Vas county – Hungary	75
5.1. Executive summary	75
5.2. Introduction	75
5.2.1. Main challenges	79
5.2.2. Development policy environment	80
5.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation	82
5.3. Overview of stakeholders.....	84
5.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process	90
5.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement.....	92
Annex I: List of key and general stakeholders	94

1. Cross-border section

1.1. Summary of the transnational part

The capCROSSplan project has won the support in the European Regional Development Programme during the Slovenia-Hungary Operative Programme's 2014- 2020 sixth tender calling. The operative programme encourages the cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Hungary.

The total support amount won during the capCROSSplan (Strengthening the capacity of development organizations in the field of cross-border regional cooperation, SIHU221) project is € 406.955 containing the support of the European Regional Development Fund with the amount of € 345.911,75.

The entitled areas of the Slovenia-Hungary Operative Programme are the following:

- Podravje Region and Pomurje, that is Muravidék (Prlekija and Prekmurje) on the area of the Slovenian Republic.
- Counties Vas and Zala on the area of Hungary.

The lead partner of the project (Lead Partner - LP) is the Development agency Sinergija, the project partners are (PP) the INSTITUTE PALEMID MARIBOR – Institute for Sustainable Development, Zala County Government as well as the West-Pannon Regional and Economic Development Public Nonprofit Ltd.

All 4 border regions prepare different strategic development documents and programs. In doing so, the two countries face the challenge of how to involve relevant actors / organizations (with a bottom-up approach). Thanks to the involvement of key actors, they can make suggestions about the untapped opportunities and benefits of the region. It is often the case that organizations do not have complete information about the opportunities, and they are not ready to share their suggestions, as they fear that their own idea may be used by others.

The aim of the capCROSSplan project is to bring together those actors in the Slovenian-Hungarian border region who can actively participate in the development of the program area with their past and future activities furthermore the project partners want to increase the preparedness of organizations in strategic planning with the project. In the region, there is a need to establish a network of development institutions on both the Slovenian and Hungarian sides, which is activated each time strategic documents and program planning are required, be it local, regional or national strategies / plans / programs. Another goal of the project is to create a strong cross-border regional development network that responds to environmental challenges.

Based on the above analysed factors the general aim of the project is to inaugurate such a long-term territorial development programme, operated on a network system, that is based on the common resources of the area.

The direct aims of the project:

1. The participation of the organisations working in regional development (activation of the organisations and experts, inaugurate the cooperative work within the framework of workshops).
2. To create a cross-border set of organisations - networks.
3. A cross-border development protocol based on the principles of the sustainability (defining the common aims as well as the development policies).

The aim of the concept is to present the capCROSSplan project and the territorial features and main statistical data of the Slovenia-Hungary Cross-Border Cooperation Program. Groups of key players will be formed in the project, this document describes the organizations (NGOs, economic organizations, local governments, regional and economic development agencies, educational institutions, national parks) that have had a great impact on the development of the border region and may also have a bigger role for the future.

1.2. Introduction in general

The programme area includes the following eligible NUTS3 regions (Commission Implementing Decision 2014/388/EU):

- Podravje and Pomurje regions in Slovenia
- Vas and Zala counties in Hungary

The territory of the Slovenia-Hungary border region covers 10,658 km² in total, 2/3rd of the area belongs to the Hungarian, 1/3rd to the Slovenian border region, divided by a border of 102 km in length. The programme area occupies the north-eastern part of Slovenia and south-western extremity of Hungary. Geographically the region is characterized mainly by alternating flat and hilly areas.



1. Figure: Programme area¹

¹ Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary for the programme period 2014-2020 (2015)

Demography and social wellbeing:

There are 960,590 (2019) inhabitants living in the program area, 54% of them in Hungary, 46% in Slovenia. The average population density – 90 inhabitants/km² - is below the national averages in all counties/regions, except Podravje (148 inhabitants/km²), which exceeds even the EU-28 average and is twice as high as in Zala county where the density is the lowest in the Region (70 inhabitants/km²). The Region is characterized by negative demographic trends with relatively high natural loss and negative demographic balance due to high outmigration resulting in population decline and ageing at an accelerating rate.

In territorial structure terms, the Region is characterized by rural settlements, and most of the bigger urban centers have a peripheral location in geographic terms. In Hungary more than 95% of the settlements are rural, concentrating more than 60% of the population in villages/small towns below 5000 inhabitants. Another characteristic is the concentration of the population in the major urban centers, this concentration being the most significant in Podravje region, where more than one third of the population lives in Maribor (34,5%). The situation is similar in Vas county where 30% of the population lives in the county capital Szombathely.

Poverty and social exclusion are crucial and highly relevant problems in these areas of Eastern Europe, mainly in the rural regions. Various socio-economic facts explain it, like poor economic background, lack of investment and employment opportunities, and as a consequence, migration of the young on the one hand, and isolation of elderly on the other.

Social care belongs to the compulsory tasks to be provided by local authorities, however due to the magnitude of social problems, more innovative and novel ways of service provision is necessary (e.g. involvement of civic service providers, e-service provision etc.) As for health care, the hospitals are located in the most important urban centers, therefore the access to high quality health care or social services may be more limited for the population living in the extended and often remote rural regions. In the whole cooperation area there are 13 hospitals, 9 in Vas and Zala counties and 4 in Pomurje and Podravje regions.

Economy and labor market:

The GDP (in PPS) of Hungary and Slovenia has developed in a rather similar way over the past years with a slow but steady growth. In spite of the improving trends, there is still a substantial development gap in terms of GDP/capita between the regions/counties forming the Slovenia-Hungary cross-border region and the EU-28 average (in 2018, Zala county and Pomurje region produced GDP per capita rates of less than 60% of the EU-28 average, while the figure for Vas county was 60% and 71% for Podravje region).

Thanks to its specific geographic situation and historically determined development features, agriculture still enjoys a relatively large share compared to national and Western European figures, exceeding 7% in Vas and Zala counties and Pomurje region. The industrial sector (excluding construction) is of importance to the Gross Value Added (GVA) especially in Vas (39%), which is the most industrialized county of Hungary, followed by Zala (35%). The Slovenian regions of the Program reach a 23-24% share, respectively close to the national average. Identically to the developed world, the service sector has the largest share of GVA, including trade, transport, tourism-related services. Public administration and community services/activities of households are below the national average in Hungary and slightly higher in the Slovenian regions.

Similarly, to the economic characteristics, the territorial structure is also reflecting the same “dualism”: the industry and service sector are concentrated in and around urban areas, while rural areas are highly agricultural with low industrialization, typically with traditional industries (craft, food, production of typical regional products) and missing services.

Unemployment rates differ in the Region: while the rate of Vas county (6.1%) is significantly below the national average (10.8%), Zala county (11.8%) faces difficulties with worsening tendency. Pomurje and Podravje regions are fragile in terms of unemployment among Slovenian regions: the rates of Pomurje (17.9%) and Podravje (14.8%) are the worst in the whole country. Rural areas are especially strongly hit by unemployment in the whole Region.

Environment:

The program area is very rich in environmental resources and natural values: it has a diverse flora and fauna resulting in high biodiversity to be protected and managed within national parks, nature parks and numerous protected areas and Natura 2000 areas. The most important nature park in the program area is the trilateral Goričko (SI) – Őrség (HU) – Raab (AT) Nature Park, unique for its cross border character offering insights to a prehistoric urn burial culture and later settled by Romans, Slavs, Germans, Hungarians, and Turks. The rates of NATURA2000 areas calculated based on the total territory is below the national averages except Pomurje (37.2%). Podravje has the least of its territory classified as protected, only 6.2% enjoying this status, compared to 31% Slovenian national average. In Hungary, the national average of protected areas is 15%, Vas county being close to this value with 14.2%, while Zala county is considerably lagging with 6.7%. The program area is crossed by several important rivers (Mura, Drava, Zala and Raba) and contains parts of the south-western shores of Lake Balaton. The Region is rich in thermal and mineral waters. They are intensively used for energy generation and tourism purposes, the thermal waters being one of the main assets the biggest tourist centers are built upon (e.g. Zalakaros, Sárovar, Moravske Toplice, Murska Sobota).

Accessibility:

The road network of both the Slovenian and the Hungarian regions is fairly developed, some important European corridors pass them, and the road infrastructure has significantly improved for the last decades. The program area is crossed by two TEN-T Core Network corridors: Corridor 4 Baltic-Adriatic with the Graz-Maribor-Ljubljana railway section and Corridor 9 Mediterranean on the Trieste-Ljubljana-Maribor-Budapest section. The cross-border public transport service is poor. Two European bicycle routes are crossing the Region: EuroVelo 9 and EuroVelo 13.

Tourism:

Tourism plays a significant role in the economy of the Region. The tourism supply of the Region is mainly driven by natural values: the core tourism products are built on the outstanding natural resources of the Region resulting in a portfolio characterized by close to the nature tourism, complemented by a large cultural heritage-based offer. The area is rich in thermal waters, therefore health / medical / wellness tourism are the most important tourism products attracting the largest number of tourists. The Slovenian side belongs to the most acknowledged wine tourism destinations of Slovenia with well-developed infrastructure and services. Although the Hungarian counties are not yet listed among the famous wine regions, there are several initiatives aiming at improving the image and strengthening the economic potential of vineyards by targeted branding.

Active tourism has significant assets and some basic infrastructure - as hiking and biking trails including two European bicycle routes - are already available, even though discontinuous, and not

properly signaled. Besides, active tourism builds on several horse riding, angling, and hunting possibilities. Water tourism is still underdeveloped; however, there are some opportunities, especially in the Slovenian part of the Region. Some remarkable cultural heritage sites are also located in the Region: monuments of the bigger cities preserve the memories of the rich historical past while the living traditions of the smaller villages provide insight into the everyday life of the countryside: rural (agro) tourism has great, so far underutilized potential.

The Region is characterized by a well-developed education infrastructure, improved quality of secondary education, increasing number of people with tertiary attainment.

As a conclusion of the key facts and trends characterizing the programme area, the following statements are of importance:

The program area is characterized by an uneven distribution of population, which is concentrated in several more important urban settlements, while large parts of the Region are predominantly rural. The population is ageing, the area being affected by natural loss and facing a high negative migration. Due to the limited economic performance, especially to the weak economic potential of the rural areas, the unemployment and thus outmigration is relatively high and there is an increase in the number of people living at the risk of poverty. All these problems call for creating alternative local job opportunities in the remote areas on one hand and on the other good quality, accessible, innovative social services have to be available for moderating the significant social consequences and increasing the retention force of the human resource in the Region.

The Region as a whole is well connected through the Budapest – Ljubljana highway, but the density and quality of the internal road network connecting the inner parts to this major transport corridor is insufficient. The public transport system is poorly developed both in general and in cross-border terms and does not contribute to the cross-border mobility. The limited intra-regional accessibility hinders the possibility of fully exploiting the economic potential of the program area.

The Region is rich in renewable energy resources, but – partially because of lack of supportive national policies – these are practically unexploited. In the perspective of the new energy policy environment, the increased use of these resources may be reconsidered, so their identification and further investigation may represent an untapped opportunity for the Region.

The program area is the shelter of a rich and valuable natural and cultural landscape enjoying special protected status (National Parks, natural protected areas, NATURA2000 areas). Being situated at the confluence of the two cultures the natural values are complemented by cultural heritage elements, both built and soft (multiethnic traditions, gastronomy) derived from the very long mutual interference. This rich natural and cultural heritage could be one of the drivers of the Region's future development.

As the situation analysis reveals, the tourism of the area is based mainly on important natural values as Lake Balaton, mountains (ski resorts), and thermal waters (spas). This resulted in a high spatial concentration of relatively well-equipped tourist centers, attracting a high number of visitors. Nevertheless, besides the fairly developed tourist areas, the Region is providing excellent opportunities for "slow tourism" by developing new and novel ways for local heritage based agro/rural tourism in the areas less developed in terms of tourism. This potential is currently underexploited due to insufficient visibility and promotion, lack of proper infrastructure and poor supply of local tourist

products and services resulting in not having achieved the critical mass. Moreover, the Region's existing tourist offer is not using the cross-border potential in terms of interconnecting the individual localities amongst and to the magnets/centers, and not integrating the resources of the two sides in border into more complex and appealing touristic products.

Further to the above thematic conclusions, based on local and regional stakeholders statements the necessity to address still existing deficiencies in the quality, level and effectiveness of cooperation in the Region is an important overarching issue to be tackled.

1.3. Stakeholder involvement in general

The involvement of local stakeholders in regional development and cross-border cooperation is essential because the decision, the development and investments can be made at the lowest possible level. The problems and the opportunities can be identified there, where the information, the decision responsibility, and the consequences of the effects of the decisions are optimal, and the ideas can be seen and enforced best. By involving local stakeholders in the project process, we can learn of the areas that are less developed and should be developed. The needs of the people living in the area come to the fore with bottom-up development ideas. Community involvement is also strengthened in the planning, programming, implementation, and monitoring with the active participation of the selected organizations in the project process. Thus, those people work together that consider the area their own homes, and this motivation effectively mobilizes local initiatives and resources. The organization takes place in a geographically coherent area of the appropriate size which provides the human, financial and economic resources to make future programming the most appropriate for the region. Local (regional) actors make development proposals for the regional area they are responsible for, considering the community and national guidelines. Local stakeholders are involved in the developments in their area and determine the direction of development. A local decision level may also be formulated of the selected local stakeholders. These actors know their own area, as well as the plans made for it, so they become competent in making decisions that facilitate the implementation of the development plans. As a result of the diversity of the stakeholders (the representatives of the civil society, the business or local public societies) we can get to know each sector and see their problems and find a common consensus, as each one of them would see the same opportunities and developments on a different way, thus they can combine their ideas during programming. During the project, the participants will get an insight into the strategic analysis process after learning about the project, and they can share their experiences so far and make suggestions for the preparation of future analyses. In addition, they will be introduced to the EU's new cohesion policy. A detailed description of the meetings can be found in Chapter 1.5.

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The project partners and the other development organizations having a great influence on the development of the project belong to the direct target group of the capCROSSplan. Target group whose work can foster the long-term and sustainable development of the Slovenian Hungarian areas

close to the border. Thus, the start of this project has great importance in addressing those organizations that can play a role in achieving these goals by their cross-border cooperation. And at the same time, they can have substantial effect on the development of the area.

1.4. About the general concept

As the starting phase of the concept of stakeholder groups the partners suggested which organizations should be involved in the project. The proposals include contains all those organisations that play a substantial role in the realisation of the Slovenian Hungarian Operative Programme and in the levelled development processes of the regions next to the border. Besides the applicants of the six callings of the Operative Programme the representatives of the civil sphere as well as the entrepreneurial sphere, the foundations, non-profit organisations, educational and health-care institutions belong to this group.

The institutional system of regional development in Hungary:

- National Regional Development Interest Reconciliation Forum:

Act XXI of 1996 on Territorial Development and Territorial Planning § 8 of the National Regional Development Interest Reconciliation Forum (OTÉF) provides service for the operation of the National Regional Development Interest Reconciliation Forum.

The task of the OTÉF is to explore and coordinate the interests and aspirations of the government, as well as the county self-governments and the capital city self-government in the field of regional development, spatial planning and rural development, to establish agreements, exchange information, make proposals and alternatives. Furthermore, the coordination of the development ideas and objectives of the municipalities and the capital districts.

OTÉF participates in the opinion-giving and proposing tasks:

- In the elaboration of the regional development policy,
- in the coordination of spatial development, spatial planning, rural development, sectoral and county and capital city development ideas and objectives,
- coordination of sectoral instruments for spatial development, spatial planning and rural development,
- commenting on sectoral plans,
- in the coordination of national and cross-border infrastructure planning (location of facilities, networks).

The aim is to include relevant / key players in strategic planning / programming from the region. The concept includes all the relevant data about who the participants might be, based on their experiences, and describes how they will get involved. With the project we want to increase the efficiency of organizations in strategic planning. The main result of the trainings and meetings will be the increased capacity of the participating organizations in the field of strategic planning.

- County governments:

County governments have a significant role in regional development in Hungary. Modification of the 1996 XXI Act, the legislator transferred the regional development tasks to the county self-governments at the territorial level by abolishing the regional development councils and county regional development councils. The county assemblies may establish a regional development council by adopting the organizational and operational regulations for the performance of certain regional development tasks that extend beyond the borders and county borders of the region.

In the performance of the public tasks included in legislation, the county self-government coordinates the development ideas of the government, local governments, and economic organizations, within a framework that ensures the enforcement of the principle of partnership during planning and implementation.

Following the amendment of the Regional Development Act, the main territorial and rural development tasks of the county self-governments became the following:

- prepares and approves the county's regional development concept and program,
- participates in the development of operational programs,
- participates in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of regional development programs,
- gives preliminary opinions on national and county-related sectoral development concepts and programs,
- gives preliminary opinions on regional spatial development concepts and programs,
- gives an opinion on the development ideas and applications of the state administration bodies concerning the county,
- cooperates with other county governments in planning tasks,
- decides on the use of the development resources referred to its competence,
- decides on the use of rural development funds allocated to it,
- decides on the establishment of a regional development council and its participation in it,
- decides on cooperation with foreign regions, participation in international programmes,
- cooperates with local governments, territorial state administration bodies, social and professional organizations, economic actors,
- assists in the organization of regional development local government associations, the work of regional development local government associations and regional development councils (planning, decision preparation).²

Following the amendment, as a first step, the county governments have prepared situation assessments and situation explorations underpinning the county concepts. Following the preparation of the documents, the county governments started to work on regional development concepts with the involvement of external experts and the then existing regional development agencies. In addition to consultations with the county's professional organizations, the population also had the opportunity to formulate and submit its development proposals to the county governments. Based on this, the county regional development concepts were prepared, in which the directions and goals of the development of the counties until 2030 were determined.

² Act XXI of 1996 on Territorial Development and Territorial Planning

To implement the goals, set by the concept, the county governments started to develop their territorial development programs until 2020. In the regional development programs, the county governments defined the priorities and measures necessary for the implementation of the target system of the concept and started to collect the county development ideas that could support their implementation.

In parallel with the elaboration of the county regional development programs, the Government, with the involvement of the county self-governments, prepared the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Program (TOP), which provides the source of the developments to be implemented by the county self-governments.

- County-rank cities

Independent territorial actors who plan independently in their administrative territory, independently of the county government. It should be noted here that although the urban development concepts and integrated urban development strategies of county-rank cities may not be in conflict with those set out in the county development documents, in practice these are not significant constraints on the planning and development practices of county-rank cities.

Accordingly, the general assembly of cities with county status decides on the use of the TOP resources available to them independently of county planning. The cities with county status - in parallel with the county self-governments - developed their integrated territorial programs, determining the schedule of the use of the resources. An important and decisive difference between counties and cities with county status is that the resources available for cities with county status can only be used in the administrative area of cities, thus, cities with county status are practically free to decide on the use of the resources dedicated to them. Accordingly, the principle of subsidiarity prevails most in cities with county status in regional development processes.³

- LEADER Local Action Groups/CLLD

In rural Europe there was increased interest in a new approach to rural development in the 1980s and 1990s in order to offset the adverse effects of the significant socio-economic changes that have taken place and to meet the new challenges and the specific development needs of rural areas. As a result, the focus of EU rural development policy has shifted towards local development based on internal resources. Thanks to the growing role of the LEADER approach in the implementation of rural development policy, LAGs have become important actors in the institutional system of rural development can effectively contribute to the implementation of European rural development policy at the local level and to the sustainable development of the rural area.

LEADER Local Action Groups contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of people living in rural areas and to developing the economy and communities of rural settlements - especially in disadvantaged areas. The bottom-up, community-based system of CLLD / LEADER allows the detailed exploration of rural problems and the wide mobilization of local resources.

The institutional system of regional development in Slovenia:

³ Gálosi-Kovács – Haffner (2016): Institutionalization of regional development in Hungary

- Podravje

In September 2018, MRA (Maribor Development Agency) started preparing the Regional Development Program of the Podravje Development Region for the programming period 2021–2027 (hereinafter: RDP for Podravje 2021–2027).

The decision to start preparing the RDP Podravje 2021 - 2027 was confirmed at the 5th regular session of the Development Council of the Podravje region on 8 October 2018. At this session, members of the Development Council of the Podravje region also approved the "Program of preparation of RDP Podravje development region 2021-2027" and to perform professional, technical and administrative tasks in the preparation of the RDP, authorized the MRA Institute - Maribor Development Agency with partners ZRS Bistra Ptuj, RASG and JARA. (hereinafter: MRA Institute with partners). Boris Keuc, Head of the Regional Development OE at the MRA Institute, was appointed Head of Preparation.

The preparation of the RDP for Podravje 2021 - 2027 will take place on the basis of partnership cooperation between the preparers (MRA Institute with partners) and representatives of local communities, the economy, non-governmental organizations and other institutions in the region. The work will be organized within the narrower project groups for the preparation of the RDP for the Podravje region 2021 - 2027 and the committees of the Regional Development Council of the Podravje region, by priority content areas. By groups, project groups will also be composed of representatives of other stakeholders. All actors will be invited to actively participate and create a development document at the regional level.

The Act on the Promotion of Harmonious Regional Development (ZSRR-2) and the Decree on Regional Development Programs stipulate that the RDP consists of strategic and program work. With the planned amendment of the Regulation on Regional Development Programs, the strategic part is to be prepared and adopted as a special, phased document entitled "Regional Development Strategy". The Regional Development Program (RDP) as the final document should include the development strategy of the region as a strategic part of the RDP and the program part of the RDP.

The regional development strategy represents a common starting point (participatory process of cooperation of all involved stakeholders - ministries, regional development agencies, municipalities) for development and spatial planning at the regional level and thus provides a basis for more rational development planning, while considering spatial interventions.

The regional development program of the Podravska Development Region for the programming period 2021–2027 is expected to be adopted by June 2020, assuming that the amendment to the RDP Regulation is adopted in time, expert materials and strategic guidelines of the competent ministries are prepared. At the same time, Regional Development Programs (DDPs) will be prepared, which are an integral part of the RDP for Podravje 2021 – 2027.

- Pomurje

The priority of development agencies is regional development planning, which must be the result of cooperation between the national and regional and local levels, and in particular the various regional stakeholders and civil society. Only in this way can the written plans be a real reflection of the situation, capabilities, and desires of the region for which they are intended.

The basic strategic and program document, which defines the main guidelines and priorities for the development of the region, is the regional development program. Its planning involves a wide range of regional stakeholders, from regional bodies and the most important regional institutions to civil society, the professional public and interested individuals - all with the aim of reaching a broader social agreement on the direction of further development of the region.

The preparation of the Regional Development Program 2021–2027 began with the adoption of the decision of the Development Council of the Pomurje Region on the preparation of the RDP and the RDP preparation program at the end of August and with the implementation of the Regional Development Conference on 5 October 2018 with regional stakeholders, experts and other stakeholders in jointly formulating a future development strategy for the region. The final document will be ready by May 2021.

The head of the preparation of the RDP 2021-2027 is the director of the Development Center Murska Sobota, the main RDA for Pomurje.

The preparation manager is responsible for the content and operational direction of the preparation of the RDP.

Development partnership institutions are also actively involved in the preparation of the RDP.

The institutions of the Development Partnership are:

- Development Center Murska Sobota – leader of RDA,
- Development Agency Sinergija,
- PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona,
- Prlekija Development Agency giz,
- Institute for Tourism and Development Lendava.

The tasks of the institutions in Development partnership in the preparation of the RDP are:

Murska Sobota Development Center: as the main RDA, leads, coordinates, implements and coordinates the preparation of the document and acts as a regional interlocutor to the Ministry, other ministries, and other national institutions in the preparation of the document. In the process of preparation, it also coordinates activities, leads, and covers the field of entrepreneurship and the economy in the region.

Sinergija Development Agency: coordinates activities, manages and covers the field of agriculture, development, and entrepreneurship in rural areas.

PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona: coordinates activities, manages and covers the field of human resources in the region.

Prlekija Development Agency giz: coordinates activities, manages and covers the field of tourism.

Institute for Tourism and Development Lendava: coordinates activities, manages and covers the field of environment, spatial planning, and infrastructure in the region.

1.5. Basic content of each deployment desk (stakeholder meeting)

At the 1st meeting, the key stakeholders and partners will discuss mainly the strategy documents and the data needed for their analysis and will touch on the programming content for the next financial period 2021-2027. The knowledge gained during the meeting will be used for strategic analysis by the partner responsible for the work package.

At the 2nd meeting, the partners will discuss the content of the protocol, which will be signed on cooperation and strengthening their expertise in the field of strategic programming. The professional protocol that includes a strategic position for future programming. The protocol is based on the tripartite principle and contains rules, agreements, and procedures to be used to strengthen regional development capacities. The organizations with the signed protocol and declarations of accession are grouped into a cross-border development partnership network, which is activated when development planning is needed, i.e. when drawing up strategies of local, various regional and national significance.

At the 3rd meeting, the participants will adopt the final version of the protocol and prepare the basis for further training of the partnership as a key participant and the other organizations involved.

Following the stakeholder meetings, 8 trainings will take place. 5 training sessions are related to the new EU cohesion policy and 3 trainings about the development of »soft« skills. For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission proposes to modernise Cohesion Policy, the EU's main investment policy and one of its most concrete expressions of solidarity.

A focus on five investment priorities, where the EU is best placed to deliver

Five main objectives will drive EU investments in 2021-2027:

Regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives 1. and 2. 65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources will be allocated to these priorities, depending on Member States' relative wealth.

- **Smarter Europe**, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation, and support to small and medium-sized businesses
- a **Greener, carbon free Europe**, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables, and the fight against climate change
- a more **Connected Europe**, with strategic transport and digital networks
- a more **Social Europe**, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion, and equal access to healthcare
- a **Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

Following the meetings and trainings, the partners and key actors identify all the organizations that have ever been involved in the planning / programming and those that can be potential partners in the capCROSSplan project.

The purpose of the trainings and meetings is to get the participating organizations to get acquainted with the strategic planning process with its elements and to get an idea of how a document should be prepared.

1.6. Relevant capCROSSplan stakeholders in summary

As already mentioned the target group of the capCROSSplan project includes the project partners and other regional development organizations that have a great impact on the development of the program area. Those trade and touristic or other organisations, foundations and associations, whose work can foster the long-term and sustainable development of the Slovenian Hungarian areas close to the border. Thus, the start of this project has great importance in addressing those organizations that can play a role in achieving these goals by their cross-border cooperation. And at the same time, they can have substantial effect on the development of the area.

The most significant stakeholders are as follows:

- County governments
- Local Action Groups
- Municipalities
- National Parks
- Regional development agencies
- Regional institutions
- Tourism organizations
- Educational institutions
- NGOs

2. Regional section: Pomurje region – Slovenia

2.1. Executive summary

The dreamy countryside along the Mura River in eastern Slovenia is a land of wide fields and rounded hills, storks and wind rattles, floating mills, healing waters and energy points, picturesque winegrowing hills, original traditions and dialects, and most of all, a land of hospitable people, who live in Slovenia's largest agricultural region.

Pomurje is the seventh largest statistical region in Slovenia. It covers 6.6% of the total area of Slovenia and 5.49% of its population. It is located in the northeast of the country, away from central Slovenia, on the fifth European transport corridor, which connects Barcelona and Kiev, on the railway connection between Slovenia and Hungary, and on the Lendava-Ljubljana-Koper motorway connection.

Effective implementation and achievement of the set orientations and goals of development programs requires the cooperation and mobilization of key stakeholders in the region. Thus, interested competent stakeholders from the region must be constantly involved in the preparation of development programs and other strategic development documents.

Cooperation and networking of key stakeholders strengthens the balance of development policies and relevant identified development goals, measures and key projects, thus increasing co-responsibility for their implementation. It also improves the region's ability to prepare quality integrated projects, their successful application for tenders, implementation and monitoring.

Pomurje as a border region, with almost the same distance to four capitals (Ljubljana, Budapest, Vienna, Zagreb), is located in the heart of Central Europe and is actively involved in the flows of international cooperation and integration. It has about 220 km of state border.

The fact that the majority of the Pomurje population lives in the border area is recognized as one of the key instruments that can further stimulate the development of Pomurje. By strengthening functional connections between border urban centers, encouraging cooperation of partner institutions, by creating joint cross-border products and services in the field of culture, tourism and nature protection, public infrastructure, renewable energy sources, equal supply of border population can be ensured and long-term territorial cohesion.

2.2. Introduction

Pomurje is the seventh largest statistical region in Slovenia. It covers 6.6% of the total area of Slovenia and 5.49% of its population. It is located in the northeast of the country, away from central Slovenia, on the fifth European transport corridor, which connects Barcelona and Kiev, on the railway connection between Slovenia and Hungary, and on the Lendava-Ljubljana-Koper motorway connection.

Pomurje is a unique Slovenian border region, as it borders three countries: Austria to the north, Hungary to the east and Croatia to the south, which gives it a particularly attractive geostrategic

position. The gravitational center of Pomurje is Murska Sobota. It is about the same distance from Ljubljana, Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava and Zagreb (approx. 200 km).



2. Figure: Pomurje in the European area (source: Information for investors)

Selection of some statistical data for Pomurje	
Area (km ²)	1.337
No. population (July 2018)	114.649
Population density per km ² (July 2018)	85.9
No. of economically active population (January 2018)	35.991
No. of unemployed persons (July 2019)	5.611
Unemployment rate, in % (July 2019)	11,8
No. of business (2018)	8.797
No. of agricultural holdings (2016)	7.890

Pomurje region, which is surrounded by the hilly Goričko in the north and Slovenske gorice in the south, is the flattest and the most agricultural statistical region in Slovenia. The fertile soil, continental climate and plain represent favourable conditions, especially for agriculture - arable land in this part of Slovenia comprises more than 80% of all utilized agricultural area or twice as much as the Slovenian average.

Pomurje is a crossroads of cultures and religions and ethnic groups, which gives it a specific cultural character and provides a unique cultural heritage.

We have two national minorities in Pomurje, namely the Hungarian national community and a special Roma ethnic community. The Hungarian national community in the Republic of Slovenia represents 0.3% of the population according to ethnicity. Approximately 3,000 Slovene members of the autochthonous Slovene national community live in Hungary, in the Porabje region. The vast majority of members of the Hungarian national community living in the ethnically mixed area in five Prekmurje municipalities, representing 83.5% of all identified Hungarians in Slovenia.

2.2.1. Main challenges

The average age of the population in Slovenia in 2018 was 43.3 years, and in the Pomurje statistical region 45.2 years, which is the highest among all statistical regions and ranks it among the areas with the oldest population in Europe.

The educational structure of Pomurje is worse compared to the educational structure of Slovenia, but it is slowly improving. In Pomurje, the largest share of the population between the ages of 25 and 65 still has only a primary education, while the smallest share of the population has a higher or higher education.

The health situation in the Pomurje region is worse than the Slovenian average. The population of Pomurje is on average 16.5 days of sick leave per year, while the average for Slovenia is 14.4 days. Asthma is more common in children and adolescents in Pomurje up to the age of 19. Diseases directly attributable to alcohol are present in Pomurje in 2.2 ‰ inhabitants, the national average is 2.0 ‰. There is also an above-average number of recipients of diabetes medicines, medicines for high blood pressure and medicines against blood clotting. Heart attacks are more common in people aged 35-74 (Pomurje 3.5 ‰, national average 2.1 ‰), and there are more cases of stroke.

Today, the Pomurje economy is stable and in good condition. In the last ten years, it has transformed from once traditional low value-added industries into stable industries, where advanced technology is used and high-quality products and solutions are produced that achieve global competitiveness and the highest added value. Above all, the export orientation of Pomurje companies should be emphasized, as this already represents more than a billion euros in total sales. The most important export partners of Pomurje are Germany and Austria, which represent more than half of the total export market.

The economic strength of the region is strengthening and the number of unemployed is falling to its lowest level in twenty years. Employment growth thus collided with the upper limit of the number of jobseekers available.

2.2.2. Development policy environment

The process of preparing the Regional Development Program for Pomurje 2021–2027 was informally started with the regional development conference in October 2018, which was intended for a wide range of regional development stakeholders in Pomurje. Since then, 13 thematic workshops of working groups with the professional and general public have been held, with individual meetings

with interest groups and working meetings for the purpose of formulating a strategy and vision for the development of the region. During the process, regular coordination takes place within the partner network of development agencies that make up the RDA for Pomurje, while individual partner organizations conduct additional individual interviews with regional stakeholders on development challenges and potential measures.

At the same time, an analysis of selected statistical and comparative indicators for Pomurje was prepared, which help to identify significant challenges in the region. During the process, based on the work done with the public, collected information and discussions and individual consultations with experts, the key development priorities of the region were defined, which are based on a fundamental value - health.

In order to implement the aspirations of development priorities, program sets of projects and measures for the period 2021–2027 were also identified, with which the region will pursue a development breakthrough based on the harmonious consideration of environmental, social and economic effects. The identified priority sets of regional development projects are structured in accordance with the strategic starting points of European Cohesion Policy, investment guidelines for financing under cohesion policy in the period 2021-2027 for Slovenia and the development priorities of the region for the period 2021-2027.

The process of preparing basic development documents of the Pomurje region under the leadership of the Development Center Murska Sobota, as the main regional development agency, is also co-created by the PORA Gornja Radgona Development Agency, Development Agency Sinergija, Prlekija Development Agency and Institute for Tourism and Development Lendava.

2.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation

The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary is the continuation of a cooperation process which started in the middle of the 90s under trilateral and bilateral compositions (Austria-Slovenia-Hungary, Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia, and Slovenia-Hungary Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes). Bilateral cooperation between Hungary and Slovenia began in the pre-accession period. The cooperation was first implemented within the framework of the tripartite Slovenia-Hungary-Austria Program (1995-1996). Between 2000 and 2003, the bilateral Phare Cross-Border Cooperation Program was implemented. Thereafter, both countries participated in the tripartite Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia Neighborhood Program in 2004-2006. In the light of experience, the two Member States have decided to establish bilateral cooperation with the other party from the 2007 programming period.

In this past 25 years. There are numerous examples of successful cross-border cooperation in the local economy, active tourism, culture, and environmental protection. These activities take place not only through state institutions and development agencies but also among non-governmental organizations and citizens.

2.3. Overview of stakeholders

Development agency Sinergija prepared list of 8 potential key stakeholders. With all of them, agency will have personal meetings to invite them in cooperation to the project.

1. Potential key stakeholder: Razvojni center Murska Sobota / Development centre Murska Sobota

The Murska Sobota Development Centre is a regional institution whose aim is to encourage balanced economic, social, and cultural development in the Pomurje region and its administrative center, the city municipality of Murska Sobota. With professional work as well as knowledge and experience in various fields, they give their best to encourage and execute development projects in the region. Their work is based on the collaboration with the user of their services, that is why cooperation and communication are key in order to offer ideas, knowledge, and services to those who really need them.

Their expert knowledge and experience reach across the fields of regional development, project management, business consulting, and strategic development planning.

2. Potential key stakeholder: Občina Moravske Toplice / Municipality of Moravske Toplice

In the middle of Prekmurje, in the extreme northeast of Slovenia, lies the municipality of Moravske Toplice, which is considered to be the geographically largest municipality in Pomurje (145 km² in area).

Five settlements in the municipality of Moravske Toplice are bilingual and closely intertwined with neighboring Hungary. Residents of the ethnically mixed area in the municipality of Moravske Toplice or representatives of the Hungarian national community, which lives here in five settlements, give the municipality the character of ethnic diversity. Within the cultural and tourist associations, they preserve the diverse Hungarian culture, which is interesting for all visitors to this place.

The slogan of the municipality - "We are rich because we are aware of what we have" - is not a coincidence, as it is justified by natural beauty and cultural and architectural treasures:

- richness of bubbling springs of thermo-mineral water (Terme 3000 - Moravske Toplice, Terme Vivat),
- religious diversity (evangelicals, Catholics, Calvinists, Baptists, members of the Pentecostal religious community),
- ethnic diversity (coexistence of Slovenes with Hungarians),
- pristine natural beauty and cultural treasury (Plečnik's church in Bogojina, Romanesque rotunda in Selo, Church of St. Martin in Martjanci),
- kindness of the locals (more than 6000 inhabitants live in the settlements of the municipality).

The area of the municipality of Moravske Toplice belongs to the Goričko Landscape Park, which is part of the Natura 2000 protected areas.

3. Potential key stakeholder: Ustanova lokalna razvojna fundacija za Pomurje / Development foundation for Pomurje region

The Local Development Foundation for Pomurje (LRF for Pomurje) was established as an institution to promote the establishment of frameworks for the development of philanthropy, voluntary work and funding of non-profit activities - development and operation of non-governmental organizations, projects and civil sector activities in Pomurje.

Since 2008, the LRF for Pomurje has been the contractor of the Regional hub for Non-Governmental Organizations of Pomurje (RSNOP) project. As part of the project, a regional network of NGOs from Pomurje was established as an informal network of non-governmental organizations operating in the Pomurje region. The network was set up with the aim of connecting non-governmental organizations in the region and with the aim of making the non-governmental sector in the region an equal partner in development.

The network represents the interests of non-governmental organizations in the region in communication with other entities at the regional level. It operates on the principles of participatory democracy. LRF for Pomurje is the manager and coordinator of the network, which provides administrative and technical support, professional support and assistance for more efficient development of non-governmental organizations in Pomurje, and also acts as a strong advocate for the NGO sector in the Pomurje region.

Through its work and activities, it aims to accelerate the progress of the NGO sector in the region, which will be an equal partner, actively involved in civil dialogue at local and regional level and as such contribute to the development of our region with new content, projects, services, etc.

LRF for Pomurje has representatives of the non-governmental sector in the Development Council of the Pomurje region, the Development Council of the Cohesion Region Vzhodna Slovenija, the Council of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Promoting the Development of Volunteering, voluntary NGOs and the Monitoring Committee of the V-A SI-HU Cooperation Program.

The institution plays an important role in strengthening the role of NGOs in regional development planning and in the formulation of joint plans and policies for NGOs at the local and regional level, where it also implements processes of coordination, advocacy and information of NGOs in relation to these bodies.

4. Potential key stakeholder: Zavod TRS / Institute TRS

The Institute for Sustainable Development of Local Communities, Renkovci (Institute TRS) was established in 2011 and initially operated in Ljutomer. In 2019, the institute moved to Renkovci (Municipality of Turnišče), with the main aim: to provide jobs for vulnerable target groups (disabled people) from the local environment and thus offering them a new opportunity.

The priority areas of operation of the institute are:

- Inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Involvement and cooperation with local providers
- Use of local ingredients and materials
- Networking (cooperation with NGOs, institutions, local authorities and other stakeholders)
- Regional development, strategic planning, cross-border cooperation
- Education, trainings, exchange of good practices

The institute is currently focused on the promotion of its brand - HUDO, which combines hand-made local products with added value, which are the result of the inclusion of vulnerable groups, local providers and local ingredients and materials.

5. Potential key stakeholder: Zavod za turizem in razvoj Lendava / Institute for tourism and development Lendava

Institute for Tourism and Development Lendava is established to connect and integrate institutions, to coordinate events, promote activities and entrepreneurship; it also implements development component and highlights the tourism development. By this, the institute implements the tasks of destination organization and development agency, too.

The institute operates as a professional institution that promotes the entrepreneurial and economic development of the municipality and the region by implementing ever new development projects by involving local potentials. The purpose of the activity is to increase the quality of life of the population, especially through increased economic activity, but also through activities that contribute to personal growth, mutual cooperation and socializing, and improving the living environment:

- implementation of general development tasks,
- support to the municipal ecosystem,
- support for entrepreneurship development,
- other projects.

Institute for tourism and development Lendava is a part of contractual partnership for implementation of general development priorities in Pomurje Region during the 2014-2020 programme period.

6. Potential key stakeholder 6: PORA, razvojna agencija Gornja Radgona / PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona

THE VISION of the PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona is to become an important partner in the development of the area of the municipalities of Gornja Radgona and Pomurje, which together with the citizens will effectively co-create an environment in which it will be pleasant to live and work.

Agency was established in September 2004. It was established with the aim of accelerating the development of the municipality of Gornja Radgona in all areas of human activity. The tasks include services for interested citizens, associations, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations, etc.

The main activities of the PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona are preparation of projects, search for additional funds from various sources for the needs of the founder's projects and other interested parties, assistance to those interested in preparing tender documentation, preparation of investment documentation, development programs in various fields, studies, etc.

The common goal of the entire operation of the public institution is faster development in basic areas:

- economy,
- human resources,
- agricultural and rural development,
- tourism, environment and infrastructure.

PORA Public Institution, Gornja Radgona Development Agency is a member of the Council of the Pomurje Development Region, the Regional Development Network and a partner institution in Regional development agency for Pomurje in performing general and other tasks at the regional level

that are performed in the public interest. Performs the tasks of the regional development agency in the field of human resources.

In the previous period, PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona successfully applied and implemented 58 major projects. In many, they participated as a partner or external professional assistance. The projects were related to various areas and contents and covered young people, culture, tourism, sports, as well as the environment, education, infrastructure and the like, especially in the municipality of Gornja Radgona.

7. Potential key stakeholder: Prleška razvojna razvojna agencija GIZ / Prlekija Development Agency

Prlekija Development Agency giz (PRA giz) has been operating since 1998. It was established with the aim of promoting the development of small businesses, tourism and the countryside in the Prlekija area. During its operation, it has implemented a number of development projects and thus made an important contribution to more efficient co-financing of local development with the help of European funds. The PRA giz activity covers four basic areas:

- promoting the development of tourism and small business in the area of Prlekija,
- rural development,
- environmental protection and
- cross-border cooperation.

Reference of agency are the richest in the field of promoting the development of tourism products, in the field of supporting rural development and in the field of implementing European cross-border cooperation programs.

The Prlekija Development Agency has been operating since 2016 as part of the partner-organized Regional Development Agency, in cooperation with other Pomurje agencies. The Prlekija Development Agency has taken over the responsibility for the coordination of tourist activities in the entire Pomurje region. Within the framework of these tasks, the PRA giz takes care of placing the interests of municipalities and other organizations in implementation projects at the regional level, financed from various EU structural funds.

Over the years, PRA giz has developed into an institution that also takes on larger and more demanding projects, especially within the framework of European programs.

8. Potential key stakeholder: Bistra hiša – Zavod za raziskovanje in trajnostni razvoj Martjanci – Smart house / Bistra hiša, Institute for Research and Sustainable Development Martjanci - Smart House

Bistra hiša Martjanci is a non-profit institution whose main purpose is to perform development, research, educational, promotional, promotional and consulting activities in the following areas:

- economic and spiritual development of people and the strengthening of their well-being,
- sustainable use of available resources,
- integration and networking of experts and institutions from various development, scientific and educational fields, and

- development and support of research and development work, new technologies and procedures, rural development, preservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage and ensuring the development and sustainability of human, natural, energy, information, cultural and other resources.

It performs its activities mainly in the area of Pomurje, but also intervenes more widely - in the international space, especially in neighboring countries.

Bistra hiša Martjanci is also lead partner in Local action group Goričko (LAG). The LAG area includes 11 municipalities: Cankova, Gornji Petrovci, Grad, Hodoš, Kuzma, Moravske Toplice, Murska Sobota, Puconci, Rogašovci, Šalovci and Tišina, covering 629.5 km² and 47,690 inhabitants. The LAG was formed in an area where the local population has common local needs and challenges, with the common goal of local development needs and achieving the set goals. LAG GORIČKO 2020 was established on 22 October 2015 with the signing of a partnership agreement on the establishment and operation of LAG Goričko 2020 by 37 members.

Table: Regional stakeholder profiles

Stakeholder name	Stakeholder's role	Stakeholder's main challenges	Areas of interests	Competence, capacity to bring about a change	Tools of stakeholder involvement, communication channels
Development centre Murska Sobota	Regional development, Regional Development Agency	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
Municipality of Moravske Toplice	Local development	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
Development foundation for Pomurje region	Regional development, NGO	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.

Institute TRS	Regional development, NGO	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
Institute for tourism and development Lendava	Regional development, Regional Development Agency	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona	Regional development, Regional Development Agency	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
Prlekija Development Agency	Regional development, Regional Development Agency	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming Challenges: Creativity appears limited; Ineffective training	Exchange of good practices; Networking; Increased cooperation with others stakeholders	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in the cross-border region; New knowledge	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings. Communication channels: emails, social networks, e-news, printed materials.
Bistra hiša, Institute for Research and Sustainable	Regional development, NGO	Opportunities: knowledge, network of organizations, strategic programming	Exchange of good practices; Networking;	Involvement in the strategic planning process; Networking in	Involvement in meetings, events, trainings.



**Development Martjanci
- Smart House**

Challenges: Creativity
appears limited;
Ineffective training

Increased cooperation
with others stakeholders

the cross-border region;
New knowledge

Communication
channels: emails, social
networks, e-news,
printed materials.

2.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings. 	Period 2	PP
2. Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens 	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. Signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating on three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

2.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement

Potential key stakeholder 1: Razvojni center Murska Sobota / Development centre Murska Sobota

- Establishing quality living conditions,
- Exchange of good practices in NUTS2 and NUTS3 level programming,
- Recognizability of the NUTS2 region,
- Acquisition of useful contacts and tools,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming.

Potential key stakeholder 2: Občina Moravske Toplice / Municipality of Moravske Toplice

- Acquisition of good practices, contacts, useful tools.
- Prevention of emigration and brain drain,
- Strengthening professional competencies,
- They are raising the quality of life,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming.

Potential key stakeholder 3: Ustanova lokalna razvojna fundacija za Pomurje / Development foundation for Pomurje region

- Cooperation with NGOs from Hungary in joint projects,
- Improving the efficiency of project management,
- Regional visibility,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming.

The project is supported by the Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary Cooperation Programme and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Potential key stakeholder 4: Zavod TRS / Institute TRS

- Cooperation with NGOs from Hungary in joint projects,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming,
- Regional visibility,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming.

Potential key stakeholder 5: Zavod za turizem in razvoj Lendava / Institute for tourism and development Lendava

- Establishing quality living conditions,
- Exchange of good practices in NUTS2 and NUTS3 level programming,
- Recognizability of the NUTS2 region,
- Acquisition of useful contacts and tools,
- Development of urban and rural tourism,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming.

Potential key stakeholder 6: PORA, razvojna agencija Gornja Radgona / PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona

- Establishing quality living conditions,
- Exchange of good practices in NUTS2 and NUTS3 level programming,
- Recognizability of the NUTS2 region,
- Acquisition of useful contacts and tools.

Potential key stakeholder 7: Prleška razvojna razvojna agencija GIZ / Prlekija Development Agency

- Establishing quality living conditions,
- Exchange of good practices in NUTS2 and NUTS3 level programming,
- Recognizability of the NUTS2 region,
- Acquisition of useful contacts and tools,
- Development of urban and rural tourism.

Potential key stakeholder 8: Bistra hiša – Zavod za raziskovanje in trajnostni razvoj Martjanci – Smart house / Bistra hiša, Institute for Research and Sustainable Development Martjanci - Smart House

- Cooperation with NGOs from Hungary in joint projects,
- Improving the knowledge of strategic programming,
- Regional visibility.

3. Regional section: Podravska region – Slovenia

3.1. Executive summary

Located at the north-east of Slovenia bordering on Austria and Croatia, the Podravska Region enjoys an excellent geographical position and boasts a well-developed transport infrastructure (motorway connection with Graz and Ljubljana, railway, the airport of Maribor).

The Podravska statistical region had 16% of Slovenia's population in 2018. With 148 inhabitants per square kilometer, this is one of the most densely populated regions. As in the majority of other regions, this region also recorded a natural decrease in 2018 (–2.5 per 1,000 population). However, due to the positive net migration between statistical regions and from abroad (this was more significant), the population in 2018 slightly increased over the previous year.

The share of people aged 0–14 was the second lowest (13.8%); it was lower only in the Pomurska statistical region. In 2018, the employment rate was among the lowest in Slovenia (59.6%). 16% of persons in employment worked outside the region of residence, which is not much since only the Osrednjeslovenska statistical region had a lower value (10%). The region generated 12.6% of the national GDP; GDP per capita was the fourth lowest in the country. The region had just over 26,400 enterprises, with, on average, 4.7 persons employed. The at-risk-of-poverty rate was among the highest; 15.6% of people lived below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

Although Maribor was even with a significant decline remains a predominantly industrial city, the share of industry in value-added of Podravje region is 26,6% and is lower than the national average of 27.3% or even the average of East Slovenia 35.4%. The construction sector still represents 6,8% in value-added of the Podravje region (which contributes to the national value-added in GDP 12,93%). The region generated 13% of the national GDP, but GDP per capita was the fifth lowest in the country. The region had slightly less than 26,000 enterprises, with an average of 4.6 persons employed.

The most important export market for the Podravje region in 2015 was Germany, where the export amounted to 741.048.453 EUR (29,8% of the total export). From the table below, it is observable that by the export, traditional markets are at the forefront, among them also markets outside the EU (BiH and Serbia). Štajerska Chamber of Commerce performs internationalization activities in agreement with the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, of which it is a regional branch office. In line with the proximity of the border, their activities are focused on the cross-border markets as well as cooperation within EU-28. Chamber of Craft and Business Maribor performs counseling activities and organization of events for its members and is mostly focused on the craftsmen and micro-entrepreneurs that conduct their businesses either in Austria or in Croatia.

The strategic goal of the Operational Program for Cross-Border Cooperation Slovenia-Hungary 2007-2013 was placing the cross-border area on the European map as a culturally, healthy, and naturally valuable area for living and working. A total of 43 projects were approved and implemented. The projects eligible for participation in the program were projected whose total requested amount of ERDF funds was higher than EUR 50,000.00 and, as a rule, less than EUR 2,000,000.00. In all areas of activity, projects reflected cross-border cooperation as a substantial added value of the program. During this financial period, the program has created good preconditions for positive effects, especially in the areas of rural development, tourism, and health. The implementation of the project with partners on both sides of the border led to the exchange of experiences and good practices.

Reliable and consistent cross-border cooperation has been established in most project groups, which will continue to reflect the preparation and implementation of new joint projects.

The mission of the Programme SI-HU 2014-2020 is to transform the region into a socially and environmentally sustainable joint “green tourism” region providing a high-quality living perspective for its inhabitants not only in the key destinations/magnets and their agglomerations but also in remote, rural areas, which are less developed in terms of tourism. The envisaged sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural values offers more comprehensive and spatially more balanced opportunities for tourism development, providing workplaces available locally, fostering entrepreneurship, and resulting in higher and more balanced economic performance and standard of living.

3.2. Introduction



3. Figure: Podravska region

The Podravska statistical region had 16% of Slovenia’s population in 2018. With 148 inhabitants per square kilometer, this is one of the most densely populated regions. As in the majority of other regions, this region also recorded a natural decrease in 2018 (–2.5 per 1,000 population). However, due to the positive net migration between statistical regions and from abroad (this was more significant), the population in 2018 slightly increased over the previous year. Mothers at first birth were the fourth oldest in the country. On average, they were 29.2 years old, which is still slightly below the national average. Almost 66% of children were born to unmarried mothers. Only two regions had a higher share: Pomurska and Koroška. The share of families without children was the third highest (27.5%). The share of people with primary education or less was the second lowest in this region. It was 22.8%.

The share of people aged 0–14 was the second lowest (13.8%); it was lower only in the Pomurska statistical region. In 2018, the employment rate was among the lowest in Slovenia (59.6%). 16% of persons in employment worked outside the region of residence, which is not much since only the Osrednjeslovenska statistical region had a lower value (10%). The region generated 12.6% of the national GDP; GDP per capita was the fourth lowest in the country. The region had just over 26,400

enterprises, with, on average, 4.7 persons employed. The at-risk-of-poverty rate was among the highest; 15.6% of people lived below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In the region, 485 kg of municipal waste per capita was generated, and 73% of it was collected separately. This ranked Podravska third in the country. Almost 96% of wastewater was treated before discharge from the sewage system. The share was higher only in Pomurska (99%). The region is third in terms of the number of convicted persons per 1,000 population (3.1).

Surface area (sq. km)	2,170
Population - Total	321,960
Population - Men	160,698
Population - Women	161,262
Population density	148
Natural increase	-816
Total increase	2,050
Live births per 1,000 population	8.7
Deaths per 1,000 population	11.2
Natural increase per 1,000 population	-2.5
Total net migration per 1,000 population	8.9
Total increase per 1,000 population	6.4

1. Table: Data for 2018 – Podravska Region

Towns

With a total population of 112,000, Maribor is the regional center and the second-largest city in Slovenia. The fact that it has its University attracts many young people. The University of Maribor has 17 faculties and around 15,000 students. The University provides a wide range of courses in engineering, computers, science, chemistry, European languages, and business. Besides, there are several independent colleges.

Other principal towns include Slovenska Bistrica (25,400), Ptuj (23,200), and Ormož (12,400).

Name	Population Estimate 2020	Name	Population Estimate 2020
Benedikt	2,615	Ormož	11,906
Cerkvenjak	2,083	Pesnica	7,410
Cirkulane	2,345	Podlehnik	1,801
Destrnik	2,643	Poljčane	4,449
Dornava	2,902	Ptuj	23,530
Duplek	6,996	Rače - Fram	7,531
Gorišnica	4,112	Ruše	7,017
Hajdina	3,879	Selnica ob Dravi	4,493
Hoče - Slivnica	11,753	Šentilj	8,351

Name	Population Estimate 2020	Name	Population Estimate 2020
Juršinci	2,380	Slovenska Bistrica	25,827
Kidričevo	6,541	Središče ob Dravi	1,902
Kungota	4,724	Starše	4,046
Lenart	8,502	Sveta Ana	2,294
Lovrenc na Pohorju	2,963	Sveta Trojica v Slov. goricah	2,101
Majšperk	4,056	Sveti Andraž v Slov. goricah	1,180
Makole	2,010	Sveti Jurij v Slov. goricah	2,098
Maribor	112,682	Sveti Tomaž	1,988
Markovci	4,039	Trnovska vas	1,366
Miklavž na Dravskem polju	6,929	Videm	5,625
Oplotnica	4,137	Zavrč	1,479
		Žetale	1,309

2. Table: Municipalities in Podravska Region

Economy

The economy of the Podravska Region is dominated by the service industry, which represents about 60% of the overall structure. Only 25 years ago, the Podravska Region enjoyed the reputation of a stable industrial region due to long industrial tradition. The region has all the attributes required for the production of sophisticated products. Most companies are in the processing industries such as:

- metal-processing
- chemicals
- food & beverages

There is also water wealth that is used for electricity production (the chain of hydro-electric power plants on the Drava River).

Employment structure: 63.4% services, 35.8% industry, 0.8% agriculture.

Companies

The most prominent companies operating in the region include:

- ADK (manufacturing of complex steel structures)
- AJM okna-vrata-senčila (PVC and ALU builders' joinery provider)
- Arriva Štajerska (interurban and other passenger land transport)
- Boxmark Leather (manufacturing and processing of leather for automotive and furniture industries)
- Dravske elektrarne Maribor (production of electricity in HE generation facilities)
- Elektro Maribor (distribution of electricity)
- Geberit (sanitary products)

- Henkel Slovenija (adhesive technologies, beauty care, and laundry & home care)
- Impol (reprocessing aluminium)
- MLM (die-casting tools, aluminum die-casting parts, machined parts, and forgings)
- NKBM (banking services)
- Palfinger (loader crane and other lifting solutions)
- Paloma (hygienic tissues, toilet paper, napkins, kitchen rolls ...)
- Perutnina Ptuj (meat processing industry)
- Pošta Slovenije (postal services)
- Safilo (eyewear)
- Starkom (automotive steering-mechanisms)
- Swatycomet (artificial abrasives and technical fabrics a production of abrasive products)
- Talum (aluminium production)
- TAM-Europe (bus and commercial vehicle manufacturer)
- TBP (Bowden cables)
- Terme Maribor (hotels and similar accommodation)
- Varnost Maribor (security services)
- Zavarovalnica Maribor (insurance company)

Value-added

The structure of value-added in Slovenia shows that the services represent a 64,9% share on the state level and in Podravje 63,8%. Although Maribor was even with a significant decline remains a predominantly industrial city, the share of industry in value-added of Podravje region is 26,6% and is lower than the national average of 27.3% or even the average of East Slovenia 35.4%. The construction sector still represents 6,8% in value-added of the Podravje region (which contributes to the national value-added in GDP 12,93%). The region generated 13% of the national GDP, but GDP per capita was the fifth lowest in the country. The region had slightly less than 26,000 enterprises, with an average of 4.6 persons employed.

Research and development (R&D)

Research and development expenditure in the public sector decreased in 2016 in comparison to 2010 and represented only 66.2% of the European average (decrease of - 10.5% from 2010). Venture capital expenditures are very low and represent only 7.7% of the EU average. According to the Research and Development Indicators, the GERD was in Slovenia 2.2% of GDP or 853.067 million EUR and in Podravje only 42.336 million EUR or 0.8 (5% of total), of which share in business enterprise 62% and 21,8% of government funds. The share of higher education funds is 2.2% and 13.9% from abroad. Firm investments in Slovenia are above the European average (141,0%), of which R&D expenditure in the business sector in 2016 was 142.9% of the European average, non-R&D innovation expenditures were also higher than in EU 118.5%. Podravje region has 8,5% of all researchers in Slovenia. Total R&D personnel in Slovenia in 2015 was 14.225 FTE, of which 7.900 were researchers. In Podravje 1052 FTE, of which 673 were researchers. The employment in knowledge-intensive activities in Slovenia in 2016 was above the EU average 102.6%. However, the share of such employments in fast growing enterprises is only 53.6% (in 2016), which is below the EU average.

Innovation

According to the European Innovation Scoreboard 2017, Slovenia is a Strong Innovator. Slovenia has an innovation-friendly environment (114.3% in comparison to the EU), although it exhibits negative

change from 2010 to 2016 (-24%), e.g., increased broadband penetration to 177.8% and decrease of opportunity-driven entrepreneurship to 69.5% of the EU average (decrease of – 64.6% from 2010 to 2016).

Inward FDI

The stock of inward FDI in Slovenia amounted to EUR 11.6 billion at the end of 2015, up 13.4% at the end of 2014. In the breakdown of FDI by the statistical region, the highest concentration in total inward FDI in value terms over the entire observation period has been in the region of Central Slovenia, which accounted for 65.0% of the total at the end of 2015. The next three regions are Gorenjska (6.0% of total inward FDI), Coastal-Karst (5.7%), and Podravska (5.5%).

Exports

2.634 companies generated net income at foreign markets in 2017. Thirty-seven large companies contributed 55,6% and 69 medium-sized 15.7% to all revenues on foreign markets. The leading exporters were 644 manufacturing companies, which represent 76.2% of total regional exports. Six hundred and eighty-nine companies in the field of trade, maintenance, and repair of motor vehicles had an 8.9% share on the non-domestic market, and 316 companies in the construction sector had a share of 5.5%. Seventy-six companies, active in the field of electricity, gas, and steam, generated 10% of the regionals net profit.

The most active companies are settled in Maribor, Slovenska Bistrica, Ptuj, and Ruše. However, in Municipality Maribor, the companies generated a 62.9% share of regional net loss, the highest was in the sector of Water supply, sewage, and waste management (for 2.4 times). The most important export market for the Podravje region in 2015 was Germany, where the export amounted to 741.048.453 EUR (29,8% of the total export). From the table below, it is observable that by the export, traditional markets are at the forefront, among them also markets outside the EU (BiH and Serbia).

Štajerska Chamber of Commerce performs internationalization activities in agreement with the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, of which it is a regional branch office. In line with the proximity of the border, their activities are focused on the cross-border markets as well as cooperation within EU-28. Chamber of Craft and Business Maribor performs counseling activities and organization of events for its members and is mostly focused on the craftsmen and micro-entrepreneurs that conduct their businesses either in Austria or in Croatia.

Although International marketing is part of the Faculties portfolio, there are no additional training or programs (such as MBA) available for companies. TehnoCenter became in 2017 part of the RAZ:UM and so part of the Slovenian EEN network. It is predominantly focused on the IPR and commercialization of innovation from the University. Tovarna podjemov (University incubator) is the dominant player in the Slovenian start-up scene, including the generation of »born global.« They match their activities with the Slovenian Enterprise fund (SPS). Štajerski technology park performs counseling for companies settled in Pesnica by Maribor as well as on location in Maribor. They are assisting the companies by preparation of the applications to the calls, organize networking events and marketing activities for the companies.

3.2.1. Development policy environment

In September 2018, MRA (Maribor Development Agency) started preparing the Regional Development Program of the Podravje Development Region for the programming period 2021–2027 (from now on: RDP for Podravje 2021–2027).

The decision to start preparing the RDP Podravje 2021 - 2027 was confirmed at the 5th regular session of the Development Council of the Podravje region on October 8, 2018. At this session, members of the Development Council of the Podravje region also approved the "Program of preparation of RDP Podravje development region 2021-2027" and to perform professional, technical and administrative tasks in the preparation of the RDP, authorized the MRA Institute - Maribor Development Agency with partners ZRS Bistra Ptuj, RASG and JARA. (from now on: MRA Institute with partners). Boris Keuc, Head of the Regional Development OE at the MRA Institute, was appointed Head of Preparation.

The preparation of the RDP for Podravje 2021 - 2027 will take place based on partnership cooperation between the preparers (MRA Institute with partners) and representatives of local communities, the economy, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions in the region. The work will be organized within the narrower project groups for the preparation of the RDP for the Podravje region 2021 - 2027 and the committees of the Regional Development Council of the Podravje region, by priority content areas. By groups, project groups will also be composed of representatives of other stakeholders. All actors will be invited to actively participate and create a development document at the regional level.

The Act on the Promotion of Harmonious Regional Development (ZSRR-2) and the Decree on Regional Development Programs stipulate that the RDP consists of strategic and program work. With the planned amendment of the Regulation on Regional Development Programs, the strategic part is to be prepared and adopted as an individual, the phased document entitled "Regional Development Strategy." The Regional Development Program (RDP) as the final document should include the development strategy of the region as a strategic part of the RDP and the program part of the RDP.

The regional development strategy represents a common starting point (the participatory process of cooperation of all involved stakeholders - ministries, regional development agencies, municipalities) for development and spatial planning at the regional level. It thus provides a basis for more rational development planning while considering spatial interventions.

The regional development program of the Podravska Development Region for the programming period 2021–2027 is expected to be adopted by June 2020, assuming that the amendment to the RDP Regulation is adopted in time, expert materials, and strategic guidelines of the competent ministries are prepared. At the same time, Regional Development Programs (DDPs) will be prepared, which are an integral part of the RDP for Podravje 2021 – 2027.

3.2.2. Main fields of past and current cross-border cooperation

Cross-border cooperation SI-HU in 2007-2013

The strategic goal of the Operational Program for Cross-Border Cooperation Slovenia-Hungary 2007-2013 was placing the cross-border area on the European map as a culturally, healthy, and naturally valuable area for living and working.

The strategy to achieve this strategic goal was aimed at:

- developing a competitive and sustainable area of cooperation with employment and earning opportunities;
- creating preconditions for positive effects in the areas of rural development and tourism;
- development of joint management skills for the protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- promoting regional and cultural identity;
- strengthening regional development and cooperation in the field of health;
- establishing better connections in cross-border traffic and transport;
- support for environmental protection and increased use of renewable energy sources;
- improving management skills, including environmental management;
- networking support (i.e., development of cross-border institutions, regional development capacity).

A total of 43 projects were approved and implemented. Only eligible expenditure could be co-financed from the program, with Community co-financing from ERDF resources amounting to a maximum of 85% of public funds. The projects eligible for participation in the program were projected whose total requested amount of ERDF funds was higher than EUR 50,000.00 and, as a rule, less than EUR 2,000,000.00.

In all areas of activity, projects reflected cross-border cooperation as a substantial added value of the program. During this financial period, the program has created good preconditions for positive effects, especially in the areas of rural development, tourism, and health. The implementation of the project with partners on both sides of the border led to the exchange of experiences and good practices. Reliable and consistent cross-border cooperation has been established in most project groups, which will continue to reflect the preparation and implementation of new joint projects.

Project title	Partners from Podravska region	Other partners
Establishing a section of the Great European Cultural Path of St. Martin of Tours, from Szombathely to Zreče www.viasanctimartini.eu/sl	Razvojna agencija Slovenske gorice, Občina Sv. Trojica v Slovenskih goricah, Občina Hajdina, Zavod za kulturo Slovenska Bistrica	Regionalna razvojna agencija Mura d.o.o., Občina Kobilje, Občina Dobrovnik, Mestna občina Murska Sobota, Občina Radenci, Szombathely Megyei Jogú Város Önkormányzata, Szent Márton Plébánia, Martineum Felnőttképző Akadémia, Vas Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, Községi önkormányzat Nádasd, AGORA Szombathelyi Kulturális Központ
The experiences of tradition are awakened by the wealth of cuisine, wine, cultural and natural heritage	Kmetijsko gozdarska zbornica Slovenije - Kmetijsko gozdarski zavod Maribor	Kmetijsko gozdarska zbornica Slovenije - mKmetijsko gozdarski zavod Murska Sobota, Pannon Egyetem, Zala Szőlő és Borkultúrájáért Egyesület
The Mental Health project dealt with mental health	Zavod za zdravstveno varstvo Maribor	Občina Moravske Toplice, Szentgotthárd Város Önkormányzata, Városi Gondozási Központ

and the everyday distress of individuals www.mental-health.si/si/		
By carrying out courses, we have trained women and young people for self-employment www.healthyfoodprojekt.eu	Ekonomski institut Maribor d.o.o., EGIDA, center za lokalni razvoj, svetovanje in storitve, d.o.o.	Društvo za trajnostni razvoj podeželja Žitek, Bögöte Fejlesztésért Nonprofit Kft., CELODIN Zalai Alapítvány, Zalai Falvakért Egyesület, Goričko drüjstvo za lepše vütro,
A concept of an energy-efficient cross-border region relying on pilot approaches www.energo-optimum.eu	E-zavod Ptuj	Lokalna energetska agencija za Pomurje (LEA Pomurje), Pomurski tehnološki park d.o.o., Energia Ügynökség Fejlesztési és Szolgáltató Közhasznú Társaság
Informative and educational eco-hub for the support of companies with the integration, innovation, and development of environmentally friendly products, processes, and services www.eco-hub.eu/ecohub/	UM Fakulteta za kemijo in kemijsko tehnologijo Štajerska gospodarska zbornica, UM Fakulteta za elektrotehniko računalništvo in informatiko	Pannon Novum Nyugat-dunántúli Regionális Innovációs Nonprofit Kft., Zala Megyei Kormányhivatal, Pannon Egyetem, Nagykanizsai Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara,
Gaining new knowledge, achieving a higher education level and finding new opportunities for all www.att-sihu.eu	Ljudska univerza Ptuj,	Első Magyar-Dán Termelő Iskola Alapítvány, Dvojezična srednja šola Lendava, Ljudska univerza, Zavod za izobraževanje odraslih in mladine
Renovation of public lighting with the purpose of saving energy and research www.energap.si/?viewPage=169	Energetska agencija za Podravje - Zavod za trajnostno rabo energije, Univerza v Mariboru, Občina Starše,	Zalakarosi Közös Önkormányzati Hivatal, Zalakaros Város Önkormányzata, Önkormányzati Tűzoltóság Vasvár
Improvement of the quality of life of celiac patients in the NE Slovenia and SW Hungary border region www.lq-celiac.com	Mestna občina Maribor, Univerzitetni klinični center Maribor,	Slovensko društvo za celiakijo, Vas Megyei Lisztérzékenyek Érdekvédelmi Egyesülete, Markusovszky Egyetemi Oktatókórház,
The activation of important experts in the field of spatial development regnet-projekt.eu	Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj	Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal, Regionalna razvojna agencija Mura d.o.o., Razvojni center Murska Sobota,
Brain injuries, new programmes, friendships, preventive workshops, educational courses, exchange of experience http://elore.center-naprej.si	Naprej, Center za osebe s pridobljeno možgansko poškodbo Maribor	Regionális Szociális Forrásközpont Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

3. Table: Overview of projects with partners from the Podravska region in 2007-2013

Cross-border cooperation SI-HU in 2014-2020

The mission of the Programme is to transform the region into a socially and environmentally sustainable joint “green tourism” region providing a high quality living perspective for its inhabitants not only in the key destinations/magnets and their agglomerations but also in remote, rural areas, which are less developed in terms of tourism. The envisaged sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural values offers more comprehensive and spatially more balanced opportunities for tourism development, providing workplaces available locally, fostering entrepreneurship, and resulting in higher and more balanced economic performance and standard of living. High quality natural and built environment and a wide range of locally available services contribute to the wellbeing of the inhabitants and good quality of life. Widespread social, economic, and institutional connections ensure the rational and sustainable utilization of the resources, skills, and capacities and create a strong sense of collective regional identity based on tolerance and mutual understanding.

Based on the mission reflecting the long-term vision for the region, an overall objective has been defined for the 2014-2020 period, which is to become an attractive area for living, working, investing, undertaking through better capitalizing on existing natural and cultural assets in tourism, catalyzing the development of the whole region on the one hand and the other jointly addressing those common problems which call for shared solutions at cross-border cooperation level. The Programme’s specific aims are the following:

- Better usage of under-exploited natural and cultural values through cooperation in tourism, as the region’s critical competitive, labor-intensive sector.
- Create/strengthen local economy (workplaces available locally, new enterprises, entrepreneurship) in rural areas through sustainable tourism development by interlinking remote cultural and natural heritage spots and connect them to more significant tourism destinations, magnets.
- Further develop the “green and liveable” region brand of the CBC area through preserving, revitalizing, and valorizing natural and cultural resources and improving stakeholder cooperation and social, economic, and institutional connections.
- Extending the cross-border cooperation by strengthening the institutional capacities of public and civil stakeholders in mutually essential fields of public policies and services.

Project title/acronym/ description	Partners from Podravska region	Other partners
The project ESCAPE will solve this territorial challenge - we will enrich 81 tolerance points (with attractive descriptions in a free-of-charge digital database and nice ambiance) and connect them sustainably into five attractive CB tourism products (escapes).	Občina Apače, Občina Sveta Ana Občina Sveti Andraž v Slov. Goricah, Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za elektrotehniko, računalništvo in informatiko, Občina Lenart,	Szentgotthárd Város Önkormányzata, Rába-vidéki Szlovén Kulturális és Turisztikai Egyesület Orfalu, Őriszentpéter Város Önkormányzata, Számítástechnikai és Informatikai Kara, Javni zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo kulturne dediščine.
IronCurtainCycling Our goal is to develop a sophisticated CBC cycling destination through	Znanstveno raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj,	Zala Megyei Önkormányzat Zavod za kulturo, turizem in šport Murska Sobota, Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal,

intertwining local, regional cycling routes connecting to EV13, being the central north-south axis of the region, and through developing cycling-friendly services and supplementary tourism supply to integrate the area into the the international system of EuroVelo.		Nyugat-Pannon Terület- és Gazdaságfejlesztési Szolgáltató Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft., Občina Lendava, NIF Nemzeti Infrastruktúra Fejlesztő Zártkörűen működő Részvénytársaság
Guide2Visit The project aims to include the peripheral areas of the Slovenian-Hungarian border region (on the Hungarian side a 30 km wide strip along the border (primarily the cultural regions Slovene Raba region, Őrség, Göcsej, Hetés), on the Slovenian side the rural areas with small villages around the towns Lendava, Murska Sobota and Ptuj) into the tourism offer by the realization of a complex visitor guide system's concrete elements, by a targeted tourism promotion positioning these areas as an attracting tourism destination and by securing the condition of crossing the border.	Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj,	Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal Zala Megyei Önkormányzat, Zavod za kulturo, turizem in šport Murska Sobota, Zavod za turizem in razvoj, NIF Nemzeti Infrastruktúra Fejlesztő zártkörűen működő Részvénytársaság
HORSE BASED TOURISM – HBT The project responds to challenges of the program area, as the primary objective represents the creation of an attractive and recognizable cross-border tour. A destination that offers high-quality products, which invite tourists to embark on a new adventure with the innovative Concept of "Horse Based Tourism."	Zavod nazaj na konja - Zavod za razvoj, raziskave in izobraževanje v konjeništvu in na področju aktivnosti in terapije s pomočjo konja	Raziskovalno izobraževalno središče Dvorec Rakičan, Pannon Egyetem, Helikon Kastélymúzeum Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.
HOUSES The main objective of project HOUSES is to integrate our cultural and built heritage – especially traditional houses – into the tourism offer, which	Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj	Pannon Helyi Termék Nonprofit Kereskedelmi, Szolgáltató és Fejlesztő Nonprofit Korlátolt Felelősségű Társaság Društvo za trajnost virov SI.ENERGIJA, Zalai Falvakért Egyesület,

contributes to the protection of these sites.		
e-documenta Pannonica General goals are: to increase the amount of competent data about cultural heritage, public access, and indirectly tourist visits. Localities' cultural heritage database, which will be designed on joint methodology will enable the promotion of smaller localities, quality improvement of their tourist offers, and forming of new tourist contents.	Pokrajinski arhiv Maribor	Pomurski muzej Murska Sobota Zavod za turizem in kulturo Beltinci, Savaria Megyei Hatókörű Városi Múzeum, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár
ECONOMY The cooperation level of the chambers, economic development organizations, agencies concerned in regional economic development at the Slovenian-Hungarian border area is not satisfactory. We aim to connect the experience, knowledge, and existing best practices of these organizations to integrate them into a harmonized system that we support with a professional, expert mentor program, thus assisting the economic cooperation and the exploitation of the advantages of the neighborhood.	Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj,	Zala Megyei Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara Pomurska gospodarska zbornica, Pannon Novum Nyugat-dunántúli Regionális Innovációs Nonprofit Kft.
GREEN LINE The project Green Line is focused on the transfer of knowledge and experience and leads to increase of capacity of the involved organizations (partners) and increase of ability of institutional cooperation (partners, municipalities, public organizations) in the field of environmental protection, energy efficiency, and renewable energy in order to achieve a higher level of maturity in cross-border relations.	E-zavod - Zavod za projektno svetovanje, raziskovanje in celovite razvojne rešitve,	Lokalna energetska agencija za Pomurje IMRO-DDKK Nonprofit Kft., Nyugat-Pannon Terület- és Gazdaságfejlesztési Szolgáltató Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

capCROSSplan	ZAVOD PALEMID MARIBOR – Inštitut za trajnostni razvoj,	Razvojna agencija Sinergija Zala Megyei Önkormányzat, Nyugat-Pannon Terület- és Gazdaságfejlesztési Szolgáltató Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.
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4. Table: Overview of projects with partners from the Podravska region in 2007-2013

3.3. Overview of stakeholders

1. Občina Maribor / Municipality Maribor

With a population of more than 110,000 inhabitants, Maribor is the second-largest city in the Republic of Slovenia and is situated in Styria, in the north-eastern part of the country. This University and the metropolitan city are the economic, financial, administrative, cultural, educational, trade and tourist center of north-east Slovenia. It is only 18 km away from the Austrian border, and for centuries has been a critical junction between the north and the south, as well as between Eastern and Western Europe. The Drava River locates the city and, in its center, grows the oldest – over 450 years old – vine in the world.

Maribor has a rich industrial tradition and a firm base of intellectuals, industrial workers, and engineers. The primary industries include the automotive industry, machine and metalworking industry, chemical and pharmaceutical industry, electrical engineering industry, and wood processing industry. Maribor is also known as the educational center of the eastern region. The University of Maribor is the second largest and the second oldest University in Slovenia. The University's objectives include: discovering, preserving and transferring knowledge, social studies, engineering, economics, medicine, natural sciences, law, pedagogical sciences and art, and making this knowledge accessible to society at large. Services and industry are the primary sources of income for the city. In recent years, trade (due to new shopping centers) and the banking and financial sector have developed significantly. Also, tourism is increasingly important.

Maribor is the first Slovenian municipality with an approved circular economy strategy. The basic idea of the strategy for the transition of the City of Maribor to the circular economy is its innovative model as a system for managing all the resources available in the Municipality of Maribor and the full urban area.

In 2012, Maribor was awarded the titles European Capital of Culture and European Rafter City -in 2013, the European Youth Capital, -and in 2018 Maribor was the European Capital of Sport.

2. Občina Šentilj / Municipality Šentilj

The municipality of Šentilj was established in 1994 and is included in the Podravska statistical region. The area of the municipality measures 65 km². In terms of area, it ranks 106th among Slovenian municipalities. The municipality of Šentilj lies in the northeast of Slovenia, in the western part of Slovenske gorice, between the Drava and the Mura. On its northern side, it borders the Republic of Austria (border length 17 km) and Austrian municipalities (Strass -Spielfeld, Murfeld, and Mureck). To the east, it borders the municipality of Apače and extends to the slopes of the Pannonian Plain. In 2017, the local population numbered 8,366 (4,178 men and 4,188 women), according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. The municipality of Šentilj combines remote areas, whose municipalities in the past within the parishes of Marija Snežna and Sv. Ilja developed quite

incoherently. Until the end of the First World War, the places along the Mura were connected to the German centers beyond the river, and the places along the “Imperial Road” and the “Southern Railway” towards Maribor. There were no good traffic routes between them until 1927, when “Žebotova cesta” was built from Šentilj through Ceršak, Selnica ob Muri and Vranje Vrh to Spodnja Velka with branches to the Ceršaška timber factory in 1939 and the Sladkogorska paper factory in 1948. Despite the economic and social development in the recent past and with modern communication methods, the municipality is still not sufficiently connected, so this should be a challenge for the future.

3. Mariborska razvojna agencija / Maribor Development Agency (MRA)

The Maribor Development Agency was established on June 24, 1993, as a non-profit development institution, by Municipality of Maribor, to provide conditions for the implementation of development initiatives of the ‘Maribor Tomorrow’ project. Relatively quickly, interest in continuing the project work was demonstrated. Thus, the Institute successfully applied for and implemented projects in the broader public interest, intended to promote small businesses, which marked the operation and mission of the Maribor Development Agency as we know it today.

The Maribor Development Agency is a member of the European Enterprise Network, which offers assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises in international business cooperation, innovation, knowledge, and technology transfer and participation in EU programs.

According to the Act on the Promotion of Harmonious Regional Development, the Maribor Development Agency is entered in the register of regional development agencies in charge of the Podravska Statistical Region, which covers 41 municipalities.

In addition to the above, the MRA is also the manager for “TOTI LAS,” the LEADER initiative is the 4th axis of the Rural Development Program of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2007-2013 for the municipalities: Duplek, Maribor, Kungota, Pesnica, and Šentilj.

Since 2013, MRA has been actively participating in the European Network of Living Laboratories (EnoLL), in which it has become involved with the open innovation laboratory ORBITALO.

Basic principles of MRA:

- Using the comparative advantages of the region;
- promoting local initiatives, innovation, and entrepreneurship;
- design of modern economic infrastructure;
- consideration of professional knowledge and experience of other regions or areas;
- strengthening technological, ecological and human resources;
- accelerating the process of creating new quality jobs;
- protection of natural resources and preservation of cultural heritage.

Objectives:

- promote local and regional project cooperation initiatives and prepare the local and regional environment for the 2014-2020 cohesion period, and consequently pursue the three fundamental objectives of EU cohesion policy: convergence, regional competitiveness and employment, and territorial cooperation;

- to influence the improvement of the economic and social situation in the local and regional environment by obtaining funds through various domestic and international tenders;
- to promote the elimination of the development gap in the local and regional environment, taking into account the principles of sustainable development, innovation, competitiveness, and social security of the population.

In 2014, the state transferred the implementation of specific instruments from the Program for the Promotion of Maribor's Competitiveness to the MRA with the Wider Surrounding Period in the Period 2013–2018:

- Implementation of a tender for subsidizing small initial investments, where the subsidy amounts to up to EUR 50,000.
- Implementation of a tender for interest rate subsidies for existing and /or new commercial loans in the amount of 50% of the total interest rate.
- Implementation of a tender for subsidizing start-up companies.
- Implementation of a tender for co-financing programs to improve the competitiveness of operating companies with growth potential.
- Activation of entrepreneurial potential among the population within the framework of establishing a "co-working" space.
- Activation of entrepreneurial potential among the population through the implementation of the project Entrepreneurial in the world of entrepreneurship for the problem area.
- Promotion of the economy and areas for attracting foreign and domestic investors.

4. Zavod PIP kot Regionalno stičišče nevladnih organizacij / PIP Institute as a Regional Meeting Point of Non-Governmental Organizations

The PIP Institute is a non-profit private law institution for the provision of activities in the field of legal advice and legal aid, information on the European Union, and the development of non-governmental organizations. We take care of youth projects and programs with heart and soul, where we offer many educations, workshops, and training. The operation of the Institute in the provision of consulting, educational, and support services is reflected in quality, professionalism, and independence.

The work of the Institute is based on high professional criteria, which employees acquire through continuous professional education. In our work, we respect all guaranteed human rights and freedoms, as well as the rights that go to individuals following the principle of fairness and justice, while respecting the principles of independence and impartiality.

The Institute encourages and takes care of the development of legal thought and the search for more advanced, more democratic, and humane solutions. Through their work, we try to contribute to consolidating the legal security of individuals and non-governmental organizations and to raising awareness of their rights and duties. Our leading guideline is to protect fundamental human rights and freedoms and to uphold the rule of law and the welfare state. We strive to strengthen civil dialogue in society by raising awareness of people and organizations about current processes in society and encouraging their involvement in them.

The primary mission is to become an indispensable element of legal security and a community developer with a supportive environment for individuals and NGOs and to provide our services to all

who need them. We believe that with our work ethic, high work criteria, and respect for human rights and freedoms, we leave our mark on today's society. We like to pass on our knowledge and create a community that is considered a meeting place for young people.

5. DOBA Fakulteta / DOBA Faculty

DOBA was founded in 1990 as the first private educational institution in Slovenia. The founder was Jasna Dominko Baloh. Throughout, they develop and nurture the process of lifelong learning. With over 100 different programs of formal and non-formal forms of education and training for different target groups and different age groups, they take care of promoting the needs for education and raising the educational level of individuals in the Podravska region, throughout Slovenia and across our borders.

DOBA started its journey 30 years ago with language education, first with programs for preschool children, then with programs for adults, also with specialized programs tailored to companies and individuals. They were the first in Slovenia to organize a summer school for primary school students on Rogla, learning English, tennis, and horseback riding. They have developed into a secure language exam center.

In 1991 they started cooperating with the Republic Employment Service Maribor. They developed new programs for unemployed/motivational seminars, professional programs, and programs for personal growth.

DOBA has successfully continued its mission in the next few years by introducing different forms and methods of learning, specially adapted to the needs of adults. In 1995, in cooperation with the Andragogical Center of Slovenia, they opened the first Center for the Promotion of Learning in Slovenia and a year later the Knowledge Exchange, both intended for free non-formal learning of individuals.

After a few years of operation, they have strengthened in the field of formal education. In 1997, they began implementing adult-adapted high school programs.

In 1999, they established one of the first vocational colleges at DOBA and began implementing the publicly valid Business Secretary post-secondary program, which they developed at DOBA. The activity of higher education was one of the critical activities at DOBA in the following years. They started with more intensive international activity, integration with the economy, and integration with the environment. Today, they run eight new higher education programs.

Already in 2004, the establishment of the College of Business was followed by a new development breakthrough in DOBA. In 2009, they transformed into a faculty. They have successfully expanded to Serbia and Croatia.

DOBA Faculty is a leader in the field of online education in the Slovenian higher education area, tradition, excellent study results, graduate performance, social responsibility, development and scientific research, first-class knowledge, use of modern and innovative pedagogical approaches and internationalization with international students rank DOBA Faculty among the most ambitious higher education institutions in Slovenia. Students from 46 countries, mostly from Slovenia, Croatia, and

Serbia, study at the DOBA Faculty. Today, they run four undergraduate programs, four master's programs, and one doctoral program in four languages.

6. Višja šola za gostinstvo in turizem / Higher Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor (VŠGT)

For almost two decades, VSGT has been offering practically oriented and internationally comparable study programs creatively and innovatively. The fourth year at the new location in the city center provides students, mentors, instructors, and lecturers with modern infrastructure with quality professional development. With this inspiration, numerous student projects, and international awards, we want to continue to co-create and inspire Maribor's tourist stories and take care of the expertise of future generations of tourist workers.

The Maribor Vocational College of Hospitality and Tourism has set itself the goal of spreading "knowledge for the art of hospitality," so we strive for a coordinated and high level of operation in all areas.

The mission of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Maribor is to offer quality, practically oriented and internationally comparable higher education for hospitality, tourism, and wellness pursuing the philosophy of a student-friendly school that promotes a productive and innovative relationship with the tourism industry, international mobility of employees and students, and the effective transfer of knowledge from the economy to school and vice versa.

The vision of VSGT Maribor is to improve the efficiency and quality of education in the next five years by encouraging motivation for study and profession. With the activities of the Inter-Entrepreneurial Education Center MIC - Academy of Culinary Arts and Tourism, they want to promote and strengthen the profession through a creative and innovative lifelong learning environment. They want to become a more comprehensive regional center of quality education and training of staff in the field of catering and tourism activities, which educates tourism professionals in the domestic and international space.

With its activity and presence, VSGT Maribor leaves a visible mark in the international space. They are active members in several international professional associations, in which the school management and lecturers occupy essential functions:

- World Association of Hotel Schools EUHOFA INTERNATIONAL
- Association of hotel schools from the alpine area EUHOFA ALPINA
- International Association of Leading Hotel Schools EURHODIP
- European Association of Hotel and Tourism Schools AEHT
- Coupe Georges Baptiste
- The Foundation for the Formation Hotel
- Maîtres Cuisiniers de France

International networking is a crucial area of VSGT Maribor, as it enables the quality implementation of the primary mission, and at the same time directs to improve existing activities and to develop new forms of work. With such activities, they take care of our development and the development of the catering and tourism profession at home and abroad.

7. Zavod za turizem Maribor – Pohorje / Tourist Board Maribor – Pohorje (ZTMP)

ZTMP acts as a tourist organization for performing public services concerning the promotion of tourism, designing comprehensive tourist offers, encouraging the development of tourist infrastructure, promoting wholesome offers, and informing visitors.

ZTMP was established by the City of Maribor in 2000 with a decree (MUV5/2000) from the Establishment of the Public Economic Institute for tourism Maribor. In 2009, the institution was redesigned into the Maribor – Pohorje Tourist Board, a public institution. The founders of the board are the City of Maribor, Hoče – Slivnica Municipality, Rače – Fram Municipality, and Starše Municipality (MUV 16/2012).

The vision of the Maribor-Pohorje tourist destination:

- The tourist destination is attractive for guests who wish to enjoy life and is known for its hospitality. The guests are relaxed, pampered, and encouraged to explore the spiritual culture, activities in nature, and a healthy lifestyle throughout the year.
- It is recognizable by the lush green forests, sunny wine-growing hills, the rich heritage, and incredible wine tradition with the symbol of the oldest vine in the world. It excels in top cultural and social offers that have seen it upgraded to the title of the 2012 European Capital of Culture.
- Its quality offer impresses professional and recreational athletes. The key characteristics of the destination are green nature, healthy potable water, a lovely climate, authentic wine and culinary experiences, ancient cities, a lively image of the countryside, and happy and hospitable locals. Its excellence is reached with the quality offer of comfort, services, and entertainment, even for the more demanding business guests.

About the tourist destination:

- The tourist destination consists of 22 municipalities. The destination has an excellent geostrategic location on a prestigious European transport corridor (close to Austria, Hungary, and Croatia) and excellent motorway connections with neighboring European cities. Of great importance is the proximity of international airports (the closest is the Austrian Graz Airport) and the potential development of Edvard Rusjan Maribor Airport, which would increase the visit of the destination, especially by guests from (more) distant markets. The railway infrastructure has been developed, which, together with other transit connections, enables good transport connections and accessibility of the area, also internationally, which is, among other things, a condition for the further development of the tourist destination.
- There are many natural resources in the destination area. Except for Mariborsko Pohorje - the central and already developed green tourist offer in the destination - natural resources were not exposed as an independent tourist product or. were not sufficiently included in the destination's comprehensive offer. The countryside is insufficiently touristically valorized and colored with potential ecological contents.
- The destination has a wealthy cultural heritage, top cultural and internationally recognized institutions and events, including mass cultural events, and thus has a significant enough potential for the development of cultural tourism. Maribor is an essential cultural center in the country, which will be the European Capital of Culture in 2012. The destination is recognized for its traditionally good organization of both cultural and international sporting events. Especially outside the Municipality of Maribor, there are still high potentials for connecting

with rural cultural heritage or. Ethnological peculiarities as part of the destination's cultural tourist offer.

- An essential product in the destination is sports and recreation, within which it occupies a leading position (in terms of supply, attendance, and development) Pohorje, which is given a unique stamp by unspoiled nature and proximity to the second-largest city in the country. The sports offer of the destination consists of skiing, hiking, cycling, adrenaline adventures, football, tennis, athletics, horseback riding, indoor sports, and other forms of recreation and movement in nature. Confirmation of a good sport and recreational infrastructure is the acquisition of the organization of the Winter Universiade 2013 and other major sporting events. With its quality sports infrastructure, it is becoming an essential destination for the training and preparation of top athletes. Nevertheless, there is still much room for further development and the creation of new guidelines in the tourist offer of the destination.
- Enology is strongly represented. The destination belongs to the wine-growing region of Podravje, the wine-growing region of Styria Slovenia. It is known for its excellent wine-growing locations and top-quality wines that achieve international recognition, and essential elements of the tourist offer are the oldest vine in the world, wine roads, wine cellars, and wine shops, wine museums, etc. The local cuisine is rich and varied; fifteen culinary areas can be found throughout Styria (geographical definition). To create an attractive and comprehensive tourist gastronomic offer, we are finding a lack of top-quality and also traditional restaurants with a quality offer of local cuisine.
- The destination has an insufficiently developed organic offer in the broadest sense of the word, organic food marketing, and a sustainable offer. The destination thus does not have any green hotel accommodation. The development of sustainable tourism requires the participation of all key stakeholders and strong leadership.
- The destination has a sufficiently developed offer of meetings and congresses. With targeted marketing and specialization of individual tourism providers as well as targeted capacity expansion, the destination could develop into one of the leading events and congress destinations in the region.

Table: Regional stakeholder profiles

Stakeholder name	Stakeholder's role	Stakeholder's challenges	main	Areas of interests	Competence, capacity to bring about a change	Tools of stakeholder involvement, communication channels
Official name Representing person						
Municipality Maribor (Local public authority) (Development Projects and Investments Service - Project Office) Barbara Mikuš Marzidovšek / Brina Lazar	Local development	Coordination - silo operation; Finance - no financial incentives for the development Capacity - additional work Understanding - no opportunities for thematic education and in-depth understanding		Exchange of good practices; Networking; Cooperation; Joint influence on EU policies	Internal: existing employees (public officials) External: experts in various fields of knowledge.	Involved tools: Appointment of working groups; workshops / consultations; notification Communication channels: PR; webinars; social networks, sister cities, active participation in urban networks, e-mail
Municipality Šentilj (Local public authority) Štefan Žvab, mayor / Ines Jurič	Local development	Time coordination; Integration of all projects with each other; Marketing of newly created products; Finding and connecting with potential partners.		Exchange of good practices; Networking; Spending more time in solving challenges; Increased cooperation with partners	Internal: Professional employees in charge of various fields External: External associates	Involved tools: Workshops, round tables, events Communication channels: website, media cooperation, social networks, printed materials, e-mail
Maribor Development Agency (MRA) (Regional public authority)	Regional development	Challenges: time and coordination and integration of all projects			Internal: Multiple and qualified staff External: Cooperation in the region	Involved tools: workshops, symposia, conferences, pieces of training, round tables

Boris Keuc, Head of the Regional Development Sector					Communication channels: website, social media, e-mail, printed materials, publications.
PIP Institute as a Regional Meeting Point of Non-Governmental Organizations (Interest group) Bojan Golčar, director	Coordination of NGOs	Development of participatory budgets, cross-sectoral cooperation	Exchange of good practices; Networking;	Internal: developed cooperation with NGOs in the region, competences for identifying needs in the environment and managing processes for connecting and involving stakeholders in finding appropriate solutions to address identified needs External: /	Involved tools: Conducting consultations, conferences, workshops, use of teleworking tools Communication channels: website, media cooperation, social networks, e-mail
DOBA Faculty (Higher education and research) Živa Čič Veingerl	Higher education and research	Challenges: New and existing competitors, finding new and strengthening existing competitive advantages Impact: variable financing	Cooperation with other research organizations and higher education institutions; exchange of good practices	Internal: existing employees External: associated researchers and professors	Involved tools: consultations, webinars, symposia, pieces of training, round tables Communication channels: Facebook, Instagram, e-mails, live meetings
Higher Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor (VŠGT) (Higher education and research) Tanja Angleitner Sagadin, director	Higher education and research	Challenges: • fluctuations in interest in the hospitality profession, • preparation of targeted programs for lifelong learning that support the circular economy model,	Cross-border promotion of catering and tourism professions with an emphasis on the transfer of knowledge, skills, and solutions.	Internal: existing employees (lecturers, other professional staff) External: /	Involved tools: workshops, symposia, conferences, training, round tables Communication channels: website, newsletter, social networks, e-mails

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the sensitivity of the industry to unpredictable situations (pandemic, ecological and social impacts). <p>Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduced enrollment in the full-time study program, variable financing, focus on circular economy entrepreneurship, adapting formal and non-formal education to unpredictable situations. 	Cross-border integration to multiply the effects of the circular economy.			
Tourist Board Maribor – Pohorje (ZTMP) (Business support organization) Doris Urbančič Windisch, director / Bernarda Karo	Business support and tourism		Challenges: many negative external influences Impacts: rapidly changing trends in the sector Challenges: insufficiently developed organic offer	Tourism, cross-border promotion, exchange of good practices and networking	Internal: existing employees in various fields; mostly in tourism External: access to a network of tourism service providers	Involved tools: workshops, webinars, consultations, round tables Communication channels: website, newsletter, e-mail		

3.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation and involvement

Stakeholder 1: Municipality Maribor

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 2: Municipality Šentilj

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 3: Maribor Development Agency (MRA)

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 4: PIP Institute

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 5: DOBA Faculty

Actions	Period	Responsible
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1.	Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2.	Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3.	The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 6: Higher Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor (VŠGT)

Actions	Period	Responsible
1.	Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.	Period 1 and 2 PP
2.	Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon-free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3 All PPs
3.	The signing of the protocol	Period 3 Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating in three soft training	Period 4 All PPs

Stakeholder 7: Tourist Board Maribor – Pohorje (ZTMP)

Actions	Period	Responsible
1.	Participation in three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed.	Period 1 and 2 PP

2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations.			
3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the pieces of training.			
2.	Participating in five pieces of training related to the new cohesion policy	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
	1. Smarter Europe		
	2. Greener, carbon-free Europe		
	3. Connected Europe		
	4. Social Europe		
	5. Europe closer to citizens		
3.	The signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating in three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

3.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement

Municipality Maribor:

- Acquisition of good practices, contacts, useful tools.
- Prevention of emigration and brain drain,
- Strengthening professional competencies,
- They are raising the quality of life.

Municipality Šentilj:

- Closer cooperation with municipalities in a common cross-border area,
- Joint promotion,
- Effective knowledge transfer.

Maribor Development Agency:

- Establishing quality living conditions,
- Exchange of good practices in NUTS2 and NUTS3 level programming,
- Recognizability of the NUTS2 region,
- Acquisition of useful contacts and tools.

PIP Institute:

- Cooperation with NGOs from Hungary in joint projects,
- Improving the efficiency of project management,
- Regional visibility.

DOBA Faculty:

- Increasing visibility,
- Integration between the region and the economy,
- They are strengthening research cooperation.

Higher Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor:

- Improving one's professional structures due to cross-border cooperation,
- strengthening innovation know-how for the needs of the circular economy,
- reducing the side effects of unpredictable situations in the hospitality and tourism industry,
- Improving the image of the hospitality and tourism professions and the industry,
- strengthening professional competencies,
- improving the quality of the profession and life,
- effects of the circular economy model,
- the attractiveness of the site for Erasmus exchanges,
- sustainable development of urban tourism,
- Restricting daily migration in deficit occupations,
- promotion and development of the circular economy,
- raising the quality of services in the field of hospitality and tourism,
- Solidarity migration, which promotes a comprehensive quality of life,
- effective knowledge transfer,
- unification of standardization.

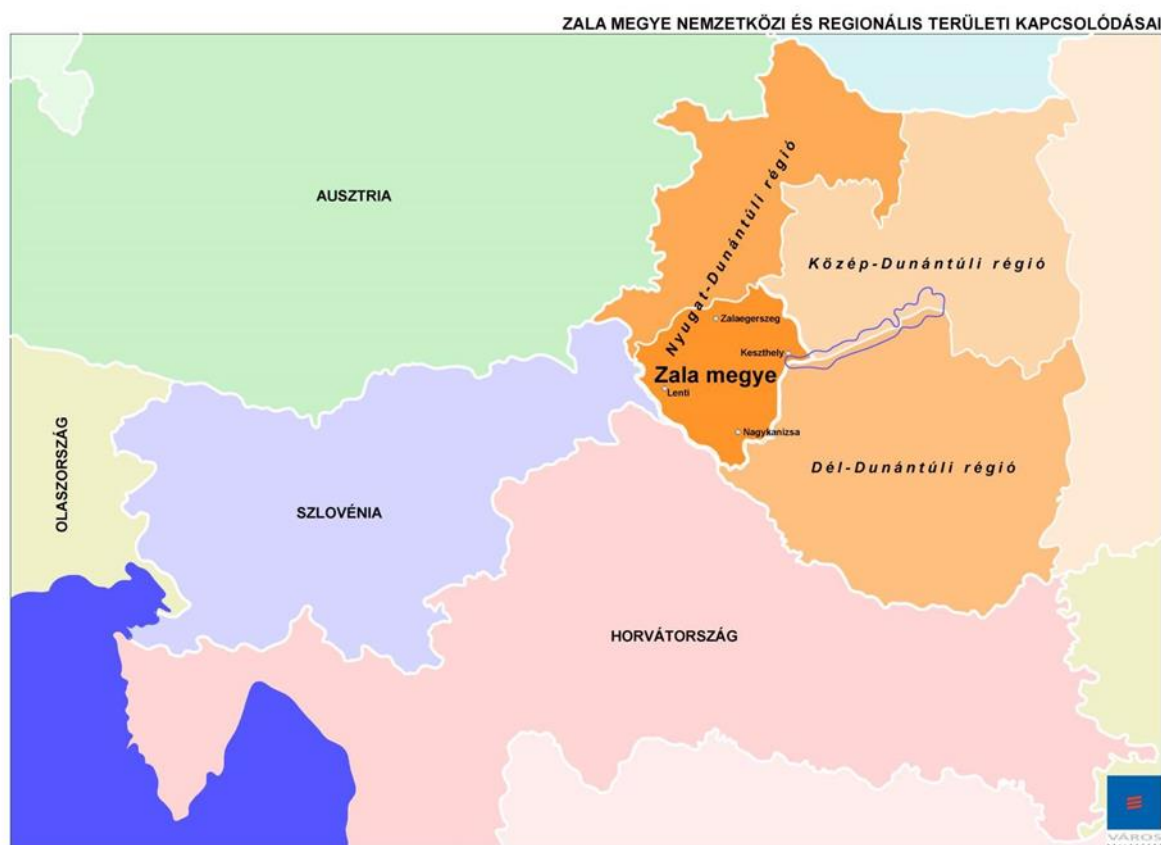
Tourist Board Maribor – Pohorje (ZTMP):

- Development of urban and rural tourism,
- Precise positioning on the tourist map,
- Increasing visibility,
- Effective knowledge transfer.

4. Regional section: Zala county – Hungary

4.1. Executive summary

Zala county is situated in the South-Western part of Hungary, its territory is 3,784 km² with the population of 270,634 persons (2018). Due to its geographical conditions the county has 258 settlements including the county seat Zalaegerszeg and 9 other towns, while the others are smaller villages. The area is rich in thermal spas (Hévíz, Zalakaros, Lenti, etc.) and it has favourable conditions for slow, green and health tourism. The western part of Lake Balaton belongs to Zala county, thus the area has attractive offers even for the family holidays, with its sunny shores and the cultural, gastronomic traditions. The first agricultural academy “Georgikon” has been established in Keszthely in 1797, that still exists as Georgikon Faculty of University of Pannonia. There are 3 other faculties in the county; business (Budapest Business School), mechatronics (University of Pannonia) and health science (University of Pécs).



4. Figure: Zala county

4.2. Introduction

Zala county is located in the South-Western part of Transdanubia, and shares borders with Croatia, Slovenia, and the counties of Vas, Veszprém and Somogy. The county's area is 3,784 km², and its landscape features uplands with valleys. Most of the county belongs to Zala Hills, which form a part

of the border region of Western Transdanubia. A narrow strip stretches to the Vasi Ridge in the north, and to the Transdanubian Hills in the south. Moreover, the Keszthely Mountains belong to the Transdanubian Mountains.

The county's infrastructure is excellent, its main axis are the M7 motorway (to Croatia) and the M70 motorway (to Slovenia) and the road no. 86 connecting the Western Transdanubian region. In addition to the main railway line between Nagykanizsa and Budapest, the Budapest-Zalaegerszeg-Bajánsenye railway line provides an opportunity to reach Slovenia. There is also an international airport (Balaton Airport), which is situated in Sármellék.

The area of Zala county is 3,783 km², and it had a population of 268,600 persons in 2019, and the population density is 71/km². The population shows a declining trend of 0.6-1.3% per year, which exceeds the national average.

The administrative structure of Zala county is divided into six districts. It has two cities with county rights (Nagykanizsa and Zalaegerszeg), and eight other towns (Hévíz, Keszthely, Lenti, Letenye, Pácsa, Zalakaros, Zalaölő and Zalaszentgrót). The county is characterised by a small-village settlement structure: more than 60% of its 258 settlements have less than 500 permanent residents. These settlements typically face demographic and economic challenges specific to the small-village areas, such as a declining, aging population, and a lack of locally available jobs.

Type of settlement	Number of settlements	Proportion in Zala county	Proportion in Hungary
Settlement	245	95,0%	84,6%
City with county rights	2	0,8%	0,8%
Bigger town	3	1,2%	3,8%
Town	8	3,1%	10,1%
Total	258		

The county seat is Zalaegerszeg (57,403 persons), and the other big towns are Nagykanizsa (46,649 persons) and Keszthely (19,289 persons). Lenti and Zalaszentgrót have a population of more than 5,000 persons, and the population of the other settlements of the county is lower than this number. The proportion of Croatian nationality is significant in the southern parts of the county near the Croatian border, while the proportion of disadvantaged Roma population is high in some settlements of the county. Tourism – especially health tourism and tourism based on active recreation and the richness of local natural resources – plays a particularly significant role in the economy of Zala county. There are two other important towns that can be found in the county: Hévíz ranks second place and Zalakaros ranks sixth place in terms of the country's tourism capacities and performance, and they are also close to Lake Balaton and have a dense network of spas. Tourism is present in almost all settlements of Zala: either because of the attractions and services in the given settlement, or due to the participation of the people living and working there - as commuters, local producers - in the production of tourism products and the operation of services.

The GDP per capita of Zala county has been growing steadily since 2013, but it lags significantly behind the regional performance. Zala performs 76% of the GDP per capita in Hungary and 72% of the Western Transdanubia region.

The largest contribution to GDP has come from the industrial sector, including the processing industry (28%, 24%), but the value-creating capacity of the industry within the total economic performance is declining. The importance of trade, transport, storage and catering sectors increased slightly from 20% to 22%, and the public administration, education and health services (from 16% to 19%) also have an increasingly significant value-creating potential in the county.

The number of registered economic organisations equaled to 57,431 in the first quarter of 2019. 30% of them pursue activities in the agricultural, forestry and fishing sectors of the national economy. This category is followed by economic organisations engaging in property transactions, and enterprises dealing with accommodation and catering services. A significant number of business organisations are active in trade, vehicle repair, as well as in professional, scientific and technical activities.

Companies with more than 100 employees engage mostly in the production of metal processing products, the manufacture of machinery and equipment, the manufacture of clothing, as well as accommodation and food production.

The proportion of the economically active population aged between 15 and 74 in the second quarter of 2019 was 63.1% (Western Transdanubia: 65.4%). The employment rate is 61.5% (Western Transdanubia: 64.3%). In Zala county the unemployment rate is 2.5%. Generally speaking, the value is more favorable than the national one (3.3%), but slightly lower than the values typical of the Western Transdanubian region (1.7%) - however, it is the same as in Vas county. The number of employees is 65,799. The data show that the county still has a significant proportion of working age population (not included in the employment register) who still choose inactivity.

Due to geographical and historical reasons, Zala county has close ties with Croatia and Slovenia, which are reflected in the form of cooperation in the fields of culture, tourism and environmental protection.

4.2.1. Main challenges

The population of Zala county has been steadily declining in the last decade, and the population decline has affected the disadvantaged areas to an increased extent (Letenye district -11.6%, Zalaszentgrót district -10.45%, Lenti district near the Slovenian border 8.28% between 2009-2018). With the exception of Keszthely district, the migration balance is also negative in each district. The most unfavorable aging indicators can be found in Keszthely district, but the aging index of the 3 disadvantaged districts hardly lags behind.

Zala county is a bipolar county as Zalaegerszeg has a significant urban atmosphere, but the role of Nagykanizsa is notable in the southern part of the county. The catchment area of Keszthely extends to the surroundings of Western Balaton. In addition, functions and services that are specific to a town are available in Lenti near the Slovenian border.

Zala is a county characterised by a structure of small villages, and this holds true especially for Lenti district near the Slovenian border. In 35 of the 48 settlements of the district, the number of residents

is less than 300 (of which 12 settlements have a population of less than 50 residents, and 7 settlements have a population of 51-100 persons). In these small settlements, the access to important services is difficult, the more mobile groups of the society are increasingly moving away from these areas, leaving the community in an even more difficult position.

Dead-end settlements, the poor condition of lower category roads, and the lack of cost-effective public services are forcing local governments and public institutions to take strategic steps in areas such as education, health and social care.

Zala was one of the winners of the first decade of the regime change in the 1990s, but the county's economy became vulnerable mainly because of the assembly companies that settled at the time. For export-sensitive companies, greater economic fluctuations pose an increased threat, the impact of which is felt in the current state of emergency imposed on the country due to COVID19. Improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in the county would reduce vulnerability that originates from the unbalanced economic structure. In order to achieve this goal, the qualifications of the workforce also need to be improved.

The innovation potential of the county is low, so there is a need to increase the cooperation between the county's 3 university faculties and the economic organizations.

4.2.2. Development policy environment

The Regional Development Concept of Zala county formulates the future prospects for the development of the county, i.e. its main long-term aim as „creating the rich and harmoniously developing, green Zala“. The concept sets three comprehensive aims and seven strategic sectoral ones for the county, for the period of 2014-2020:

I. Well-functioning, developed economy

1. Stimulation of the activity of SMEs and of large international corporations
2. Development of future-oriented, marketable economic activities
3. Strengthening tradition-based economic sectors, increasing added value

II. Increase of employment, social cohesion

4. Flexible training structure supporting both future and traditional industries
5. Treatment of social depression, preparation for employment

III. Livable Zala county

6. Healthy, attractive and human-oriented built and natural environment
7. Modern, accessible institutional structure and service system, reduction of inequalities.

Zala County Integrated Territorial Program sets the following main operative development aims:

- Forming a dynamic economy in Zala, which manufactures for the global markets
- Let's make a future of our past! Preserving the traditions of rural Zala
- Recreation and recovery: Developing tourism in Zala
- Prepared residents in Zala, ready for a renewal
- Livable, competitive villages and towns in Zala
- Strong and cooperating community in the county

The aims of the county-level program are considerably entwined with each other. Especially tourism development (Recreation and recovery), settlement development (Livable, competitive villages and towns in Zala) and economy development (Forming a dynamic economy in Zala, which manufactures for the global markets) aims are the ones which support not only the most regional development aims, but play a considerable role in the realization of the other aims, as well. There is an extraordinarily strong connection between the ITP aims of „Livable, competitive villages and towns in Zala”, and „Strong and cooperating community in the county” due to the harmonization of ERDF and ESF resources of the social town- rehabilitation developments.

The overall resource budget of Zala County is 27 billion Ft, which does not include the sources of the cities with county rank (Zalaegerszeg, Nagykanizsa).

Actions of the TOP priorities:

- 1. Developing the economy of the region for promoting the employment**
 - 1.1. Developing the local economic infrastructure
 - 1.2. Socially and environmentally sustainable tourism development
 - 1.3. Transport development for stimulating the economy development and the mobility of labour force
 - 1.4. Supporting the employment and improving the quality of life by developing family-friendly institutions, public services which help starting work
- 2. Enterprise-friendly, population keeping settlement development**
 - 2.1. Economy activating és population keeping settlement development
- 3. Switch-over to the economy of low CO₂ emission especially in the towns**
 - 3.1. Sustainable transport development in the settlements
 - 3.2. Increasing the energy efficiency of the local governments and the ratio of renewable energy use
- 4. Developing the local community services and strengthening the social cooperation**
 - 4.1. Developing the infrastructure of the basic health service
 - 4.2. Enlarging, developing the infrastructure of the basic social services
 - 4.3. Rehabilitation of the town areas being in bad condition
- 5. County-level and local labour force developments, employment stimulation and social cooperation**
 - 5.1. County-level and local cooperations (pacts) aiming at the increase of employment
 - 5.2. Local-level complex programs for strengthening the social cooperation
 - 5.3. Implementation of local community programs

The Zala County Regional Development Concept sets three territorial aims for the period of 2014-2020 in parallel with the objectives supporting the future prospects:

1. The economic and industrial development of Northern Zala (the areas of Zalaegerszeg, Pácsa, Zalaölövő, Zalaszentgrót)
2. A diversified re-industrialization and economic revitalization of Southern Zala (the areas of Nagykanizsa, Zalakaros, Lenti and Letenye),
3. The development of the Lake Balaton region of Zala (Keszthely and Hévíz region) on the basis of creative knowledge and natural assets.

4.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation

During the last periods several CBC projects were implemented with cooperation of partners from Zala county. Beneficiaries from Zala county can participate in three CBC programs:

- Austria-Hungary,
- Hungary-Croatia,
- Slovenia-Hungary.

Cooperations in the SIHU program, involving partners from Zala county:

Priority axis	Fields of cooperation	Lead partner	Project title	Short summary
Attractive region	Natural heritage, tourism	Őrségi Nemzeti Park	Go In Nature	A network of nature friendly tourist infrastructure will be established in protected areas of the nature in programme area in a form of eco camps and additional infrastructure that could assure unique experience of the nature and biodiversity in those areas.
Attractive region	Natural heritage, tourism	Zala Megyei Önkormányzat	IronCurtain Cycling	Developing a complex CBC cycling destination through intertwining local, regional cycling routes connecting to EV13, being the main north-south axis of the region, and through developing cycling-friendly services and supplementary tourism supply with the aim to integrate the area into the international system of EuroVelo.
Attractive region	Tourism, culture	Vas Megyei Önkormányzat Hivatal	Guide2Visit	The project aims to include the peripheral areas of the Slovenian-Hungarian border region (on the Hungarian side a 30 km wide strip along the border (primarily the cultural regions Slovene Raba region, Őrség, Göcsej, Hetés), on the Slovenian side the rural areas with small villages around the towns Lendava, Murska Sobota and Ptuj) into the tourism offer by the realisation of a complex visitor guide system's concrete elements, by a targeted tourism promotion positioning these areas as an attracting tourism destination and by

				securing the condition of crossing the border.
Attractive region	Tourism, culture	Nagyrecse Község Önkormányzata	Tele-Ka-Land	Establishing the TELE-KA-LAND Fairy Tale Park network, which aims to make the region attractive to almost every age group.
Attractive region	Tourism	Zavod nazaj na konja, Zavod za razvoj, raziskave in izobraževanje v konjeništvu in na področju aktivnosti in terapije s pomočjo konja	Horse Based Tourism	The main objective of the project is to represent the creation of an attractive and recognizable cross-border touristic destination that offers high quality products, which invite tourists to embark on a new adventure with the innovative concept of "Horse Based Tourism".
Attractive region	Tourism, cultural and natural heritage	Lenti Város Önkormányzata	GARDEN	The aim of the project is increasing the attractive force of the rural area between Moravske T. and Lenti by cross-border integration of the sustainable tourism offer focusing on the protection of the cultural and natural heritage by developing products and services of the less developed rural areas connecting to the tourism magnets, creating innovative tourism program packages.
Attractive region	Tourism	Szlovén Vidék Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft	ETHOS Land	Due to the project different ethical and socially responsible local providers will be connected from both sides of the border, in order to make them appear on the market together.
Attractive region	Tourism	Zalai Borút Egyesület	Wine Picnic	The main purpose of the project is to create an innovative, sustainable, cross-border, integrated and complex wine tourism product that includes natural and cultural resources.
Attractive region	Cultural heritage, tourism	Pannon Helyi Termék Kereskedelmi,	Houses	The main objective of project is to integrate the cultural and built heritage – especially traditional houses – into the

		Szolgáltató és Fejlesztő Nonprofit Korlátolt Felelősségű Társaság		tourism offer, which contributes to the protection of these sites.
Cooperative Region	Labor market cooperation	Pomurska gospodarska zbornica	Right Profession II	The specific objective of the project is to contribute to diminish of human resources imbalances and to the improvement of staff needs in cross-border area, by increasing the mutual cooperation between the educational institutions in the cross-border area.
Cooperative Region	Cultural cooperation	Raziskovalno izobraževalno središče Dvorec Rakičan	Back in the day	With innovative solutions based on cooperation regarding business processes, the project tackles common challenges of the program area in the field of development strategies, operational procedures and promotion in the field of open-air museums.
Cooperative Region	Regional economic development	Zala Megyei Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara	E-CONOMY	The aim is to connect the experience, knowledge and existing best practices of the organizations like chambers, economic development organizations, agencies concerned in regional economy development, to integrate them into a harmonized system which is supported with a professional, expert mentor programme, thus assisting the economic cooperation and the exploitation of the advantages of neighbourhood.
Cooperative Region	Cultural cooperation	Humán Esély Tanácsadó Nonprofit Közhasznú Kft	Folk Music Heritage	In this project, the partners work on the authentic folk music of the program area. They make the tunes and the musical sheets digitally available, researchable and usable. The goal is to explore the region's centuries-old joint music roots and spread the joint folk music widely, that could help diminish the borders
Cooperative Region	Energy efficiency	Lokalna energetska	Green Line	The project Green Line is focused on the transfer of knowledge and experience

		agencija za Pomurje		and leads to increase of capacity of the involved organizations (partners) and increase of ability of institutional cooperation (partners, municipalities, public organizations) in the field of environmental protection, energy efficiency and renewable energy in order to achieve a higher level of maturity in cross-border relations.
Cooperative Region	Vocational training	Pomurska gospodarska zbornica	Dual Transfer	The aim of the project is to introduce the apprenticeship training system as an improvement of the dual system, and also to interest youngsters in this form of vocational education. Chambers and other institutions can play an important coordinating role in this.
Cooperative Region	Social enterprises	Ustanova lokalna razvojna fundacija za Pomurje	SENS NETWORK	The main outcome: a self-preservative public support network, which will to influence the economic development of the project area on the long run. Its first target group is social enterprises who receive development help through cooperation and actors who were unable to establish a social enterprise without professional help.

5. Table: Examples of approved Interreg V-A Slovenia Hungary projects related to Zala county

4.3. Overview of stakeholders

1. Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate/Balaton-felvidéki Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság

BfNPI is an independent legal entity financed by state budget. The operational area of the Directorate includes parts of Veszprém and Zala counties and the northern part of Somogy county. Tasks of BfNPI include:

- management of protected and strictly protected natural values and areas, Natura 2000 sites, natural areas and values protected by international agreements;
- fulfilling tasks related to state research on nature conservation, maintenance and restoration of habitats;
- preparing nature conservation management plans;
- preparing plans for the maintenance and management of protected plant associations/vegetation types;
- taking care of the safe-keeping/preservation of seized natural values;
- education, forming of consciousness, ecotourism.

BfNPI's key tasks include managing protected areas and preparing nature conservation management plans. The BfNPI has special experiences on the Protected Areas and Strictly Protected Areas and the Nature conservation management of Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve (MDD BR). BfNPI has great experience in cooperation and communication with cross-sectoral national, regional and local stakeholders (land owners, NGOs, authorities), and with international partners. BfNPI worked in project management many times, including EU funded projects, took part in dissemination actions and organization of meetings. BfNPI has experience in nature oriented tourism, awareness raising and environmental education, including setting up theme trails, guided tours and water tours organized for the public and operates 17 visitor centres and receives more than 400 000 visitors a year.

2. Lenti and Countryside Development Agency Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd. / Lenti és Vidéke Fejlesztési Ügynökség Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

The Lenti and Countryside Development Agency Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd., founded in 2006, is 100% owned by the Municipality of the City of Lenti.

The basic tasks of the Development Agency are to promote the development of Lenti and its catchment area by planning, developing, and implementing programs.

The organization has been involved in several international projects; In the City Cooperation project, it coordinated the cooperation of 7 Hungarian towns in the joint regional development project of 24 Austrian, Slovenian and Hungarian border towns (innovative urban development solutions, tourism marketing, rural development).

During the 2014-2020 EU semester, we mainly managed the development projects of the Municipality of Lenti, as a result of which our kindergartens, schools, doctor's offices, social institutions were renovated, bicycle paths were built, and the city's bus station and incubator house were modernized.

In addition to our several energy efficiency programs, we are currently working on the development of a heating system based on a small geothermal power plant, and our green city program is one of the most significant urban rehabilitation programs in Zala county.

Together with 5 settlements, we are developing a new tourist destination near the Slovenian border, whose promotional activities we also carry out.

The task of our organization is to manage the work of the West Zala Employment Pact, which affects nearly 150 settlements in Zala, and to help the disadvantaged Roma population catch up in the framework of a social urban rehabilitation project.

Our initial community development project aims to involve as many locals as possible in cultural, community, and educational programs together with the local library and the Municipality.

The Agency has set up a volunteer centre and we are constantly organizing volunteer programs with the involvement of NGOs in the city's catchment area.

3. Zalaerdő PLtd. / Zalaerdő Zrt.

In addition to the main professional activities (forest and game management), Zalaerdő PLtd. carries out public welfare activities: operating of the narrow gauge railway, forest schools, accommodation,

arboretums, excursion sites, educational trails, exhibition, summer camps, other programs related to the environmental education.

Several natural and tourist attractions are managed by the company.

4. Zala County Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Limited Liability Company /Zala Megyei Területfejlesztési Ügynökség Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

Zala County Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd. (ZMTÜ) with its headquarters located in Zalaegerszeg, is an organisation owned by the Zala County Self-Government. The goal of the agency is to enhance the harmonisation of regional and rural development tasks in Zala county and to assist the work of the Zala County Self-Government in defining the long-term development directions and objectives for the county, in the planning and implementation of national and international projects, in elaborating of the integrated territorial program.

5. IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Ltd. / IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Kft.

IMRO-DDKK was founded in 2009 with the aim of providing effective support to environment-friendly policies and initiatives mainly in the geographic areas of Western and Southern Transdanubia and the border regions of the neighbouring countries (Croatia, Slovenia and Austria) by carrying out a number of projects focused on the protection of the environment, the promotion of renewable energy sources and energy efficient solutions. IMRO also implements activities which foster the environmentally conscious thinking by applying sustainable lifestyle education methods.

The organisation has participated in numerous EU-funded projects (Austrian-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation Program, Interreg Central Europe, EuropeAid, H2020 and Erasmus+ Programmes) focused on the organisation of a series of events including outdoor educational activities, lectures, courses and campaigns for awareness-raising related to topics such as environment protection, climate change, energy efficiency and sustainability. IMRO-DDKK also developed and implemented different thematic training materials. With the help of these projects they were able to directly reach and involve thousands of members of their target groups including the local government decision-makers, educators, kindergarten children, students and parents, as well as other professionals and enterprises in the Southern- and Western Transdanubian regions.

6. Lenti and Region Rural Development Association / Lenti és Térsége Vidékfejlesztési Egyesület

In the financial period 2014-2020, local communities covering the entire country were established in order to implement the Rural Development Program. One of them is Lenti and Region Rural Development Association, which unites 42 settlements in the Lenti region. There are nearly 100 members in the organisation, and they work to achieve rural development goals. Their work help the development of the public, civil and entrepreneurial spheres with the LEADER for proposals announced on the basis of its rural development strategy, the assessment of received applications and award of grants.

The main goal of the Association is to improve the living conditions of the population, and to strengthen the socio-economic role of rural and regional development.

The tasks of the Association are performed by the work organization. Its office can be found in the centre of Lenti, and helps to shape the development plans of regional organizations and enterprises into projects with advice and information. The Association is a partner cooperating in the implementation of several regional projects, which contribute to the development of the region and to the support of the professional work of the work organization.

7. Municipality of Lenti /Lenti Város Önkormányzata

Lenti is a town on the Western part of Zala county, and the centre of Lenti district with a population of 7,908 persons. The Municipality has more than 200 employees. There are 48 settlements in Lenti district. In most of the settlements (64.5%), the number of residents is less than 200. In total, Lenti district has 19,783 residents, making it the third biggest district in Zala county. The main tasks of the Municipality of Lenti are: urban development and settlement management, providing social and child welfare services, economic development and tourism-related tasks. The municipality participated in several international projects over the last few years.

Table: Regional stakeholder profiles

Stakeholder name	Stakeholder's role	Stakeholder's main challenges	Areas of interests	Competence, capacity to bring about a change	Tools of stakeholder involvement, communication channels
Official name Representing person	Area of responsibility, tasks, portfolio, etc	What are the main challenges (opportunities, threats) of the stakeholder? How is the stakeholder affected by its challenges?	Possible / planned actions to address its challenges – with a special regard on cross-border activities	Internal /external capacities and competences directly accessible for the stakeholder	Communication channels used to involve the stakeholder and to communicate project results, events with wider audiences should be defined
Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate András Lelkes	Nature conservation, environmental protection	Threats: Because of the climate change the methodology is changing how to manage the protected areas Opportunities: Preparation of environmental management plans, biosphere reserve.	Preparing of development programs focusing on the area covered by the biosphere reserve (Kerka and Lendava)	Internal: well-trained management and expert team in the field of nature conservation, environmental protection.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings
Lenti and Countryside Development Agency Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd. Károly Kovács	Regional and urban development	Threats: economic risks and insufficient funding. Opportunities: funding programs by EU in the next project cycle.	Establishing of joint cross-border touristic / employment / educational / economic development networks	Internal: well-trained project management and expert team. External: expert team. Cooperation with local municipalities, NGOs.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings

		Ecotourism, educational programs.			
Zalaerdő PLtd. Anikó Vitális Molnárné	Wood processing, game farming, tourism	Threats: economic risks and insufficient funding; climate change, deforestation (pine forests), spreading of invasive species., Opportunities: shortening of commodity chain, increasing the public function of forests, touristic and eco touristic programs, funding programs by EU in the next project period.	Medium term development concept consulted and harmonized with the BFNPI's activities.	Internal: well-trained management and expert team in the field of forestry, tourism.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings
Zala County Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Limited Liability Company József Bali	Regional development	Threats: ageing, weak labour market, obsolete infrastructure, the disappearance of people who maintain the landscape. Economic risks and insufficient funding. Opportunities: traditional farming, ecotourism, educational programs, networking	Medium-term development plan.	Internal: managing director and employees in the field of project management.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings
Municipality of Lenti Bernadett Róka	Local municipality, urban development	Threats: ageing, weak labour market, obsolete	Preparation and implementation of	Internal: colleagues at the Municipality, at the	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings

		infrastructure, recession in tourism, industrial and agricultural sectors. Opportunities: strengthening of domestic tourism in the future.	development programs, Creating a common tourist area – HU-SI. Establishing and operating an ETC covering the whole SIHU area.	institutions owned by the municipality, external experts from different fields.	
IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Ltd. Róbert Musits	Regional development, rural development	Threats: recession in tourism and renewable energy sector. Opportunities: strengthening of domestic tourism in the future. The spread of renewable energy networks. Educational programs, networking	Preparation and implementation of development programs, focusing on energy efficiency and regional development.	Internal and external management team.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings
Lenti and Region Rural Development Association Diána Odonics	Rural development	Threats: recession in rural development and tourism sector. Opportunities: strengthening of domestic tourism in the future. Educational programs, networking, new rural programs	Preparation and implementation of rural development programs.	Internal and external management team.	newsletter, email, stakeholder meetings

4.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process

Stakeholder: key stakeholders

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the further trainings.	Period 1 Period 2 Period 2	PP3
2. Participating on two workshops 1. General workshop 2. Overview of the content of the 2021-27 period	Period 2 Period 3	PP3
3. Signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating on three soft trainings	Period 4	All PPs
5. Participating on the five trainings related to the new cohesion policy: 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 3 and Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder: general stakeholders

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation on two workshops: 1. General workshop 2. Overview of the content of the 2021-27 period	Period 2 Period 3	PP3
2. Participating on five workshops related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 3	PP3 and PP4
3. Signing of the letter of intent	Period 3	General Stakeholders

4.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement

1. Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate/Balaton-felvidéki Nemzeti Park Igazgatóság

- Broadening relationships, seeking for potential partners
- Identification of target groups and motivating their involvement
- Sharing good practices

2. Lenti and Countryside Development Agency Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd. /Lenti és Vidéke Fejlesztési Ügynökség Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

- More effective participation in cross-border projects
- Closer cooperation with Slovenian and Hungarian municipalities

3. Zalaerdő PLtd./Zalaerdő Zrt.

- Collective thinking with other municipalities
- Learning good practices
- Rethinking development guidelines

4. Zala County Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Limited Liability Company /Zala Megyei Területfejlesztési Ügynökség Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft.

- Collective thinking with other municipalities
- Learning good practices
- Rethinking development guidelines

5. IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Ltd./IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Kft.

- Broadening relationships, seeking for potential partners
- Sharing good practice
- From the sectoral and regional point of view, increasing the visibility and the touristic potential of Vasi Hegyhát and Rábamente micro-region

6. Lenti and Region Rural Development Association / Lenti és Térsége Vidékfejlesztési Egyesület

- Increasing the fundraising potential
- Improving the efficiency of project management
- For the target groups, it can be a benefit if the utilization of the developments increase, and more optimal solutions are found to meet the needs of the target group
- From a territorial point of view can be a benefit to strengthen the network of regional actors and the coherence of regional development

7. Municipality of Lenti / Lenti Város Önkormányzata

- More effective participation in cross-border projects
- Closer cooperation with Slovenian and Hungarian municipalities

5. Regional section: Vas county – Hungary

5.1. Executive summary

Vas county is located on the western border of Hungary. Its capital is Szombathely which has a population of nearly 80 thousand. The population of the other towns in the county barely exceeds 10 thousand. The western county is one of the most developed regions in Hungary. Its economy is characterized by the dominance of industrial production which is concentrated in Szombathely. Tourism is also an important segment whose main direction is health and wellness tourism.

The county's main challenges can be linked with on the one hand industrial dependency and territorial inequalities, and the other with unfavorable demographic trends (e.g. ageing, the emigration of the skilled workforce). The county's development policy is aimed at increasing competitiveness, exploiting its natural and touristic potential, and strengthening disadvantaged rural areas.

Vas county has multifaceted relationships with Austria and Slovenia which take the form of co-operation in the field of culture, tourism, environmental protection. These activities take place not only through state institutions and development agencies but also among NGOs and citizens.

The key stakeholders' fields of activity cover territorial and urban development, tourism, and culture, as well as environmental protection.

- The Self-Government Office of Vas County is the most important public administrative organization of the territorial unit, which coordinates and facilitates the mid-level regional developments.
- The Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter as a central actor of a network of villages in the southwest and sectoral organizations, plays an integrative role in territorial development and tourism.
- Szentgotthárd is the industrial center in the micro-region. Its regional significance stems from that it is closely connected with the public administration, economic, cultural, and tourist actors of the tri-border region.
- The Őrség National Park is an important sectoral agency that has a wide range of partners in the West-Hungarian border region.
- The aim of Vasi Hegyhát–Rábamente Tourism and Destination Management to coordinate between smaller tourism actors in the region.

5.2. Introduction

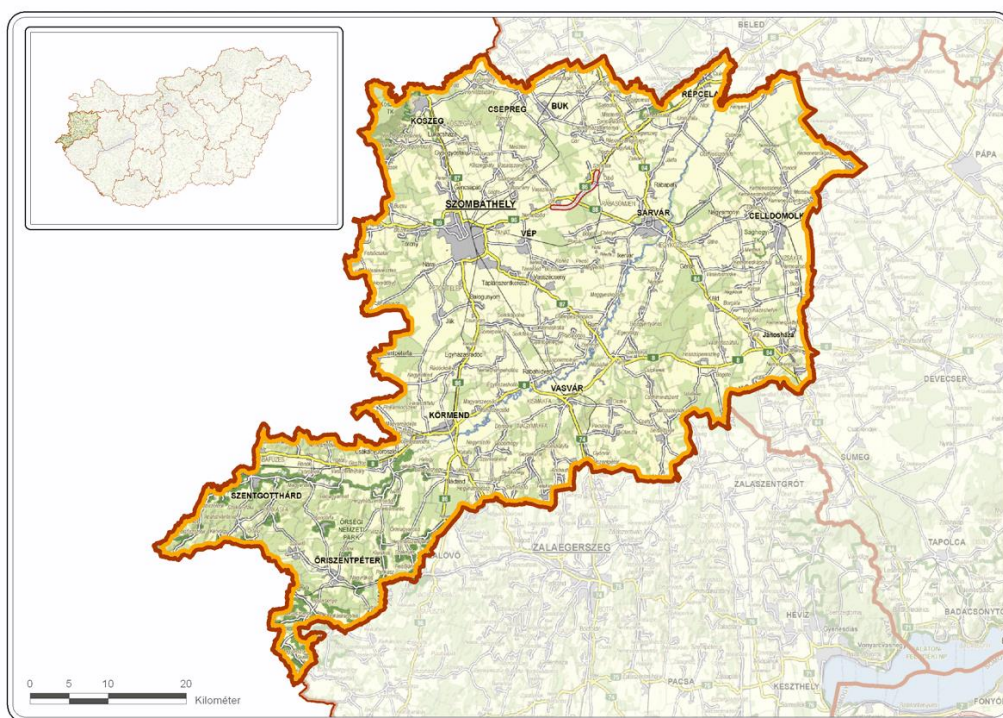
Vas county is an administrative unit of Hungary which located on the western border of the country. It borders Austria (182 km in the west) and Slovenia (48 km in the southwest). Its total area is 3.336 km² and its population was 253.551 persons in 2019. According to the settlement system, 203 villages

and 13 cities belong to the county. The capital of Vas county is Szombathely which is a home for 76.344 inhabitants (2019). The administrative unit is subdivided into 7 districts (see Table 7).

District centers	Area of the district (km ²)	Population (2011)	Density (population/km ²)	Number of municipalities
Celldömölk	474.13	24.630	52	28
Körmend	614.53	27.177	44	46
Kőszeg	286.45	25,090	88	21
Sárvár	685.46	38.684	56	42
Szentgotthárd	255.04	14.961	59	16
Szombathely	646.36	112.320	174	40
Vasvár	374.14	13.767	37	23

6. Table: Regional structure of Vas county

Regional structure: The settlement structure is characterized by small villages. 63% of the settlements have less than 5.000 inhabitants, and only six small towns or cities have more than 5.000 inhabitants. The average population of the settlements (1182) is only four-tenths of the national average. The county's cities do not reach 100 thousand people. The population of Szombathely is close to 80 thousand, and the four smaller cities (Sárvár, Körmend, Celldömölk, Kőszeg) is more than 10 thousand. The population of Szentgotthárd cannot reach this value, in Jánosháza, Vasvár, Bük, Csepreg, Óriszentpéter, Vép, and Répcelak the population does not reach 5.000. In summary, the county's settlement structure is highly deconcentrated in which small cities and towns have an important role in the performance of basic urban functions. From the point of view of territorial development, the Self-Government Office of Vas County has also an indispensable role as a coordinator and a facilitator.



5. Figure: The map of Vas county (Source: TelR)

Transport infrastructure: The road network in the West-Hungarian region (and Vas county) is fairly developed, some important European corridors pass it, and the road infrastructure has significantly improved for the last decades.⁴ In the north-south direction, the main road 86 crosses the county, which is part of the European transport corridor E65; in the east-west direction, the main road E66 passes through it. The network of secondary roads covers the area with high density. Due to the high settlement density, the length of the secondary roads in Vas county is the longest in Hungary. The county has a direct railway connection to Austria and Slovenia, but the cross-border public transport service is needed to develop in more sustainable ways.

Natural environment: Vas county is rich in environmental resources and natural values: it has a diverse flora and fauna resulting in high biodiversity to be protected and managed within Őrség National Park, nature parks, and numerous Natura 2000 areas. The most important natural value is the trilateral Goričko-Őrség-Raab Nature Park. The highly protected area on the Hungarian side is under the authority of the management of Őrség National Park which performs a wide range of sectoral agency tasks. Most of the protected areas are in agricultural zones therefore, it is very important to raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection and to help identify alternatives to sustainable farming. The most important river in the county is the Rába which is extremely valuable not only because of its natural environment but also for water tourism. On the other hand, the river also a threat in terms of floods which calls for increased joint efforts in risk prevention and civil protection as in the case of preparing for the impacts of climate change.

Economy and tourism: Vas county is one of the most developed and most industrialized regions in Hungary. Its economic structure is characterized by the strong dominance of industrial production which is significantly concentrated in Szombathely. The hegemony of the vehicle-related industry observable within the secondary sector which means that more than half of industrial production is related to the automotive industry. The share of services in the GDP is 48% therefore the economic role of agricultural activity is relatively small compared to other main sectors.

Tourism is also an important economic segment in Vas county whose main direction is the health and wellness tourism. The West-Pannonian region is rich in thermal water therefore there are many spas in the county, but Bük and Sárovar are the most popular among them with around 7-800 thousand guest nights per year. Kőszeg is also noteworthy as a tourist attraction with its cultural values and natural environment. Őrség and Vasi Hegyhát are in the southwestern part of the county with their rural landscapes are outstanding locations for active and ecotourism. The most important destination of historical and religious tourism is Szombathely, where Roman and early Christian sights are located. EuroVelo 13 (Iron Curtain Trail) is crossing Vas county through the protected areas of Goričko and Őrség National Parks, bearing an important touristic potential. In sum, there are several attractions and cultural values in the region therefore, the diversification of the sector is needed so the less developed areas can contribute to expanding the supply in tourism. The Vasi Hegyhát-Rábamente Tourism and Destination Management were established for coordination between smaller tourism actors in the region.

⁴ Based on the findings of document "Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary for the programme period 2014-2020".

Demography and society: The area is characterized by negative demographic trends with relatively high natural loss and negative demographic balance due to high outmigration resulting in population decline and ageing at an accelerating rate. The territorial location of the population in the county is extremely unbalanced due to the special settlement network conditions. The population density in the rural areas of the southwest and southeast of the county is very low, while in the agglomeration of Szombathely and the rapidly urbanizing settlements around Kőszeg is relatively high.

According to a recent study, the network of relatively developed medium-sized cities provides a good quality of life for its residents.⁵ Vas county is one of the most favorable positions in the country in terms of the labor market, as employment is higher than the national average and unemployment is lower. As a result of the continuous change of workplace and social expectations, the education of the population also shows a more favorable picture in the county: the younger age groups have higher education than the older ones. Based on the processes outlined above, the key task of regional strategies for reducing territorial inequalities and improving living conditions in disadvantaged areas. This requires the involvement and mobilization of actors who play a central role in their regional or sectoral network.

Cross-border relations and national minorities: Due to geographical and historical reasons, Vas county has an important relationship with Austria and Slovenia which take the form of cooperation in the field of culture, tourism, environmental protection, transport, and so on.⁶ Tri-border areas (or tripoints) are special locations of a space divided into political units. Visual and linguistic references to tripoints and the phenomenon of intersection can be found not only in the surrounding area of such locations but also in nearby communities. This is particularly the case in the Austrian-Hungarian-Slovenian region, where related symbolism is used by tourist, business, and cultural enterprises as a kind of a brand.⁷ This unique local identity can also serve as a basis for further collaborations. The Hungarian center of the tri-border region is Szentgotthárd which has an important role in the network of economic, cultural, and administrative organizations.

Vas county also has great importance in the Slovenian and Hungarian relations because the Slovene minority in Hungary has the largest population in this region. The centers of Slovenian nationality are in Szentgotthárd/Monošter and the surrounding villages where numerous cultural organizations can be found. The involvement of minorities and their associations on both sides of the border may also contribute to making organic and fruitful cross-border collaborations. In recent decades, the political and infrastructural barriers to bilateral and trilateral cooperation have been significantly reduced, but the development of cultural and economic relations is an important task for the future.

⁵ http://hetfa.hu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HETFA_JSZHM.pdf

⁶ One of the earlier and prominent regional projects in the framework of trilateral cooperation is the creation of Goričko-Őrség-Raab Naturpark in 1995.

⁷ Turai, Tünde–Csaba Mészáros (eds.) (2015): An Ethnographic Perspective on Tri-Border Areas. MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet. http://real.mtak.hu/32611/1/HarmasHatarsima_u.pdf

5.2.1. Main challenges

The degree of urbanization is characterized by the fact that 61.4% of the population lives in cities which is about 9 percentage points lower than the Hungarian average. The differences are also significant at the district level where Szombathely district stands out markedly with 72.1% on the other side, in more rural areas (like Őrség, Vendvidék) the indicator below 20%. Consequently, the territorial distribution of urban functions and services is extremely unequal. The difficult accessibility of settlements increases the problems associated with under-urbanization. Poor infrastructure increases the migration of inhabitants.

The population of Vas county has been steadily declining over the past two decades. Unfavorable population indicators are characteristic of almost the entire territory of the county, but the rate of natural decrease of population is not completely homogeneous, in this respect, there are also territorial differences between the districts. Most unfavorable indicators are found in rural areas with small villages (whose population is less than 500 people) in the southern part of the county.

Another problem associated with the decrease of population is the ageing which occurs in particular in rural areas. The ageing of the population not only causes local problems at present but in the longer term also threatens to depopulate some villages. Living conditions in shrinking settlements are poorer, and as the population has more difficulty accessing important services the more mobile groups of society are increasingly relocating, leaving the community in an even more difficult position. While in 2001 the ageing index in Vas county was 94, this indicator is currently 145, which means that the number of people over the age of 65 is one and a half times higher than the number of people under the age of 18. The extension of the elderly population forces local governments and public institutions to take strategic action in different areas such as health and social care.

The industry-oriented economic structure of Vas county can also cause serious risks. The economy is highly vulnerable to exports and especially the automotive industry, and therefore greater economic fluctuations pose an increased threat. Improving the competitiveness of domestic small and medium-sized enterprises would reduce the vulnerability resulting from the unbalanced economic structure. To achieve this goal, it is also necessary to increase the qualification of the workforce.

Climate change is one of the main environmental dangers, affecting not only the economy but also a lifestyle and living conditions. The climate of the region is expected to have higher average temperatures, decreasing and winter-concentrated precipitation, and higher potential evaporation. Besides, extreme weather events (storms, heat waves, etc.), floods, and forest fires are expected to increase in frequency and intensity, as well as the emergence of new pests and diseases. The task of the present is to prepare for the changes in the natural ecosystem and, in close connection with it, the possibilities of agricultural management. These challenges also affect neighboring countries therefore, knowledge transfer and cooperative preparation can make adaptation more effective.

In the context of climate change, infrastructural transformations are also needed to reduce carbon emissions and protect the natural environment. In this sense, there is a need to improve cross-border mobility by ensuring the interconnections of public transport facilities and promote sustainable (green) transportation modes. Concerning tourism, the improvement of related infrastructure also needed to

create the conditions for tourist-friendly means of transportation (hiking, bicycle route, horse riding networks, water tourism).⁸

5.2.2. Development policy environment

The comprehensive aims of Vas county's development policy are to improve its competitiveness by taking advantage of its geographical location, as well as to utilize its excellent natural and touristic endowments in more a sustainable way. In response to the problems presented above, it is also a general aim to prevent the segregation of disadvantaged rural areas (see Table 8).

General aims	Expanding employment	Improving economic performance	Improving the qualifications of the workforce	Sustainable use of natural and cultural resources	Preventing the segregation of peripheral settlements
Strategic aims	Improving the competitiveness of the region		Strengthening relations within and outside the county	Sustainable use of natural resources	Improving the quality of life in small settlements
Horizontal aims	Sustainable use of environment and landscape Utilization of brown-field areas Equal opportunities and inclusion for disadvantaged social groups Utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT)				

7. Table: Strategic goals of the development of the county

Maintaining and expanding the level of employment: to increase the number of employees, especially among the skilled workforce, in connection with which the emigration from the county is reduced and additional new employees are attracted to the county.

Improving the performance of the economy to increase the amount of household and corporate income in the county, which makes working and living in the county more attractive.

Improving the skills of the workforce: higher skills lead to higher value-added jobs and incomes.

Sustainable use of natural and cultural resources to reduce the ecological footprint, expand the wide range of sustainable use of local resources, locally produce agricultural and other products, and create an attractive living environment in both urban and rural areas.

Preventing the complete socio-economic backwardness of small settlements on the inner periphery, improving the conditions for population retention so that there are no depopulated settlements in the county.

The Programme addresses the following two priority axes:

Priority axis 1: ATTRACTIVE REGION:

The priority axis includes one investment priority 6c corresponding to the Thematic Objective 6. The region has a high potential in natural and cultural assets that necessitates its protection and preservation and also creates a strong basis for sustainable development of heritage based tourism

⁸ Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary for the programme period 2014-2020.

and related activities. However the region is also featured by 'dual' characteristics: certain subregions (especially spa and thermal ones) are well developed with outstanding performance compared to national and EU standards, other areas are significantly lagging behind their potentials, (especially rural and natural areas, protected areas).

The projects financed under this priority axis will be oriented towards 1) supporting the preservation of the heritage, and 2) promoting the exploitation of this potential in the regions not valorizing it in tourism. Taking into account the financial allocation of the Programme, only small-scale infrastructure developments can be supported which fits to the preservation/development initiatives of the border region's tourism.

Possible key areas of cooperation:

- Preserve, valorize and promote natural and cultural heritage through sustainable forms of tourism
- Create the proper physical and service infrastructure for tourism in remote areas
- Provide help for the stakeholders to improve their tourism service quality, effectiveness and competitiveness, through e.g. networking, clustering
- Improve visibility, branding of the region by joint communication (ICT tools)
- Diversification of joint product and services through crosslinking of remote cultural and natural heritage spots with larger tourism destinations

Priority axis 2: COOPERATIVE REGION:

The priority axis includes one investment priority (11b) corresponding to the Thematic Objective 11. Efficient cooperation of the regional actors can provide strong added value to the development of the Region, as common problems can be tackled jointly with greater impacts and effectiveness resulting in stronger cross-border identity. Adopting better governance models resulting in high level public services and social innovations addressing also the needs of vulnerable groups is one of the key challenges of the Region, calling for more cooperation between public authorities, civil organizations and public interest bodies. Ultimately strengthening cross-border cooperation of the stakeholders, and thereby contributing to increased respect, tolerance and mutual understanding is also one of the key targets of the EU.

The projects shall seek cooperation in addressing the main challenges and needs identified within the analysis of the programme area. They will not develop infrastructures and will not be focused on investments but will seek opportunities offered by the cross-border networks and cooperation for improving the situation in different socio-economic and environmental sectors.

Possible key areas of cooperation:

- Societal challenges, as ageing, poverty, migration, quality social services, healthcare
- Environmental protection, renewable energy, risk management
- Cross-border accessibility and interoperability (soft measures, collaboration)
- Harmonization of labor market needs with education and vocational training with special focus on youth and all disadvantaged groups

5.2.3. Main fields of past and current cross-border co-operation

The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary is the continuation of a cooperation process which started in the middle of the 90s under trilateral and bilateral compositions (Austria-Slovenia-Hungary, Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia, and Slovenia-Hungary Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes). Bilateral cooperation between Hungary and Slovenia began in the pre-accession period. The cooperation was first implemented within the framework of the tripartite Slovenia-Hungary-Austria Program (1995-1996). Between 2000 and 2003, the bilateral Phare Cross-Border Cooperation Program was implemented. Thereafter, both countries participated in the tripartite Slovenia-Hungary-Croatia Neighborhood Program in 2004-2006. In the light of experience, the two Member States have decided to establish bilateral cooperation with the other party from the 2007 programming period.

In this past 25 years there are numerous examples of successful cross-border cooperation in the local economy, active tourism, culture, and environmental protection.⁹ These activities take place not only through state institutions and development agencies but also among non-governmental organizations and citizens. The following table shows some examples of cross-border cooperation from approved Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary projects related to Vas county (Table 4).

Priority axis	Fields of cooperation	Lead partner	Project title	Short summary
Attractive region	Active tourism, nature conservation	Őrségi Nemzeti Park	Green Exercise	The main goal of the project is a common cross-border promotion of extant touristic service related to cultural heritage and natural assets with an expansion towards emphasizing the importance of a healthy way of life, sustainable and environmentally friendly means of transport (especially cycling).
Attractive region	Cultural heritage, active tourism	Občina Apače	ESCAPE	In Podravje, Pomurje and Vas, there are many elements of natural and cultural heritage that have been completely overseen. These are independent, not connected points, that are hard to reach and dysfunctional. The project ESCAPE will solve this territorial challenge - we will enrich 81 tolerance points (with attractive descriptions in a free-of-charge digital database and nice ambience) and connect them sustainably into 5 attractive CB tourism products (escapes).
Attractive region	Tourism, culture	Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal	Guide2Visit	The project aims to include the peripheral areas of the Slovenian-Hungarian border region (on the Hungarian side a 30 km wide

⁹ <http://www.si-hu.eu/hu2/projekti/odobreni-projekti/#toggle-id-1>

				strip along the border (primarily the cultural regions Slovene Raba region, Őrség, Göcsej, Hetés), on the Slovenian side the rural areas with small villages around the towns Lendava, Murska Sobota and Ptuj) into the tourism offer by the realisation of a complex visitor guide system's concrete elements, by a targeted tourism promotion positioning these areas as an attracting tourism destination and by securing the condition of crossing the border.
Attractive region	Tourism, culture, built heritage	Pannon Helyi Termék Nonprofit Kft.	HOUSES	The main objective of project HOUSES is to integrate our cultural and built heritage – especially traditional houses – into the tourism offer, which contributes to the protection of these sites. A new methodology is being elaborated in order to help the several developed traditional houses to reach the same quality on both sides of the border, as well as to increase the quality of the related tourism offers to meet the today's expectations. The improved offer then will be organized into a cross-border tourism package, called "The Route of Traditional Houses".
Cooperative region	Energy efficiency, renewable energy, environmental protection	Lokalna energetska agencija za Pomurje	Green Line	The project Green Line is focused on the transfer of knowledge and experience and leads to increase of capacity of the involved organizations (partners) and increase of ability of institutional cooperation (partners, municipalities, public organizations) in the field of environmental protection, energy efficiency and renewable energy in order to achieve a higher level of maturity in cross-border relations. In the project a key topic has been activated, namely a lack of skills and cooperation is necessary to strengthen the possibility and show new ways and develop additional tools for effective strategic planning in line with the national legislations and European directives.
Cooperative region	Social inclusion, ageing	MURABA Korlátolt Felelősségű Európai	MOTIVAGE	Effective management of the challenges of an ageing society is one of the most crucial tasks Europe is facing nowadays. MOTIVAGE transforms the Lendava-Szentgotthárd area

		Területi Társulás		into an integrated age-friendly region, encourages social and economic inclusion, supports responsible and independent living, as well as an active, healthy and dignified ageing, and thus takes strain off social care systems and strengthens social cohesion.
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8. Table: Examples of approved Interreg V-A Slovenia Hungary projects related to Vas county

5.3. Overview of stakeholders

1. Self-Government Office of Vas county/Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal

The Vas County Assembly was established in 1990 and in parallel the Vas County Government Office started operating. The Vas County Government Office performs its work as a regional self-government in order to perform the tasks specified in the Local Government Act. Its task is to assist the preparation of the European Union tenders of the county self-governments, to encourage participation and co-operation, and to provide substantive assistance to the specialized committees and work of the Vas County Self-Government.

The Self-Government Office of Vas County one of the most important economic organizations of Vas county.¹⁰ In addition to the county-level administrative functions, the office is also responsible for maintaining international relations. General competencies of the office:

- Organizing of county-level regional development and meso-level spatial planning
- Boosting economic and infrastructural development
- Managing and developing international relations
- Participating in preparation, coordination, and realization of development initiatives in and around Vas county
- Mobilizing partnerships of professional organizations in business, cultural and civic spheres of life

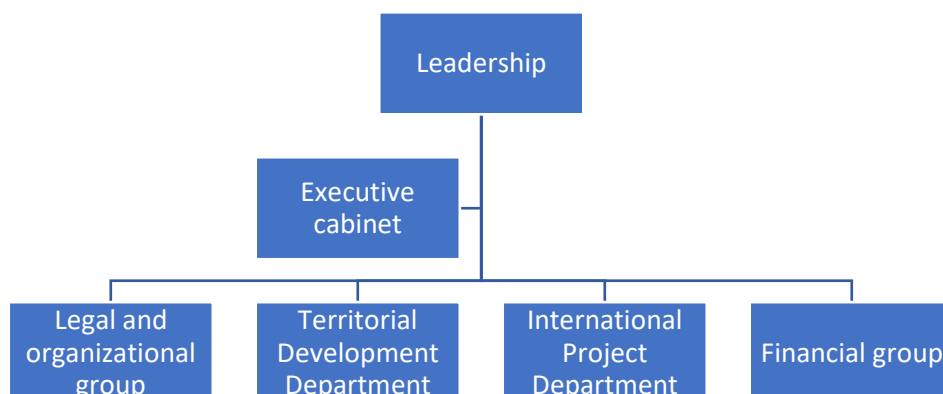


Figure 6: Organizational structure of Self-Government Office of Vas County

¹⁰ <http://www.vasmegye.hu/discovering-vas-country/>

The office has 26 full-time public officials. The International Project Department took place as a lead partner or as a project partner in the management of several international projects. These projects are financed by European Union programs, such as Interreg SI-HU, Interreg AT-HU, Interreg Europe, Central Europe, Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens Program, COSME Program, etc.

The associates of the Territorial Development Department are responsible for the preparation, management, and implementation of the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (launched by the local government bodies) both as consortium leader and consortium member.

2. Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter/Óriszentpéter Város Önkormányzata

Óriszentpéter is one of the smallest cities in Hungary, with a population of 1.166. The small town, despite its size, plays an important role in the life of the predominantly agricultural area, for which it provides important functions, as well as plays an integrative role in territorial development and tourism. In the recent period, organic cooperation has developed between the actors of the region not only in the field of territorial development but also in the sector of tourism and event organization, which is one of the leading branches of the region's economy.

The project management organization of the town is provided by the Őrség Határok Nélkül Egyesület (Őrség Without Borders Association), which successfully copes with the preparation, implementation, and accounting of all domestic and EU projects. The self-government office works closely with the local municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and the directorate of the Őrségi Nemzeti Park (Őrség National Park). The recent cross-border cooperation in which Óriszentpéter participated:

- Interreg City Cooperation II.: The project was implemented in the framework of two mirror projects between 2014 and 2020, one in the framework of the Interreg AT-HU Program and the other in the framework of the Interreg SI-AT Program. The project was submitted and authorized in the priority axis entitled Improving Institutional Capacity and Efficient Public Administration. The aim of the project to raise cross-border cooperation to a higher level between municipalities.
- Interreg SI-HU, ESCAPE (see project summary above)
- Interreg SI-HU, GREEN LINE (see project summary above)

3. Self-Government Office of Szentgotthárd/Szentgotthárd Város Önkormányzata

Szentgotthárd is the westernmost located city of Hungary which is also one of the most important industrial centers in the micro-region. Hungary's western border region is a particularly popular investment destination. The micro-region is crossed by the international main road E66, which connects Budapest with the Western European motorway network. Austria and Slovenia can be reached via several border crossings. Due to the water tourism connected to the Rába river and the proximity of the Őrség National Park, as well as the thermal bath and various services, the small town is noteworthy as a tourist destination. The regional significance of Szentgotthárd is increased by the fact that it is closely connected with the public administration, economic, cultural, and tourist actors of the region.

Szentgotthárd is one of the centers of the Slovene minority in Hungary, it is hosting the Slovenian Cultural and Information Center, and the editorial office of the national weekly Porabje. The town has good relations with several municipalities in Prekmurje/Muravidék, with which it has participated in various projects. Main cross-border cooperation:

- Establishment and operation of the MURABA European Territorial Association together with the Municipality of Lendava, the Mura Region Hungarian National Self-Government Community, and the National Slovene Self-Government
- Participate in the preparation of Leader Local Development Strategy
- Implementation of Interreg SI-HU, ESCAPE project.

4. Őrség National Park/Őrségi Nemzeti Park

The sectoral agency is linked to a wide range of partners in the West-Hungarian border region, making the organization an important player in regional development. The National Park covers a total of 44 settlements on 43.927 hectares, includes the Őrség, the Vendvidék (Porabje), the valley of the river Rába and the surroundings of Szentgyörgyvölgy. The headquarter of the organization is located in Őriszentpéter. Its entire territory is Natura 2000 certified and protected by the European Community.¹¹

The national park's board has a wide range of responsibilities related to nature conservation from research and planning to the protection of species and dissemination of knowledge. The biosphere is affected by many sectors and activities therefore, it is an important task to ensure that the aspects of the protection of wildlife prevail in the implementation of these activities. Activities affecting protected areas and organisms are subject to permits that are within the competence of the national park experts. Expert activities cover agriculture, forestry, water management, infrastructure, and regional development. Since the establishment of the national park, it has been involved in the planning and implementation of several domestic and international projects. Some examples of these:

- Green Exercise (as lead partner) with Javni zavod Krajinski Park Goričko, Center za zdravje in razvoj Murska Sobota, Občina Moravske Toplice, Občina Šalovci, Szlovén Vidék Gazdaságfejlesztési Szolgáltató Közhasznú Nonprofit Kft., Szakonyfalu Község Önkormányzata, Alsószölnök Község Önkormányzata
- "In harmony with the landscape": in 2009, the Municipality of Apátisvánfalva, the Goričko Landscape Park, the Prlekija Development Agency and the Ecological Center SVIT joined forces with the management of the national park to find a solution to the sustainable use of the habitats and economic problems of the border area.
- "Pearls of tall trees": The project was implemented with the participation of 5 partners (Regional Development Agency Mura d.o.o., Krajinski Park Goričko, Društvo za opazovanje

¹¹ <https://orseginemzetipark.hu/en/index.html>

and proučevanje ptic Slovenije, Razvojna agencija slovenska krajina). The project aims to conserve the gene pool of native fruit trees.

5. Vasi Hegyhát–Rábamente Tourism and Destination Management

The Vasi Hegyhát–Rábamente Association was founded in 2011 in Körmend with the cooperation of several settlements and service providers in the region. The aim of the organization is to improve the living conditions of the population living in its area, to strengthen the socio-economic role of regional development, and to develop tourism based on private-public partnerships and the common interests of its members.¹² Main tasks of the TDM:

- support and coordination of the activities of enterprises and service providers related to tourism in the region
- coordinating tourism activities between municipal, business, and civil actors
- marketing activities
- support for the conservation of local natural and cultural values
- operation of tourist information offices
- monitoring tenders for tourism
- cooperation with other tourism associations

The association currently employs five people. The employees work on various community, rural and tourism development projects. The organization is supported by a five-member presidency and a membership of 66 supporters. One of the strengths of the association is that it connects the demand and supply side within the region with a good sense, all of which it also supports with marketing activities, thus increasing the brand of the region.

¹² <http://vasihegyhat-rabamente.hu/kezdolap/>

Table: Regional stakeholder profiles

Stakeholder name	Stakeholder's role	Stakeholder's main challenges	Areas of interests	Competence, capacity to bring about a change	Tools of stakeholder involvement, communication channels
Official name Representing person	Area of responsibility, tasks, portfolio, etc	What are the main challenges (opportunities, threats) of the stakeholder? How is the stakeholder affected by its challenges?	Possible / planned actions to address its challenges – with a special regard on cross-border activities	Internal /external capacities and competences directly accessible for the stakeholder	Communication channels used to involve the stakeholder and to communicate project results, events with wider audiences should be defined
Self-Government Office of Vas County Péter Balázszy	Economic and territorial development, tourism	Threats: COVID-19 Opportunities: online communication channels.		Internal: 26 full-time public officials. External experts in various fields of knowledge.	newsletter, email
Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter Zoltán Őr	Territorial and urban development	Threats: loss of income due to epidemic. Opportunities: ongoing energy efficiency investments.		Internal: Őrség Határok Nélkül (Leader) Association as project management organization. External: Őrség National Park as expert team.	email
Self-Government Office of Szentgotthárd Gábor Huszár Bálint Papp	Territorial and urban development	Threats: economic risks and insufficient funding. Opportunities: funding programs by EU in the next project cycle.		Internal: employees from the finance, technical and regional development departments.	email and workshops

				External: institutions maintained by the municipality (tourism, museum pedagogy, urban development, sports, childcare).	
Őrség National Park Zsolt János Horváth	Nature conservation, environmental protection	Threats: emigration, ageing, weak labour market, obsolete infrastructure, the disappearance of people who maintain the landscape. Opportunities: traditional farming, ecotourism, educational programs	Medium-term development plan.	Internal: 80 full-time employees in the fields of ecotourism, environmental education, agriculture and forestry, zoology, botany, project management, finance. External: cooperation with ecotourism actors, local farmers, NGOs, and authorities.	email
Vasi Hegyhát-Rábamente TDM Flóra Kata Debreczeniné Késmárky	Tourism, local culture and economy	Threats: recession in tourism sector. Opportunities: strengthening of domestic tourism in the future.	They are trying to take the opportunity to bring the region to the public consciousness with marketing campaigns.	Internal: 5 full-time employees, 5-members presidency and 66 supporters. External: NGOs	email

5.4. Overview of stakeholder cooperation in the moment process

Stakeholder 1: Self-Government Office of Vas county/Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. Signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating on three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 2: Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter/Óriszentpéter Város Önkormányzata

Actions	Period	Responsible
1. Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2. Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3. Signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4. Participating on three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 3: Self-Government Office of Szentgotthárd/Szentgotthárd Város Önkormányzata

Actions	Period	Responsible
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1.	Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings.	Period 1 and 2	PP
2.	Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3	All PPs
3.	Signing of the protocol	Period 3	Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating on three soft training	Period 4	All PPs

Stakeholder 4: Őrség National Park/Őrségi Nemzeti Park

Actions	Period	Responsible
1.	Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed. 2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations. 3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings.	Period 1 and 2 PP
2.	Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy 1. Smarter Europe 2. Greener, carbon free Europe 3. Connected Europe 4. Social Europe 5. Europe closer to citizens	Period 2 and 3 All PPs
3.	Signing of the protocol	Period 3 Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating on three soft training	Period 4 All PPs

Stakeholder 5: Vasi Hegyhát–Rábamente Tourism and Destination Management

Actions	Period	Responsible
1.	Participation on three Stakeholder group meetings: 1. The data needed to analyze the strategy documents and the contents of the next programming period are discussed.	Period 1 and 2 PP

2. The participants will discuss the content of the protocol, which is about cooperation and strengthening organizations.		
3. They adopt the final version of the protocol and discuss the trainings.		
2.	Participating on five trainings related to the new cohesion policy	Period 2 and 3
	1. Smarter Europe	
	2. Greener, carbon free Europe	
	3. Connected Europe	
	4. Social Europe	
	5. Europe closer to citizens	
3.	Signing of the protocol	Period 3 Key Stakeholders
4.	Participating on three soft training	Period 4 All PPs

5.5. Benefits of stakeholder involvement

1. Self-Government Office of Vas county/Vas Megyei Önkormányzati Hivatal

- Broadening relationships, seeking for potential partners
- Identification of target groups and motivating their involvement
- Sharing good practices

2. Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter/Óriszentpéter Város Önkormányzata

- More effective participation in cross-border projects
- Closer cooperation with Slovenian and Hungarian municipalities

3. Self-Government Office of Szentgotthárd/Szentgotthárd Város Önkormányzata

- Collective thinking with other municipalities
- Learning good practices
- Rethinking development guidelines

4. Őrség National Park/Őrségi Nemzeti Park

- Increasing the fundraising-potential
- Improving the efficiency of project management
- For the target groups, it can be a benefit if the utilization of the developments increase, and more optimal solutions are found to meet the needs of the target group
- From a territorial point of view can be a benefit to strengthen the network of regional actors and the coherence of regional development

5. Vasi Hegyhát–Rábamente Tourism and Destination Management

- Broadening relationships, seeking for potential partners

- Sharing good practice
- From the sectoral and regional point of view, increasing the visibility and the touristic potential of Vasi Hegyhát and Rábamente micro-region

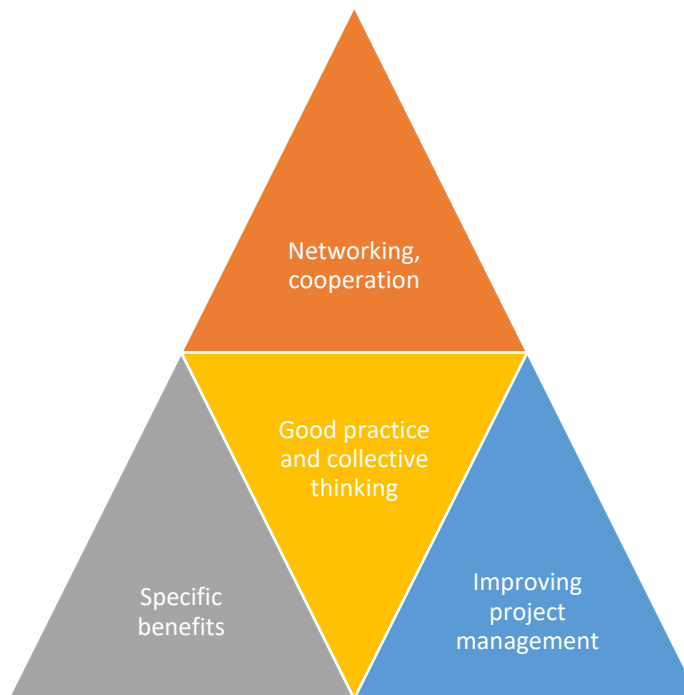


Figure 7: Expected benefits of stakeholders in Vas county

Annex I: List of key and general stakeholders

All PPs please list the stakeholders

LP: Development agency Sinergija				PP2: INSTITUTE PALEMID MARIBOR				PP3: Zala County Government				PP4: West-Pannon Nonprofit Ltd.			
	Key stakeholders:		General stakeholders:		Key stakeholders:		General stakeholders:		Key stakeholders:		General stakeholders:		Key stakeholders:		General stakeholders:
1	Development centre Murska Sobota	1		1	Municipality Maribor	1	Municipality Lenart	1	Balaton-felvidéki National Park Directorate	1		1	Self-Government Office of Vas county	1	
2	Municipality of Moravske Toplice	2		2	Municipality Šentilj	2	Municipality Pesnica	2	Lenti and Countryside Development Agency Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd.	2		2	Self-Government Office of Óriszentpéter	2	
3	Development foundation for Pomurje region	3		3	Maribor Development Agency	3	Municipality Sveta Ana	3	Zalaerdő Ltd.	3		3	Self-Government Office of Szentgotthárd	3	
4	Institute TRS	4		4	PIP Institute	4	ENERGETSKA AGENCIJA ZA PODRAVJE - zavod za trajnostno rabo energije	4	Zala County Regional Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd.	4		4	Órség National Park	4	

LP: Development agency Sinergija				PP2: INSTITUTE PALEMID MARIBOR				PP3: Zala County Government				PP4: West-Pannon Nonprofit Ltd.			
5	Institute for tourism and development Lendava	5		5	Doba Faculty	5	LAS Ovtar Lenart Razvojna agencija slovenske gorice d.o.o.	5	IMRO DDKK Nonprofit Ltd.	5		5	Vasi Hegyhát-Rábamente TDM	5	
6	PORA, development agency Gornja Radgona	6		6	Higher Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor	6	TALUM/KREAL Inženiring	6	Lenti and Region Rural Development Association	6				6	
7	Prlekija Development Agency	7		7	Tourist Board Maribor – Pohorje (ZTMP)	7	Kmetijski zavod Maribor	7	Municipality of Lenti	7				7	
8	Bistra hiša, Institute for Research and Sustainable Development Martjanci - Smart House	8				8	E-zavod zavod za projektno svetovanje, raziskovanje in razvoj celovitih rešitev			8				8	
		9				9	Društvo za kadrovske dejavnosti Mestne občine Maribor, občin			9				9	

LP: Development agency Sinergija				PP2: INSTITUTE PALEMID MARIBOR				PP3: Zala County Government				PP4: West-Pannon Nonprofit Ltd.			
							Lenarta in Slovenske Bistrice								
		10				10	IRDO - Inštitut za razvoj družbene odgovornosti			10				10	